

The NORTH PACIFIC

A STORY OF THE
RUSSO-JAPANESE
WAR



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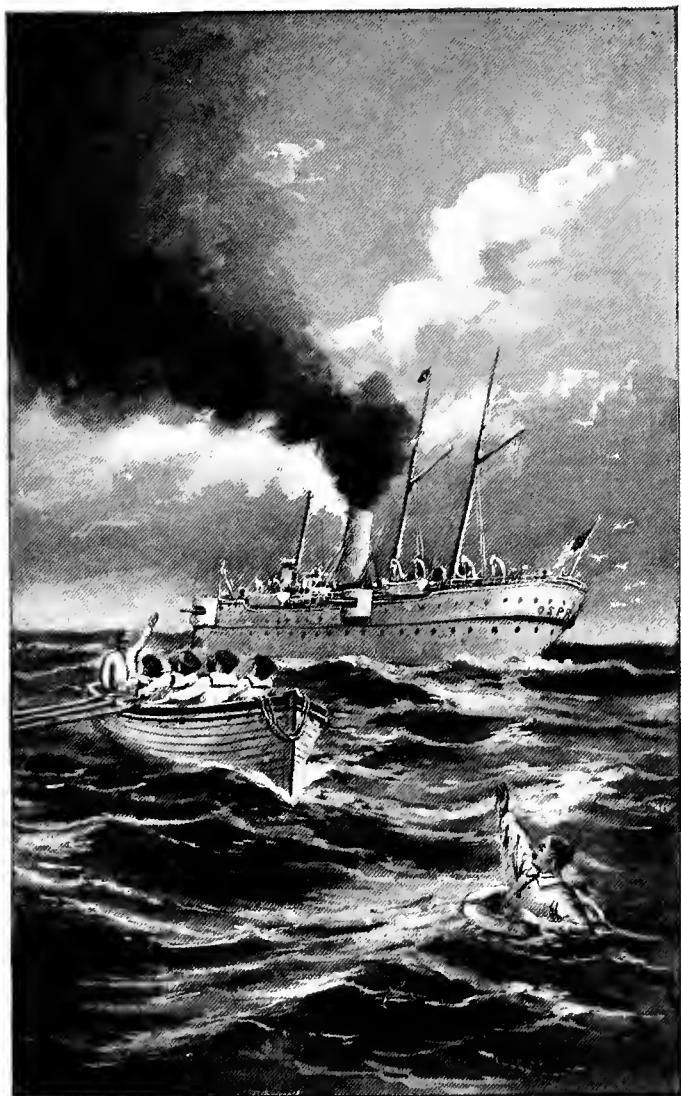


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"MAN OVERBOARD!"

The North Pacific

*A Story of the Russo-Japanese
War*

By

Willis Boyd Allen

Author of "Navy Blue" and "Cleared for Action"



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TO MY FRIEND
COMMANDER WILLIAM H. H. SOUTHERLAND, U. S. N.
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

PREFACE.

AS in the preparation of *Navy Blue* and *Cleared for Action*, the author has taken great pains to verify the main facts of the present story, so far as they are concerned with the incidents of the great struggle still in progress between the empires of the East and the West. He acknowledges most gratefully the assistance received from the office of the Secretary of the Navy, from ex-Secretary John D. Long, and from Commander W. H. H. Southerland, now commanding the U. S. Cruiser *Cleveland*, Commander Austin M. Knight, President of the Board on Naval Ordnance, and Chief Engineer Edward Farmer, retired.

W. B. A.

BOSTON, June, 1905.

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THE NORTH PACIFIC.

CHAPTER I.

THE TRIAL OF THE "RETVIZAN."

IT was a clear, cool afternoon in early September, 1901. In the country the tawny hillsides were warmed to gold by the glow of the autumn sun, while here and there a maple lifted its crimson torch as if the forest were kindling where the rays were the hottest. Brown, golden, and scarlet leaves floated slowly downward to the ground; flocks of dark-winged birds drifted across the sky or flitted silently through the shadows of the deep wood; the call of the harvester to his straining team sounded across the fields for a moment—then all was still again. But for the creak of a waggon, the distant bark of a dog, the fitful whisper and rustle of the wind in the boughs overhead, the whirring chatter of a squirrel, the world seemed lost in a day-dream of peace.

Only a few miles away the air was rent by a clamour of discordant sound. Ponderous hammers beat upon plates of iron and brass; machinery rumbled and shrieked and hissed at its work; a thousand men, labouring as if for their lives, pulled, pushed, lifted, pounded, shouted orders, warnings, replies above the din that beat upon the ear like a blacksmith's blows upon an anvil. From the tall chimneys poured endless volumes of black smoke that were reflected in the blue waters of the river and mimicked by innumerable puffs of steam. The place was like a volcano in the first stages of eruption. A vast upheaval seemed imminent. Yet the countless toilers worked securely and swiftly, fashioning that dread floating citadel of modern warfare, the Battleship.

On this same afternoon, at the outer gate of the Cramp Shipbuilding Works, two strangers applied for admission, presenting to the watchman a properly accredited pass. They were young men, under the average stature, dark-skinned, and almost notably quiet in appearance and manner. Although their dress was that of the American gentleman, a very slight accent in their speech, their jet-black hair, and a trifling obliquity in their eyes, would have at once betrayed their nationality to a careful observer. He would have known that they were of a people famous for their shrewdness, their gentle manners,

their bravery, their quick perceptions, and their profound patience and tireless resolution in accomplishing their ends—the "Yankees of the Orient"—the Japanese.

The watchman glanced at them carelessly, rather impressed by the visitors' immaculate attire—both wore silk hats and black coats of correct Broadway cut—and asked if they wanted an attendant to show them about the works. They said, "No, thank you. We shall remain but short time. We can find our ways"; and, bowing, passed into the yard.

Their curiosity seemed very slight, as to the buildings and machinery. With light, quick steps they passed through one or two of the most important shops, then turned to the river-side, and halted beside the huge ship that was on the stocks, almost ready for launching. Here for the first time their whole expression became alert, their eyes keen and flashing. Nobody paid much attention to them as they passed along the walk, scrutinising, it would seem, every individual bolt and plate.

"A couple o' Dagos!" remarked one workman to another, nodding over his shoulder as he carried his end of a heavy steel bar.

At the gangway the visitors met their first obstacle. A man in undress uniform, with a full beard and stern countenance, waved them back. "No admittance to the deck," he said briefly.

The two Japanese bowed blandly, and spoke a few words together in soft undertones and gutturals, as incomprehensible to a Western ear as the language of the Ojibways. Then they bowed again, smiled and said "Thank you, sir," and moved away. The Russian officer watched them sharply until they disappeared around the bows of the vessel, muttering to himself under his bushy moustache.

Once out of sight the languor and mild indifference of the strangers vanished. They spoke swiftly, with excited, but graceful gestures. Then one of them pointed to the snowy curve of the battleship's prow, above their heads. There, gleaming in the sunset light, shone the word, in gold letters,

РЕТВИЗАНЪ

"RETVIZAN," murmured the other; "RETVIZAN." Adding in his own language, "She will have her trial trip late in October, sailing from Boston. Then—we shall see!"

"We shall see."

"*Sayonara, Retvizan!*" said the first speaker with just a trace of mockery in his tone, as the two turned toward the gate. As they passed through, on their way out, they bowed and smiled to the gate-keeper. Once more they were suave, languid little gentlemen of fashion, travelling for pleasure.

It was eight o'clock on the morning of October 21st when the last tug-load of "distinguished visitors" scrambled up the steep ladder to the deck of the *Retvizan*, which had lain all night in President's Roads, Boston Harbour, waiting for her trial trip. In five minutes more the battleship was under way, the smoke rolling from her three huge funnels as she forged ahead slowly, on her way to the open sea.

It was an oddly composed crowd that gathered forward of the great turret from which projected two twelve-inch guns. The crew consisted of Russian "Jackies," in man-of-war rig; but the spectators were the invited guests of the builders from whose control the ship had not yet passed. There were lawyers, naval officers, engineers, and politicians, with one or two officials of the city and State government—all bound to have a good time, whether the *Retvizan* should prove slow or fast. They buttoned their overcoats up around their throats—for the day was chilly, and the draught made by the vessel as she gathered speed was sharp—and in little knots, here and there, joked, laughed, and sang like boys on a lark.

One young man was constantly moving about, alert and active, interested apparently in everything and everybody on board. Most of the Boston men seemed to know him, and exchanged jokes with him as he passed.

"Hullo, Larkin, you here?" called out one. "Better go ashore while there 's time—you 'll be sea-sick when we get outside!"

"I never yet was sick of seeing!" retorted the young man. "The *Bulletin* must have a good story on to-day's trip."

"Why did n't they send a reporter that knew his business?" jested another.

"Don't *you* say anything, Alderman, or I 'll fix up an account of you that will make you turn pale when you read it to-morrow morning," said the jolly reporter; and off he went, followed by a chorus of laughter.

Fred Larkin was one of the most valued reporters on the Boston *Daily Bulletin*. He had risen to his present position, from that of mere space writer, by sheer determination, pluck, and hard work, which characteristics, backed by fine character and a sunny good-humour, made him a favourite with both his superiors and his comrades on the staff. Three years before this sea-trip Fred had been sent to Cuba as war correspondent for the *Bulletin*, had performed one or two remarkable feats in journalism, had been captured by the Spaniards, and on the very day when he expected to be executed in Santiago as a spy had been exchanged and set free.

Meanwhile on this same perilous journey inland, he had met a young Spanish girl named Isabella

Cueva, who subsequently appealed to him for protection, and whom, a few months later, he married. They now had one bright little dark-haired boy, a year old, named Pedro.

"He 's a wonderful child," Larkin would assert. "Talks Spanish like a native, and cries in English!"

Besides the company of invited guests on the *Retvizan*, the officers of the ship-building company, and the Russian crew, there were a number of supernumeraries—butlers, cooks, and stewards, of various nationalities.

About a week before the ship was to sail from Philadelphia, two Japanese boys applied for a position on board as stewards. They were dressed neatly, after the custom of their race, but their spotless clothes were threadbare, and as they seemed needy and brought the best of references from Washington families, they were hired at once. It was true that they seemed unable to speak or to understand more than a few words of English, but their slight knowledge of the language appeared to be sufficient for their duties, and the Japanese are known to be the neatest, quickest, most efficient little waiters that can be procured. Many of them, as their employers knew, were engaged in this humble service on United States war-ships, where they gave complete satisfaction.

As the great vessel swung out upon her course,

the two boyish Japs appeared. They had come on board in Philadelphia, and were soon equipped for their work, with white aprons and dark suits. Having with some difficulty made the head steward understand when and for what they had been engaged, they had entered at once upon their duties.

Nobody took much notice of the little fellows, as they glided silently to and fro, giving deft touches to the lunch table, or assisting a stout alderman to don his overcoat. Only once did they seem disconcerted. That was when a Russian under-officer, with bushy beard and moustache, put his head inside the cabin-door. One of the Japanese started so nervously that he nearly upset a water-carafe on the table. As he adjusted it, he spoke a few words in a low tone to his companion, and both remained with their backs to the door, although the Russian summoned them roughly.

“Why did n’t you go when he called?” demanded the head steward crossly, a minute later, when he had himself given the officer the glass of water he wanted.

“No speak Russian. No un’erstan’,” said the little Jap with a meek gesture.

“Well, you might have known what he asked for,” retorted his superior. “Look sharp now, and attend to your business. You ain’t here for fun, you!”

The steward addressed shot a quick glance at the other, but neither said a word, as they resumed their tasks.

The *Retvizan* moved proudly northward, throwing out a great wave on each side of her white prow and leaving a wake of tossing foam stretching far astern. The harbour islands were now dim in the distance and the shore of the mainland might have been that of Patagonia, for all the sign of human life it showed. Now, indeed, the vessel drew in, or, rather, the coastline veered eastward as if to intercept her in her swift course. The Magnolia shore came in sight, with its toy cottages and hotels, as deserted as autumn birds'-nests. Norman's Woe was left behind, backed by dark pine forests, and Gloucester, nestling in its snug harbour, peered out at the passing monster. Almost directly in front the lights of Thatcher's Island reared themselves, two priestly fingers raised in blessing over the toilers of the sea.

Now the battleship began to quiver, as the increased throbbing of her engines, the monstrous fore-waves, and the volumes of black smoke rushing from her stacks told the excited passengers that she was settling down to her best pace for the crucial test of speed. A government tug was passed, and for ten miles the *Retvizan* ploughed her way fiercely northward, never deviating a foot to right or left,

crushing the waves into a boiling cauldron of seething foam, dashing the spray high into the sunshine, until the second stake-boat, off Cape Porpoise, was passed, and with a long sweep outward she turned, to retrace the ten-mile course more swiftly than ever.

Fred Larkin pervaded, so to speak, the ship. Note-book in hand, he interviewed the officers, chaffed the Russian Jackies, darted in and out of the cabins, and ranged boldly through the hidden passages below. In process of time he reached the engine-room, smearing himself with oil on the way, from every steel rod he touched.

No sooner had he entered the room than he was pounced upon by one of the three or four engineers, naval and civil, who were busily watching the work of the great, pulsing heart of the vessel.

“Larkin! How are you, old fellow?” And his hands were grasped and wrung, over and over, regardless of oil.

“Holmes! Well, I did n’t guess *you* were here! Shake again!”

It was Lieutenant-Commander Holmes, Assistant Engineer, who, with several subordinate officers, two of them from the Academy, had been detached by the Navy Department to watch the trip of the *Retvizan* and report upon it. They mingled freely with the Russian engineers, and compared notes with them, as the trial progressed.

Norman Holmes explained this to the young reporter, who was an old and tried friend.

"Where is Rexdale stationed?"

"He 's doing shore duty in Washington just now. Between you and me, Fred, I think he 'll be a lieutenant-commander before long, and may command one of the smaller vessels on this station—a despatch-boat or something of the kind. I only wish I could be assigned to the same ship! You know Dave and I were chums in the Academy."

"I know. And the trifling circumstance of each marrying the other's sister has n't tended to produce a coldness, I suppose! But is n't that an awfully quick promotion for Rexdale? The last I heard of him he was only a lieutenant."

"Well, we 've built so many new ships lately," said Holmes, with his eye on the steam gauge, "that it has been hard work to man them. Two or three classes have been graduated at the Academy two years ahead of time, and promotions have been rapid all along the line. The man that commanded the gunboat *Osprey*, for instance, is now on an armoured cruiser, taking the place of an officer who has been moved up to the battleship *Arizona*, and so on. Why, in the course of ten years or more I may be a commander—who knows?" he added, with a laugh.

"I suppose you hear from 'Sandy' and—what did you fellows call Tickerson?"

“ ‘Girlie’? Oh, yes, I hear from them. Both are in the East somewhere. Sandy’s last letter was from Guam. He’s a lieutenant now, and so is Tickerson.”

“Well, I must n’t stay here, bothering you. There’s a queer crowd on board—a mixed lot. Seen those little Japs?”

“No. What are they here for?”

“Oh, just waiters. But it’s odd to see Japanese on a Russian man-of-war, considering that—hullo, here’s one of them, now!”

Sure enough, a small, white-aproned figure came daintily picking his way down into the jarring, clanging, oily engine-room. He seemed a bit troubled to find two of its occupants regarding him intently, as he stepped upon the iron floor.

“Mist’ Johnson no here?” he asked innocently, gazing around him.

“Johnson? No, not that I know of,” replied Holmes. “What’s his position.”

“He—he from Boston,” said the Jap, after a slight hesitation.

“Look here,” broke in Larkin, in his offhand way, “what’s your name, young fellow?”

The steward looked into the reporter’s frank, kindly face, then answered, “Oto.”

“Oto,” repeated Fred. “That’s a nice easy name to pronounce, if it *is* Japanese. Well, Oto, how about your chum—what’s his name?”

"Oshima. We from Japan."

"So I suspected," laughed Fred. "Been over long?"

The boy looked puzzled.

"When did you leave home?"

Oto shook his head. "Un'erstan' ver' leetle English," he said.

"Well, run along and find Mr. Johnson, of Boston. Norman, good-bye. I 'll look in on you again before the end of the trip. Where did Oto go?"

The little Jap had melted away—whether upward or downward, no one could say, he had vanished so quickly.

Larkin shook his head and made a few cabalistic curves and dots in his note-book, then reascended the stairs to the upper deck. Through a winding staircase in a hollow mast he made his way to one of the fighting-tops. Singularly enough the other Japanese waiter, Oshima, was there before him. As Fred emerged on the circular platform, the boy thrust a scrap of paper under the folds of his jacket and hurried down toward the deck. Again the reporter made a note in his book, and then gave a few moments to the magnificent view of the ship and the open sea through which it was cleaving its way.

Directly before and below him lay the forward deck of the *Retvizan*, cleared almost as completely

as if for action. Most of the visitors had withdrawn from the keen wind to the shelter of the cabin, where, doubtless, the question of luncheon was already exciting interest. Beneath the fighting-top was the bridge, where the highest officials on the ship were watching her progress. Just beyond was the forward turret, with its projecting guns, their muzzles peacefully closed.

The vessel now reached the first stake-boat once more, and turning, again started over the course at half-speed, for the tedious process of standardising the screw; that is, determining how many revolutions went to a given rate of speed. The engineers were busy with their calculations. Larkin joined the hungry crowd in the cabin, giving a last look at the blue sea, the misty shore line, and the dim bulk of *Agamenticus* reared against the western sky.

When the *Retvizan* passed Cape Ann, on her homeward trip, the great lamps on Thatcher's Island were alight, and the waves sparkled in the glow. It was nearly nine o'clock that evening when the chains rattled through the hawse-holes, in the lower harbour, as the battleship came to anchor. Many had been the guesses as to her speed. Had she come up to her builders' expectations? Had she passed the test successfully? These were the questions that flew to and fro among the passengers, crowding about the gangway beneath which the tug was soon

rising and falling. At the last moment the approximate result of the engineers' calculations was given out. The ship had responded nobly to the demand upon her mighty machinery. Splendidly built throughout, perfectly equipped for manslaughter and for the protection of her crew, obedient to the lightest touch of the master-hand that should guide her over the seas in warfare or in peace, the *Retvizan* had shown herself to be one of the swiftest and most powerful war-ships in the world. For twenty miles, in the open ocean, she had easily made a little over eighteen knots an hour.

In the confusion of going on board the tug and disembarking in the darkness, no one observed the two Japanese waiters, who must have forgotten even to ask for their wages. Certain it is that Oto and Oshima were among the very first to land on the Boston wharf, and to disappear in one of the gloomy cross-streets that branch off from Atlantic Avenue.

CHAPTER II.

“MAN OVERBOARD!”

“WELL, we 're out of the harbour safely, Captain,” said Executive Officer Staples with a sigh of relief, as he spread out the chart of the Massachusetts coast and glanced at the “tell-tale” compass. “No more trouble till we get down by the Pollock Rip Shoals.”

“Anybody would think you had been taking a battleship out from under the enemy’s guns,” laughed Lieutenant-Commander David Rexdale. “Don’t talk about ‘trouble,’ Tel., while it ’s daylight, off a home port, in good weather!”

The two were standing in the chart-room, just behind the bridge of the U. S. gunboat *Osprey*, as the vessel, leaving Boston Outer Light behind, headed slightly to the south of east. Rexdale, as his old chum Holmes had predicted, was now in command of the *Osprey*, and was taking her to Washington for a practice trip, on which the crew would be drilled in various manœuvres, including target-practice. Lieutenant Richard Staples, his

executive, had been the captain's classmate at Annapolis. He was lanky and tall, and at the Academy had soon gained the sobriquet of "Telegraph Pole," or "Tel.," for short; a name that had stuck to him thus far in his naval career. He was a Californian, and, while very quiet in his manner, was a dangerous man when aroused—as the upper-class cadets had discovered when they undertook to "run" him. Rexdale was from the rural districts of New Hampshire, and was known to his classmates as "Farmer," a term which was now seldom applied to the dignified lieutenant-commander.

The *Osprey*—to complete our introductions—was a lively little member of Uncle Sam's navy, mounting several six-pounders and a four-inch rifled gun, besides smaller pieces for close quarters. She had taken part in the blockade of Santiago, and while not as modern in her appointments as some of her bigger and younger sister-ships, had given a good account of herself in the stirring days when Cervera's fleet was cooped up behind the Cuban hills, and made their final hopeless dash for freedom. Rexdale was in love with his little vessel, and knew every spar, gun, plate, and bolt as if he had assisted in her building.

On the way down the harbour, they had passed the *Essex* and *Lancaster*, saluting each with a bugle-call. Besides the two officers mentioned, it should

be added that there were on board Ensigns Dobson and Liddon, the former a good-natured little fellow, barely tall enough to meet naval requirement as to height; the other a finely educated and elegant young gentleman who had attended a medical college before enlisting, and whose fund of scientific and historical knowledge was supposed to be inexhaustible. He wore glasses, and had at once been dubbed "Doctor," on entering the Naval Academy. These, with Paymaster Ross, Assistant Surgeon Cutler, and Engineer Clafin, made up the officers' mess of the *Osprey*.

It was a fair day in June, 1903. The sunlight sparkled on the summer sea. Officers and men were in the best of spirits as the gunboat, her red, white, and blue "commission pennant" streaming from her masthead, sped southward past the long, ragged "toe" of the Massachusetts boot.

At noon Rexdale dined in solemn and solitary state in his after cabin. The rest of the officers messed together in the ward-room, below decks, and doubtless Dave would have been glad to join them; but discipline required that the commanding officer, however familiarly he might address an old acquaintance in private, should hold aloof at meal-times. He was waited upon by two small Japanese men, or boys, who had easily obtained the situation when the vessel went into commission at the Charles-

town Navy Yard, where she had remained for some months, docked for overhauling and thorough repairs. The two cabin stewards were gentle and pleasant in their manners, conversant with all their duties, and spoke English fluently. Their names were on the ship's papers as Oto and Oshima.

"Oto," said Rexdale, when the dinner was finished, "call the orderly."

"Yes, sir."

The marine was pacing the deck outside the cabin-door. On receiving the summons he entered and saluted stiffly.

"Orderly, ask Mr. Staples to step this way, if he has finished his dinner."

Another salute, and the man turned on his heels and marched out.

"Mr. Staples," said the commander, as the former came in, "at four bells we will have 'man overboard' drill. We shall anchor to-night about ten miles off Nantucket. I shall come on the bridge and con the ship myself when we sight the Shovelful Lightship, and I shall be glad to have you with me, passing the Shoal. The next time we go over this course I shall let you take the ship through the passage yourself."

"Very well, sir." And the executive, being in sight of the waiters and the orderly, as well as the surgeon, who just then passed through the cabin, saluted formally and retired.

On deck, forward and in the waist of the ship, the men were busy at various tasks, burnishing brass-work, making fast the lashings of the guns, overhauling rigging and such naval apparatus as the warrant officers knew would be needed on this short cruise. But few of the crew—over a hundred in all—were below, although only the watch were actually on duty.

In passing one of the seamen, who was polishing the rail, Oshima, on his way to the galley, accidentally hit the man with his elbow.

“Clear out, will you?” said the seaman with an oath. At the same time he gave the little Jap a shove that sent him reeling.

“Oh, take a fellow of your size, Sam!” cried one of the watch standing near.

“He ran into me! I’ll take him and you, too, if you say much,” retorted the first speaker morosely.

Two or three of the men paused on hearing the angry words. The little stewards were favourites on board, although the enlisted men looked down on their calling.

Oshima’s dark eyes had flashed at the rough push and the sneering reply of the sailor. He brushed his neat jacket where the former’s hand had touched it. Then he said quietly, “You can strike, Sam Bolles, as an ass can kick. But you could not throw me to the deck.”

“Could n’t I?” snarled Sam, dropping his hand-

ful of oily waste and springing to his feet. "We 'll see about that, you ——!" and he called him an ugly name.

Glancing about to see that no officer was watching, Oshima crouched low, and awaited the burly seaman's onset. Sam rushed at him with outstretched hands and tried to seize him around the waist, to dash his slight antagonist to the deck. Had he succeeded, Oshima's usefulness to the United States Navy would have ended then and there. A dozen men gathered about the pair, and more than one uttered a warning cry to the Japanese. They need not have been alarmed, however, for the safety of their small comrade.

Just as Sam's burly paws closed on his shoulders, Oshima's dark, thin little hands shot out. He caught the seaman's right arm, gave a lightning-like twist, and with a cry of pain and rage the big fellow went down in a heap on the deck. As the men applauded wildly and swung their caps, the Jap looked a moment at his fallen foe with a smile of contempt, then turned away, for the master-at-arms, hearing the noise of the scuffle, was approaching. Sam, however, was wild with rage. Scrambling to his feet, he darted upon his late antagonist, caught up the small figure in his powerful arms, and before anybody could interfere, tossed him over the rail into the sea.

Lieut. Commander Rexdale, pacing the quarter-deck and congratulating himself on the fine run the *Osprey* was making, was suddenly aroused from his professional meditations by the sound of cries from the forward part of the ship. Annoyed by this breach of discipline, he called sharply to one of the ensigns, who was standing near, watching a distant steamer through his glass, "Mr. Dobson, step forward, please, and find out what that disturbance is among the men——"

But before Dobson could reach the head of the ladder another confusion of shouts arose, followed immediately by a rush of footsteps. At the same time the commander felt the tremor of the screw's motion die away, under his feet.

"Man overboard?" exclaimed Rexdale, with a vexed frown. "I gave orders for the drill at four bells, and three bells were struck only a few minutes ago. Where is Mr. Staples?"

The executive officer was at that moment seen hurrying aft, but the Jackies were before him. They tumbled up the steps like mad, and flung themselves into the starboard quarter-boat, which had been left swinging outside from the davits for the purposes of drill. Already the man on watch at the taffrail had cut away the lashings of a patent life-preserver and sent it into the sea, where it floated with signals erect, far astern. The propeller

was lashing the water into foam with its reversed motion. The *Osprey* shook as she tried to overcome her momentum; then, as the screw was stopped, forged slowly ahead.

"Lively, now, men! Let go! Fend off!" shouted Dobson, whose station was in that boat at the "man overboard" signal. "Oars! Let fall! Give way!" And off went the boat, plunging and foaming over the waves in the direction of the life-preserver, which was now a quarter of a mile astern.

"Very well done, Mr. Staples," said Rexdale approvingly. "But why," he added in a lower tone, "did you have the drill at this hour, instead of at four bells, as I ordered?"

"Drill? This is no drill, sir!"

"No drill?"

"There *is* a man overboard, sir. One of the Japanese waiters fell over the rail somehow. I gave no orders for the drill, but that bugler is a quick fellow and knows his business. The men like the little Jap, and it put a heart into their work."

When Oshima struck the water his early training (which will be referred to before long) stood him in good stead. He rose to the surface and gave a few quick strokes to ensure safety from the propeller; then he turned on his back and tried to float. There was too much ripple on the water for this, and he was obliged to turn back upon his chest and

maintain his position with as little exertion as possible, not struggling to reach the ship, which was drawing rapidly away. He had seen the "man overboard" drill many times, and was on the lookout for the life-preserver, which was thrown just as he turned for the second time. His clothes dragged downward heavily, but in three minutes he reached the buoy and clung to it, knowing that by this time the men were in the boat and casting off.

It was perhaps ten minutes from the moment of his falling into the sea when the white boat drew up alongside and pulled both him and the life-preserver out of the water. Five minutes later—the ship having reversed her screw again, and backed toward the boat—he was scrambling over on to the deck and making for the little cabin he shared with Oto.

On the ship's log it was simply recorded that the boy had "fallen overboard." Oshima was sharply questioned by the officers, but he could not be induced to tell how the accident happened. Sam knew there were no talebearers among his mates and felt safe. He made a surly apology to the little chap, saying he was mad at having been thrown, and that he had not meant to drown him. Oshima thereupon bowed in a dignified way and went about his work, serving the commander in his cabin that night as usual.

Passing the Handkerchief Lightship, the *Osprey*

dropped anchor with the lights of Nantucket twinkling far on her beam to the south and west. The next morning preparations were made for target-practice.

The target, towed out and anchored by a whale-boat, consisted of a triangular raft of boards supported at each corner by an empty barrel. On this was stepped a mast twelve feet high, with a small red flag at the top. Three leg-of-mutton sails, or "wings," gave the craft the appearance, at a distance, of a small catboat under sail. The *Osprey* now took her position—the distance and course being plotted by officers in two boats—and steamed at half-speed past the target at a distance of about sixteen hundred yards.

The gun-crews were summoned to quarters, and the firing begun with a six-pounder on the fore-castle, followed by two three-pounders on the same deck.

The big four-inch gun was then loaded, the officers putting cotton in their ears to avoid injury. The first shot, weighing between thirty and forty pounds, was dropped a little to the right of the target; the second fell just beyond it and to the left.

"Fire on the top of the roll," cautioned the captain of the gun-crew, which comprised four of the best gunners on the ship.

The third shot fell short, and was duly so recorded, in a memorandum to be included in a report to the Department.

As the disappointed gunner stepped back he saw Oto, who, being a sort of privileged character, was lingering close by, shake his head slightly.

"Perhaps you think you could do better, Jap!" said the man sharply.

Oto nodded, but remained modestly silent.

"What, did you ever fire a heavy piece of ordnance?" asked Liddon, standing near to watch the practice.

Oto nodded again. "I could hit that target," he added simply, touching his cap and turning away.

"Stop," said the officer. He stepped toward the bridge, and, saluting, said: "The Japanese yonder says he is used to firing and could hit the target, sir. Shall I let him try?"

Rexdale, who was closely noting the practice, hesitated, it being the strict rule that no one outside the gun-crew should fire. He spoke in a low tone to Staples, who laughed and said: "All right, sir. It's only one shot wasted, in any case."

"Let the boy sight the piece, and fire," ordered the commander.

Oto touched his cap and adjusted the sighting apparatus to his shoulder. His small hands fluttered a moment around the delicate machinery; then he

swung the great muzzle slightly upward and to the right. The ship rose on a long swell, and just as it hung on the crest came the roar of the great gun.

An instant's pause was followed by a cheer from the men; for as the smoke drifted away, behold, there was no target to be seen!

"He must have struck the base of the mast, true as a hair!" exclaimed Rexdale, scanning the wreck of the target through his glass. "Well done, Oto!"

The men crowded around the little fellow, clapping him on the back.

"Just his luck!" growled Sam, who was one of the gun-crew.

"Oh, let up, Sam! The boy has made a first-class shot," said a grizzled old gunner. "Wait till you have such luck yourself!"

"You will send a boat out to pick up what is left of the target," ordered Rexdale, returning his glasses to their case. "We 've no more time for practice to-day. Get all your boats in and proceed, if you please, Mr. Staples."

That night he sent for the executive and had a long talk with him. There was something queer about those two Japanese boys, Rexdale said. Did Staples or any of the officers know anything about them? Inquiries were made, and the waiters themselves were closely questioned, but no information of importance could be gained. It was learned,

indeed, that one of the ordinary seamen, Dick Scupp by name, was more "chummy" with Oto and Oshima than any one else on board. He was a simple, long-legged, awkward young fellow from northern Maine, who had enlisted at the outbreak of the Spanish War, and had served before Santiago, in the blockading squadron. He had taken a fancy to Oshima, particularly, and it was he who had rebuked Sam's rough treatment of his Japanese friend, just before the wrestling-match. He knew nothing, however, of the previous lives of the two little foreigners.

Rexdale would hardly have been surprised at Oto's skill in gunnery had he known that this meek and gentle Japanese lad had passed through the whole course at the Naval Academy at Annapolis, graduating—under his full name, Makoto Owari—in the first third of his class, just seven years before Dave received his own commission!

CHAPTER III.

SEALED ORDERS.

THE rest of the cruise of the *Osprey* was without special incident. Various drills were performed until every movement was executed to the officers' satisfaction. One of the most interesting was the "fire drill." A succession of loud, hurried strokes on the ship's bell brought the men hurrying up from below. Some ran to the hose, uncoiled it and coupled it to the pipes, others closed ports and ventilators, boat crews repaired to their stations, and in an almost incredibly short time water was gushing from the nozzle of the hose into the sea. Then there was "Boats and away!" the life-raft drill, signalling, and other manœuvres. Attention was paid to the slightest details, which were executed with the wonderful precision that characterises every naval movement. If the emergency should really arise, in the midst of a storm or under the enemy's fire, every man would know his station and the exact duties he was to perform. "Collision drill" and "setting up" finished the work in that line for the day.

During the afternoon land was near on both sides of the vessel, as she pursued her course to the north-west between Martha's Vineyard and the mainland. Nobska Head and, three hours later, Gay Head, were sighted and passed. Then the *Osprey* stood directly for Cape Charles. Just at sunset a heavy fog shut down.

"Three-quarters speed!" ordered Ensign Liddon, who was on the bridge.

"Three-quarters speed, sir," responded the quartermaster, throwing the indicators, which connected with the engine-room, around to that point. At about twelve knots an hour, or fifty-five revolutions of the screw to a minute, the ship crept steadily southward, with her whistle going twice a minute. At ten o'clock full speed was resumed, for the stars were out again.

The next day was fair, and the sun shone brightly on the broad ocean, on the white ship, and on the great steel gun which bore the inscription "Bethlehem"—the place where it was cast. "After all, it 's a good peacemaker," said Lieutenant Staples, as he made his inspection tour, accompanied by Dr. Cutler. "There 's thirty-six hundred pounds of peace," he added, patting the breech of the gun. On the deck, near by, a kitten was tumbling about in the sunshine. The men were engaged in mending, writing letters, and smoking idly.

At about noon the lightship off Cape May was left behind, and the *Osprey* started up Chesapeake Bay. When she had proceeded to a point sixteen miles below the mouth of the Potomac, she brought up for the night, a light fog rendering navigation difficult in those crowded waters. Early the next morning the gunboat weighed anchor and got under way. Just as she was turning into the Potomac she sighted the battleship *Indiana* outward bound with midshipmen on board in large numbers.

Staples immediately gave an order, and a string of gay flags fluttered at the yard-arm above the *Osprey's* decks. The signal was answered by the battleship, and the executive reported to Rexdale, "Permission to proceed, sir." When two ships of the navy meet, this permission must always be obtained from the one commanding officer who ranks the other.

Up the broad, placid river the *Osprey* moved, seeming to gain in size as the stream diminished; past wooded banks where cabins nestled in the greenery, or statelier homes lifted their white pillars; past the little cove where Booth, the assassin of President Lincoln, landed after crossing the Potomac in his mad flight; on toward Washington. At the Proving Ground a boat was sent ashore with a telephone message to Alexandria, ordering a tug-boat to meet the war-ship for two or three miles' tow to her dock.

When the *Osprey* was opposite Mount Vernon, a mournful strain from the bugle floated over the water from the ship's forward deck. The ensign was half-masted, every man on board faced the shore and stood at salute, while the bell tolled slowly until the sacred spot, the home of the great American, was passed.

Not long afterward the tug appeared, made fast to the gunboat, and towed her to the navy-yard wharf, where she was to await orders for further movements.

During the week that followed, two events took place which were destined to exert an important influence upon the subsequent history of the *Osprey*.

The first was the appearance of a new member of the mess, Midshipman Robert Starr. He was a cheery, good-natured young fellow, finishing his Academy course; full of fun, and a great joker. While the original ward-room mess were at first disposed to regret, if not to resent, this addition to their family, they soon liked him thoroughly, and, indeed, he became popular from one end of the ship to the other.

The other event of importance was a dinner given by Lieut. Commander Rexdale on board his ship. Among those who received invitations were the Commandant of the Yard, with his wife and daughter; one or two officers from a torpedo-destroyer then docked and out of commission; Fred Larkin,

who happened to be in Washington; and two young girls, nieces of a Government official of high standing, Ethelwyn and Edith Black, aged respectively sixteen and nineteen. These fair young Anglo-Saxons were the guests of the commandant, and on finding that they were included in the invitation expressed their delight by seizing upon his daughter Mary and executing a sort of triple waltz around the room for fully five minutes.

"You see, dear," panted the younger Miss Black, adjusting an amber pin which had fallen from her sunny hair to the floor, "we 've never been on a war-ship and have n't the least idea what it 's like. Is n't that Captain Rexdale a dear!"

"There, there, Wynnie, do sit down and keep still for two minutes," laughed her quieter hostess. "You 've just about shaken me to bits. Yes, Lieut. Commander Rexdale is nice, and so are the rest of the officers of the *Osprey*. You 'll like Mr. Liddon, I know."

"And will your mother go?"

"Of course she will. How could we accept, if she were not to take care of us?"

"I don't need anybody to take care of *me*," remarked Wynnie demurely. "You 'll see how nicely I 'll behave—like the kittens in the poem—

“ ‘Spoons in right paw, cups in left,
It was a pretty sight!’ ”

“You witch!” said Mary, giving her a squeeze. “I’ve seen you ‘behave nicely’ before now! Mother will have her hands full, for once.”

“Who are the other officers?” asked Edith, from the sofa.

“Oh, there’s Ensign Dobson—he is n’t very lively, but he’s nice; Dr. Cutler, who *will* talk with papa all the time about quarantine regulations and the Red Cross; and Mr. Ross, the paymaster, I suppose. Oh, and I believe there’s a little midshipman from the Naval Academy—I don’t know his name, for he has just been assigned to the ship.”

Wynnie’s eyes danced. “He’ll be dreadfully bashful, I know. I shall consider it my duty to entertain him, poor little thing!”

The dinner proved a great success. Larkin, of course, kept his end of the table in a shout, while young Starr was by no means too bashful to appreciate Ethelwyn’s fun. “Doc.” Liddon talked politics with the civilian reporter, navy-yard gossip with Mrs. Commandant, international complications with her husband, and nonsense, flavoured with dry wit, with Edith. Dobson told the story of his rescue from the hazing party at the Academy, and brought down the house as he described his position when Norman Holmes and Dave Rexdale came on the scene—standing on his head, with his tormentors pouring cold water down his trousers-leg.

Then Dave himself was called on for the tale of his boat-wreck on the lonely Desertas, near Madeira, when he and "Sandy" barely escaped with their lives.

The cabin of the *Osprey* was prettily decorated with ferns and flowers, and there was little to suggest warfare, the roar of cannon, the cries of the fierce combatants, in its dainty appointments. It fell about, however, that, as was natural, the conversation at length turned to the navies of the great nations, and, in comparison, that of the United States.

"Where do we stand, among the other Powers—in point of naval strength, I mean?" asked some one.

The commandant had excused himself on the plea of important duty, and had returned to his office on the Yard. Oddly enough, it was the civilian that answered the question, before any one else could recall the figures

"We are fifth in rank," said Larkin, helping himself to a banana. "If we carry out our present rather indefinite plans we shall be, by 1908, the third in strength, possibly the second, with only England ahead of us."

"Do you happen to remember the approximate number of large ships in the English navy?" asked Dobson.

"I 'm sorry to say I do not," replied the reporter.

"I do," put in Ensign Liddon, who had had time to collect his thoughts and statistics. "England has two hundred and one, not counting gunboats, torpedo-boats, and other small craft——"

"Small! Do you call this ship small?" cried Ethelwyn indignantly.

"She 'd look like a kitten beside her mother if a first-class battleship ranged alongside," laughed Liddon. "Well, I was about to add that France has ninety-six big ships, Russia fifty-nine, and Germany seventy-three. The United States has only sixty-five."

"How many has Japan?" inquired Rexdale significantly. Just behind his shoulder a pair of dark, obliquely-set eyes flashed at the question.

"Forty-four, I believe. She would have a poor show at sea against Russia's fifty-nine."

"Oshima, there, does n't seem to agree with you," said Dr. Cutler lightly, nodding in the direction of the steward.

All eyes were turned to the little Japanese, who drew back modestly.

"Well, boy, speak your mind for once," said Rexdale. "What do you think about the chances of Nippon against the Russian Bear?"

"I was t'inking," said Oshima, whose English was not quite as perfect as his comrade's, "of man behind gun."

The phrase was already a favourite in the navy, and a round of hearty applause followed the diminutive waiter as he retired in some confusion.

"Let 's go on deck," suggested Starr. "It 's getting pretty hot down here."

The commander set the example by rising, and the whole party adjourned to the quarter-deck, where chairs had been placed for them. The gentlemen lit their cigars, "not (Starr gravely remarked) because they wanted to, but purely to keep the mosquitoes away from the ladies."

Overhead the June stars were shining, lights flashed across the river, and distant shouts came softly over the water. The young people sprang to their feet and declared they must walk a bit. What they talked about as they paced to and fro—Bob Starr with Wynnies, Liddon with Edith, and Dobson with Mary—is of no consequence. It is probable that the two sisters explained to their respective escorts that in the early fall they expected to travel to India, China, and Japan, going via San Francisco, and returning through Europe. Whereupon it is more than likely that the young gentlemen in white duck expressed themselves as plunged in despair at the prospect of having to remain on the North Atlantic Station, with even a vague and disgusting possibility of "shore duty" for one or both!

Meanwhile the older members of the party

renewed the conversation which had been broken off when the girls rose from table.

“If we are to keep up with foreign Powers,” said Dr. Cutler, striking his hand upon his knee, “much more if we are to pass any of them in naval rank, we must hurry up our ship-builders. Germany expects her battleship in commission in three years and a half from the day when the keel is down. We have one under construction now that was begun over five years ago.”

“What does a modern battleship cost?” asked the older lady, who was one of the quarter-deck group.

“About eight million dollars,” replied REXDALE. “And a right lively war costs the country a million dollars a day, in round numbers.”

“And all of it absolutely consumed, burnt up, eaten, thrown away,” added the doctor. “It is not like expenses for construction; it is all for destruction.”

“My idea of a good-sized navy’s mission is to keep the peace, so that there ’ll be no war,” put in STAPLES, who had been rather silent thus far.

“Staples was the only man in our Plebe class who actually fought a battle with a second-year man,” laughed DAVE. “I like to hear him preach peace!”

“Perhaps you remember,” said the other grimly, “that no more fights were necessary. One good upper-cut on that fellow’s jaw won peace for the

whole crowd. If Dewey had n't sunk the Spanish fleet at Manila we might have been fighting the Dons to this day."

"Will the Japs fight Russia, do you think?" asked Larkin. "If they do, that may mean a job for 'yours truly.'"

"Certainly it looks like trouble over there," said Rexdale soberly. "The Russians are steadily advancing to the Pacific—already they have one hand on Vladivostock and the other on Port Arthur. Japan, crowded in its little group of islands just out of sight of Korea, feels the danger and the menace. Both nations have been preparing for a big war for years, I am told."

"But Russia enormously outnumbers the Japanese," said Dr. Cutler. "She has an army, they say, of four and a half million men, against Japan's six hundred thousand——"

"Aye, but where are those four millions?" put in Rexdale warmly. "Separated from the fighting line, which we can call Korea and the coast of Manchuria, by six thousand miles, with only a single-track railroad between Moscow and Port Arthur. The Japs could handle them one at a time like the Spartans at—at—where was it?"

"Thermopylæ, sir," remarked Doc. Liddon, who had paused a moment in his walk, attracted by the commander's earnestness.

“Thanks—Greek history never was my strong point at school!” said Dave with a good-humoured laugh. Then, resuming: “As to the Russian navy, matters would be just as bad. Half her ships at least must be in the Baltic to protect her home ports——”

Before he could proceed further, an interruption occurred. An orderly mounted the steps to the quarter-deck and with the usual stiff salute handed Rexdale a letter, marked “Important and Immediate.”

The commander broke open the envelope. He had no sooner read the few lines it contained than he sprang to his feet.

“Madam,” he said abruptly but courteously, “and gentlemen, I am sorry to bring our pleasant party to an end, but my orders leave me no choice. Mr. Staples, I must see you and the rest of the officers at once in my cabin. Orderly, attend the ladies through the Yard. Good-night, all!”

Hurriedly the girls ran below for their wraps, wondering what the mysterious orders could be that compelled them to retire so early and brought that new ring to the commander’s tones. They bade good-night to the young officers, who would fain have escorted them to their home, but Rexdale was obliged to refuse his permission.

“Good-night! good-night! We shall see you

again soon!" called the girlish voices from the wharf, while their late companions swung their hats gallantly on the deck of the *Osprey*.

"Gentlemen," said Rexdale in grave, earnest tones, when they were all gathered once more in the cabin, "I have important news for you. We are ordered to coal and take on stores and ammunition for sea without delay, sailing one week from to-day, if possible. You will see that this is done promptly, and that every man reports for duty to-morrow, all shore leave being withdrawn."

Not a man there but longed to ask, "What is our port of destination?" but discipline prevailed. Their lips remained closed. They were no longer a party of young fellows chatting and laughing gaily as they performed their pleasant social duties and joked with their merry guests; they were officers in the United States Navy, ready for the duty at hand; willing to go to the ends of the earth, to encounter danger in its most appalling forms, to give their lives, if need be, for their country. Silence settled for a moment over the group.

"If I could I would tell you, without reserve, where we are bound; but I do not know myself," added Rexdale. "There are new complications in the far East—that is all I know. We sail under sealed orders, to be opened at sea, twenty-four hours out."

He rose from his chair, to signify that the interview was ended. As the officers filed out to their respective quarters, the pantry door, which, though no one noticed it, had been slightly ajar, closed noiselessly. Behind it were two Japanese, grasping each other's hands and looking into each other's eyes. Their breath came quickly; their eyes glowed.

"*Banzai!*" they whispered. "*Teikoku banzai!*
Long live the Empire!"

CHAPTER IV.

UNCLE SAM'S PACKING.

WHEN the family of a citizen in private life makes up its mind to a long journey to foreign shores, great is the confusion, and multitudinous the errands and minor purchases for the trip; trunks, half-packed, block the sitting-room and hall-ways; Polly flies up-stairs and down distractedly, Molly spends hours uncounted (but not uncharged-for) at the dressmaker's, Dick burns midnight oil over guide-books and itineraries, and even paterfamilias feels the restlessness and turmoil of the times, and declaims against extravagance as the final packing discloses the calls that are to be made upon his bank account.

If a vacation trip for a single family is productive of such a month of busy preparation, what must be the commotion on a war-ship starting for the Far East, with a crew of one or two hundred men and only a week allowed for packing!

The officers and enlisted men of the *Osprey* had

their hands full in the days that followed the banquet.

In ordinary times it takes one hundred skilled men a full week to stow away provisions, supplies, ammunition, coal, and the thousand and one minor articles that are needed on board one of the larger war-ships. The ship's crew lend a hand, but they operate only under the direction of the staff of trained stevedores which is kept on duty at the Navy Yard.

Everything must be put away "snug and ship-shape"; and goods are "stowed snug" where they occupy the least possible space, for every inch counts in the narrow limits of a ship. Then, too, they must be so stevedored that they will keep their original positions during the rolling and pitching of the vessel in a seaway.

More than this is required. There must be perfect order with the greatest degree of safety attainable. Inflammable or explosive substances must not be stowed together, and the arrangement must be such that any article needed can be reached on the instant. Emergencies often arise in which the safety of the ship itself is dependent on having needed appliances or material in the hands of certain officers without a moment's delay. It may be nothing more than a case of oil, or it may be the duplicate of some broken rod, bolt, or plate of the

delicate mechanism of the great propelling engine or of the dynamo, which is the very life centre of the modern war-ship.

Paterfamilias, grumbling at the shopping memorandum of his wife and daughters on the eve of their Mediterranean vacation trip, would gasp at the list which Uncle Sam must fill, for a long cruise of one of his naval vessels. Here is a single order sent to one wholesale house on the *Osprey's* account, that week in June: Loaf sugar, brown sugar, powdered sugar, fair molasses, Ceylon tea, Hyson tea, Java coffee, Rio coffee, smoked ham, American rice, breakfast bacon, lambs' tongues, pigs' feet, corned beef, corned pork, leaf lard, dried peas, dried beans, coffee extract, chicory, chocolate, Swiss cheese, English cheese, New York dairy cheese, canned tomatoes, canned peaches, canned onions, canned asparagus, canned peas, canned corn, canned beets, olives and olive oil, sauces and catsups, oatmeal and flour, limes and lemons, fruit jellies, condensed meats, beef extracts, Jamaica ginger, mustard and spices, cigars and tobacco, corn-meal and hominy, sago and tapioca, crackers and biscuits, lime juice, fresh and limed eggs, baking powder, canned cherries, canned plums, canned pears, canned rhubarb, dried apples, canned salmon, canned oysters, canned clams, sardines, canned lobster, canned mackerel, canned codfish, kippered herring,

Yarmouth bloomers, canned ox tongues, canned tripe, canned mutton, canned chicken, canned turkey, canned soups, condensed milk, canned pickles, vinegar, salt, pepper, canned mushrooms, macaroni, vermicelli, laundry soap, toilet soap, sapolio, starch and blue, insect powder, candles, safety matches, stationery, rope and twine, smoking pipes, tubs and washboards, chloride of lime, ammonia, alcohol and paints, shoe blacking, sewing machines.

From this partial list an idea may be formed of the extent and variety of the supplies that go to a modern war-ship. The clothing, medical and mechanical departments of the *Osprey's* outfit are not included, and each in itself would make a long roll. Of course the delicacies mentioned above are for the officers' use alone. When in port or on a short cruise the sailors get fresh meat, bread, fruit, vegetables and milk. On a long voyage their staple is "salt horse, hard tack, and boot-leg," which, being translated, is corned beef or pork, with crackers and black coffee. They receive frequently, too, oatmeal and rice, hot rolls and tea.

It will be noted that the important items of ice and fresh water do not appear in the list of supplies. Neither is taken aboard from the outside. The ship condenses fresh water pumped in from the sea by ingenious machinery contrived for the purpose, and the supply is limitless. From this fresh water ice is

manufactured in any quantity desired, and no properly appointed modern war-ship is now without its ice-plant. It is for the manufacture of ice that ammonia is so largely shipped.

In the general disposition of the stores and supplies the articles likely to be needed for immediate use are usually stored forward under the berth deck. Such stores as cloth and made-up wearing apparel go in the lower hold, and there are also nearly all the magazines, guncotton, and torpedo-heads, if the ship carries them.

The coal bunkers on the *Osprey* were located between the engines and boilers and the hull of the vessel, at a point a little abaft of midship. Thus the coal afforded protection to the machinery from projectiles aimed at the most vital part of the ship. Such inflammable liquids as oil and alcohol are never stowed below.

Allusion has been made to the "life centre" of the vessel. This has been well described as the throbbing heart of every war-ship in the navy; the wires radiating from it like veins and arteries through which flow the life and intelligence which direct the movements of ship and crew.

Innumerable electric lamps light the cabins, engine-rooms, magazines, conning towers and decks, while a finger's pressure on a knob, or the turn of a tiny handle, throws a flood of radiance streaming out

into the black night, disclosing the enemy and rendering futile his attack or escape as the case may be. Other wires operate telegraph, telephone, and signal from the bridge, or move compartment doors, massive guns, and, on a battle-ship the huge turrets themselves.

With a ship elaborately wired one chance shot of the enemy may thus prove fatal. If a shell should happen to force its terrible way into the dynamo room and explode there, the guns would cease firing, every light would be extinguished, every officer cut off from rapid communication with his men; and the delay consequent on this derangement would give the enemy, quivering with light and life, time to pour her tons of steel projectiles into the helpless, groping victim until she foundered.

At the end of the sixth day, the *Osprey* was ready for sea. Her men, her stores, supplies, coal and ammunition were on board, well stowed. Rexdale drew a long breath of relief, and Paymaster Ross another, as the last account was filed that night. The commander wrote a long letter to his wife, Hallie, before retiring. She was visiting friends in the West, and he had no opportunity to see her before starting on what was doubtless to be a cruise to the other side of the world. This is a part of a naval officer's life. "Detached," from this place to that, from one ship, or one duty, to another, says

the brief naval report. The officer receives his written orders, and if his heart aches a little, under his blue uniform, no one knows it but the one who receives the good-bye letter, hurriedly sent by the despatch-boat or the orderly; and he is ready for the new post.

Paymaster Ross, meanwhile, is busy with half a hundred lists and receipts and accounts. He it is who knows accurately the pay of every man on board. Look over his shoulder and read in his "Register" of current date the salaries that our National Uncle pays to his nephews for naval services:

RANK.	ON SEA DUTY.	ON SHORE.
Admiral (George Dewey).....	\$13,500	\$13,500
Rear Admirals:		
First Nine.....	7,500	6,375
Second Nine.....	5,500	4,675
Chiefs of Bureaus.....	5,500
Captains.....	3,500	2,975
Commanders.....	3,000	2,550
Lieutenant-Commanders.....	2,500	2,125
Lieutenants.....	1,800	1,530
Lieutenants, Junior Grade.....	1,500	1,500
Ensigns.....	1,400	1,190

It is to be remembered that, in addition to the amounts given in this table, all the officers mentioned (below the grade of rear-admiral) are entitled by the present laws to "ten per cent. upon the full yearly pay of their grades for each and every period

of five years' service, as increase for length of service, or 'longevity pay.' " Still, thirty-five hundred dollars, even with that additional "longevity pay," does not seem a very large salary for the commander of a battle-ship at sea and perhaps under fire from day to day!

Warrant officers, namely boatswains, gunners, carpenters, sailmakers, pharmacists and warrant machinists are paid (for sea duty) from \$1200 a year for the first three years after date of appointment, to \$1800 after twelve years' service.

Chief petty officers, including Chief Master-at-arms, Chief Boatswain's Mate, Chief Gunner's Mate, Chief Yeoman, Hospital Steward, Bandmaster, and a few others, draw pay ranging from \$50 to \$70 a month. The pay of first-class petty officers, of whom there are about twenty varieties, is from \$36 to \$65 a month; that of second-class petty officers a trifle less; and that of third-class petty officers \$30 a month.

First-class seamen receive \$24, seamen gunners \$26, and firemen \$35. Second-class or "ordinary" seamen draw \$19 a month, and third-class seamen, including apprentices and landsmen, have to be content with \$16.

Oto and Oshima, as regular cabin stewards, were paid \$50 a month; and the wages for this sort of service on a war-ship run from that sum down to

the pay of the mess attendants, which is the same as that of apprentice seamen.

Just as Dave Rexdale finished his letter to Hallie the orderly entered and announced Fred Larkin, who had been unexpectedly detained in Washington.

"I 've been making inquiries, Dave," said the reporter, when the marine had retired, "and I can't see any reason for your sudden orders. A number of our ships are to rendezvous at Kiel next week, to take part in a naval review. It may be that you are bound to German waters. If so, give my respects to the Kaiser!"

Rexdale shook his head. "I don't believe Kiel is our port of destination, Fred," he said. "There 'd hardly be time for us to get over there before the end of the review, even if we made a regular '*Oregon*' voyage of it. I 'm afraid it 's a longer cruise than that. Who knows what is going on at St. Petersburg or in Tokio?"

"Right you are," acquiesced Larkin. "I should n't be surprised to receive orders myself, any day, to start for Japan or Korea. Of course I should go by way of San Francisco. If there 's to be any lively unpleasantness over there, the *Bulletin* wants a front seat, sure!"

"Well, I hope we shall meet there, old fellow," laughed the commander, "though the United States will of course have nothing to do with the scrap.

Still, it 's as well to have a few of Uncle Sam's war-ships on that station or near by—say at Cavite."

"If war breaks out between Russia and Japan," said Larkin, rising, after a little more conversation of this sort, "the big European Powers may be involved any day, with China as an uncertain force just behind the scenes. You know France is bound to take a hand if two nations attack Russia, and England has the same agreement with Japan. China will do lots of mischief, if she does n't play in her own back yard."

At daylight the *Osprey* cast off her moorings, and dropping down the quiet Potomac, started on her long voyage.

CHAPTER V.

OTO'S STRANGE VISIT.

IN N. Latitude 36° Longitude 72° W. from Greenwich, the commander of the *Osprey* opened his sealed instructions, and, having glanced over the lines, read them aloud to his subordinate officers, as follows:

“WASHINGTON, D. C.

“*Sir* :

“Having your coal-bunkers full, and being in all respects ready for sea, in accordance with previous directions, you will proceed with vessel under your command to the port of Hongkong, China, where you will report to the commander of the North Pacific Squadron. If his flagship should be at Manila, Shanghai, or any other port at the time of your arrival, you will follow him to that port without delay, and report as above. In view of the present critical state of affairs in the East, and the attitude of Russia and Japan, the *Osprey* should proceed with all possible dispatch. The crew is to be constantly drilled, the passage of the ship not to be delayed thereby. You will follow the usual route by way of Gibraltar and the Suez Canal, and will call at Malta (Valetta) for further instructions.

“Very respectfully,

“_____, *Secretary*.

“LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER DAVID REXDALE,

“Commanding U. S. S. *Osprey*.

“(Through Commandant, Navy Yard, Washington).”

A half-suppressed cheer broke from the circle of blue-coated officers around the cabin table, as Rexdale concluded his reading.

"There 's nothing said about ammunition," observed Stapleton, significantly.

"The Department knows that our magazines are well provided," said Rexdale. "I reported on all classes of ammunition just before we sailed from Boston."

"Shall we have a chance to use it?—that 's the question," put in the young midshipman. "Oh, I do hope there 'll be a scrimmage!"

"We 're at peace with every nation on the globe," remarked Paymaster Ross with emphasis. "How can there be a fight? We 've nothing to do with the quarrel between Japan and Russia."

"I hope the little fellows will win out, if there 's war coming," exclaimed Dr. Cutter heartily. "I 'm always in favour of the under dog."

"Who is the under dog? The Japs have the enormous advantage of a home base," said Stapleton. "I don't know enough of the situation to be sure which to sympathise with, big, sturdy Russia with all Asia between him and St. Petersburg, or snappy, shrewd little Nippon. Perhaps there won't be any war, after all."

"I don't see that we are in it, anyway," said Rexdale, rising. "Probably all our ship will have

to do will be to hang round on guard, and protect American interests——”

“And be ready for squalls!” finished the irrepressible Starr, as the group filed out of the cabin, while the commander repaired to his stateroom to plot the course for Gibraltar.

The fact that the *Osprey* was bound for Pacific waters soon spread through the ship. Most of the jackies were delighted, and were enthusiastic over the prospect of a “scrap” with somebody, they did not much care whom. A heated discussion arose, forward, as to the merits of the two nations which were supposed to be preparing for war. In the midst of the excited talk a black-and-white kitten made her way into the group and gave a careless little lap with her rough tongue at a hand which was braced against the deck. The hand, a rough and knotty one, taking no notice of her attentions, she drew her sharp little claws playfully across it.

This time the owner of the hand, who was no other than Sam Bolles, started so suddenly that he almost rolled over; then, vexed at the laughter which greeted him, he caught the kitten up savagely and swung his arm as if about to throw it overboard.

Now Sneezer, the kitten, was a special pet of Dick Scupp. Dick gave a roar at seeing the danger of the animal, and flung himself bodily upon Sam,

who went over backward in a heap, relinquishing the kitten (fortunately for her) as he did so.

“Well, I never seed sech kids fer quarrelin’,” said old Martin, the gunner, philosophically watching the two men as they rolled about the deck, scattering kits and boxes and bringing up against the shins of more than one of their comrades. “Come off, Sam, and let the youngster alone! Let go, will you (for Sam was pulling Dick’s stringy locks with vigour)? Here comes Jimmy Legs. Let him up, Dick!”

“Jimmy Legs,” whose real name was Hiram Deering, was chief master-at-arms. The duties of his office, on a war-ship, are perhaps more multifarious than that of any man on board. He is an enlisted man, rated a chief petty officer, and wears the eagle rating-badge. Forward of the mainmast his word is law at any hour of the day or night. Aft, his word is taken by the commander, the executive, and by all other officers.

The mettle in a chief master-at-arms, or “Jimmy Legs,” as he is universally known among the men, is always thoroughly known aft before he is rated. He need not be a bully, but he must be a natural “master of the situation,” and of men, in an emergency as well as in the routine of navy life. The Legs is privileged to take matters into his own hands, up forward, when occasion demands. If

necessity arises for him to knock a man down, it is the business of Legs to know how to do it with science and despatch.

The master-at-arms of an American war-ship is always a man who has seen many years of service in the navy, and passed through most of the inferior ratings of the enlisted men. He is a man whose blue-jacket experience has taught him every trick of the naval sailor, every phase of fore-castle life. Hiram could neither be cajoled nor outwitted. He was stern with evil-doers, but was the most popular man forward, in the *Osprey*.

At dawn Jimmy Legs's duties begin, when the men turn out to clean ship. The chief boatswain's mate is nominally the "boss" of the job, but it is Legs who sees that the men do not growl or quarrel at their work, as sleepy men will at such an hour and task.

Mess gear for breakfast is piped. The men rush to the tables. A bluejacket with shoes on steps on the foot of the bluejacket who is shoeless. Biff-bang! The Legs may be 'way aft on the poop watching the after-guard sweepers at their work; but he is a man of instinct. In a dozen bounds he is at the scene of the scrap.

"Chuck it! The Legs!" is the word there. The scrappers break away, and when the Legs shows up they are seated side by side at their mess table, quietly taking morning coffee.

It is the business of Jimmy Legs to make a tour of inspection through the ship just before "morning quarters." The ship is then supposed to be in shape for the commanding officer's approval, and the men's wearing-gear all stowed away in ditty bags. It never is. There is always to be found a shirt hastily thrown here, a shoe lying loose there, a neckerchief and lanyard hanging over a ditty-box. This gear the Legs gathers in impartially, no matter to whom it belongs, and thrusts into the "Lucky Bag" (which is generally known by a far more opprobrious epithet), which he keeps for that purpose.

The only way the owner of the gear may get it back is by reporting himself at the mast, that is, to the commanding officer, for remissness in stowing gear, which means, generally, a lopping off of liberty privileges. Every month the contents of the bag of gear thus accumulated are sold aboard at auction to the highest bidder among the jackies.

Finally, there is hardly a day in port that the Legs is not sent ashore along toward noon to hunt up derelicts. These are liberty-breakers carousing in town regardless of the fact that their services aboard are needed, and that punishment awaits them when they return for overstaying their leaves. Jimmy Legs is called for by the commander and gets a list of the men to be returned.

Into the steam-cutter hops Legs, and away he

goes after the derelicts. He generally returns with them. He may be gone for some hours, or for a day, but when he comes off to the ship, in shore boat or cutter, he has the men he went after along with him.

So much for Jimmy Legs, whose never-ending and varied duties Hiram Deering, a grizzled old man-o'-warsman, performed most admirably on the *Osprey*.

The two men were pulled apart and the others had hardly gathered up their scattered ditty-bags and personal belongings when a commotion was observed among the officers on the bridge. They were gazing through their glasses at a puff of smoke on the north-western horizon. In the course of fifteen minutes it had grown to a small-sized cloud.

"She must have legs, to overhaul us in this way," observed Ensign Dobson, with his binocular at his eyes. "How much were we making at the last log, quartermaster?"

"Fifteen strong, sir."

"Then that fellow 's doing a good twenty," added the officer. "Can you make him out, Mr. Liddon?"

"It looks to me like a 'destroyer,'" replied the other, readjusting the lenses of his glass. "It 's a rather small, black craft, walking up on us hand over fist."

"Bo'sun!" called Dobson to a man who stood near on the lower deck.

“Yes, sir!”

“Set the ensign.”

“Aye, aye, sir!”

“There goes his flag!” said Dobson, excitedly.

“I can’t make out what it is, but we ’ll soon know. Shall I slow down a bit, sir?” he asked the lieutenant-commander, who had joined the other officers on the bridge.

“Not yet,” said Rexdale. “We can’t afford to tie up for every fellow that wants to speak us. Let him come up. He ’ll signal his business soon, if he ’s really after us.”

The stranger approached rapidly, and could now be seen with the naked eye, as was attested by the watch on deck lining the bulwarks. There was no apprehension, as the United States had no enemies afloat; still the appearance, so far out at sea, of an unknown vessel bearing down swiftly on the *Osprey*, was enough to attract the lively attention of fore-castle as well as cabin.

The kitten episode was quite forgotten, as the men thronged to the rail.

“Ah,” exclaimed a brawny Irishman, waving his bare arm in the direction of the stranger, “w’ot a pity it ain’t war-toimes now! Sure it ’s a lovely bit av a foight we ’d be lookin’ for, wid that smoker!”

“War nothin’!” retorted the old gunner. “I ’m willin’ to keep me arms and legs on fur a while

longer. What 's the use o' bein' shot to pieces, anyway!"

"Why don't he h'ist his ens'n?" growled another of the crew. "Manners is manners, I say."

"It is h'isted," said Scupp, "only ye can't see it, 'cos it blows straight out forrard on this west wind he 's comin' afore. The officers up there 'll soon be makin' it out, I reckon."

But the uniformed group on the bridge had no such easy task. They scrutinised the flag again and again, without success.

"I can't make the thing out," said Dobson, lowering the glasses, "can you, Mr. Liddon?"

"Can't say I can. It blew out once, and looked like nothing I ever saw before—a sort of twenty-legged spider in the centre. It 's like nothing I ever saw in these waters. If we were on the Asiatic coast——"

"Who has the sharpest eyes among the men, quartermaster?" enquired the commander.

"I rather think, sir, them Japs can see the farthest."

"Orderly," ordered Rexdale, beckoning to a marine on duty, "find one of the cabin stewards and send him to the bridge at once."

Hardly a minute elapsed before Oto glided gracefully up the ladder and saluted.

"Take these glasses and see if you can make out that fellow's ensign," said Rexdale.

Oto lifted the binocular to his slanting eyes and picking up the approaching steamer gave it a swift glance. A moment sufficed. Then he returned the glasses to the commander, his face alight.

"Japanese, sir," he said simply. "That the flag of Japanese navy."

"Dobson so far forgot his dignity as to slap his thigh.

"That 's so!" he exclaimed. "I remember it well enough now. What on earth can a Jap torpedo destroyer want in these waters?"

"We shall soon find out—where 's that boy? Gone already? Of course it excites him to see a part of his own navy so near. Stand by for signals, Mr. Dobson. Have your man ready, and get out your book." Dave's eyes were again scrutinising the approaching vessel as he gave the orders.

When the stranger was within about half a mile she rounded to a course parallel with that of the *Osprey*, showing her long, vicious hull, black and low in the water; and slowed down to keep from running away from the American ship. Presently a line of small flags fluttered up to her masthead.

Dobson examined them closely through the glass, then turned to his signal-book. "One—three—seven—five—here she is—the *Kiku*—that 's Jap for Chrysanthemum, is n't it? Run up the answering

pennant, signalman. Then haul it down and set our number."

The introduction having thus been politely performed, the *Kiku*, first answering the *Osprey's* number, hoisted another line of flags.

"H'm, they have our signals pat," muttered Dobson, turning the leaves of his book. "Here it is, Captain. 'Wish to communicate. Have message for—' for whom I wonder? Answer, signalman. There goes the second half of the signal: 'man on board your ship.' Well, that 's cool! What shall we reply, sir?"

"Answer: 'Send boat with message—hurry,'" said Dave, frowning. "I don't like to stop, but the message may be important. I suppose it 's for me, only the Japanese don't know enough to say so. Slow down, quartermaster."

"Slow, sir." And the indicator swung to that mark.

"Half speed."

"Half speed, sir."

"Now, full stop."

"Full stop, sir," and the engines of the *Osprey* were still.

The *Kiku* had taken similar measures, and changing her course, approached to within a hundred rods.

Down came her starboard quarter-boat, with

beautiful precision. The oars fell together as the boat left the ship's side, and started toward the *Osprey*.

A ladder was thrown over, but the Japanese stopped abruptly, backing water when two or three boats' lengths distant, and turning, rowed a slow stroke to keep abreast the gangway of the gunboat, which had not lost her way. The officer in charge rose to his feet and raised his cap courteously.

"You have Japanese on board, sir, name Oto?" he called out.

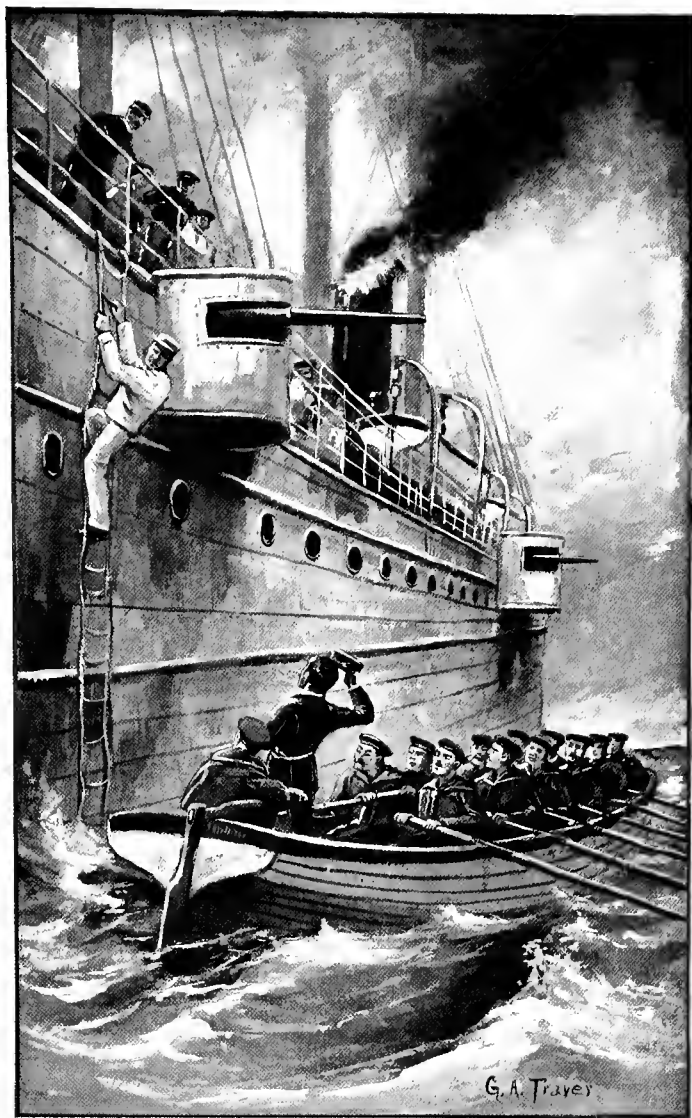
"Yes, sir. What of it?"

"My captain wish to see him."

Rexdale gave a little start of irritation. "Leave your message for the boy," he shouted. "He's my cabin steward. I can't hold my ship for him to visit you."

While this conversation was in progress, a slight, diminutive figure had glided into the crowd of men overhanging the rail on the deck below. On hearing Rexdale's answer he called out a few rapid words in his own language to the officer in the boat. The latter answered, and the boat lay up alongside. Before any one realized what Oto was about, he had climbed the rail like a monkey and dropped into the strange boat, which immediately headed for the *Kiku*.

"Here!" shouted Rexdale, angrily, "What are



"OTO CLIMBED THE RAIL LIKE A MONKEY."



you about? Bring back that boy! He belongs to my ship!"

The Japanese officer half turned in his seat, waved his hat most courteously, and spoke to his men; with the result that they pulled harder than ever.

"Start her!" cried out REXDALE, furious with rage.

"Start her, sir," repeated the phlegmatic quartermaster, throwing over the electric indicator.

"Full speed ahead!"

"Full speed ahead, sir."

"Now port your helm! Look sharp!"

"Port, sir."

But by the time the *Osprey* had fair steerage-way the stranger, veering in to shorten the distance, had picked up her boat and was pouring volumes of black smoke from her funnels as she too forged ahead. Her bows slowly swung to the northward.

The captain on her bridge waved his hat.

Dave set his teeth hard. "I 'd like to send a shot across her bows!" he muttered, glaring at the audacious destroyer which was plainly running away from them. The jackies looked up eagerly at him, with their hands on the breach of the four-inch rifle; not a few fists were shaken at the departing stranger. It was a temptation, but the commander overcame it.

"It won't do to open fire, just for a steward," he said to his subordinates, who were standing at his

side with scowling faces. "On her course, quarter-master!"

"On her course, sir. East by south, quarter south."

"It's a regular insult," stormed Liddon, for once shaken out of his regularly calm demeanour. "It's abduction on the high seas! It's piracy, that's what it is!"

"More like the press-gang," said Dobson, laconically.

"Well," said Rexdale, after a pause, "Japan will have to apologise for that little performance when we've reached a cable port."

"Is Oto an American citizen?" enquired Liddon.

"I'm afraid not. I never heard him speak of naturalisation."

"Then I suppose it's hardly an international episode," said the other, recovering his usual dignity of speech. "Perhaps the boy is an escaped criminal. At worst, I'm afraid the captain of the *Kiku* has only been guilty of bad manners."

"I shall report the incident to the Department at the first opportunity," said the commander decisively. "They can do what they like about it."

But Rexdale did not make the report. The next morning he was waited upon, to his utter bewilderment, by Oto himself, obsequious, deft, and silent as of old!

CHAPTER VI.

A SCRAP IN MALTA.

THE lieutenant-commander rubbed his eyes and stared at the little brown man in utter amazement.

"Oto!" he exclaimed at length. "You here?"

"Yes, sir," replied Oto, placing a steaming cup of hot coffee at the right hand of the officer.

"Come round here where I can see you. When did you come on board?"

"This morning, sir, at about three bells."

"Who brought you? Did you swim back?" demanded Rexdale, still mystified.

"No, sir. I came in the *Kiku's* boat," said Oto, showing his white teeth in a genial smile. "There was fog. The *Osprey* was going at less than half speed, and the lookouts did not see me. We came very quiet."

"Well, what have you got to say for yourself, any way?" asked Dave, irritated at the boy's self-possession. "Do you know I can put you in irons for deserting the ship?"

The little Jap spread his arms, in deprecation. "Very sorry," said he humbly. "It was all mistake. Captain Osara wanted to give me message. He did not wish me to leave ship. All mistake. So I come back. Captain Osara say he apologise. Here his letter," and he handed a sealed missive to the commander, who impatiently tore open the daintily folded sheet. It was covered with Japanese characters.

"Read it to me," said Dave, handing the letter to Oto, who translated as follows:

"SHIP 'KIKU,'
"ROYAL NAVY OF JAPAN.

"To the Honourable

"DAVID REXDALE,

"Commanding U. S. Ship *Osprey*.

"Am desirous to tender most humble apologies to your august presence for having taken to my ship the man Oto, whom I restore tremblingly to you. Augustly condescend to grant your forgiveness, and accept my joyful congratulation on your august health and the beauty and majesty of your ship.

"Respectful veneration,

"OSARA."

"Well," said Rexdale, smiling, in spite of his vexation, at the language of the apology, "what was the message?"

But neither threats nor persuasion could induce

Oto to divulge the nature of the communication which had been of sufficient importance to take a naval vessel out of her way and to lead her commander to play such a daring trick—for such it evidently was, in spite of his polite phrases—on a United States war-ship. Oshima in his turn was closely questioned, but professed entire ignorance of the matter.

“I ’ve not a particle of doubt,” said Rexdale, talking it over with Staples, “that it has some connexion with the strained relations between Russia and Japan. He ’s a dangerous fellow to have on board, this Oto, with his skill at gunnery, his high-bred manners, and his mysterious disappearances and appearances. When we reach Hongkong I shall dismiss both Japs. They might get us into a heap of trouble.”

Staples quite agreed with Dave, and, with a careful record of the episode in the ship’s log, the affair was closed.

Two weeks later the *Osprey* dropped her anchor off the quay in the inner harbour of Valetta, the principal seaport of Malta. Rexdale’s first care was to cable his arrival to the Department; next, to mail his report of the voyage; third, to send a long letter to Hallie, his wife, who would be waiting, even more anxiously than the Secretary of the Navy, to hear from him. At the telegraph

office he found a dispatch from Washington, ordering him to hold the *Osprey* at Valetta until further instructions from the Department. He knew that he would need time for coaling, and informed the other officers of the ship that they would probably spend at least a week at their present anchorage, which had been designated by the harbour-master.

The next two days were busy ones. All hands worked hard and became grimy from head to foot with coal dust. At length the jackies forward heard the welcome order: "Shift into clean blue, the liberty party!" Working in the intense heat of a Mediterranean July, the men had been stripped to their waists. Now they sluiced one another down with the hose, and gladly slipped on their spruce shore-going togs. With strict injunctions to be on board before dark, thirty of the crew were permitted to land.

Midshipman Starr went ashore with Ensigns Liddon and Dobson.

"There 's only one thing I want to see," announced Starr, and that 's a real, genuine Maltese cat, proudly standing on her native soil. I suppose the streets are full of 'em." He and Dobson had never before visited the city of Valetta, but "Doc." Liddon was well informed as to its history and attractions, having spent several weeks there before he joined the Naval Academy.

The moment the three young officers set foot on the quay, they were beset by vendors of all sorts of trinkets, especially those of silver filigree-work.

“What sort of money do they use here?” asked Dobson.

“English, of course,” replied Liddon. “The island is one of the choicest jewels in the British crown, and——”

“Lend me a dollar’s worth of shillings, will you?” interrupted the other, “and tell me about the jewels later, Doc. I want to buy that bracelet for ‘the girl I left behind me,’ if the price is n’t too high.”

The seller parted with the pretty ornament for one shilling, and the trio, waving aside the rest of the merchants, moved on.

“Where shall we go first?” asked Liddon.

“Just show me one good cat——” began Bob, earnestly, “and I ’ll——”

“Oh drop your cats, Bob! Take us to the best view, to begin with, Liddon.”

“Well, let ’s go up to Fort St. Elmo. That overlooks both harbour basins.”

“Whew! Hot ’s the word!” exclaimed Bob Starr, wiping his brow as they gained the ramparts of the old fortress. “Now, while we are cooling off, tell us about this aged ruin which the *Osprey* could make over into cracked stone for a macadamised road in about five minutes.”

“It is n’t a ruin yet, young man,” said the ensign, taking off his cap to enjoy the breeze, “and the *Osprey’s* rifled four-inch would have to toss a good many shot up here to produce road material, I can tell you. But three hundred-and-odd years ago—in 1565, to be exact—this old fort held off a big fleet and land force for four months. The Knights of St. John defended it in great style. Sultan Solyman, who had driven the Knights from Rhodes thirty-four years before, made up his mind that Malta was too good for them. He brought about a hundred and forty vessels and an army of thirty-odd thousand men, to give them a thorough-going house-warming.”

“Were there any cats—” began Starr; but the lecturer proceeded without noticing the interruption.

“These forces were reinforced, if I remember rightly”—(Cries of “Oh, you do! you *do!*” from the audience)—“were afterwards increased by a lot of corsairs from Algiers and pirates from Tripoli. When the fort seemed on the point of breaking up, after four months’ battering, the few Knights that were left entered that little chapel over there, received the rites of the Church—the *viaticum*—and went out to start on their last journey. They were cut to pieces by the Turks; but two outworks still resisted and fought off the besiegers until help arrived from Sicily. Out of eight or nine thousand

defenders, only six hundred were left to join in the *Te Deum* (you know the Knights were a religious order) as the Turks sailed off."

"O my, look at this!" Starr suddenly broke in. "Is n't she a dear!"

The officers looked up and saw an extremely pretty girl approaching, attended by a maid.

"What on earth is that thing on her head?" queried Dobson under his breath. "It looks like a stu'n'sail!"

"It's a *faldetta*," said Liddon. "Most of the ladies, the natives, I mean, wear them."

The young men rose from their seats on the bastion, and raised their hats as the girl passed. She flushed and bowed, then looked down demurely, and hurried on.

"What language do they speak?" demanded Bob, hastily. "If I only knew, I could ask her about Maltese ——"

"Don't get agitated, my son," said Liddon, calmly, "and don't address any young ladies without an introduction. As for their language, it's a mixture of Portuguese and Arabic——"

"That'll do," groaned Bob, with a heavy sigh. "There's no danger of my breaking out in her native tongue. What's next on the programme?"

"Well, we'll take a stroll through the principal street and visit the Church of St. John, which was

built by the Knights a few years after the siege."

The street itself was full of interest to the young Americans. Sauntering along—their own selves attracting no little favourable attention in their natty white uniforms—they met cabmen driving their little horses at full speed, English ladies elegantly dressed side by side with the natives in their huge black one-sided hoods, flocks of goats, to be milked at the doors of customers, smart British officers, swarthy-faced Hindoos, and beggars without end.

"This is the Church of St. John," said Liddon, as the naval party entered an imposing portal, flanked by two huge towers. "Here the Knights used to worship, when they were not otherwise engaged——"

"To wit, in fighting!" interpolated Starr. "Well, I must say those old fellows did well whatever they undertook. Look at those marbles and paintings!"

With hushed voices the three young men passed down the long aisle, to one of the chapels where they were shown various relics which, Liddon said, had been held in the deepest veneration by the builders of the church in those strange old days. There were some of the bones of St. Thomas of Canterbury, one of the stones cast at St. Stephen, the right foot of Lazarus, and a thorn from the sacred crown. However sceptical the Americans

might have been as to the genuineness of these relics, they showed in their faces and demeanour only their respect for the belief of those who treasured them. A party of tourists came up at the same time, and two or three pretty girls giggled effusively over the objects displayed.

"Come on!" muttered Dobson in disgust. "Let 's get out of this. There are times when I 'm ashamed of my race!" and turning on their heels the young men left the church.

The gay scenes in the sunny street restored their good humour, and they visited successively a catacomb chapel—where the vaults were ornamented with fantastically arranged bones of departed monks and knights—an old city gate, and some interesting rock-hewn depositories of grain.

"Not a cat yet, except a yellow one that don't count!" murmured Bob sadly, as they turned their steps toward the final great attraction of Valetta, the Governor's Palace, in St. George's Square.

"It was formerly," explained their omniscient guide, "the palace of the Grand Master of the Knights of St. John, and contains some of the principal treasures of the Order. Here is the Armory," he added, as they entered a large hall, containing rows of figures clad in antique armour, and a wealth of weapons and armour of ancient times. Here, too, was the sword, battle-axe, and

coat-of-mail of the leader of the corsairs who assisted the Turks in the famous siege of Fort St. Elmo; the trumpet which sounded the retreat of the Knights from Rhodes, in 1523; and a cannon made of a copper tube and wound with tarred rope, used by the Turks, Liddon said, during their siege of that island.

“Compare it with one of the twelve-inch turret rifles on our modern battle-ships!” exclaimed Dobson. “Why, I’d rather have a good navy revolver to fight with than this ropy thing!”

For two or three hours more (a rest being taken at a small restaurant) the officers wandered about the streets of Valetta. Liddon regaled his companions with details of its history, including its capture by Napoleon in 1798, the subsequent two-years siege when the Maltese had risen in revolt against their captors, and its formal cession to the English in 1814.

“It’s no use, boys, I’m used up,” said Dobson at length. “I’m off for the ship; you can come or stay, as you like.”

“Oh, we’ll go along, too,” said Starr. “I should have left an hour ago, but I wanted to see how long Liddon *could* keep it up, before the pumps sucked. He’d make his fortune as a filibusterer against an unpopular bill in the Senate!”

They passed along the Strada Reale—“Royal

Street"—for the last time, and were just turning down toward the harbour when a slight commotion on the sidewalk ahead attracted their attention. A knot of people had gathered around a group in which some sort of altercation was going on.

"Hold on a minute," cried the midshipman, "let 's see what 's up."

The three inseparables pushed their way into the crowd, the outer portion of which was composed of good-natured Maltese and a variety of street-loungers. Within this circle were a dozen sailors from a small Russian cruiser in port. They, in their turn, had corralled a couple of small brown men whom their tormentors were hustling rudely as if to provoke a resistance which would afford an excuse for rougher treatment.

The officers from the *Osprey* simultaneously recognised the victims of this assault, and with a howl of indignation from Bob, and a stern "Stand aside, men!" from Liddon, they pulled off the Russian blue-jackets and took their stand beside the Japanese, who were no other than Oto and Oshima.

"*Amerikanski!*" snarled the sailors as they noted the uniforms of the intruders and closed in again, while the throng of idlers increased.

"What 's the matter, my lads?" said Dobson to the stewards, who seemed in no wise discomposed,

but stood quietly awaiting a favourable moment for withdrawal.

“We do no harm,” said Oshima, when both had given the naval salute. “These men, these Russians”—(it is impossible to describe the tone of lofty contempt with which he pronounced the word, looking around at the burly tars, each a full head taller than himself)—“they stop us here in the street and call us bad names and dare us to fight—the big men—cowards!”

Perhaps it was fortunate for the little Jap that the Russian sailors could not understand a word of English; but the general tenor of his remarks was only too plain from his tones and gestures. The assailants closed in again with a volley of incomprehensible expletives and unmistakably threatening gestures. Liddon was violently shoved aside. This was more than he could stand.

“Take that, you bully!” he cried, planting a quick, nervous blow straight between the eyes of the fellow who had jostled him.

The man fell over against his comrades—the street was too crowded to allow him to drop outright—and the inner circle enlarged; but only for a moment. The sailors, half of whom were intoxicated, rushed forward with a roar of rage. Before they reached the officers, whose prospects of gaining their ship in safety seemed decidedly poor, Oto

spoke a swift word to his chum, and each darted upon a Russian. It was like a terrier charging a bloodhound; but with a lightning-like grasp and twist of the arm the diminutive assailants brought to the ground their bulky adversaries, screaming with pain. Then the Japanese ducked under the arms of the nearest bystanders and disappeared as if by magic.

Another momentary diversion had been effected by this quick and unexpected display of *jiu-jitsu*, but now the sailors were about to charge again. The unarmed young officers stood on guard, their fists advanced.

"You take that big chap with a black beard, Bob," said Liddon hastily, "and I 'll engage the brute next to him. Dob., you look out for the beauty with red hair. Steady, now, fellows, here they come!"

But before the two parties fairly clashed, a ringing shout rent the air.

"Hooroar, byes, it 's a scrap!" shouted a jovial voice well known to the Americans. Then the tone changed. "Ah—h— sure it 's the darlints of ensigns and the middy from the *Osprey*! Come on, byes, let 'em have it!"

The officers were glad enough of reinforcements to overlook the slight to their dignified rank on board ship. In a moment the affair was over.

Half a dozen Russians were rolling in the dust, while the rest fell back in disorder before the onslaught of the *Osprey's* jackies, led by Pat Ryan and Dick Scupp, who, it afterwards turned out, had been directed to the spot by Oto, and had rushed ahead with no clear idea of what was the matter until they caught sight of the white duck and gold braid of their own officers' uniforms.

"Down to the boats in a hurry, lads!" shouted Liddon, leading the way, as he heard cries of "Police! Police!" on the outskirts of the throng.

A rush for the quay, and the *Osprey* men scrambled into their boats, taking the two Japanese with them. The Russians gathered on the steps shaking their fists at the "Amerikanski," but no further harm was done, and in a few minutes the "liberty party," officers and all, were safe on board the gunboat.

"'T was a lively brush, sir," said Ensign Liddon, reporting the affair to Rexdale; "but I think nothing will come of it. We must keep away, and keep our men away, from Russians just now, when their feeling against Americans is running pretty high."

"Very true," said the lieutenant-commander, smiling. "I'm glad it was no worse. And Oto, Oshima, no more shore leave for you, while the *Neva* is in port!"

Liddon proved to be right in his conjecture. The police, arriving just too late to witness the affray, and seeing that trouble had arisen between sailors of different nationalities, hardly went through the form of pursuing the participants, and let the whole matter drop; such squabbles being common in every large seaport where war-ships lie in the stream and their crews have liberty ashore.

The *Neva* sailed for the Baltic two days later, and within a week Rexdale received orders from the Department to proceed eastward. Then came a succession of wonderfully beautiful days and nights on the blue Mediterranean, the *Osprey* tossing the foam from her stem in showers of sparkling silver, and startling the flying fish that flashed from wave to wave, until the low, tawny shores of Africa came in sight.

“To think that I’m actually gazing upon Egypt!” exclaimed Bob Starr, as he stood on the bridge one fair July morning. “Those are really the ‘sands of the desert,’ and that scraggy-looking feather-duster is a palm!”

Small vessels with great ruddy lateen sails hovered about the war-ship as she advanced. A shark’s black, sickle-like fin drifted carelessly astern while the fierce fish, all alert below the surface, watched for prey.

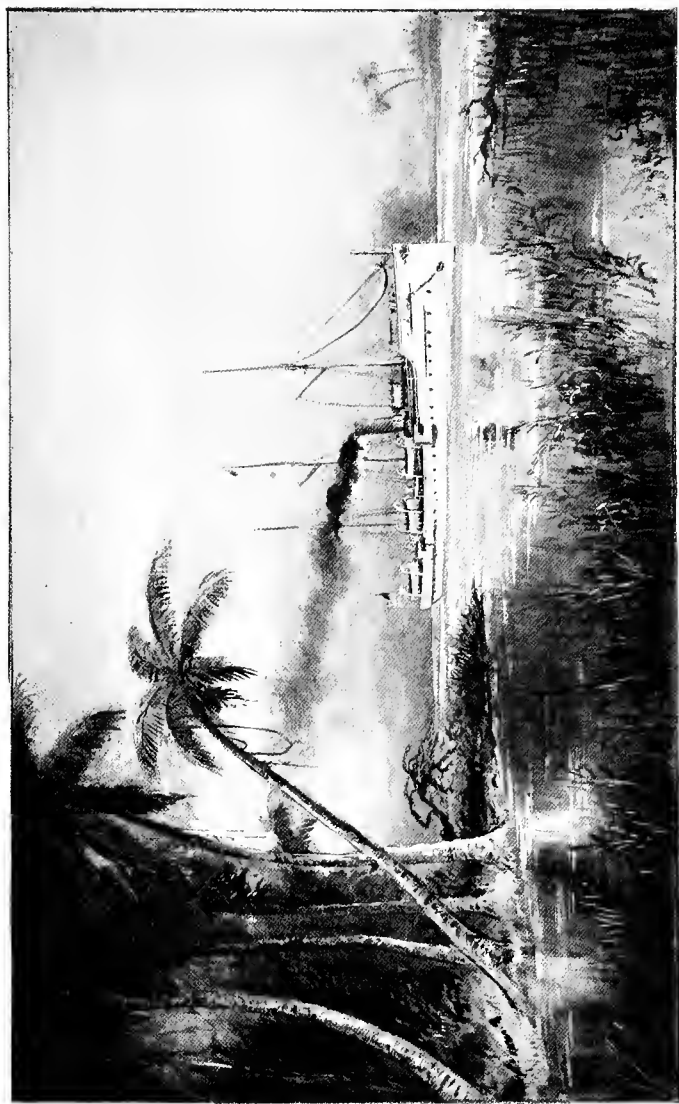
Now Damietta was reached, and Port Said. The

Osprey, awaiting her turn, meekly entered the Canal in the rear of a big Dutch merchant steamer. There was little for the officers or men to do, and they clustered at the rails, and on the quarter-deck, gazing out over the marshes and plains of Egypt—the crew blankly, for the most part; the more highly educated graduates of Annapolis with thoughts of the great, dim Past to which this storied land of the Pharaohs bore silent witness. Here Abraham wandered, from Ur of the Chaldees; across those sands marched the hordes of Rameses II., going up against the Syrians.

Now and then the ship halted in basins cut for the purpose, like railroad sidings, to allow north-bound vessels to pass. Nearly every ship was flying the Union Jack, for three-quarters of all the tonnage that passes through the Canal belongs to Great Britain. Next in order of frequency came the French, Dutch, and Germans.

“Sure, it ’s hungry I am for the Stars and Stripes,” said Pat, gazing gloomily at a broad German ensign at Ismalia, half-way across the Isthmus. “I ’m tired o’ jumpin’ lions and two-headed eagles and rid crosses!”

Onward again. Here a little village of mud-huts, with its clump of “feather-dusters,” as Bob persisted in calling the palms; there a caravan plodding along the marshes against the sky-line. Flocks of



IN STRANGE WATERS

water-fowl faring gracefully over the broad pools gave place to yellow sands, and the sands again to clear green water and sighing reeds.

At last the good ship *Osprey* emerged from the narrow, lonely, sluggish stream into the sparkling waters of the Indian Ocean.

CHAPTER VII.

O-HANA-SAN'S PARTY.

O-HANA-SAN was to give a party. She announced the fact with pride to her school-mates, who, with the frankness peculiar to childhood, eagerly demanded invitations. Had they been older, they would have called on the lady who was to entertain, and, after flattering her and making their personal regard for her as prominent as possible, would have brought the conversation round to the party, in order to show that they knew all about it and of course should expect an invitation. Being little girls, they just said, one and all, "Oh, do ask me to come, Hana!"

Miss Blossom (for that is the English equivalent for her name) considered.

"I can only invite twelve," she finally announced. "Twelve girls," she concluded, with a sigh; "no boys."

"Why not?" demanded one of the larger boys, pushing forward. "You must ask me, anyway, Hana!"

O-Hana-San shook her head. "It is not permitted," she said. "I cannot invite you, Oto Owari. Only girls—no boys."

It was after school-hours. The children had been summoned to their tasks by a drum-beat, and at noon they had marched out of the schoolhouse, in orderly fashion, the boys in one division, girls in another. Once beyond the school limits, the two divisions became mixed. O-Hana-San was only nine years old, and Oto, being fifteen (this was about a dozen years before the building of the *Retvisan* and the cruise of the *Osprey*) considered that he did her great honour in applying for an invitation to her party. He scowled, at her refusal, and turned away abruptly.

"Come, Oshima," said he, to a comrade a little younger than himself, "let's go down to the shore." When Oto was disturbed in his mind he always wanted to "go down to the shore."

The town where he lived was on the west coast of one of the northern provinces of Nippon, the principal island of the group comprising the Japanese Empire. Oto was the son of one of the leading men of the place. He was a bright, earnest boy, and often, after he had been listening to the talk of his elders, he would gaze across the sea toward that mysterious country Korea, which he had heard his father say was "a dagger, aimed at the heart of

Japan." He longed to fight for the Empire, which he adored with all the passionate worship of the true Japanese. He was an adept at seamanship, in a small way, before he was fourteen; perfectly at home in the water or on it; and possessed with an ardent ambition to join the navy which his country was then building up in wonderful new ways, taught by the pale-faced folk of the other hemisphere. His father could give him but little hope of attaining his wishes, for he could not let the lad serve as a common sailor, nor could he afford to give him the higher education necessary for an officer.

Oto's boon companion since childhood was Oshima, the son of a rich family who occupied a handsome villa on the outskirts of the town. Oshima's grandfather had been one of the famous *Samurai*, who carried two swords. When the edict had gone forth suppressing the order, or depriving it of its essential characteristics, he had joined a band of *Samurai* who refused to obey the imperial command, and in a fight which followed he had lost his life. Oshima's father was a peaceful man who cared little for war, but the boy himself had inherited his grandfather's love of battle, and made up his mind to enter the army. The two boys talked with each other of their plans and hopes, often and earnestly.

By the time the lads had reached the rocky shore

just north of the village, they had forgotten all about little Blossom and her party. O-Hana-San was a great favourite with Oto, it is true, but when once the topic of the navy was raised, all other thoughts fled to the winds.

“Let us swim,” said Oshima at length, when several prospective battles had been fought out, on sea and land. “I ’m as warm as if I had been marching from Fusan to Seoul—where I shall march some day.”

“Go you and swim if you want to,” replied Oto. “I have a plan here to work out, for manœuvring a battle-ship in the face of the enemy, with the tide setting out from land, and——”

“Oh, bother your tides!” laughed Oshima. “Here goes for a dip into them. I ’ll come out in ten minutes.”

He was soon in the water at a good distance from shore, gamboling like a porpoise, swimming on his back, treading, and performing all sorts of antics.

Oto had drawn a piece of paper from his pocket and was absorbed in tracing a diagram of a sea-fight. After a while he glanced up carelessly; then he sprang to his feet with a wild cry.

“Come in! come in, Oshima! Quick! There ’s a shark after you!”

At first Oshima did not understand; but he saw the other’s gesture, and looked over his shoulder.

There, not a hundred yards away, was the dreaded black fin, glistening in the afternoon sun, drifting rapidly toward him like the sail of a child's toy-boat.

The swimmer struck out for the shore with all his might. He was in a little bay, and Oto, springing down headlong over the rocks, perceived that his friend was a little nearer the southern point of land than the central beach from which he had started.

"Make for the point—the point!" he shrieked, gesticulating wildly.

Oshima veered to the right, and the black fin followed. Oto plunged into the sea and swam straight toward the shark. There was no more shouting now; only two dark heads bobbing in the waves, and the little black sail dancing toward them.

Oshima now began to beat the water with his hands, making a tremendous splashing. The great fish, startled by the commotion, paused, and the ugly fin seemed irresolute. Oshima was now swimming more slowly. Younger than Oto, and far less robust, he was becoming exhausted. Every moment he expected to feel the clutch of those terrible jaws. He struck out madly, but made little progress.

The shark, meanwhile, made up his mind. The new morsel was coming directly toward him, while the first seemed in a fair way of escaping to shallow water if not to the land itself. The monster, with a twist of his tail, turned again and made for Oto,

though not very rapidly, for the splashing made the fish wary.

At last the critical moment came. Oto had heard an old pearl-fisher tell of many a battle with the man-eating sharks of the Pacific. As the huge creature began to turn, to seize his prey, the black fin disappeared. Quick as a flash Oto doubled himself in the water and dived. A moment later a red stain dyed the surface of the sea. The boy had drawn a sharp dagger from his belt and stabbed upward as his assailant passed over him.

There was no more battle. The shark had enough of Oto and fled for the depths of the ocean while his victor, watching sharply for his late foe, made his way ashore as swiftly as possible. He found Oshima stretched upon the sand, uninjured but almost unconscious from fright and exhaustion.

It was this incident, the self-forgotten valour of his son's friend, saving the former's life at the peril of his own, that led Oshima's father, a few days afterward, to make the offer that changed the boy's whole life. He proposed to the elder Owari to send Oto at his own expense to any naval school in the world, and educate him for the Japanese navy. Oto chose the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, as we have seen, and graduated with honour, resigning only to accept a post under his own Emperor.

Oshima meanwhile pursued his studies at the Military Institute in Yokohama, and received in due time his appointment as sub-lieutenant in the Japanese army. Entrusted with an important secret mission a few years later the two comrades went to America, performed their duties faithfully, and, in pursuance of direct orders from high authority, concealed their identity by returning as cabin stewards; the men of the *Osprey* little dreaming that the meek, gentle "boys" whom they ordered to and fro on menial errands were officers, older and of higher rank than themselves, in the Imperial Army and Navy of Japan.

Thus the party of little O-Hana-San led to important results; for had not Oto applied to her for an invitation, and gone off to the shore sulking because of her refusal, Oshima would not have had his eventful swim, the shark would not have been disappointed in a meal, Oshima's father would not have felt the impulse of gratitude which influenced him to bestow a naval education upon his neighbour's son; in short the *Retvizan's* plans would never have been laid before the naval secret service authorities of Tokio, nor, in all likelihood, would Dave Rexdale have been so well served, in the absence of his two faithful Japanese stewards, on the outward cruise of the *Osprey*!

As for O-Hana-San, she had her party, and a gay

one it was, as gaiety was reckoned in those parts. The little hostess duly sent out her invitations, and received her guests with all formality. Her dark, glossy hair was drawn back, raised in front, and gathered into a double loop, in which a scarlet bit of scarf was coquettishly twisted. She wore a blue flowered silk kimono, with sleeves touching the ground; a blue girdle lined with scarlet; and a fold of the scarlet scarf lay between her neck and the kimono. On her little feet were white *tabi*, socks of cotton cloth, with a separate place for the great toe (which was a very small one, nevertheless), so as to allow the scarlet-covered thongs of the finely lacquered clogs, which she wore while she stood on the steps to receive her guests and afterward removed, to pass between it and the smaller toes. All the other diminutive ladies were dressed in the same style, and, truth to say, looked like a company of rather expensive little dolls.

Well, when they were all assembled, she and her graceful mother, squatting before each, presented tea and sweetmeats on lacquer trays; and then they played at quiet and polite little games until dusk, when the party broke up, and O-Hara-San (Spring), O-Yuki-San (Snow), O-Kiku-San (Chrysanthemum), and the rest bobbed nice little bows and said, quite after the fashion of their elders, that "they had had *such* a nice time," and went home.

In the years that followed, O-Hana-San, the Blossom and the prettiest girl in the town, had but little chance to invite Oto to her parties, nor could the gallant young Japanese take her to the Academy hops; but he wrote to her constantly, and now, as the *Osprey* cut the waters of the Indian Ocean with her snowy stem, he thought of the dark-eyed Blossom in the far-off little village of Nippon; and, as he tripped to and from the pantry, and returned with delicacies for the cabin table, balancing himself gracefully against the rolling and pitching of the vessel, wondered how soon he should stand before her on the quarter-deck of his own ship, clad in the brilliant uniform of his rank. As for Oshima, he had been waiting eleven years for a good chance to give his life for Oto!

CHAPTER VIII.

A BATCH OF LETTERS.

[*Dick Scupp to his Mother.*]

“ON BOARD THE ‘OSPREY,’

“December 20, 1903.

“*Dear Mother :*

“I take my pen in hand to inform you that I am well and hope you are the same. We left Manila two weeks ago and came to this place, which is Chefoo. It sounds like a sneeze, does n't it? It is a Chinese port on Shantung Peninsula, pretty nearly opposite Port Arthur, which as you know is occupied by the Russians. I wish I could be home next Friday, which is Christmas. Tell Katy to think of me and I will bring home something in my box for her. I am sorry to say I have lost that pair of stockings you knit for me. I forgot and left them on the deck instead of putting them in my bag and Jimmy Legs got them when he came round, and popped them into the lucky-bag. I might have gone up to the mast the next day and claimed them, but a lot of us were going ashore (it was

when we were at Shanghai) and I did n't want my liberty stopped, so I let them go, and Sam Bolles bought them at the auction afterward for nineteen cents. That is all I have to say at present.

“From your loving son,

“RICHARD.”

[*From Oto Owari to O-Hana-San.*]

Translated.

“SASEBO, January 2, 1904.

“The exalted letter which you augustly condescended to send me on the 13th day of the 10th moon filled me with great felicity, to know that you are in ever-increasing august robustness, as you were tormented with light fever when I worshipped your eyebrow * a short time before. I do not know where I shall go next. I see Oshima almost daily at the barracks. A new ship is fitting out at the docks, the *Fujiyama*, and it may be that I shall have an appointment to her, or it may be that I shall have to go *under the water*. You will understand later. I am now awaiting orders. Although the war-cloud in the west is dark, the people in Tokio celebrated New Year's Day with rejoicing and festivity, as usual. The houses and shops, Oshima told me, were covered with fruits and flowers, and the streets decorated with flags and

* “Met you.”

lanterns. Many bands of men marched through the city singing old war-songs of the Samurai. All the fairs were crowded. Pray condescend to take august care of your exalted health. I knock my head against the floor.

“Remembrance and respectful veneration.

“OTO.

“TO O-HANA-SAN.”

[*Hallie to Lieut. Com. David Rexdale, U. S. N.*]

Extracts.

“BOSTON, November 15, 1903.

“*Dear Dave :*

“You can’t tell how anxious I am to hear from you. Your last letter, mailed at Suez, was a very short one. You told me you had a despatch from Washington ordering you to Shanghai instead of Hongkong, and I ought to have received a letter from that city; but I have n’t and I ’m worried about you. If it did n’t cost so much I would cable instead of writing. Do write to me at once. If anything should happen to you * . . .

In September I had a little visit with the Holmes. Norman has been detached from the Brooklyn Yard and appointed to the *Vulture*, which probably will join the Asiatic squadron this winter or in the

* Mrs. Rexdale has insisted that some portions of her letter, interesting only to her husband, shall be omitted.

early spring. Our old friend Tickerson has received his commission as lieutenant (first grade) and his wife writes me gleefully on the increase of pay as well as glory. Do you remember when you introduced me to her, at Annapolis? They say 'Girlie' is just as proud of her as he was in the old days, when the other cadets (all but *you*, of course, Dave!) used to envy him as he walked down 'Lover's' with her.

"You would be interested in the football situation this fall, if you were here. O, if only . . .

"Well, as I was about to say, Harvard is of course straining every nerve to get into condition for Yale. The game comes off in about ten days, and I'm going over to Cambridge to see it. Who do you suppose is going to take me? Why, dear old Uncle Richard, who happens to be spending a few weeks East, on business. Little Hallie Holmes is the dearest baby in the world. Was n't it lovely in Anemone to insist on naming her for me? Aunt Letitia is tremendously interested in two things—anti-vivisection and the Russo-Japanese trouble. She has attended several hearings at the State House, and at one of them she spoke her mind out so forcibly that old Jed, bless his heart, made a great racket pounding on the floor and set everybody applauding. He had sneaked in without Aunt's knowing it, and on reaching home was

heard to express a strong desire to 'keelhaul them doctors.' He takes great delight in his lofty 'cabin' and regularly goes out 'on deck' at the top of the house every night, to have a last smoke and a 'look at the weather,' like Captain Cuttle, before turning in. Aunt Letitia reads every scrap she can find in the papers about Russia and Japan, and so, for that matter, do I. Sometimes my sympathies are with one nation and sometimes with the other. Of course Japan is ever so much the smaller of the two, and her people are so quick and bright that nearly everybody takes their side and hopes that if there is a war she will win. But then Russia sometimes seems to me less like a bear than a great Newfoundland dog, and, as somebody has said, it's fairly pathetic to see how she has been trying all these years to get to the water; that is, to the open ocean, where she can have a navy, big and well trained, like other nations. Her ships in the Baltic seem like boats in a tub. Anyway I do hope and pray that there won't be any war, after all. Surely we humans know enough, have got evolutionised enough, in this twentieth century, to settle a dispute without fighting like savages.

"I miss you every day. . . . Write to me as soon as you can. . . .

"Your loving wife,

"HALLIE."

[From Fred Larkin to Lieutenant Staples.]

“SAN FRANCISCO, December 29, 1903.

“MY DEAR LIEUTENANT:

“‘If you get there before I do,
Tell them I am coming too!’

“As I expected, the *Bulletin* does n't propose to get left on any unpleasantness in the Extreme East, nor even to take its chances in a syndicate. It wants real news, straight from the front, and, naturally, it hits upon Yours Truly to pick it up. I wrote to Rexdale just before leaving Boston, so it is probably no surprise to you that I have crossed the continent and am about to embark for Yokohama. Indeed I may make my bow to you on the quarter-deck of the *Osprey* before you receive this letter! The papers are full of correspondence and abstracts of diplomatic papers from St. Petersburg and Tokio. The language of these communications between the State Departments of the two countries is bland and meek as the coo of a dove or the *baa* of a lamb; but mark my words, my boy—there 's going to be a war, and a big one. There *must* be, to justify my going out to report it! Do you remember how a reporter in Havana in 1897 is said to have cabled to the home office of a certain 'yellow' journal not unknown to fame, 'No war here. What shall I do?' And the editor of the newspaper cabled back,

'Stay where you are, and send full reports. I'll provide war.' Well, our venerable and sagacious friend Marquis Ito, together with the amiable but distracted Ruler of all the Russias, will 'provide war' for me to write up, and that before many days. And the little Japs will strike first, see if they don't! Tell Rexdale, please, that I'm on my way. If anything good happens before I see you, 'make a note on,' and give it to me for a *Bulletin* story.

"Yours ever,

"LARKIN."

[*From Lieutenant Commander Rexdale to Hallie.*]

Extract.

"CAVITE, P. I., December 2, 1903.

". . . From Shanghai we were ordered to this port, where we have been lying for nearly a month, doing guard duty. Next Thursday we sail for Chefoo, the Chinese seaport not far from Weihai-wei, where Pechili Strait opens into the Yellow Sea. At that station we shall be quite near Korea and Port Arthur, and if there is any trouble we shall be spectators, though almost certainly not participants, so you need not worry when you see by the naval despatches at home that we are on the outskirts of the Debatable Land. It is hard, I've no doubt, for you to realise how the war-fever is

growing, out here. I am told that the Japanese have been steadily preparing for this final trial of her strength with Russia for years past. You may be interested in the make-up of the Jap. army. Under the present law all males are subject to conscription at the age of twenty. There is no distinction of class, and there are no exemptions except for physical disabilities, or because the conscript is the sole support of indigent parents, a student in certain schools, or a member of certain branches of civil service.

“The first term of service is between the ages of twenty and twenty-three. Then the soldier enters the first reserve, where he serves between the ages of twenty-three and twenty-six. After that he goes to the second reserve, where his service is between the ages of twenty-six and thirty-one; and then to the general national reserve, which includes all males between the ages of seventeen and forty not already in active service.

“. . . I was called off, yesterday afternoon, from my writing, and later in the day I learned that there is trouble in Seoul, the capital of Korea. There are lots of Japanese and Russians there, and, with the Korean natives hating all foreigners, there is material for a good deal of disturbance. Several riots have occurred in the streets, and it is said that our minister has cabled to Washington asking for a

war-ship at Chemulpo, the port of Seoul. If the Department assents, the talk is that either the *Wilmington* or the *Osprey* will be detailed for that duty. I must say I hope it will be our little ship, and so do all our officers. Midshipman Starr puts it very well: 'When I was a boy, I always liked to get right up against the ropes at a fire!' He is n't much more than a boy now, but he 's a fine fellow, and I 'd trust him to do his part in an emergency.

. . .

"*Later.*—The *Vicksburg* is the lucky ship, after all. She has sailed for Chemulpo, and a party of marines will be landed and sent up to Seoul to protect our Minister and all other Americans and their interests in the city. The gunboat is commanded by Com. W. A. Marshall, whom you will remember meeting in Washington at the ball three years ago. His ship is about the size of the *Osprey*, and carries six guns.

"I hear that the Japanese fleet at Nagasaki is removing all superfluous wood-work, filling its bunkers with hard steam coal, and preparing, in general, for business. We sail for Chefoo at 9 A.M. to-morrow.

. . .

"Your loving husband,

"DAVE."

CHAPTER IX.

AT THE CZAR'S COMMAND.

I VAN IVANOVITCH lived on the outskirts of a small village about one hundred miles north-east of Moscow. Like his father and grandfather and many generations before, he was a *moujik*, a peasant, with this difference: they had been serfs; Ivan was freeborn. His father now owned the hut in which he lived with his family of wife and three children—two girls, besides Ivan; he also owned a small patch of land, and an acre or two of tillable soil had been allotted to him when the serfs were emancipated, with a condition of slow payment to the Government, a few roubles at a time.

Up to the autumn of 1903 Ivan worked in the fields, bare-headed and blue-bloused, beside his father. The girls worked, too, for the father was lame and needed all the help he could get. He had leaned upon Ivan more and more as the years went by and his son grew from boyhood to sturdy young manhood. Every evening the family knelt before the crucifix on the wall of the living-room,

and prayed for themselves, their country, and their "Little Father," the Czar, who spent all his time in far-off St. Petersburg, they were sure, in thinking of his "children," the people of the great Empire, and loving them and planning for their good. In return they almost worshipped him, as they did the figure on the crucifix.

"Soon you will have to serve as a soldier, Ivan," said his father one day. The older man had a great tawny beard and mane of hair like a lion's; Ivan resembled him more and more.

"That is true, my father."

"You are nearly of age."

"True, my father."

"But," put in his mother anxiously, "surely our boy will not have to fight?"

"Nay, Matouschka," said Ivan tenderly but manfully, "if the Czar commands, my life is his!"

Two months later he reported at the barracks at Moscow, and was duly enrolled in the 11th Regiment of Infantry, Third Division, First Reserves, of the Imperial Army.

At first the novelty was amusing, and Ivan enjoyed the companionship of his comrades in the ranks, the smart uniform and big fur cap, the music of the band, when they paraded in the great square and the crowds gathered to see. But the drill, drill, drill became tedious, and it was with rather a sense

of relief that in the latter part of the following January he heard that the regiment was to leave Moscow for the Far East.

There was no time to say good-bye to his parents, nor could he have paid his fare to and from the village had permission been given. So Ivan took out his little brass cross, his "ikon," which, like every other Russian soldier, he carried in his bosom, and murmured a prayer for father and sisters and the little mother. Then he buckled on his belt, adjusted his clumsy cap, shouldered his musket and was ready.

"Where are we going, comrade?" he asked of his next neighbour in the ranks, as they marched to the railway station.

"I do not know. They say there is to be war."

"War—against whom?"

"The Japanese."

"Japanese? Who are they? Are they savages or white like us?"

"I can't tell you, Ivan. We shall know when we see them."

"Why do we fight against them? Where do they live?"

But his comrade could only shrug his shoulders. He had not the least idea of the answer to either question; nor had any man in the company, only a half-dozen of whom could read or write.

“It is the Czar’s command.”

Silently they plodded on, the snow whirling about them as they marched. Here and there a knot of people cheered them. This was pleasant. Ivan felt that he was really a soldier. When a lump came into his throat at the thought of the little hut in the lonely white waste far to the north, he gulped it down and broke into a hoarse laugh which brought down a reprimand from the nearest officer.

The troops were packed into a long transport train like cattle. When the cars stopped or started suddenly they fell against each other. Some swore and even struck out, but most were as mild and phlegmatic as the cows and sheep whose places they had taken. Ivan was of this sort.

“Never mind,” he said to a man who trod upon his foot; “it is nothing. My foot is iron”; and when he was thrown against a neighbour: “Ah, what a blockhead I am! Will you not hit me, to pay the score?”

Most of the soldiers said nothing. As verst after verst of desolate snowy landscape was left behind they stood or squatted in the cars, silent, uncomplaining. Why should they find fault with cold and hunger and fatigue? It was the Czar’s command. The Little Father in his palace was caring for them. It was theirs not to complain, but to obey.

There were many delays on the ill-constructed,

overcrowded Siberian Railway, the black cord that stretched across a continent to Port Arthur and Vladivostok, seven thousand miles away. But whether it was seventy miles or seven thousand the rank and file of the army hardly knew or cared. Cold, hungry, stiff from constrained position, they bore all privations with calmness and even a sort of jovial good-humour. At night every soldier fumbled under his furs and heavy winter coat for his ikon, and his bearded lips murmured the sacred Name.

At length the rugged shores of Lake Baikal were reached, in Farther Siberia. Here there was another halt, for the railway itself came to an end, and the troops were ordered out of the train at early dawn.

"How can we go on?" asked Ivan stupidly. Before him a white plain stretched away to the horizon line. To the right were mountains; to the left, mountains. The ice-bound surface of the lake was swept by a bitter gale, which heaped up huge drifts and flung them away again, like a child at play. Behind the regiment of fur-capped soldiers, huddled on the frozen shore, was home; before them, what seemed an Arctic sea. The snow fell heavily, and drifted around their feet. "How can we go on?" asked Ivan; and a subaltern, breathing through his icy moustache, replied: "I do not know, private, but we must advance. It is the Czar's command."

When Russia, determined to establish a port on the open sea, though it were thousands of miles from her capital, built the great Trans-Siberian Railway, she progressed rapidly with her fragile, light-rail, single-track road until she came to Lake Baikal. Here Nature had placed what might well be deemed an impossible obstruction: a huge inland lake four hundred miles in length, eighteen hundred feet deep, bordered with mountains, whose sheer granite cliffs rose from the water to a height of fifteen hundred feet, and in their turn were overshadowed by snow-capped peaks. The lake at this point is forty miles wide. No bridge could span its storm-swept surface, no tunnel could be driven beneath its sombre depths. How was the obstacle to be surmounted? A weaker nation would have given up the task, as the French tired of working at the Panama Canal; Russia, ponderous, tireless, determined, almost irresistible, moved on. In the science of Physics, the momentum of a moving body is thus analysed and expressed: $M = m \times v$. In other words, it equals the mass of the body multiplied by its velocity. If either factor be increased, the momentum becomes correspondingly greater. When Russia moves, the velocity is slight, but the mass is enormous. When the soldier, in the time-worn anecdote, tried to stop with his foot the slowly rolling spent cannon-ball, it snapped his leg like a pipe-stem. The nation that

opposes Russia must itself be of iron mould, or it will snap. Lake Baikal was a trifle, a mere incident to the civil engineers who laid out the Trans-Siberian Railway.

In the summer-time huge steam ferry-boats plied from shore to shore, transferring passengers and freight from the western to the eastern or Trans-Baikal section. From November to April the lake is frozen over, but during at least half of that time enormous ice-breakers, like the heaviest ocean-going tug-boats, crashed through the ice and kept open a canal from side to side.

These were temporary expedients. The engineers meanwhile had not been idle. They attacked the cliffs bordering the southern end of the lake, and began cutting a path through the solid rock for advancing Russia. Twenty-seven tunnels were to be bored, and have since been completed. While Ivan waited by the shore a dull boom came now and then to his ear, from the blasting. It was the relentless, unfaltering tread of Russia's iron heel.

But other means had to be provided, in that terrible winter of 1903, for the passage of troops and supplies, for although the great mass of soldiers did not understand, their leaders and the counsellors of state in St. Petersburg knew there was urgent need. A railroad was begun upon the ice itself, and before March was in actual operation. A thousand feet of

water gloomed beneath the thin ice bridge. Once or twice there was an accident—a locomotive went through, or a few cars, and, incidentally, a few human beings. This was nothing. “Forward, my men! It is the Czar’s command!”

The ice railway not yet being complete, there was but one way to cross Lake Baikal—by horse-power or on foot. High officials and favoured travellers secured sledges; the main body of infantry, including Ivan’s regiment, having hastily swallowed a breakfast of army rations, set out on the march across the forty miles of ice plain, at “fatigue step.” The bands were forbidden to play, lest the rhythmic tread of the soldiers, instinctively keeping time to the music, should bring too great and concentrated strain upon the ice.

Before they were half a league from shore the wind pounced upon its new playthings; it blew upon their sides, their backs, and their faces. It pelted them with ice-drops, with whirling masses of snow. They leaned forward and plodded on, unmurmuring. It roared like a cataract, and howled like wolf-packs; the air was so filled with drift that each man simply followed his file-leader, with no idea of the direction of the march, the van being guided by telegraph-poles set in the ice at short intervals of space. Hands and feet became numb; beards were fringed with icicles; the men in the

disordered ranks slipped and stumbled against one another. With the mercury 23° below zero, and a northerly gale, hurled down the entire four hundred miles of unbroken expanse of the lake, the cold was frightful.

Ivan turned his head stiffly to mumble something to his neighbour in the ranks. He was no longer there. The subaltern who had answered him on the shore was also missing. Like scores of others he had wandered off the line of march, to fall and die unseen.

Ivan bent his head to a fierce blast, muttering "Courage, comrades!" No one replied to him as he staggered uncertainly onward. "Courage, comrades!" shouted Ivan again. His voice was lost in the ceaseless roar of the gale. Ivan peered out from under the mask of ice which had formed across his eyes, from his shaggy brows to his moustache. No one was near him. He was alone with the storm.

It seemed an easy thing to lie down in the snow and go to sleep. It would be a joy merely to drop the heavy musket. Nobody knew where he was; the lake would swallow him up, and who would be the wiser? Ivan halted a moment, pondering in his dull way. Suddenly he remembered. That would be disobedience of orders. His officer had said, "It is the Czar's command!" What madness, to

think of disobeying the Little Father at St. Petersburg! The peasant-soldier gripped his breast, where the ikon lay, and, taking his course as well as he could from the direction of the wind, staggered on.

Whether it was five minutes or an hour he could not tell; but now he saw dim figures around him, plodding silently onward. Whether they were comrades of his own regiment he neither knew nor cared. He was once more, after that moment of individuality, a part of the Russian army, and moved mechanically forward with it.

The men huddled together like sheep, as they marched. When one of their number staggered aside and disappeared they closed the gap; when one fell, they stepped stiffly over him.

“Halt!”

Each man stopped by stumbling abruptly against the one before him. They asked no questions. They remained standing, as they had moved, by sheer inertia, letting the butts of their muskets rest on the ice.

The column had halted by a rest-house, marking half-way across the lake. A few officials of highest rank, a newspaper man or two, half a dozen merchant travellers with special passes, refreshed themselves with soup and steaming tea. A steady stream of open sleighs passed slowly by the silent,

immovable column. The troops were fed where they stood, without shelter from the fierce blast and whirling snow.

Soon the order came down the line, "Forward!"

Once more the fearful march across the ice was resumed. At long intervals there were more halts, when tea was served; but the cold increased. The men now began to suffer less. Some of them hoarsely roared out a snatch of song; these soon dropped or wandered away. When the winter storm of Siberia first assaults it is brutal in its blows, its piercing thrusts, its agonising rack-torment of cold. Gradually it becomes less rude and more dangerous. Its wild shriek of rage becomes a crooning cradle-song; it strokes away the anguish from the knotted joints of hand and foot and limb. It no longer repels, it invites.

When the long column of staggering, ice-covered forms reached the eastern shore of the lake its numbers had lessened by five hundred, who would never face the unknown enemies of the Far East. Ivan was among the survivors. His huge frame, his iron constitution, his allegiance to the Czar, had carried him through.

He found his company half a verst ahead, and as night fell he joined a group of grim figures around a blazing camp-fire. Tea was made and served out, with regular army rations. The men's drawn faces

relaxed. They warmed their half-frozen limbs. Rough jokes passed. The terrors of the lake-crossing were forgotten. "On to Harbin!" they roared out in chorus, as their colonel passed. "Long live the Czar!"

CHAPTER X.

THE FIRST BLOW.

ON the evening of February 8th a fleet of dark-hulled ships moved silently westward across the Yellow Sea. In the harbour of Port Arthur lay the pride of the Russian navy, most of the ships riding peacefully at anchor in the outer roads. They comprised the battle-ships *Petropavlovsk* (flagship), *Perseviet*, *Czarevitch*, *Retvizan*, and *Sebastopol*, and the cruisers *Novik*, *Boyarin*, *Bayan*, *Diana*, *Pallada*, *Askold*, and *Aurora*. Of the officers, many were on shore, enjoying the hospitalities of the port and drinking the health of the Czar. The crews were below decks, or smoking idly and talking, in the low gutturals of their language, of home and friends far away. Secure in their sense of their mighty domain and the power that reached from the Baltic to the Pacific, they sang snatches of rude fore-castle songs, or joked and laughed at the prospects of a war with the Japanese, "those little monkeys," who dared dispute even in mild diplomacy with the Great Empire. And as they laughed,

and the smoke curled upward from their bearded lips, and the little waves of the peaceful harbour lapped softly against the huge floating forts, the black hulls from the east crept nearer, through the darkness.

Nine years had elapsed since the Japanese had invaded Korea and Manchuria. In 1895, victor over the Chinese, firmly established with his troops on the main land, with his fleet riding in the harbour of Port Arthur, which his army had taken by storm, the Mikado had been compelled by the powerful combination of Russia, France, and Germany to give up the material fruits of his victory, and Japan, too exhausted to fight for her rights, withdrew sullenly to her island Empire.

Three years later Russia obtained from China a twenty-five years' lease of Port Arthur, which she claimed she needed "for the due protection of her navy in the waters of North China." Her next move was to secure right to build the Manchurian Railway, connecting her two Pacific ports, Vladivostock and Port Arthur, with her western capital. She had at last reached the open sea. Vladivostock, at the south-eastern extremity of her own possessions in the north, was blocked by ice and shut off from the ocean every winter; Port Arthur offered a safe and open roadstead for her navy and mercantile marine throughout the year.

During the years that followed Russia strained every nerve to establish her customs, her power, and her people in Manchuria. Japan saw the danger to herself, but was powerless to prevent it. Recruiting from the expenditures of the Chinese war, she prepared for the greater struggle that was inevitable. She built up one of the most formidable navies the world had seen; she trained her officers and crews by the most modern methods; she reorganised her army and laboured to perfect it as a fighting machine. By wise laws and enlightened counsels she fostered her resources until her treasury was plethoric with gold. At last, early in 1903, she calmly reminded Russia that the stipulated term of her occupation of Manchuria, save at Port Arthur, had expired; that her excuse for remaining there no longer existed; that her pledges of removal must be kept.

Russia winced under the word "must"; the keyword of her own domestic polity, when applied by the nobles to the masses, it now had a strange and unwelcome sound. She redoubled her efforts to pour troops into the province, provisioned and fortified Port Arthur for a year's siege, established a "railroad guard" of sixty thousand men,—and blandly promised to retire in the following October.

Japan was no less alert. One by one the divisions of her great army were mobilised. They were drilled

unceasingly, by competent officers from Western schools. They invented new and terrible explosives and engines of war, and prepared their battle-ships and torpedo-boats for active service. October passed, and the forces of Russia in Manchuria had been largely augmented instead of diminished. More diplomatic messages, couched in courteous terms, passed between the two capitals, and greater numbers of armed men flocked to the eastern and western shores of the Japan Sea.

Again and again St. Petersburg gained a modicum of time through silence or evasive answer; while the rails of the long railroad groaned under the heavy trains that day and night bore troops, supplies, and ammunition eastward. At last the limit was reached. On the 6th of February, at 4 P.M., Kurino, the Japanese minister at St. Petersburg, presented himself at the Foreign Office at that city and informed Count Lamsdorff that his government, in view of the delays in connexion with the Russian answer to Japan's latest demand, and the futility of the negotiations up to that time, considered it useless to continue diplomatic relations and "*would take such steps as it deemed proper* for the protection of Japan's interests." In obedience to instructions, therefore, he asked, most gently and politely (after the fashion of his countrymen), for his passports.

On one of the Japanese torpedo-boats silently

approaching Port Arthur, just forty-eight hours after M. Kurino had made his farewell bow at the court of the Czar, was Oto Owari. No one who had seen him on the *Osprey*, meekly serving his commander with sliced cucumbers and broiled chicken, would have recognised the trim, alert little figure in the blue uniform, his visor drawn low over his sparkling eyes, his whole bearing erect, manly and marked with intense resolve as he conned his vessel through the channel toward the doomed fleet of the enemy.

When the American ship arrived at Shanghai, Oto had at once procured his own discharge and that of Oshima, which was an informal matter, they not being enlisted men but merely cabin servants. Rexdale was glad to let them go. The little Japs were too mysterious and secretive personages to render their presence welcome on a war-ship where the commander should know all that is going on, above-board and below. Dave more than half suspected that his stewards were of more importance in their own country than their menial office would indicate; and while he could not exactly regard them in the light of spies—Japan being friendly to the United States—he felt more comfortable when they had taken their little grips and marched ashore to mingle with the heterogeneous population of the Chinese port.



PICKED UP BY THE SEARCHLIGHT.

The torpedo-boats increased their speed as they neared the outer basin of the harbour of Port Arthur. Oto steered his small black craft directly toward a huge battle-ship with three smoke-stacks.

"It is the *Retvizan*," he whispered to the officer next in command. "I know where to strike her. Wait for the order."

The Russian ships had their nets out. They believed the Japanese fleet two hundred miles away.

"Now!" hissed Oto sharply; and in a moment a long, black, cigar-shaped missile leaped from the bows of his ship toward the Russian leviathan. It dashed, foaming, through the water, sheared its way through the steel meshes of the torpedo net, and struck the hull of the doomed *Retvizan* exactly where Oto had planned his attack. There was a dull roar, echoed by another and another a short distance away. Wild cries and shrieks of anguish rose from the Russian fleet. Two mighty battle-ships, the *Retvizan* and the *Czarevitch*, slowly heeled over, mortally wounded. The cruiser *Palлада* began to settle. She, too, was pierced below the water-line. Thus the Japanese declared war.

The harbour now seemed full of torpedo-boats. Flash-lights from the forts on the Golden Horn and the Tiger's Tail disclosed the swarm of invaders. The hills resounded with the sudden roar of artillery, and every machine-gun in the Russian fleet

that could be trained on the audacious enemy poured its hail of steel shot upon them. Outside the harbour, within easy range, lay the heavier vessels of the Japanese, which opened fire on the forts and the town from their great turret-guns. In the midst of the uproar and confusion the torpedo-boats which had inflicted such terrible damage retired to the shelter of the outer battle-ships and cruisers, unhurt. The *Retvizan* limped over to the entrance of the harbour and rested on the rocks. The *Czarevitch* was towed out of further danger. The storm of Japanese shot and shell diminished and at length ceased altogether, as the attacking fleet withdrew. The assault had occupied less than an hour; at one o'clock all was silent again, save where the wounded were being cared for, on the ill-fated *Retvizan* and her sister ships, and the crews of every vessel in the harbour talked hoarsely as they stood to their guns, with decks cleared for further action. The first sea-battle—if such it can be called—of the twentieth century was over. Japan had struck, and struck fiercely. Russia was stunned by the blow. Although she did not then realise it, her sea-power in the Pacific was at an end, for years to come.

“*Sayonara, Retvizan!*” said Commander Oto Owari grimly, as he headed his ship for the open sea.

The midnight attack was but the first outburst of

the storm. Before noon the Mikado's fleet returned, as the United States ships came back at the battle of Manila, and once more the huge twelve-inch rifles thundered and the shore forts replied. The still uninjured vessels of the Russians came bravely out to meet the foe, but reeled under the terrible fire that was concentrated upon them. For an hour the bolts fell thick and fast. Then the Japanese drew back, and the Russians, dazed, bewildered, thunderstruck at the swiftness and might of the assault, again counted their losses.

"By order of Viceroy Alexieff," reported the commanding officer to St. Petersburg, "I beg to report that at about eleven o'clock in the morning a Japanese squadron, consisting of about fifteen battle-ships and cruisers, approached Port Arthur and opened fire. . . .

". . . At about midday the Japanese squadron ceased its fire and left, proceeding south.

"Our losses are two naval officers and fifty-one men killed. . . . During the engagement the battle-ship *Poltava* and the cruisers *Diana*, *Askold*, and *Novik* were damaged on the water-line."

Three battle-ships and four cruisers put out of action in a single day! But more was to follow.

In the harbour of Chemulpo, across the neck of the Yellow Sea; lay the Russian cruisers *Variag* and *Koriets*, in company with several war-ships of other

nations, including the U. S. gunboat *Vicksburg*. On the evening before the assault on Port Arthur the commanders of these two cruisers were notified by the Rear-Admiral Uriu, commanding a Japanese squadron, which lay just outside, that on the following day they would be attacked at their moorings if they did not quit the port by noon. Other foreign ships in the harbour were warned to withdraw from the line of fire.

Early the next morning the *Variag* and *Koriets* cleared for action, and, with their bands playing the Russian national anthem, slipped their cables and moved slowly out of the harbour to sure destruction, amid the cheers of the crews of other nations, who appreciated their splendid bravery and the devotion of the men to the Czar, at whose command they were ready for death in its most terrible form.

At a range of nearly four miles the battle began. The Japanese squadron opened fire upon the advancing Russians, who replied as promptly as if they were the forefront of a fleet of a dozen battle-ships, instead of a cruiser and gunboat as absolutely helpless as two spaniels encountering a pack of wolves.

Five shells struck the *Variag* in rapid succession, while shrapnel swept the crews repeatedly from her guns. A single shell killed or disabled all save one of the gunners on her forecastle; another struck one of her six-inch rifles (the largest in her armament),

and exploded part of her ammunition; still another demolished her fore-bridge and set fire to the *débris*, so that the crew had to cease firing and rush to fire stations. Two shells now penetrated at the water-line. The second bridge was wrecked and a funnel shattered. All this time the *Koriets* was firing wildly and doing little damage to the Japanese, who paid but slight attention to her.

The *Variag*, to save the lives of her remaining crew, turned slowly toward the shore, and, accompanied by the gunboat, regained her anchorage, listing heavily and evidently sinking fast. Surgeons and ambulances were instantly despatched to the doomed ship by every war-ship in the harbour, including the *Vicksburg*. It was maliciously reported that the latter did not assist in this Samaritan work, but the slander was refuted and absolutely disproved. Commander Marshall, of the *Vicksburg*, was one of the very first to send boats to rescue the sailors, and medical aid to succour the wounded.

At four o'clock the *Koriets* was blown up by her commander. There were two sharp explosions, forward and aft. A mass of flame arose, and a column of black smoke rolled upward. As the noise of the explosion died away the Russians on the other ships could be heard across the bay singing the national anthem.

The *Variag's* sea-cocks were now opened, and

the ship gradually filled. At five, a succession of small, sharp explosions were heard. The Russian captain, fearing that the Japanese would arrive, begged the commander of a British war-ship to fire at her water-line, but he refused.

The list to port became more and more marked, and flames burst out from the sides and stern of the beautiful ship which, like the *Retvizan*, had been the pride of the builders in Cramp's Philadelphia shipyard a few years before.

The ship's guns remained fast to the end, but there was a tremendous clatter and roar of gear falling to leeward. At last, with a slow and majestic plunge, the *Variag* sank, all her tubes charged with torpedoes, and her great rifled guns pointing upward. Soon afterward the mail-boat *Sungari* was fired, and the flames sent their red glow over the harbour of Chemulpo until it and all the ships seemed embayed in a sea of blood, while the wounded and dying men moaned below decks. So ended the first terrible day of the war, and night fell, as softly, as gently, as on the hills of Palestine long ago when the holy Babe lay in the manger and the angels sang "Peace on earth—good will to men!"

CHAPTER XI.

IN THE MIKADO'S CAPITAL.

ON the evening after the event narrated in the last chapter a group of foreigners sat on the pleasant verandah of one of the largest hotels in Tokio. They were easily distinguishable from the natives that thronged the street and square, not only by the Occidental costumes—of the latest and most fashionable styles—which adorned the ladies, but by the bright and animated faces with which they looked out on the strange scene before them, and discussed the astounding news which had just been displayed, “in real tea-chest letters,” Edith said, on the newspaper bulletins.

Edith and Ethelwyn Black had been invited by their father's old friends Colonel and Mrs. Selborne to join them in a trip around the world. The two young girls were delighted with the prospect, and with some reluctance Major Black consented to the plan. His wife had died five years before, and a widowed sister kept house for him; so, although the separation bore hardly upon the jolly major—from

whom Wynnie must have inherited her unfailing flow of spirits—there really was no good excuse for letting the girls miss such an opportunity to enlarge their horizon, mental and physical. The party left New York in December, spent Christmas in San Francisco, and late in January landed in Yokohama. After a brief tour inland they went to Tokio, arriving just before the assault of the Japanese on the ships in the harbour of Port Arthur.

On this special evening Tokio was a blaze of light. Not only were lanterns strung over every shop door and the porches of private houses, but in groups of twos and threes the golden and crimson globes veered wildly through the streets, borne by children as well as by their jubilant elders. Newspaper boys ran to and fro with extras, their little bells jingling and their shrill cries sounding above the roar of the crowds. The naval cadets of Japan in their neat uniforms massed in a solid column, and their cheer rang out, loud and clear: "*Banzai! Dai Nippon banzai! Banzai, banzai, banzai!*"

Edith clasped her hands as she listened. "It 's like a Harvard cheer," she exclaimed; "only it 's more real!"

"Yes," said the Colonel, blowing out a whiff of smoke. "It 's life and death, instead of a mere football victory. I wish I could get the latest news——"

Just then a slight, alert figure came up the steps of the hotel. The young man glanced quickly right and left as he reached the verandah.

"Ah, Miss Black and Miss Ethelwyn," he said, coming forward with outstretched hand, "I'm not sure that you remember me, but that evening on the *Osprey*——"

"Mr. Larkin!" exclaimed both girls, rising and cordially shaking his hand. "How delightful to find you here! Colonel Selborne, Mr. Larkin, a friend of Lieutenant-Commander Rexdale's."

"Is Mr. Larkin in the navy?" inquired Colonel Selborne, meeting the young man's friendly greeting in his hearty way.

"Well, no, not exactly," said Larkin with a laugh, "although I am on board the war-vessels pretty often, as war correspondent for the *Boston Bulletin*. There are half a dozen of us here already, trying to get our passes to go to the front, wherever that may be. Just now it's on the fleet and at Chemulpo, where the Japs have landed a regiment."

"O Mr. Larkin!" exclaimed Edith. "You'll surely be shot, or something, if you go right where the soldiers and battles are!"

"It will be 'something,' then, I guess," said the reporter with another of his jolly laughs. "We fellows are n't often shot. The greatest trouble we have, in a foreign war, is getting within reach of

bullets at all. These blessed Japs bow and smile and promise, from dawn to sunset, but somehow there 's always some hitch when it comes to actual permission to start. If I don't get my pass soon," he added, lowering his voice, "I shall get a move on, permission or no permission."

As he spoke, both girls nodded to a man who bowed low as he passed them and entered the open door of the hotel. Larkin, following the direction of their glances, stopped short. A puzzled expression came into his face.

"Pardon me," he said quickly, "may I ask you the name of the gentleman who bowed to you?"

"That? Oh, that 's Señor Bellardo," replied Wynnie carelessly. "He 's a Spaniard, I believe, travelling for his health, but he speaks English very nicely. Have you met him?"

"There 's something familiar about his face," mused Fred, "but I can't remember—a Spaniard, did you say, Miss Ethelwyn?"

"I think—yes, I know he is, for he alluded to his estates near Barcelona. That 's in Spain, is n't it?"

"It certainly is," assented the war correspondent, "but that fellow—excuse me, that gentleman—looked more like a—well, I think the air of Tokio, or the pleasure of finding old friends here, must have gone to my head. So we 'll let the Señor drop. You 'll be surprised when I tell you of an-

other friend of yours who arrived here this very day!"

"Oh, who is it? Tell us!" exclaimed the girls.

"Perhaps you 've forgotten him," said Fred, with a sly glance at Wynn timer. "I declare there he is, now! Hulloo, there! Ship ahoy!" he cried, beckoning to a trim-looking lad who was passing on the other side of the street.

"Why, it 's Mr. Starr!" said Wynn timer, with a gladness in her voice that proved she had not forgotten her companion of the *Osprey* banquet.

"Come up here, young man!" called out Larkin, rising from his seat. "I would have brought you here to-morrow, anyway, but my good intentions are frustrated by your untimely appearance."

By this time the midshipman, recognising the faces of the two girls, had reached the verandah with a bound. He was presented to Colonel Selborne, and then came such a rapid fire of questions and answers as might have been expected.

Bob explained that he had been temporarily detached from the *Osprey* to carry important documents and messages from the commanding officer of the battle-ship squadron (of which the gunboats formed one division) of the Asiatic fleet to the United States naval *attaché* at Tokio. He had arrived that morning on the U. S. Ship *Zafiro*, which had immediately steamed away again under

orders to return for him at some future day to be appointed. He had run across Fred Larkin on the wharf, that enterprising gentleman being on the lookout for news from the fleet and any scraps of information the *Zafiro* might have picked up as to the midnight assault on Port Arthur. Starr's official duties had occupied his attention most of the day, and he was on his way to see the crowds at the park when he was hailed from the hotel verandah.

"Well, this is homelike!" he exclaimed with great satisfaction, as he settled back in his chair next Wynnies's.

"What is the latest war news?" inquired the Colonel.

"Oh, the Russians have got it in the—have sustained a severe defeat," said Bob, cutting short his Academy slang. "The Japs have blown up, sunk, or disabled half a dozen of the finest ships in their fleet. This afternoon Admiral Uriu finished off the *Variag* and *Koriets* just outside Chemulpo. The naval *attaché* got it direct from the commander of the *Vicksburg*. I tell you, the old academy made itself felt when those Russian ships steamed out of the harbour!"

"Made itself felt? Why, what academy, Mr. Starr?" asked Colonel Selborne, who was himself a West Point man.

"Did n't you know, sir, that the Japanese Ad-

miral Uriu was a graduate of the Naval Academy at Annapolis?" cried Starr.

"Is it possible?"

"It's true, and what's more, he married a Vassar girl."

"To graduate from the Naval Academy and marry a Vassar girl—what more could man desire?" laughed Edith.

"Echo answers 'What,' " agreed the midshipman enthusiastically. "That is, unless — Miss Ethelwyn,—” But if he had intended to ask whether *she* were a Vassar student, his courage failed him and he lamely inquired if she "felt the draught."

Wynnie dimpled and then laughed outright, putting the young man to still more confusion. Larkin struck in with one of his irrepressible puns about a "Vassarlating maid," and the laughter became general.

"I married a farmer's daughter from Connecticut," said Colonel Selborne, "and, as a result, see what a charming pair of adopted nieces I have!"

In the midst of the merriment that followed this sally, Señor Bellardo passed out of the hotel door, raising his hat to the group and saying "Good evening, ladies!" on his way to the street, in the shadows of which he soon after disappeared.

Larkin started again and frowned. "Where have I heard that voice?" he demanded. No one could

enlighten him, and the gay badinage and laughter of the young people was resumed, while the far-off clamours of the crowds were renewed as fresh details of the victory appeared on the illuminated bulletins. The "piazza party" at the Grand Hotel was prolonged to a late hour, when Fred and the midshipman took their leave, promising to call early the next forenoon in order to show the young ladies some of the sights of Tokio.

When the correspondent reached his lodgings he cudgelled his brain to recall the time and place in which he had met that stranger whose voice affected him so unpleasantly. He gave it up at last, but his last waking thought was a resolve to follow up the mystery and establish that black-bearded Spaniard's identity before he left Tokio.

The next morning the two young men appeared promptly at the appointed hour, together with three *jinrikishas* (or "rickshaws," as foreigners call them) of the most gorgeous description. It being Saturday the Mikado's private pleasure-grounds, the Fukiagé Gardens, were thrown open to the public, and here the American party wandered for an hour, observing and discussing the broad, smoothly cropped lawns, the cascade, the masses of dark evergreen trees—unfortunately the plum was not yet in blossom—and, most interesting of all, the careless, bare-headed, quaintly dressed, good-

natured people who thronged the grounds. Of the six thousand policemen in Tokio not one was visible in the Garden, yet everybody was well-behaved and courteous.

In the afternoon Larkin took his daily tramp to the War Office. The sentry outside allowed him to pass with what Fred could not help interpreting as a sardonic gleam in his dark eye. The man had admitted many newspaper men, during January and February, and had seen them depart, bearing gloomy and disappointed faces and using strong language which fortunately he could not understand. Any boy or man who has ever drilled will remember the wearying performance called "marking time," when the soldier goes through all the motions of marching, tramp, tramp, tramp, but never gets ahead one inch. A noted American war correspondent contributed to his journal at this period a series of papers called "Marking Time in Tokio." No term could be more expressive.

Larkin found half a dozen of his brothers-of-the-craft in the War Office. There were besides, in the large, bare room, two uniformed orderlies and two or three grave, elderly, courteous generals, each apparently doing nothing by himself, and although politely interested in the welfare of the foreign visitors, unable to spare time to discuss the war with them.

“Perhaps,” said one of these officials to Fred, “a column will leave soon for Korea. It would give me exalted pleasure to allow you to accompany them. No, I cannot tell when or where. Must you go? Good-day!”

The days passed quickly. Larkin did his best to pick up scraps of information and cable, or write them out, for the *Bulletin*. His leisure moments he spent with the Blacks and Bob Starr, who was their unfailing escort in all excursions. Once they came upon Bellardo in full daylight, and Fred studied his face, but had to confess himself baffled. A rather dark complexion, full black beard, and an odd mispronunciation of English—these peculiarities he noted; in the two-minute interview with the young ladies he could make out nothing more, nor did he even secure an introduction, Bellardo excusing himself, on the plea of an engagement, and moving away just as Fred joined the group.

The correspondents of the great American, English, French, and German dailies became more and more impatient. Some of them gave up, or were recalled, and went home. The certainty that Japanese troops were being taken across in transports made the situation the more aggravating. News of various sea-fights, and skirmishes on land, was posted by the newspapers. It was evident that the war was proceeding, just as if there were no war

correspondents waiting to report it—at least, on the Japanese side. The city reporters in New York were better informed as to the movements of the two great armies than these scouts so near the firing line, yet so far away. Before long there appeared ship-loads of wounded men, sent back from the front to the hospitals in Nagasaki and Tokio.

Information was given out that the Russians were concentrating in the lower Yalu valley, and that here the first great battle might take place. It was necessary for Japan to strike across the Korean peninsula and isolate Port Arthur, cutting the railroad above it if possible.

“Larkin,” said Starr, meeting the reporter in the street one day early in March, “I’ve received word that the *Zafiro* will be at this port to-morrow, and I am ordered back to the *Osprey*. I hate to say good-bye to you, old fellow!”

“And I hate to have you,” said Fred. “Perhaps you won’t have to,” he added meaningly.

“Oh, yes, of course I must obey orders. I’m on my way now to make my farewell call at the hotel. This evening I’ll run in to see you at your lodgings on my way home.”

But when Bob called, Larkin was not in his lodgings, nor, strange to say, was there any trace left of his ever having occupied the room. No one knew where he had gone. He had paid his bill in full and

left the house early in the evening, taking the small bag which constituted all his luggage.

With a heavy heart — for various reasons — Bob went on board the *Zafiro* the next morning, and the little despatch-boat put out to sea.

CHAPTER XII.

BETWEEN TWO FIRES.

“I SAY, Farmer, can't we have a little target-practice and hit something accidentally—even that Chinese junk over there would do—so as to stir up some sort of a scrap?”

Lieutenant Staples, addressing his commander familiarly by the old Academy nickname, yawned and stretched his arms in most undignified fashion as he spoke. The two officers were on the bridge of the *Osprey*, which lay at anchor off Chefoo. A gentle breeze barely stirred the placid waters of the bay, and the sun gave a hint of the torrid days that were to come.

“I'm tired of sitting here, like a toad in a puddle, are n't you?” added the tall lieutenant, straightening himself up a little as a boatswain's mate crossed the open deck below him.

“There is a kind of a sameness about it,” laughed Rexdale, adjusting a pair of field-glasses. “What sort of a craft is that yonder, Tel?”

“H'm—something under steam, anyway. Can you make her out through the glass?”

“Unless I ’m mistaken, it ’s the *Zafiro*,” said the commander, working the glasses for a focus. “Yes, it ’s the despatch-boat, bringing Starr back from Tokio, no doubt.”

Ten minutes later Bob scrambled up over the rail, followed by a young man in civilian’s clothes.

“Fred Larkin!” exclaimed Dave. “How on earth did he get on board the *Zafiro*?”

As soon as Midshipman Bob had reported himself, the war correspondent stepped up with a genial smile and shook hands warmly with the officers on the bridge.

“Fact is, I ’m a stowaway, Dave,” said he. “That gay young lieutenant on the gunboat would have put me in irons if it had n’t been for Bob Starr. He ’s a good fellow and stood by me, when I disclosed myself on the *Zafiro* about twenty miles out.”

“Well, what am I to do with you—that ’s the question?” said Rexdale, laughing in spite of himself at the reporter’s nonchalance. “Strictly speaking——”

“Strictly speaking, I ’ve no business on one of Uncle Sam’s war-ships without a permit from the Secretary of the Navy, or the admiral of the fleet, at least,” said Larkin, with utmost good-humour. “Therefore, we won’t speak strictly, until I ’ve had time to look about a little, being under arrest, theoretically.”

"I can't very well drop you overboard, old fellow," assented Rexdale, "there being a shark or two around who would gobble up even a newspaper man. But really——"

"Really, I 'll leave you before night, old man," interrupted Fred, "so don't worry. Now you and Lieutenant Staples just sit down and tell a fellow what 's the news from home—and hereabouts."

"But how did you manage to get on board the *Zafiro*?" queried Dave.

"Ah, don't ask me, and then you won't know. The movements of some of the heavenly bodies—comets, for instance, and reporters—can only be calculated from their periodic appearances, my son. Did n't you learn that at the Academy?" asked Fred, as the party of officers betook themselves to the after cabin. "Let it suffice your lieutenant-commandership that I really did go on board, and at the proper dramatic moment materialized before the astonished crew. I had a little more sail than I bargained for, not knowing that Mr. Starr had to report to the admiral before coming here."

"Then Bob did n't know——"

"Had n't the ghost of an idea about it, upon my word of honour," said Larkin hastily. "There was n't a more thunderstruck man on the ship than he, when I stepped on deck. I wish you could have seen his face!"

They talked of Boston friends and of the progress of the war, concerning which Rexdale could afford his friend but little enlightenment. "All sorts of reports are afloat," said he. "I see in the home papers—by the way, there 's a bunch of them at your disposal—that Chefoo is called a 'fake-factory, working over-time.' "

"Not bad," said Larkin. "But so-called fakes often prove to be facts, after all. Has any attack yet been made upon Vladivostock?"

"Apparently not. They say the whole sea-front, up there, is a network of submarine mines. Jap torpedo-boats and destroyers are patrolling the sea in every direction, and have picked up one or two vessels with contraband goods. I believe there was a bombardment of the port early in the month, but it amounted to nothing."

"And on land?"

"Well, the Russians are said to have about four hundred thousand men in Manchuria, and they are arriving by the railroad at the rate of a regiment a day. The Japs probably have at least half that number on the mainland. They are swarming across the Korean Peninsula and will have Port Arthur isolated before long."

"If that is so," mused Fred, "I must move quickly."

"Move—where?"

"I 'm going into Port Arthur, my boy."

"Port Arthur! You 'll never get there alive—don't try it, Larkin!" exclaimed Staples earnestly. "There 's a close blockade, and you 'll either be sunk in the bay or at the very best be taken prisoner if you reach the shore."

"It 's just that 'very best' that I 'm reckoning upon," rejoined the reporter coolly. "I wanted to see you fellows before I went in, so you can allude to my whereabouts if I don't show up in a week or two. I 'm an American citizen, Dave, and don't you forget it. You may be sure I won't let Russian or Jap, whichever one captures me, forget that little fact. There 's no danger of my being hung as a spy, for I have my passport and credentials, and the worst they can do, when they 've made their investigation, is to fire me out. All this is supposing I actually reach one 'firing-line' or the other. I 've sat round in Tokio and looked at lanterns and spidery letters until I 'm tired of it. The *Bulletin* sent me out here to get news, and I 'm not going to disappoint the old man."

The day passed pleasantly enough, with stories, talk of old times and discussions of war incidents. The routine duties of naval life filled the intervals in the conversation. Late in the afternoon the officers missed their jolly companion, and enquired for him, but no one knew where he was. As evening

came on they realised that the daring young reporter had kept his word and left them, it was impossible to ascertain when or by what means.

“I hope he won’t get into serious trouble,” said the commander anxiously.

“Oh, Larkin can take care of himself,” replied Liddon, who had joined in the useless search. “He has been through one war, besides innumerable scrapes in which he came out on top. That ’s why the *Bulletin* chose him for this service.”

“Evening colours!” sang one bugle after another, on the war-ships; and all hands stood with bared heads while the flags fluttered down from staff and peak.

Shortly afterward a dull boom sounded across the waters of the bay. But little attention was paid to it by the men on the *Osprey*, such disturbances being of daily occurrence. That shot, however, meant much to Fred Larkin.

About half an hour before he was missed, that afternoon, he had slipped over the ship’s side into a Chinese sampan, or small fishing-boat, which had come alongside to dispose of its fare of fish. Fred tossed a coin to the Chinaman who was seated in the stern and pulled a broad piece of matting over himself in the bottom of the boat. All this was done in less time than it takes to tell it. If any of the *Osprey’s* jackies saw it, he said nothing. The

sympathy of a sailor always goes with a runaway, whatever the reason for the escape may be.

The owner of the sampan, understanding from a gesture of his unexpected passenger that the latter wished to reach the shore without detection, immediately cast off his painter and worked his small craft skilfully and swiftly toward the docks of Chefoo. As soon as the *Osprey* was hidden by another hull—that of a British man-of-war—Larkin threw off the matting gladly enough and sat up. Presently he caught sight of a large junk, just hoisting its sails. It was heavily loaded, though the character of its freight could not be ascertained.

Fred pointed to the junk, and the oarsman turned his boat toward it. A moment later he was alongside.

“Where are you bound?” he called out to the skipper.

Fortunately the latter could understand English.

“Port Arthur,” he replied, but not loudly.

Fred held up a coin. The man nodded, and the correspondent jumped on board, taking in his hand the small leathern gripsack he had brought from home.

The junk proved to be coal-laden, and the captain (and owner), having made sure that no Japanese vessels were in sight, was about to make a dash for Port Arthur, where he knew he would obtain high rates for his cargo.

It soon appeared that he had underrated the

watchfulness of the blockaders, for within less than an hour from leaving port the men on the junk perceived a torpedo-boat destroyer bearing down on them. The skipper calculated his chances of safe return, and decided to "keep all on" for Port Arthur. In twenty minutes the black hull of the pursuer could be plainly made out, and soon after the sound of a gun was heard. The Chinamen working the junk got as far down out of danger as possible, in their clumsy craft, and Fred followed suit. He had no desire to be killed or maimed, nor did he wish to be captured and sent back to Tokio.

He was beginning to despair of the successful issue of his adventure, when a shout from the sailors called his attention to an object dead ahead. It was a column of dense black smoke arising from the sea in the direction of Port Arthur.

A cheer rang out from the Chinamen, as they perceived the smoke. There could be no doubt that it arose from a Russian war-ship, coming out under full head of steam to meet the destroyer.

Again the Japanese gun spoke, and this time the shot struck the water within a few feet of the junk.

"They 've got our range," said Fred to himself grimly. "Trust the Japs for scientific work, when it comes to firing! I might as well improve the time, though!" And drawing his note-book from his pocket he began to take notes.

The junk kept on its course, foaming through the water under pressure of her great sail until the lee rail almost went under. Clouds had arisen in the west and it was nearly dark. A search-light on the mainland flared out suddenly, and a broad ray wavered over the waves until it picked up the Japanese boat, now within less than a mile of the fleeing junk. A deep boom sounded ahead. The Russian had at last spoken, and a big lump of steel swirled through the gloom, over the great triangular sail. The Chinese craft was between two fires. The Japs shrewdly kept her in line with themselves and the enemy, so that the latter dared not fire low. The destroyer fired steadily and fiercely, hulling the junk more than once. It was evident that a crisis was at hand.

Crash! A solid six-pound shot struck the stern of the labouring *White Dragon*, knocking her rudder to bits and killing the skipper, who had remained bravely at the helm. The junk yawed wildly and fell off before the wind. The sailors shrieked and ran to and fro, calling upon their gods to help them.

Another shot, and the mast went by the board. But the Russian cruiser was now close at hand and engaged the Japanese boat savagely.

Fred was watching the fight and looking for a chance to hail the Russian, when a splinter struck him and he was knocked headlong into the sea.

CHAPTER XIII.

WYNNIE MAKES A BLUNDER.

EDITH and Wynnie found Tokio rather lonely after the two young men had gone. It was the loveliest season of the Japan year; the trees were pink with blossoms and every street and square carpeted with fallen petals. Save in the government offices and at the railway stations there was little outward sign of war. All over the empire almond-eyed girls and women were working quietly for the soldiers, arranging bandages, picking lint, preparing scrap-books for the hospitals; but this made no stir. The rickshaw coolies pattered along the city streets and groups of strangers clustered about the shop-windows as in the time of peace. Now and then the tap of a drum was heard, and a column of dark-faced little soldiers passed at quick-step, their faces set with stern resolve, the sunrise flag floating before them. For a moment the crowds turned to look, then returned to their money-making or sight-seeing or shopping.

Señor Bellardo became more attentive to the

Blacks on the very day when the midshipman and correspondent sailed away in the *Zafiro*. He attached himself naïvely to their party, even when they went to the War Office to ask for the latest news.

Larkin and Bob Starr, in pursuance of their purpose of showing their friends everything worth seeing in Tokio, had introduced the American girls, as well as Colonel Selborne, to the high government officials, who had welcomed the strangers with utmost courtesy.

About a week after the departure of the young men the Blacks called at the War Office, Bellardo following meekly in their train. As it happened, no one was in the room but the orderlies, who gave the party to understand that their superiors had been called out, but would return soon.

“Oh, we can’t wait,” said Edith impatiently.

“But it ’s our last visit, really a call of ceremony, girls,” protested their adopted uncle, as he called himself. “It will hardly be courteous to leave without seeing one or both of these gentlemen who have been so polite to us.”

“I ’ll write a line and leave it for them,” said Wynnie impulsively. “We ’ve lots to do, Uncle, and we can’t waste time, you know, in our last day in Tokio. They may not come back for hours.”

She took the chair of one of the officials, looked

about for pen and ink, and began writing hurriedly on a blank sheet which lay on the top of a pile of documents. The orderlies gazed in bewilderment at the pretty vision of the girl in a picture hat, occupying the chair of their venerated head of department.

Before Wynnie could finish her note, however, the owner of the chair appeared, with profuse apologies for his delay. Wynnie crumpled up the slip of paper upon which she was writing, and dropped it into the waste-basket as she rose to pay her respects to the war official. The rest of the party advanced and joined in the mutual farewells and regrets. As they stood by the desk, Edith was surprised to see the Spaniard stoop, take Wynnie's half-written note from the basket, and bestow it in an inner pocket. "How sentimental!" she thought, rather contemptuously. She started to speak to her sister about it, on the way home, but something in the street took her attention, and she forgot all about it.

The Blacks had expected to leave next morning for Yokohama, where they were to go on board a steamer for Hawaii and San Francisco. In the disturbed state of affairs on the Chinese coast, Colonel Selborne had concluded not to risk inconvenience or danger, and to give up the rest of the trip. Early in July the whole party would be at home once more. But their plans were interrupted by an unforeseen and astounding incident. It was no less

than the detention of all four by the Japanese Government.

They had hardly reached the hotel, on their return from the War Office, when a dapper little gentleman stepped up to the Colonel and said a few words in a low tone.

“What!” exclaimed the American. “Impossible. We start for home to-morrow morning. Edith,” he added, turning to his young guests, who were just behind with Señor Bellardo, “this man says we are not to leave the hotel till further notice. Special orders from the War Office!”

“Why, what can be the reason? What has happened?”

The Japanese officer shrugged his shoulders and murmured an apology. “A document of great value has been lost,” he said. “It is necessary to detain every one who has visited the office during the afternoon. It is mere form. Honourably do not be annoyed—a thousand regrets for your inconvenience!”

Colonel Selborne understood Japanese methods well enough to know there was a hand of iron under the velvet glove. He submitted with what grace he could muster.

“Search our rooms,” he said. “It is absurd to suppose——”

“Ah,” interrupted the emissary from the War

Office eagerly, "we suppose nothing. It is mere form. To-night, to-morrow, next day, you will surely be at liberty to depart. If you are put to extra expense by remaining longer than you had planned the Government will repay all."

At the Colonel's urgent request the rooms were searched, and of course nothing was found. The little man withdrew, walking backward and apologising over and over; but he did not leave the hotel. He sent a message to the Office and informed the Blacks that nothing further could be done until the next day.

It was ten o'clock in the evening when the recollection of Wynn's half-written note flashed across Edith's mind. She almost flew to her uncle's door and rapped. The good man had not retired; he was too much annoyed and troubled to sleep.

"Uncle, Uncle, I've something important to tell you. It may be a clue!" And she described Wynn's act of throwing away the piece of paper and its subsequent recovery by the Spaniard.

"I thought he just wanted a bit of Wynn's writing," she said, her lip curling a little. "It may be there was something deeper in it."

"But the paper was perfectly blank; there was nothing on it but two or three lines I had written when General Kafuro came in," said Wynn, who had joined them.

“Did you look on the other side of the sheet?” demanded Colonel Selborne.

“Not once! And it may have been the very document they miss! Oh, what a foolish, foolish girl I was! I saw the paper lying there on a heap of other sheets, and supposed—oh, the General must have turned it over so that no one would see it when he was called out, expecting to return in a minute! That was it, I know it was—and it’s all my fault!” Wynn timer hid her face on her uncle’s shoulder.

“There, there, dear, it was a natural enough mistake, and you really meant to do a kind and courteous thing in writing our regrets,” said the Colonel, patting the brown head.

“Do you know what the missing paper was, sir?” asked Edith.

“It was a sketch of a portion of the fortifications at Sasebo, with specifications below—all in very fine handwriting and pale ink. I must see the officials at once,” added Colonel Selborne, looking for his hat.

“Why not hunt up Señor Bellardo first?” suggested Edith eagerly. “Now I think of it, he must have left us just as you were first notified, and he did n’t come near us the whole evening.”

“I noticed that,” said Wynn timer, “and was glad of it. I can’t bear him, and never could.”

“Do you remember how Mr. Larkin looked at him?”

“Yes, and he said——”

“I can't stop, my dears,” broke in the Colonel. “I'll enquire for the Spaniard at once and find him if he is in the hotel. Do you know where his lodgings are in Tokio?”

Neither of them knew. Singularly enough, the man had never mentioned his lodging-place. He always dined at the hotel.

Colonel Selborne found the Japanese official on the verandah, and at once took him into his confidence. They made enquiries and looked into every public room in the hotel. Bellardo was not there.

“Leave the matter now with me,” said the secret-service man quietly. “My men are near, and I will continue the search. In the morning you shall know the result, and I hope to be able to relieve you from further surveillance.”

Early the next morning the report was made by the chagrined but ever-polite officer. The bird had flown. Señor Bellardo's lodgings were known—as were those of every stranger in the city—to the police. They were visited before midnight, and found empty. The police in every seaport were notified by telephone and ordered to arrest a tall, well-dressed man, claiming to be a Spaniard, with dark complexion and black beard and moustache.

His clothes were described, as well as a certain shifty look in his eyes. His bearing was that of one who had been trained in a military or naval school.

Colonel Selborne and his party made affidavits before the American consul, telling everything they knew about the matter. As General Kafuro remembered leaving the paper on the very pile from which Wynnie had taken her sheet, there seemed to be no doubt that Edith's story accounted for the theft. Other papers of value had been missed from time to time since the war broke out, and it was believed at the Office that the so-called Spaniard was a dangerous spy in the pay of the Russians.

General Kafuro congratulated Ethelwyn on having forced the man's hand, and, at the request of the consul, declared the American party free to leave Tokio whenever they wished.

Colonel Selborne lost no time in availing himself of the permission and, with his wife and the two young ladies, sailed from Yokohama two days later.

On the evening of the same day, when the *City of Peking* was heading eastward with the Americans on board, a small sailboat put out from a village on the west coast of the island. Besides the sailors it had one passenger—a gentleman with smooth face, light complexion, and red hair. The boatmen had agreed, for a large sum, to land him at the nearest point in Korea, unless they should previously fall in

with a Russian war-ship. The latter contingency actually came to pass, as the boat was driven northward by a southerly storm, and picked up by one of the Vladivostock squadron, then cruising for prizes.

From Vladivostock, where he was safely landed on the following day, the red-haired gentleman proceeded by rail to Harbin Junction, and then southward to Port Arthur, now nearly cut off by Nogi's troops. Trains, however, were still running regularly between the beleaguered port and Moukden.

Strangely enough, the hair of the mysterious gentleman was now rapidly turning dark. By the time he reached Port Arthur, it was quite black. A stubbly beard and moustache, too, began to show themselves on his sallow face. The man spoke Russian brokenly, and used English when he could. Never a Spanish word came from his lips, and the Barcelona estates proved veritable castles in Spain, fading from his memory.

As the man passed up the street of Port Arthur, under escort of a corporal's guard, he laid his hand triumphantly on his breast. In an inner pocket, beneath it, reposed a sheet of rice paper, on one side of which were scrawled a few lines, in a girlish handwriting. On the other were drawings of moats, counterscarps, and a medley of fortifications,

followed by vertical lines of delicate Japanese characters.

“Take me at once to General Stoessel’s headquarters,” said the sallow-faced man. “I have important information for him. Here is my pass from the War Office at St. Petersburg.”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ATTACK OF THE "OCTOPUS".

SINCE the Stone Age, when long-haired men, half brutes, fought with battle-clubs made by lashing a rudely shaped lump of stone in the cleft end of a club, and with arrows and javelins tipped with hammered flint, through all the successive generations of fighters, human ingenuity has been exercised to its utmost to devise new implements of warfare, and new defences to protect against them.

A long stride was taken when the first elaborately carved, bell-mouthed cannon roared at Cressy and Poitiers; another when iron balls were substituted for stone, and still a third when the idea flashed upon some belligerent inventor to make his iron shot hollow and transform them into explosive shells and death-dealing shrapnel.

From shells to torpedoes was an easy transition, and the torpedo-boat became necessary, duly followed by the torpedo-boat destroyer. At the same time the armour of the largest fighting ships was increased in thickness from two or three inches to a

foot, over the vital parts of the battle-ship and cruiser, the primary batteries of which now included huge rifled guns throwing a steel projectile of well-nigh half a ton's weight.

The torpedo is a terrible but uncertain weapon. The modern search-light makes daylight of the darkest night, and renders the approach of a torpedo-boat within striking distance exceedingly difficult. If detected, the boat is doomed, for a concentration of fire from the larger ship beats the necessarily small assailant to death in a moment. Moreover it is by no means sure that the torpedo will do its work when launched at the enemy, even if it succeeds in piercing the wire net that is suspended to entangle it at a safe distance from the hull of the vessel attacked.

Summing up all the obstacles to successful torpedo attack, it may be reckoned that *only one in twelve* reaches its mark, explodes, and accomplishes its purpose.

It remained for the twentieth century to produce a terrible fighting-machine—often foretold but never perfected until the Russo - Japanese war— which should approach the enemy unseen, discharge its torpedo with careful aim at the most vulnerable part of its huge adversary, and, while the latter was floating in fancied security on the open sea, strike a blow which should be instantly fatal. Such is the

marvellous submarine torpedo-boat of this day and generation.

The idea of a boat that shall move under water and discharge its missile at a hostile ship is by no means a new one. In 1776 a young man named David Bushnell, of New Haven, Connecticut, constructed a submarine boat resembling two "turtle-backs" screwed together. She was so small that only one man could occupy her. Air was supplied to last half an hour. The "crew," who was expected to work by hand the propelling screw, was also supposed to be able to pump in and out water ballast to enable her to descend to the desired depth, to maintain the craft on an even keel when submerged, and to detach two hundred pounds of ballast weights in order to rise again to the surface. An explosive mine containing one hundred and fifty pounds of gunpowder was to be towed alongside until the bottom of the enemy's ship was reached, when, the mine having been fastened to the hull, a clock-work arrangement, set by the operator, would explode the charge. Nothing practical resulted from the young Yale man's scheme, but it is evident that his boat was the original model for every submarine torpedo-boat which has since been invented.

In 1800 Robert Fulton, turning his attention from steam engines for a while, modelled a boat which

was a considerable improvement upon Bushnell's, but, like the latter, failed in practical use.

During our Civil War several essays were made at submarine warfare, the Confederates taking the initiative. One of these submarines actually blew up a Union man-of-war, but was itself demolished, with its crew of nine men. Every great navy in the world now reckons a number of submarines among its available forces.

One of the most dangerous and powerful of these deadly destroyers at the time of the breaking out of the Japanese war was the *Octopus*, launched at night, with great secrecy, near the naval station of Sasebo. Her length was eighty feet, diameter eleven feet, displacement (when submerged) one hundred and thirty-nine tons. When she was running light, or "awash," the twin-screws, operated by triple expansion engines worked by steam, gave a speed of fifteen knots, with a minimum endurance, at this speed, of twelve hours.

To drive the craft when submerged a battery of storage cells supplied an electric current to operate motors sufficient to give a speed of eight knots for at least six hours. Her armament consisted of five automobile torpedoes and two expulsion tubes, which opened through her black prow like the nostrils of some hideous sea-monster. She was able to sink to a depth of twenty feet below the

surface within one minute after the order to dive was given. When she was submerged three feet the pilot obtained a view over the water by means of a *camera lucida* in a tube that projected above the surface.

When Jules Verne wrote *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea*, in 1873, his *Nautilus* was deemed by the reader untaught in naval constructive history a wild creation of the author's fancy, like his passenger-car shot to the moon from an enormous cannon. To-day there is not a naval commander who would not look grave and consider an immediate withdrawal of his ship when told an enemy's submarine was cruising in his neighbourhood.

In the face of open danger, visible to eye and ear, no officer of the navy blanches. The submarine is out of sight. It may be within a hundred yards of the ship when the report is brought. A man who will stand up against a wild beast or a band of savages without a tremor will turn white and shriek with terror if, when he is in the water, the cry of "Shark!" is raised. The shark betrays its presence by its black dorsal fin above the surface of the sea. When the fin disappears the danger increases, becomes terrible; the fear of the swimmer in the vicinity of that black, unseen peril overmasters him.

The submarine sinks, like the shark, to attack.

Its gleaming back, surmounted by the small, round conning tower, disappears amid a swirl of foam. A single staff at the stern betrays its presence for a moment; then that, too, glides beneath the surface. Not a man on the battle-ship but shudders at the thought of that hidden monster under the waves, driven by the skill and hatred of the human brain.

Only tried and absolutely reliable men are chosen for the crew of the submarine. They must be ready to endure extreme discomfort and hardship and must hold their lives in their hands. A well-aimed shot from a war-ship, or a defect in the delicate machinery of the boat, and all is over. A submarine never is wrecked; it sinks, with all on board; it is obliterated.

The Japanese have been among the first to realise the terrible effectiveness of this formidable engine of war. No one outside a handful of men near the Mikado's throne knows how many submarine torpedo-boats are included in the Japanese navy, nor where they are stationed. Japanese naval officers and men form an ideal body from which the crews of these boats are to be chosen. In conflict with the enemy, whether on land or at sea, they reckon their lives as nothing. They seek eagerly for a glorious death at the hands of the foe, and when that is denied them and defeat is inevitable they prefer to die by their own weapons, or by leaping

into the sea, rather than prolong what would be to them a life of disgrace.

Oto Owari was appointed, on the 11th of April in this eventful year, to the command of the submarine *Octopus*, then docked, under a concealing roof, at Sasebo. Three nights later he went on board with a picked crew at midnight, and the *Octopus*, first gliding out of the dock, and gathering speed until she reached open water, suddenly stopped her engines and began to sink, inch by inch. In one minute a dark spot on the sea, and a patch of foam, indicated the top of her conning tower; and a moment later she was out of sight. In the act of sinking, her prow was toward the west.

Early on the morning of April 13th, the Japanese fleet made a demonstration in the direction of Port Arthur. Always ready to accept a challenge while there was a shot in the locker, the Russians steamed out to meet them. There was but a brief exchange of battle courtesies. The Port Arthur ships were far out-numbered and out-metalled, and Admiral Makaroff, on the *Petropavlovsk*, signalled for his squadron to retire.

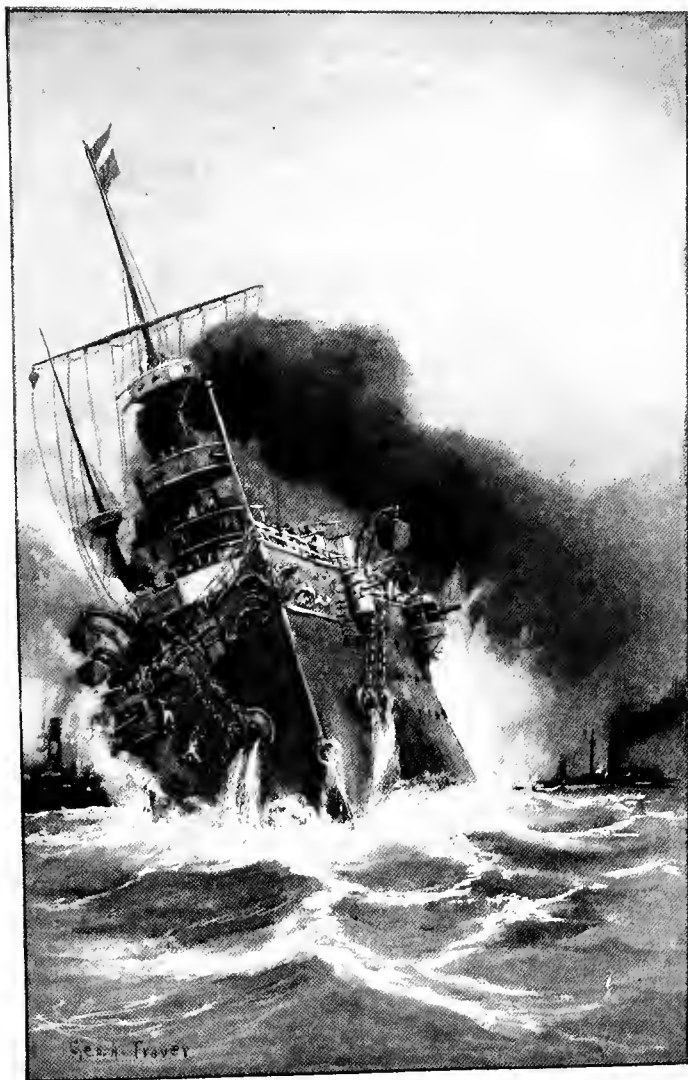
The *Petropavlovsk* was a first-class battle-ship of about 11,000 tons, with heavy armament of twelve-inch guns and secondary batteries. She had on board the admiral, the regular crew of 650 men, the Grand Duke Cyril, and, as a special guest, the

famous painter Verestchagin. Makaroff, with several officers of high rank, having satisfied themselves that the ship was in no immediate danger, proceeding as she now was under good headway, toward her home port, with the Japanese fleet hull down in the offing, went below to breakfast. The Grand Duke and the great artist remained on the bridge with the commander of the flagship and its lieutenant. They scanned through their glasses the far-off pursuers, and the frowning forts on Golden Hill, and congratulated each other on the escape of the Russian squadron from the danger of annihilation by an immensely superior force. Not a man of them guessed the near presence of a peril, unseen beneath those waves, dimpling in the morning sunlight, more terrible than the whole array of Japanese battle-ships on the horizon. Verestchagin, then the greatest living painter of death on the battle-field, knew not that Death was at that moment gliding toward him; that he was taking his last look at the drifting clouds, the rippling sea, the blue hills of Manchuria. The *Petropavlovsk* sped onward, but faster, beneath the waves, sped the *Octopus*, guided by the fierce eyes, the strong hand, the glowing heart and brain of the small brown man erstwhile cabin steward of the *Osprey*.

Suddenly the great battle-ship quivered from stem to stern, as if she had struck upon a rock. The sea

rose on the starboard side in a tremendous wave, and a roar like a broadside of a frigate filled the air, followed by a rattling, crashing discharge from the magazines. A huge gap appeared in the hull of the ship. A cataract of water poured in, and slowly turning upon her side, with one great, hissing gasp the *Petropavlovsk* sank.

The other ships of the squadron hastened to the spot, and almost before the fighting-tops of the battle-ship disappeared their boats were foaming across the water to pick up the survivors from the ill-fated vessel. The Grand Duke was saved, as were the lieutenant, two other officers, and about fifty sailors. Every other man went to the bottom. Never again would the guns of Russia boom out their noisy salute to the gallant admiral; and Verestchagin had made his last great study of Death.



THE SINKING OF THE PETROPAVLOVSK.

CHAPTER XV.

UNDER THE RED CROSS.

WHEN Fred Larkin regained consciousness, after being hurled into the sea, he found himself lying on a large table covered with a white cloth. Around him stood a number of big, burly men with black beards and stern but not unkindly faces. He knew at once that they must be Russians, and (having applied himself vigorously to the study of their language on his outward voyage from San Francisco) addressed himself to the most amiable-looking of the lot.

“Where am I?” he asked, in very poor Russian.

The man did not reply, but said, “Do you speak French?”

“*Oui!*” replied Larkin, glad to know that he could converse in a tongue much more familiar to him than the former. He repeated his question, adding, as a twinge of pain shot through his shoulder, “I am hurt.”

“Yes,” said the other; “you were struck by a splinter. We picked you up from the water and brought you here. You are English?”

“American. Am I in Port Arthur, then?”

“You are near Port Arthur, at Laouwei. What were you doing in the Chinese junk which was sunk by the Japanese?” demanded the Russian more sternly.

“I am a newspaper correspondent,” said Fred boldly, though in a weak voice. His wound pained him more and more, and he rightly guessed that the collar-bone was fractured. “I have been in Tokio, and could not reach the front, so I crossed over to your side, where, they tell me, the press receives more consideration. My credentials are in my inside pocket.”

The officer—for such Fred deemed him to be—smiled grimly, but made no comment upon this speech.

“You must be taken to the hospital in the city, where they will set your broken bone,” he said. “Meanwhile you will pardon the discourtesy of covering your face.”

A word of command was given, and a light cloth laid over the reporter’s head. He was then placed gently upon a stretcher and carried on board some kind of a vessel. Before long Fred heard the clamour of a wharf crowd; then felt himself lifted again and borne through the streets of a city which he knew must be Port Arthur, up a rather steep hill, to a building where he was deposited on a cot

beside two other men. The cloth was now removed, and the first object which met his eye was the kind, good face of a young woman, on whose arm was bound a strip bearing a red cross. With a feeling that he was in a safe refuge he meekly took the medicine held to his lips and fell into a deep sleep.

Between his sleeping and waking, the collar-bone was set that afternoon. Fred only remembered a confused sense of gentle hands and rough voices, of the smell of chloroform, of a general battered and "want-to-cry" feeling; and, at last, of utter abandonment of restfulness. The next morning he was weak and a little feverish, but he felt like a new man. In three weeks, the surgeon told him, he would be about again. Fred made use of his first returning strength to cable to the *Bulletin* and ask for instructions. The censor passed the message without cutting. The reply was terse: "Remain Russian army."

The time passed pretty heavily with the disabled correspondent, during his convalescence at the hospital. From the window of his room he could look down on the harbour and see the Russian war-ships. His two room-mates, Japanese officers from one of the stone-laden hulks sunk in a vain attempt to block the channel in Hobson fashion, had been sent to prison soon after his arrival.

From time to time he obtained scraps of information from other patients, from the hospital surgeon-staff, and from his gentle little nurse, Marie Kopofsky, a native of Moscow. Not "at the Czar's command," but of her own free will, she had volunteered, as had hundreds of Japanese women on their side of the sea, to nurse the sick and wounded at the front, under the banner of the Red Cross.

On the day before he left the hospital Fred was walking idly through the corridors to his room, when his ear caught the sound of an unpleasantly familiar voice. It recalled the prison at Santiago, where he had been confined at the close of his daring scouting expedition during the Spanish War. It recalled, too, strangely enough, the bright days he had recently passed at Tokio. Suddenly a light broke upon his mind.

"Stevens!" he exclaimed under his breath. "That mean traitor who tried to bribe me to betray the secrets of the United States navy to the Spanish—he and Señor Bellardo are the same man! It was the beard and the dark complexion that fooled me! What tricks is he up to now, I wonder?"*

* Readers of *Cleared for Action* will remember the previous career of the renegade Stevens. He was a graduate of the Naval Academy at Annapolis, and subsequently turned against his country. In an attempt to betray the Spaniards he was detected, arrested, and thrown into prison at Santiago just before the fall of that city.

Fred turned away abruptly, before Stevens caught sight of him, and entering his private room closed the door.

"I may not be here long," he muttered, "but while I am I will keep an eye on that fellow."

The next day he received his discharge from the hospital, and obtained lodgings at a respectable hotel near by. As soon as possible he presented his credentials to General Stoessel, and received a newspaper pass, with the instructions of the Russian government governing war correspondents at the front. They were, in brief, as follows:

Rule I. Correspondents must not interfere in any way with the preparations for war, or the plans of the staff, or divulge military secrets of advantage to the enemy, such as actions in which forts are damaged or guns lost.

II. No criticism of members of the General Staff, Corps, or Division Staff. The report of an engagement must be limited to a simple statement of fact.

III. Correspondents must not transmit unconfirmed information about the enemy, such as rumours of victory, or threatening movements, which may cause public uneasiness in Russia.

IV. All correspondents without credentials will be turned back. Those given permission to join the forces are in honour bound to observe the regulations, with the penalty of expulsion without

warning for any violation. They can go anywhere in the field, and are barred only from the Russian fleet.

"H'm," said Fred, as he read over the printed rules, "fair enough, though 'a simple statement of fact' is hard lines on a flowery writer. If my friends the Japs had been as liberal, I should n't have got into Port Arthur in a hurry."

He soon made the acquaintance of two or three other newspaper men from European capitals, and managed to get a few good cables through the censor without their being mangled beyond recognition. He soon discovered Stevens's lodgings, where he learned that the traitor had the entrée of Staff headquarters, and was known as Henry Burley, of Liverpool. For the present Fred could see no spoke to put in his wheel, for the interests of the United States were, as far as he knew, in no way involved in the man's character or actions. Still, as Fred soliloquised, "he would bear watching."

The war proceeded with unabated vigour. During the second week of Fred's enforced idleness another sea-tragedy took place in the Yellow Sea, off Korea. The Japanese transport *Kinshiu Maru* was proceeding from Nagasaki to the Korean coast, with ammunition, coal, supplies, and infantry. In the middle of the night several large ships loomed up through the haze. Supposing them to be Togo's fleet, the *Kinshiu Maru* signalled, "I am bringing

you coal." What was her commander's dismay to read the answer, twinkling out in red and white Ardois lights, "Stop instantly!" At the same moment the cry ran through the transport, "The Russians! the Russians!"

"Surrender!" signalled Admiral Yeszen, from his flagship. It was the Vladivostock squadron of formidable cruisers, released at last from the ice which for months had both protected and fettered them.

Instead of surrendering, the crew of the *Kinshiu Maru* began to lower their boats in mad haste, hoping to escape in the darkness; a Russian steam cutter captured every boat but one, which was afterward picked up by a Japanese schooner, many miles from the scene of the disaster.

The Russians boarded the transport, and found about one hundred and fifty soldiers, who barricaded themselves in the cabin and refused to surrender. Withdrawing to their ships, the victors began to shell the doomed hulk. The Japanese soldiers swarmed on deck and discharged their rifles in the direction of the foe, shouting old Samurai battle-songs. Pierced and shattered, the transport settled lower and lower in the water. At last a Whitehead torpedo, exploding against the ship, tore a great hole in her hull amidships, and she plunged into the depths of the sea. Up to the last

moment, when the waves rolled over them, the soldiers shouted their defiance and steadily loaded and fired. With two hundred prisoners, the Russian squadron returned to Vladivostock.

On land the Japanese advanced steadily. Gradually the long, throttling fingers extended from east and west toward the railroad that meant life or death to the great fortress. Then came the battle of the Yalu, to the east. The river was crossed, the Japanese poured into Manchuria, and the position of the Russian forces on the Liaotung peninsula became still more critical. Supplies were crowded into the beleaguered port, and non-combatants filled the northward-bound trains to overflowing. Early in May it became evident that with one more clutch of the relentless hand of Nippon all communication between Port Arthur and the rest of the world would be cut off.

Fred Larkin saw that he must decide whether to move out at once or remain virtually a prisoner in the town. Most of the other correspondents had already gone. The instructions from the home office were ambiguous. He tried to cable again, but the wires were pre-empted for military despatches in those stirring days. He decided, reluctantly, to abandon Port Arthur and join the Russian army now entrenched a few miles north, on the line of the railroad.

On the evening before the day which he had set for his departure he was strolling about the large square where a military band was playing national airs, when he bumped against a stranger who was hurrying in the opposite direction. Both paused, and their eyes met.

“Larkin!”

“Stevens!”

“Hush!” said the latter, looking nervously over his shoulder. “My name is Burley. Why are you here? When did you leave Tokio?”

“At about the same time when you decamped with the War Office documents,” said Fred easily. “Look here, old fellow,” he continued with assumed cordiality, “there ’s no need for us to quarrel in a foreign camp. You ’ve got something on hand now, or I ’m mistaken. Can’t you let me in?”

“You used pretty hard words to me the last time we met,” said the other gloomily. “It was n’t your fault that I was n’t strung up.”

“Nor yours that I was n’t,” assented Fred cheerfully, “so we ’re square on that score. But this is a different matter. It ’s all Japanese or Russian over here, and your Uncle Samuel has n’t a finger in the pie. Now you must have made a good thing out of your Tokio observations, and the presumption is that, having the confidence of our friend Stoessel and his staff, you are about ready to face about,”

“Perhaps I am,” said Stevens, or Burley, again looking about him. “And *if* I am, I need one good man I can depend on, to help me in the job. It’s too big for one to handle, and the city is so full of spies that I would n’t trust a native round the corner. But how do I know you will do your part, eh?”

“Try me and see,” said Larkin with great firmness.

“All right, I’ll try you.” They were now walking through one of the side streets, which was but dimly lighted. “Here are my lodgings. Come in and we’ll talk it over.”

He opened the outer door with a pass-key, and Fred followed him up two flights of narrow stairs.

“Here we are,” said Burley, opening a door. “Step right in, and I’ll light up.”

Larkin entered, but he was hardly over the threshold when he was pushed headlong to the floor, and heard the door closed and locked behind him.

A low laugh sounded from the entry. “‘Help me out,’ will you, you puppy?” whispered Burley through the keyhole. You’ll never help anybody out, in this world. Within ten minutes this house will be a heap of rubbish, and you will be in kingdom come. Good-bye! I’ll report you at home!”

His steps echoed down the stairway, and then the house was still.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LAST TRAIN FROM PORT ARTHUR.

FRED LARKIN'S first move, on finding himself trapped, was a perfectly natural one. He scrambled to his feet and rushed to the door. It took him some time to find the knob, in the darkness, and on turning it and pulling with all his might he was not surprised to discover that it refused to yield.

"It's a bad scrape," said the reporter to himself, breathing hard with his exertions, "but I've been in worse ones, unless that threat of blowing up the house is carried out."

He had been fumbling in his pocket, and now drew from it a box of wax vestas, one of which he struck. The light disclosed a small room, perfectly bare. A glance at the heavy door convinced him that it was useless to attempt a speedy escape in that direction. There were two low windows, both with the sashes fastened down and protected by outside shutters of wood.

Fred made short work of one of the sashes,

smashing it to bits with his foot. He then unhasped the shutters and peered out. The night was cloudy and he could discover nothing beyond the fact that there was a sheer drop of at least twenty-five feet to a sort of yard, which might be paved with brick or lumbered up with stones and iron scrap, for all he could see. The buildings beyond seemed to be warehouses of some sort; not a light gleamed from a single window. He shouted with all his might for help, but none came. Although he did not believe the house would "be a heap of rubbish in ten minutes"—three of which had already elapsed—he was sufficiently in doubt to be perfectly willing to leave it at once, if there were any possible way of escape.

As he stepped back into the room the flooring creaked under his foot. Lighting another wax match he found that a board was loose. He managed to get his fingers under the end, and, throwing his whole weight upward, ripped out the board. With the first for a lever, its neighbour came up easily enough. It was a cheaply built house, without a second layer beneath the surface floor. The edgewise-set planks on which the boards rested were about two feet apart. Fred did not hesitate a moment, but stamped hard upon the upper side of the ceiling of the apartment beneath his own. His foot went through the lath and plaster with a smash and

a cloud of dust. Picking up the broken boards, he enlarged the hole, and, as soon as the dust cleared away, peered through the opening. The room below was as dark as his own. He "sounded" with the longest floor-board at his disposal, and was gratified to find that he could "touch bottom" at about nine feet depth. Without losing further time he crawled through the hole, hung off from the stringers and dropped.

Recovering himself from the shock of alighting in the dark, Fred hastily produced another vesta, in order to survey his new quarters. The room was entirely unfurnished, like the one above. In one respect, however, it differed from the apartment in which he had been so unceremoniously installed: the door was ajar! In a minute more Larkin stood on the pavement outside, and in another, having taken a careful survey of the premises, he was hurrying away to his own lodgings, which he reached in safety, congratulating himself on the happy issue of his evening's adventure.

Martin Stevens, like all evil-doers, was an unhappy man. For weeks and months he would toil at a self-imposed task, to earn money and fame at the expense of principles, and when he seemed to himself to have attained absolute success, and felt the crackle of his basely earned bank-notes in his pocket,—he was miserable. The luscious fruit he

had so long looked forward to eating was a Dead Sea apple, crumbling to ashes at the first bite.

After his narrow escape from death at the hands of the Spaniards in Santiago, he had engaged in various questionable enterprises on the Continent, where a natural aptitude for languages soon enabled him to converse fluently in German, French, Italian, and Russian. He was already master of Spanish, as we have seen, and he had received a fine education in applied mathematics, physics, and navigation at the United States Naval Academy. Tall and rather well formed, carrying himself well, and conversing easily in the language of the country where he desired to exercise his peculiar calling—that of a professional spy—he readily obtained admittance to many councils and offices closed to the general public. He had correspondents in every court in Europe, as well as in Japan and at Peking.

When Stevens left Tokio in disguise, with half a dozen important papers in his breast pocket, he felt that he had achieved the crowning glory of his life. The documents were indeed gladly received at the Russian headquarters, but the man was despised and distrusted. The bluff, gallant Stoessel paid the spy a large sum without hesitation; but, beyond suggesting another expedition—perhaps to the camp of General Nogi's forces, or to Admiral Togo's fleet—he had nothing more to say to him. As the high-

minded Russian turned to his staff-officers, whose bronzed, manly faces bore witness to their honourable service under the Czar, Stevens sneaked off, his face sallower than ever, to cash the official draft and to gnash his teeth at the cold, contemptuous treatment he had met with when his secrets were all divulged. In this mood, plotting a new system of espionage upon the Russians, whom he hated, he had met Larkin. He had already recognised the reporter in Tokio, and had thought himself well rid of him when he fled to Port Arthur. No sight could have been more unwelcome to him than that of Larkin's merry, honest, shrewd countenance, rising before him like Banquo's ghost, when least expected.

Near Stevens's lodgings was an empty house of which he had the key, and in which he had already met representatives of that terrible class of men who are now found in all parts of the civilised world, but most where the double eagle of the Russian flag proclaims the despotic rule of St. Petersburg — the Nihilists. Revolving in his mind various plans for getting rid of Larkin without actually committing murder, he determined, on the spur of the moment, to lock him up over night at this secret place of rendezvous. He even thought vaguely of blowing up the building with a bomb, which one of his friends would supply on demand. He shrank,

however, from this extreme measure, which would put his own head in peril, and contented himself with giving the war correspondent a good scare, out of pure malice, and with so disposing of his person that he would be kept out of the way over night. He had no doubt that Larkin would gain his release in some way the next morning, but there would be time, meanwhile, to don a new disguise and perfect arrangements for leaving the city. How he failed, we have seen. Fred Larkin was not an easy man to scare, or to keep within four walls against his will. The next morning, accordingly, both spy and reporter were at the railway station, eager to take the first train for the north. There was a dense crowd of refugees struggling for places, and neither of the two men was conscious of the other's presence on board when the guard's whistle sounded at last, and the long train — the last train for many a weary month, as it proved—moved out of Port Arthur.

It was six o'clock on the morning of May 6th. The sun had burst through the clouds which had rendered the preceding night so gloomy, and the country around the city stretched out on either side of the railroad in all the loveliness of spring. Fields and hillsides flushed with blossoms of almond and apricot, and opened fair reaches of greensward as the train rolled past. In sheltered nooks, by the banks of dancing streamlets, nestled those little

Chinese villages which, however squalid upon close acquaintance, add a picturesque touch to the Oriental landscape. All around the horizon was piled with high hills, clothed in verdure or reddish in the early sunlight where broad ledges and stretches of sandy slope had been denuded by storm and the hand of man. Larkin almost forgot the war and the hot passions that were smouldering behind the fair peaks and along the hidden valleys of Manchuria, as he gazed from the car window and thought of the Brookfield meadows in May, the little stream where he had caught his first trout, and the pine wood which sheltered the brave mayflowers and hepaticas before the winter's drifts had melted on the northern slopes and in the deeper recesses of the forest.

But his musings were rudely interrupted. At the end of about two hours after leaving Port Arthur the train halted at the outpost position occupied by the Russian forces under General Fock. The peace of nature was broken by the sound of sappers and diggers at work, by commands harshly shouted, the tramping of horses, the rumble of wheels, the stir and bustle of an armed camp.

On again, steadily forging northward, with the engine throwing out great clouds of black smoke from her soft-coal fuel as she climbed the up-grades; through several villages without a stop, until Kinchow was reached. A sharp lookout was now kept

for Japanese cavalry, which were known to be scouring the country to the east, the main body of the invaders having already made a substantial advance from Dalny, on the eastern coast. A train had been fired upon, only the day before, at a point about forty miles north of Port Arthur. There were rumours that Japanese troops were landing in force at Port Adams, on the west coast of the peninsula, near Newchwang, and that a strong detachment had occupied Haicheng, just south of Liaoyang.

The engineer pulled open the throttle, as the train struck a long, straight piece of road. The cars rocked from side to side, and cries of alarm from invalids and women were heard. The speed was frightful. Larkin clung to his seat, devoutly hoping that his journalistic career would not terminate in a smash-up on the Imperial Trans-Siberian Railroad. Just then a band of horsemen was seen galloping toward the road. They drew up sharply and could be seen to unslung their muskets. *Puff! Puff!* No noise could be heard above the roar of the train, but the passengers were not left in doubt as to the cavalymen's intentions. A dozen windows were shattered by bullets, while the frightened inmates of the rocking cars crouched low between the seats. With a rush and a roar the train clattered on, leaving the assailants far behind.

On and on, through Newchwang, crossing bridges

which were soon to be wrapped in flames, rattling over level plains, winding through narrow defiles surmounted with frowning fortifications, until at last the train rolled into the station at Liaoyang. That afternoon the railroad was crossed by the Japanese, the rails torn up, bridges burned and telegraph wires cut. Port Arthur was isolated from the world. Its next telegram would be sent out eight months later, to be recorded in the quaint characters of the Island Empire.

Fred Larkin, little dreaming that his captor of the preceding evening was in the same city, at once proceeded to make himself at home. He presented his credentials at headquarters, secured lodgings, and sent off a dispatch to the *Bulletin* that very night, describing the last train from Port Arthur and the conditions as he had found them in that city. This final portion of his telegram would have occupied about half a column of his paper. The grim censor blue-pencilled it down to eight lines and a half!

CHAPTER XVII.

DICK SCUPP'S ADVENTURE.

“*OSPREY, ordered to Chemulpo.*” Hallie Rexdale read the brief announcement in the list of “navy orders, Asiatic fleet,” and wondered if her Dave were summoned to new dangers. While his ship was stationed at Chefoo she felt comparatively easy about him; but Chemulpo, the port of Seoul, Korea, was almost on the firing line. To be sure, the United States was as yet in no way involved in the conflict, but suppose the Vladivostock fleet should happen to descend upon Chemulpo? Shells would fly, and the *Osprey* could not. The obscure half-line in the newspaper recording naval movements, and overlooked by all but one in a thousand readers, carries joy or dismay to many a wife and sweetheart, for whom the interest in the whole paper centres in that one announcement. Hallie tore up the envelope she had already addressed, and added a few lines to her letter, tearfully bidding—bless her heart!—her gallant commander to “be careful.”

The officers and crew of the gunboat were glad to receive the order, when it reached them late in May. They were heartily tired of Chefoo, and any change was hailed with delight. They foresaw, moreover, that before long the *Osprey* would be ordered to Cavite, there to dock for repairs and the cleaning up her weedy hull needed.

From Chefoo to Chemulpo the distance is about four hundred miles. Rexdale consulted his charts and reckoned that thirty-six hours would be needed for the trip. Word was passed that all liberty on shore was at an end, and every man was supposed to be on board before four bells that same evening. "Supposed to be"—but the commander knew that his crew had recently been diminished, and he felt sore on that particular subject. Three men, during the preceding fortnight, had deserted, presumably to join the Russian navy, which was offering generous inducements to new recruits. It is reckoned, at the present day, that nearly ten per cent. of men—not all "enlisted"—in the United States Navy sooner or later desert.

At Morning Quarters, on the day when the *Osprey* was to weigh anchor and sail for Chemulpo, one more man was missing—no other than our old friend Dick Scupp. He had been one of the shore party of the preceding day, and in some way his absence from mess had been overlooked at night. One of

his mates remembered seeing him enter a saloon in Chefoo, kept by a Chinaman of more than doubtful reputation; nothing further could be ascertained concerning the seaman's movements. Dave knew that sailors are loath to betray one of their number, and questioned them sharply, as Dick was too valuable a man to lose without an effort for his recovery. He even delayed sailing while "Jimmy Legs" spent a couple of hours searching for the delinquent in the lower quarters of the town; but no light was thrown on his disappearance. The Chinese saloon-keeper, Ah Fong, declared that a sailor-man answering to Scupp's description had become partly intoxicated on the premises and had been summarily ejected. That was the last seen of him. Lieut.-Commander Rexdale could wait no longer and put to sea, logging the incident as "Dick Scupp, Ordinary Seaman, disappeared in Chefoo. Probably deserted."

At a little before noon the *Osprey* was under way. There was no local pilot on the bridge, for each of the officers was supposed to be perfectly capable of taking the ship out and conning her across the gulf to the port of destination. During the long stay at Chefoo Rexdale, in particular, had improved the time by as careful a study of the currents, channels, tides, and beacons on the Chinese coast as if he were to pass an examination in seamanship at short notice.

The gunboat was about five miles out when the attention of Staples, the executive, was called to a large junk crossing her bow about a mile ahead.

"There 's some sort of a row on board," said the lieutenant, as he eyed the lumbering craft through his glasses. "It looks like a free fight among the pigtails."

Rexdale and Liddon, the officer of the deck, joined him in scrutinising the stranger, whose decks seemed to be crowded with men, among whom a struggle was evidently taking place.

Suddenly the commander exclaimed: "There goes a man overboard, and the scoundrels don't mean to stop for him!"

"He may be dead," suggested Staples coolly. "He seemed to be muffled in black, which is n't the fashionable costume for a Chinese coolie."

"We must pick him up," said Dave with energy. "He 's alive and struggling. I can see his head now—I believe it 's a negro. Port your helm a little, Mr. Staples. Head for the man and get your lifeboat ready!"

"Port, Quartermaster!" commanded the executive. Then, raising his trumpet to his lips, he shouted, "Man the lifeboat!"

It should be understood that the *Osprey*, like most gunboats of her class, carried two large "whaleboats." These were kept ready for lowering

quickly, when the ship was at sea. The one which happened to be on the lee side at any given time was the "lifeboat." There is always a "lifeboat's crew" on watch, while at sea, permanently detailed, all fully drilled in their duties.

Staples's voice rang like a bugle-call throughout the ship and in an instant every man in the lifeboat crew was on his feet and racing for his station.

"Steady, Quartermaster," commanded Rexdale. "Keep her as she is. You 're heading straight for him."

"Aye, aye, sir! East-north-east, sir!" responded the quartermaster.

"I 'll relieve you, Mr. Liddon," said Staples. "You go down and look out for the boat!"

By this time the boat-crew were clambering into the lee whaleboat, led by Midshipman Starr, who had cleared the wardroom ladder in a flying leap at the first order from the bridge. Within sixty seconds from the call "Man the lifeboat!" the boat was ready for lowering. In the stern-sheets stood the coxswain, steering oar in hand, with every nerve alert and tense; the bow oarsman had cast off the end of the "sea painter," but kept a turn with it around the forward thwart. The other men were seated on the thwarts, two of them with boat-hooks, with which they were prepared to push the boat off from the ship's side while being lowered, as the

Osprey was rolling a little in a cross swell. Bob Starr was beside the coxswain, and awaited the command for lowering, as he tried to catch a glimpse of the drowning man in the sea far ahead.

When the alarm was first given the *Osprey* was making about ten knots an hour, which would call for six minutes to cover the intervening mile. Rexdale knew better than to slow up and lower his boat at once, thus increasing this time and the risk of losing the man.

"Port a little more, Quartermaster!" ordered the captain. "Mr. Staples," he added, "whistle down to the engine-room and tell them to give us all the speed they can."

After a brief colloquy through the tube the executive reported: "They can do a little better, sir, but not much. They were just starting to clean fires."

Liddon, on the quarter-deck, now called out, "All ready the lifeboat, sir!"

"Very well, Mr. Liddon," returned Staples. "Hold on all till I give you the order to lower."

Four minutes went by, with only an occasional growl from Dave: "Port a little! steady, now! Starboard a little! Steer a steady course there at the wheel—you 're yawing all round the compass! There you are! See if you can hold her steady at that!"

The man in the water was now about two hundred yards away.

“Stop both engines, Mr. Staples!”

The executive, who was already standing with his hand on the lever of the port indicator, swung it sharply to “*Stop*,” while the quartermaster, at the starboard indicator, did the same.

“Half speed astern with both engines!” commanded the captain. “Stand by to lower, Mr. Staples!”

Again the signal levers swung, and the executive called out, “Stand by to lower, Mr. Liddon, as soon as we stop backing!”

The ship slowed down, trembling under the reversed strokes of the powerful screw and rolling sheets of white foam from beneath each quarter.

“Stop both engines!” ordered Dave.

“Stop, sir!”

“Lower away, Mr. Staples!”

“Lower away, sir!” and an instant later the boat sank to the water, was detached, and was pulling rapidly toward the swimmer, who, when first abandoned by the junk, had paddled about irresolutely, but was now making his way steadily toward the boat.

“It ’s a negro, fast enough,” observed Staples, gazing through his binoculars. “He ’s as black as the ace of spades.”

“Give her half-speed, Mr. Staples,” directed REXDALE, whose whole mind was now on the management of his ship, “and come round to pick them up!”

Again the signal jingled in the engine-room, and the ship, with helm a-starboard, circled round the lifeboat.

“Up oars! Shove off!” commanded STARR in low tones, as soon as the boat had detached itself from the patent hooks. “Let fall!”

The orders were repeated sharply by the coxswain, the oars dropped into the rowlocks, and were brought level with the rail, with blades horizontal.

“Give way together!” and away went the boat on its errand of mercy, foaming over the choppy sea, toward the struggling swimmer.

“Way enough!” ordered the midshipman, as they approached the black, woolly head bobbing about in the water.

Bob stood up in the stern-sheets, as the boat lost its headway. Suddenly a look of wonder came into his face, succeeded by a suppressed chuckle, to the amazement of the men, no one of whom, however, broke discipline by turning his head.

“In bows!” called the coxswain, in response to STARR’s order. “Stand by there, to pull the man in! Hold water! Stern all!”

Again a ripple of amusement shot over the

midshipman's jolly face, which grew red in his attempts to suppress his emotions.

The next moment the bow oarsman reached down and with a great effort pulled the dripping cast-away in over the side.

A roar of laughter rang out from the boat's crew.

"A dog! A big Newfoundland!" exclaimed the coxswain, as the animal, sinking down in the bottom of the boat with a low whine, gave himself a shake that sent the water flying over the men. "Shall we throw him over again, sir?"

"No, no," laughed Bob, resuming his seat. "He's too fine an animal to drown. Get back to the ship. That's enough, men! Silence!"

Rexdale, Staples, and Liddon had already made out the character of the supposed "man overboard," and were shaking with laughter when Bob returned. The duty remained, however, of hoisting the boat and resuming the course to Chemulpo.

"Lead along and man the lifeboat's falls!" shouted the executive.

The boat pulled up to the leeward side of the ship—the engines having been stopped—and a line was thrown to her. This was deftly caught by the bow oarsman and a turn taken around the forward thwart. The boat, by means of this line and skilful management of the steering oar in the hands of the coxswain, was sheered in under her falls, which had

already been overhauled down so that the lower blocks were within easy reach of the men in the boat. The ship in the meantime was forging slowly ahead. A line was thrown from her stern to a man in the stern of the boat, who took a turn and held on, to keep the boat from swinging violently forward when she should leave the water.

The falls were now hooked on, having been previously manned on deck by a long row of men reaching half the length of the ship, ready to run the boat up quickly, at the order.

"Haul taut!" commanded Liddon, who was standing on the ship's rail, watching affairs. "Hoist away!"

Up came the boat, crew and all, to the davits. The men clambered out and, with some difficulty, passed down the dog, who seemed disinclined for further adventures.

"Full speed ahead!" jingled the engine-room bell, at Staples's command, and the *Osprey*, brought to her old course, once more started for Chemulpo.

The dog, a big, shaggy Newfoundland, soon regained his composure, and wagged his way along the deck with the greatest good-humour.

"He's a fine fellow, anyway," said Dave, patting the broad head. "I'm glad we hove to for him."

"What's this written on his collar," queried Liddon, taking the wet leather band in his hands

and turning it, so as to read some rude characters apparently scratched with the point of a knife.

Dave glanced down carelessly, then sprang up the steps to the bridge.

“Starboard, Quartermaster,” he ordered in sharp, quick tones. “Mr. Staples, head her dead for that junk!”

Liddon was already by his side. After the first instant he did not wonder at the commander’s sudden change of course. He, too, had read the two words, scrawled on the dripping leather collar:

“*Shanghaied—Scupp.*”

Both officers understood in a moment the whole story of the seaman’s mysterious disappearance. They reasoned with the quickness of sailors—and correctly, as it afterwards appeared—that Scupp had yielded to his one unfortunate weakness, a fondness for liquor, during his liberty on shore. Once inside the rum shop he had been plied with spirits, probably drugged—for the Chinese are experts in the use of opium—and while insensible carried on board the junk, to be shipped on board a Russian man-of-war. So many men had deserted for that purpose that there was little likelihood of the man’s objecting when he found himself actually pressed (or “shanghaied,” to use an old sailor’s term for this sort of forcible enlistment), and offered wages double those he had been earning. While the Rus-

sian navy would not instigate such a daring breach of the law of nations it was highly improbable that they would reject a good seaman, trained to his work by the United States.

In kidnapping Master Richard Scupp, however, the Chinese made a bad mistake. Now that he was sober Dick had no idea of deserting his colours or taking service under a foreign flag. He came to his senses just as the junk cleared the chops of the harbour of Chefoo, and within five minutes he had laid out three of his captors and was himself knocked down. He found himself lying beside a big dog, who licked his face and expressed his willingness to aid his new friend, so far as he was able, to escape. Without definite purpose Dick scratched the two words on the dog's collar with the point of his sheath knife. This act was detected by the observant Chinese, but they could see no harm in his amusing himself in that way and were rather glad for the dog to keep him out of mischief.

About half an hour later there was a commotion and a jabbering of tongues among the pig-tailed crew. Dick stood up and caught sight of the *Osprey* heading toward the junk at full speed. This drove him wild again. Bowling over the nearest Chinaman he sprang for a spare spar, intending to jump overboard and take his chances of being picked up. The crew crowded him back, and the

dog, putting his forepaws on the rail, barked joyously at the gunboat which poor Dick vainly longed to reach.

A thought struck the kidnapped sailor as he watched the dog. Before any one could stop him he leaped to the side of the junk and tossed the animal overboard. He knew the Newfoundland could swim like a fish, and, providing a shark did not drag him under, there was just a chance that the officers of the *Osprey* might see the dog and, picking him up, read the message on his collar. The plan, as we have seen, succeeded admirably.

Dick had the satisfaction of watching the gunboat at it slowed down and sent a boat to his four-footed messenger struggling in the sea. The Chinese, as he had expected, were angry at the loss of the dog, but did not dare risking a visit from the United States war-ship by throwing their boat up into the wind and rescuing the black swimmer.

"They'll know where I am, anyhow, if they only read that collar," said poor Dick to himself, as the junk rapidly drew away.

He was now forced down on the deck behind the rail lest he should be made out through the glasses of his officers, which the Chinese knew must be scrutinising the craft which had left behind such a peculiar bit of jetsam.

The *Osprey* quivered from stem to stern, under

the pressure upon her engines. The firemen guessed that something unusual was in the wind, and, stripped to the waist, kept the furnace doors clanging and the fires roaring under her boilers.

"We 're walking right up on her!" said Staples excitedly, as he and Dave watched the chase. "Is it any use to signal to them to stop? Do they understand the signals?"

"We 'll signal in a way they *will* understand," exclaimed Rexdale, "if they don't obey the flags. Call the signal-men!"

In response to a shrill whistle two men came clambering up to the bridge and stood ready to execute orders.

"Set 'Stop at once,' " commanded Dave, "General Merchant Code."

A string of gay little flags mounted to the signal yard. They produced not the slightest effect on the flying junk, which was plunging its nose into the waves and scurrying eastward before the wind at not less than nine or ten knots an hour.

"Pass the word for the crew of the forward port three-pounder, Mr. Staples! Stations! Cast loose and provide!"

The orders were repeated, and four gunners sprang to their places. In a twinkling the captain of the crew had removed the gun-cover and tompion and cast adrift the gun-lashings; Number Two had

gone over all the mechanism of the mount and provided revolvers and ammunition for all four; Numbers Three and Four brought cartridges and swabs, and took positions in rear of the breech of the gun.

“Load!”

The breech was opened, a cartridge inserted, and the block swung back into place and clamped. The junk was now only about one thousand yards distant. The *Osprey*, closing up from the south, held a course at an acute angle with that of the fugitive, to head her off.

The best marksman of the gun-crew now stood at the breech, and, with his shoulder against the padded crutch, slowly and carefully brought the Chinaman within the sighting line.

“Drop a shot across her forefoot,” ordered the commander.

“Commence firing!”

The gun roared, and a big splash just in front of the junk testified to the correct aim of the pointer, and at the same time spoke in a language that could not be misunderstood. The vessel veered round, spilling the wind out of her great, oddly-shaped sail, which hung flapping from its huge yard.

The *Osprey* had now forged up within a few times her own length and slowed down.

“Mr. Liddon,” said Dave with energy, “you will take the starboard quarter-boat and board that ves-

sel. Arm your crew with cutlasses and revolvers, and if her captain can understand English, tell him I 'll blow him out of the water if he does n't hand over my man."

"Ay, ay, sir!" returned Liddon, delighted with his commission.

For the second time within an hour the boat glided down from the davits, and went tossing over the waves, driven by eight pairs of brawny arms.

Before they could reach the side of the junk, a chorus of shouts came from the gunboat they had just left.

"Man overboard! Man overboard! Stand by to pick him up!"

The fact was that when the Chinamen saw that the formidable war-ship was really in earnest, a panic seized them. They all shrieked and jabbered together, as their vessel hove to, and Dick Scupp plainly saw that more trouble was coming for him. There seemed to be a dispute between two factions on the junk, one of which screamed and pointed first to Dick and then to the *Osprey*, and the other pointed as furiously to the hold of the junk. Comprehending that they were discussing whether to restore him to his own ship, or to hide him below decks—possibly with a knife in his heart—and declare innocence, the sailor made ready for action.

The party demanding his concealment seemed to

have carried their point, for a number of them now made a rush for Dick, with fierce eyes and with daggers drawn. The seaman sprang to his feet, catching one of his guards with a blow under the ear and tripping the other to the deck. Before a hand could be laid upon him he bounded over the rail into the sea, and began to swim vigorously toward the approaching boat.

All efforts of the crew of the latter were now directed to saving the life of their comrade. Liddon steered skilfully up to him and a moment later he was dragged in over the gunwale, gasping and sputtering. The junk, meanwhile, caught the wind over her bows and filled away again toward the north-east. The *Osprey* waited to pick up her boat, as the Chinamen thought she would, and another chase was in prospect.

“Stave her to bits! It ’s an insult to the United States! We can catch up with her in five minutes!” urged the junior officers of the gunboat, gathering around their commander, forgetful of discipline.

Rexdale shook his head, though his teeth were set and his face red with suppressed anger. “We can prove nothing,” he said. “They ’ll swear he was a deserter and concealed himself on board. Uncle Sam does n’t want to take on China or anybody else in this scrappy country just now. We ’d be blamed and court-martialled if we should sink a

junkful of Chinamen for no better reason than the one we have."

He turned to the pilot. "Full speed ahead, on her course for Chemulpo." Then, calling down to the gun-captain, "Unload and secure!"

Dick was duly disciplined for absenting himself beyond leave, but, considering the hard experience he had undergone, his punishment was made nominal, with a not very severe reprimand from the commander. The dog was named "Junk" and became the rival of the black kitten—though very friendly with her—as the mascot of the *Osprey*.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OSHIMA GOES A-FISHING.

CAPTAIN OSHIMA (promoted from lieutenantcy for bravery on the field), of the 10th Regiment in the Second Japanese Army, under General Odzer, was fishing. Like most of the Japanese soldiers he had brought from home, among other effects, a small fishing-line and several hooks. There were hours and even days when he was called upon to perform no active duty beyond routine drills, and in memory of the days when he and Oto used to tramp the brook-sides of dear old Japan, displaying their trophies at night to gently admiring O-Hana-San and the other prim little maids of the village, he had determined to try his luck in this strange, war-swept Manchuria. The hill-tops might be wreathed in battle-smoke and the plains heaped with dead and dying; but in obscure valleys and down slopes which had thus far escaped the tread of martial forces, the ploughshare of the steel shell and the terrible harrow of shrapnel, streamlets laughed and flowed blithely along their pebbled

courses, and tiny trout darted to and fro as merrily as in the dreamy days of peace and plenty. So Oshima went a-fishing.

Unrolling his line and attaching it to a neat little pole, cut in a near-by thicket, he took his seat on a boulder and dropped his baited hook in one of the quieter pools of a brook that fed an upper branch of the Faitse River. It was warm, and Oshima took a fan from his pocket and fanned himself gravely as he fished. Every Japanese soldier is provided with a fan. Oshima had often looked back on his company, and on the column trailing behind, on a long march under the scorching Manchurian sun in June, and had seen a thousand little fans fluttering beside the heads of the men.

The Japanese army are not only among the fiercest fighters the world has ever known, but they are dainty in their appointments. With the army go camp-followers who are allowed to sell fans, handkerchiefs, cigarettes, tea, soaps, tooth-brushes, and writing-paper. For the officers are carried great iron kettles in nets, two on a pony; these are used in heating water for baths, as well as to cook the company mess of rice. A few squares of straw matting make a bath-house, and a big stone jar is the tub of comfort for the almond-eyed campaigner. Much time is also spent in correspondence. The field post carried an immense amount of mail every

day between Antung and the front. Around the camp of Oshima's regiment could be seen, in the quieter hours of the day, hundreds of soldiers sitting cross-legged under the trees, painting artistic epistles to their dear ones at home with brushes on rolls of thin paper. Oshima himself had written two letters that day; one to his mother and one to O-Hana-San, who was now a volunteer nurse under the Red Cross at a large seaport of the new country. So he went fishing.

He caught three very small trout within an hour. Then he rose, rolled up his line and deposited it in a neat packet, strung the fish upon a twig and was about to return to camp when he noticed a Chinese coolie acting very peculiarly. The man was dressed as a Chinese labourer, with a helmet upon his head, a coarse blouse and thick-soled shoes, like all of his caste. He was carrying two pails of water, which he had just filled at the brook, a few rods below Oshima. This was no unusual occupation for a coolie, although it was surprisingly far from camp; the peculiarity lay in the keenness with which the man surveyed the outworks of the fortifications, and his manner in glancing nervously over his shoulder as he walked off. When he saw Oshima looking at him he almost dropped his pails; then hurried down toward the camp at a pace that soon carried him out of sight.

It was late in the afternoon when the captain—who had dined sumptuously on rice and his three fish—caught sight of the coolie once more. The man was walking past his tent, carrying water as before. Oshima called to him sharply. Apparently the coolie did not hear, for he continued on his way, with head bent and eyes cast down.

Oshima spoke a few words to his orderly, who passed an abrupt order to two privates stationed near headquarters. They at once stepped after the Chinaman, and clapping their hands on his shoulders, turned him round in his tracks and marched him back to the tent.

Oshima viewed the coolie in silence for a moment; then said in Chinese, "What is your name, my man?"

"Ah Wing, master."

"Your occupation?"

The man held up his water-pails, as if that were a sufficient answer. He had not yet looked his interrogator in the face, but persistently gazed down at the ground.

Oshima scrutinised the fellow intently. Suddenly and without warning the officer sprang to his feet, knocked off the helmet and tweaked the supposed coolie's pigtail. Behold, it came off in his hand! The man stood erect. He dropped his burden. His countenance was pale but firm. He looked his captor in the eye.

"You are a Russian soldier?" asked Oshima.

"I am an officer in the Third Siberian Reserves," answered the prisoner calmly, in his own language. "My name is Sergius Jalofsky. Volunteers were called for to obtain information as to your forces and defences. I was one of six to volunteer. The other five have, I trust, escaped. I was to return to Liaoyang to-night."

"Search him," said the Japanese captain sternly.

From an inner pocket was produced a paper containing measurements, figures, and plans relating to the encampment. The evidence was convincing, even if the spy, seeing that escape or concealment was impossible, had not made his full confession.

"Hold the prisoner under guard," ordered Oshima. "We will hold a court-martial and settle this matter at once."

The capture of the Russian was reported at once to the colonel of the regiment, and a council of officers was convened. Five minutes' deliberation was sufficient.

"You will die at sunset," said Oshima to the spy. "You are a brave man. You shall be shot."

At a gesture of the captain the guard led away the prisoner, whose countenance had not changed nor features relaxed in the slightest degree when the sentence was pronounced.

The sun was already nearing the mountain-tops

in the west, and the cool damp shadows of evening rapidly advanced.

A corporal's guard led the captive to a retired spot at a short distance from the camp. The men formed in line, with loaded muskets ready.

"Sir," said the corporal, "have you any request to make, or message to leave? You are one of the bravest men I ever met. I give you my word your message shall be delivered."

For the first time the Russian's eyes moistened. "I thank you, comrade," said he. "I have but done my duty. It was at the Czar's command. I have no word—yet—I will ask you to send word to my wife in Irkutsk that I died like a man and a soldier." He took his ikon from his breast, kissed it, and bent his head over it a moment. Then, having given his wife's address to the corporal, who wrote it down carefully, he folded his arms and stood erect.

The corporal gently placed the folded arms down at the man's side. "It is well not to cover one's heart," he said. "Death will be very quick."

The Russian bowed his head gravely. "I am ready," he said.

"Ready, men! Aim! Fire!"

As the smoke drifted away, the Russian looked upward an instant, with a smile on his bronzed face; then, murmuring "At—the—Czar's—command!" he fell, dead.

Day by day, through the fierce summer heats of June and July, the Japanese strengthened their hold upon lower Manchuria, and tightened the cordon about Port Arthur.

Nanshan Hill and Motien Pass on the east were carried with the bayonet. Kinchow had already fallen, the fire of the Japanese fleet annihilating the Russian batteries in a two-days battle.

When the great Corliss wheel was set up and the massive machinery "assembled" at the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia, the maker refused to start his engine for a trial before the Exposition was officially opened.

"It will run," he said, "and run smoothly and perfectly. Every part is exact; figures cannot lie."

It was a great risk to take, but the event proved that the manufacturer was right. When the electric signal announced the formal opening of the Fair, steam was let on. The huge piston of the Corliss engine started; the enormous wheel—the largest ever made, up to that time—began to revolve, and in a moment every polished rod and valve and wheel in the great engine was doing its part, running the entire machinery of the hall and performing its work without jar or noise, as smoothly as a child's water-wheel in a wayside brook.

So operated the wondrous, complex machine of

the Japanese military system, from the first mobilisation in Tokio, through the hurry and risk of transportation across the inner sea, and in movement after movement, battle after battle, in a country far removed from home. Field telephones kept the commanders in touch with advanced forces; the commissary department fulfilled its duties like clock-work; Kuroki, Oyama, Nodzu, Nogi, moved regiments and divisions to and fro like pieces upon a gigantic chess-board.

The heat was now terrible. More than once a whole battalion rushed into a river to drink, under the full sweep of the enemy's fire. Still the relentless army of small brown men swept onward, marching through fields of Chinese corn, winding along narrow defiles, holding firmly every point of vantage gained.

As the end of August drew near it was evident that the two mighty armies must meet. Minor battles had been fought, and skirmishes had been of almost daily occurrence throughout the campaign, but the vast hordes of armed men from the East and West had not yet been pitted against each other. The time had come at last, and the civilised world held its breath.

The Russian army lay strongly entrenched at Liaoyang, an old town on the line of the railroad between Port Arthur and Harbin. The Japanese

had been pouring troops into the peninsula for months, a portion called the Third Army gathering around Port Arthur, under General Nogi, the remainder pressing northward on the heels of the retreating enemy. The objective of the First, Second, and Fourth Armies was Liaoyang. The supreme command of the Japanese forces was now entrusted to Field Marshal Marquis Oyama, who had commanded ten years before, in the war against China.

The three armies, having overcome every obstacle, were in touch before Liaoyang. They formed a huge horse-shoe, with its ends resting on the Taitse River, on the south bank of which stood Liaoyang. The Russians formed an inner horse-shoe in a similar position. On each side were over two hundred thousand men, nearly half a million human beings, all animated with the one desire to kill!

On the morning of August 30th, at the first grey of dawn a puff of white smoke broke upward from the Japanese lines and a shell, filled with shrapnel, flew screaming across the peaceful plain—a dread messenger to announce the beginning of the longest and greatest battle the world had ever known.

One battery after another opened fire, throughout the entire front of nearly forty miles. Under cover of the artillery attack the Russians charged furiously, often driving the Japanese before them at the point

of the bayonet; but no sooner was a company or a regiment annihilated than another took its place, and was hurled against the foe. Positions were taken and retaken. The carnage was terrible. Never in the world's history had such enormous masses of men thrown their lives away with utter abandon. On each side a thousand cannon thundered from morning till night. At noon of the second day a slow rain began to fall, transforming the plain into a quagmire, crossed and recrossed by endless trains of men, a part charging toward the front with wild shouts of defiance, a part halting, crawling, limping, or lying in carts, seeking the hospitals, where their ghastly wounds could be treated. When the second night fell it was reported in every capital in both hemispheres that after two days of desperate fighting Kouropatkin had gained a decided advantage.

Fred Larkin was in his element. Dashing to and fro on a shaggy little Siberian pony, he gathered news as if by instinct. His experience in the Spanish-American War served him in good stead, and he not only knew what deductions to draw from certain movements on both sides, but what information was most desired by his paper and the great reading public at home. In Boston the crowds in lower Washington Street read on the bulletin boards the despatches he dashed off in his note-book

and sent from the Liaoyang telegraph office after they had been duly censored.

Late in the afternoon on the second day of the battle he was making his way back to the town across the miry fields south of Liaoyang. The shaggy pony shook his mane and snorted as the rain fell, but was too tired to trot.

“Tough day, pony,” said Fred, who himself was so used up with his exertions that he could hardly sit upright in the saddle. “Never mind, old boy. In half an hour you will be in your stable, munching oats. You shall have an extra good supper for the hard work you ’ve—hallo! be careful!”

The pony had wandered a little from the main road, which the steady stream of hospital and commissary waggons had made well-nigh impassable, and Fred had allowed him to pick out his own path across the plain so long as his general direction was right. The little animal now interrupted him by shying violently at an object upon which he had almost trampled. Peering down Fred saw a soldier stretched out upon the sodden ground. At first he thought the man was dead, but looking more closely he saw the soldier’s hand move slightly, as if to ward off a blow.

“Poor chap!” said Fred, whose kind New England heart the horrors of war had by no means hardened, “I won’t hurt you. Are you wounded?”

As the man did not reply, the rider dismounted for a closer examination of the prostrate soldier. Then he uttered an exclamation of pity. It was evident that the man had been struck—probably by a fragment of a shell—and a terrible wound inflicted upon his head. How he had managed to crawl from the firing line as far as this spot, Larkin could not see. It was plainly impossible for him to live. Fred mustered up what little Russian he could command and spoke gently to the poor fellow, whose life was going fast.

“What is your name?” he asked. “Can I do anything for you?”

“Ivan—Ivanovitch,” gasped the soldier, making a great effort to speak. “I do not—know—I do not understand—I am a—soldier of—Russia—It was the command—the Little Father—ah-h!”

He spoke no more, but lay quiet and silent, his white, boyish face, upturned to the slow rain. Fred opened his military coat, and laid his hand upon Ivan’s breast. The ikon was there, treasured to the last; but the heart no longer beat. At the Little Father’s command, Ivan Ivanovitch, like thousands of his comrades, not knowing why, not understanding, but faithful to the last, had given up his home, his dear ones, his life.

With a long sigh Fred drew the flap of the young soldier’s coat over the still face, remounted his pony, and rode on towards Liaoyang.

He found the town in a state of wild confusion, with heavy carts rumbling through the ill-made streets, crowds of wounded men on their way to the hospitals and the trains for Mukden; refugees clamouring at the railroad station, householders removing their goods, and thousands of people hurrying to and fro like ants in a breached ant-hill. With much difficulty the reporter got a brief dispatch through to the *Bulletin*, and sought a well-earned rest at his lodgings near the station.

Night after night the cannon thundered, and day after day the battle raged. The Russian front was now crowded in from thirty miles to less than eight. At great risk Oyama resolved to divide his army, and attempt a flanking movement, which proved successful. On the seventh day of the battle, Kuroki threw a strong force across the Taitse, ten miles above the town. This movement turned the scale. Kouropatkin gave orders to fall back on Mukden.

Larkin, meanwhile, was doing the work of half a dozen reporters and a Good Samaritan besides. He took his place beside the surgeons and nurses, whenever he could leave the firing line, and laboured by the hour, caring for the wounded, especially the Chinese who suffered the fate of those caught between two conflicting forces. The losses on both sides had been fearful, and the amount of ammunition expended almost incredible. In one day of the

battle the Russian artillerists reported one hundred thousand shots fired.

Fred was assured at headquarters, on the day of Kuroki's flank movement, that in any case Liaoyang would not be evacuated for forty-eight hours; so he toiled on, in good faith, making no special provision for his withdrawal from the front, but intending to accompany the Russian army in its retreat. The next morning what was his surprise, on emerging from his lodgings, to find the town deserted by Kouropatkin's forces. Japanese flags were already flying from almost every house and shop of the Chinese inhabitants. Shells were bursting in the streets, and the Japanese army was reported just outside the gates.

He hurried to the railway station, only to find that the last train had gone. There seemed no way of escape, without crossing the fire-swept zone in the rear of the retreating army. Fred reluctantly faced the conclusion that he must return to the hospital and submit to inglorious capture, if no worse, at the hands of the Japanese; and this when he was ordered to "remain with the Russian army" by his own "Czar," the chief of the *Daily Bulletin*. The reporter ground his teeth as he stood irresolute, in a sheltering doorway. At that moment he happened to glance upward, and a huge, ungainly object, showing above the low roofs of the sur-

rounding buildings, caught his eye. At first it meant nothing to him. "The balloon section have run and left their big gas-bag behind them," he said to himself mechanically. Throughout the fight a balloon had hovered above each of the contending armies, the occupants spying out the dispositions of the enemy's forces and telephoning from aloft to the commanders' headquarters. It was evident that the Russians, startled by the hurried orders to retreat, had obeyed so hastily as to leave their charge behind, to fall into the hands of the Japanese.

A thought flashed across Fred Larkin's quick brain as he gazed upon the swelling expanse of tawny silk. Quitting the doorway where he had taken refuge from the bursting shells, and snatching a Japanese flag as he ran, he made for the balloon. It was suspended over a small square, held down by a strong hemp cable. To spring into the car was the work of a moment. He drew his knife and was about to sever the rope when a shriek rang out from a neighbouring street and a man was seen running toward the square, pursued by half a dozen Chinamen.

"Help! Help! They'll murder me!" screamed the man, looking about wildly as he ran.

His eye fell upon Fred, in the balloon, and at the same moment the reporter recognised him, disguised, mud-stained, and dishevelled as he was.

“Stevens!” exclaimed Larkin, stooping to cut the moorings. Then a better impulse came over him. “Jump in, man!” he shouted. “It ’s our only chance to get out of town, if that ’s what you want!”

Stevens recoiled at the sound of Fred’s voice, and his pursuers, seeing the daring reporter standing over the fugitive with a drawn knife, hesitated a moment.

“Get in! Get in!” reiterated Fred, seizing the shaking coward by the collar and fairly dragging him over the side of the wicker basket. “I won’t hurt you!”

“Wh-where are you going?” stammered the renegade, sinking down in the bottom of the car.

“We ’ll decide that point later,” said Fred, sawing away at the rope. “If a shell hits our ship before we ’ve cast off, we shall stay right here; and from the looks of your excited friends there, the place would probably prove unhealthy for—Ah! Here we go!”

The last strand parted and the great balloon soared swiftly above the town. A distant Japanese artillerist trained his gun upon it, but the shot passed below, and a moment later the air-ship was out of range, mounting toward the clouds and swept by a strong west wind directly over the battle-field.

CHAPTER XIX.

AMONG THE CLOUDS.

AT the very moment when the adventurous correspondent of the Boston *Daily Bulletin* was making his escape from Liaoyang, a motley crowd of Koreans, Chinese coolies, Japanese, and Europeans were gathered upon the platform of the railway station in Chemulpo, waiting for the Seoul train to start. Tidings of the great battle had reached the port and the announcement of the decisive victory of Japan, and the evacuation of the city by the Russians, had set the people in a frenzy of delight, real or assumed.

Distinguished by their erect bearing and bright naval uniforms two young men pushed their way through the throng and took their places in a first-class carriage on the train.

"Whew!" said Bob Starr, pulling off his cap and wiping his forehead, "this is about as hot as Key West and St. Louis rolled into one. How soon does the train start, Liddon?"

"In about five minutes," replied the dignified

young officer of the *Osprey*, cool and calm as ever. "Don't complain of the heat, brother, until you've tramped through the interior of Luzon in July."

The two messmates had applied for and obtained leave to run up to Seoul and do a little sight-seeing as well as some shopping. It was believed that the ship would be ordered home soon, and every officer on board wanted some little knick-knacks from the heart of Korea. Bob and "Doc." Liddon, therefore, had half a dozen commissions to execute at the capital, as well as their own purchases to make.

"Now," said the midshipman, leaning back in his seat by the open window as the train began to move, "let's have a few statistics on Korea, old man."

"What do you want to know about it, youngster?" smiled Liddon, who was well used to this sort of appeal.

"Oh, I don't know enough about the place to ask questions," rejoined his companion languidly. "What is there interesting about it, anyway?"

"Well, perhaps the most interesting feature of the history of this country has been, up to a very recent date, its exclusiveness," said Liddon. "You know Korea has always been called 'The Hermit Kingdom.'"

"How big is Korea, anyway?" interrupted Bob, gazing out at the tawny waters of the river Hang-kang.

“Almost exactly the size of Minnesota—or, say, the size of New England, New Jersey, and Maryland. With the sea on three sides, and an uninhabited wilderness on the fourth, this independent little affair has been able to keep out foreigners, up to a very recent day.”

“Independent? I thought China——”

“Oh, China holds a sort of suzerainty or protectorate over Korea, but practically it has governed itself. The King, or Sultan, or whatever he calls himself, has always been held sacred—to touch him with an iron weapon was sure death. Of late years foreign merchants have gained a foothold in the country, and travellers have visited it. You know Wiju, at the mouth of the Yalu, was declared an open port only last February.”

“What ’s the religion hereabouts?”

“Mostly Confucianism. Catholic missionaries have made a tremendous struggle to introduce Christianity, and their history has been a long series of martyrdoms. Why, in 1866, there was a great massacre of native Christians, and nearly ten thousand perished.”

“That finished the matter, I suppose?”

“Not much. There are supposed to be at least forty-five thousand Roman Catholic Christians in Korea to-day. Just what will become of them if the country goes to Japan, or is divided up among

the big Powers, nobody knows. The Koreans, by the way, have a standing army of seventeen thousand men, trained and drilled by European officers."

With talk of this sort, and various other statistics relating to the Hermit Kingdom, time passed rapidly, and the learned young ensign was still lecturing when the train rolled into the station at Seoul.

The two officers strolled up the shady side of the main street, and soon espied some curios from which they determined to select mementos of this strange city.

"We ought to have some change," said Bob. "I 've nothing but English gold. Suppose I get this shopkeeper to give me Korean money for half a dozen sovereigns?"

"All right," agreed Liddon, with a twinkle in his eye which the other did not see. "He 'll be glad to have the gold, no doubt, and will cheat you a little, but that won't matter."

"How can I make him understand what I want?" queried the midshipman, standing before the Korean helplessly, with the money in his hand.

"I guess I can arrange it," said Doc. Liddon gravely. "I happen to know the word for small change in this country. Hulloo, you! *Sapeke!*" The ensign held out the gold as he spoke, and let it clink.

The man nodded twenty times, repeating "*Sapeke! Sapeke!*" and calling three or four coolies, gave them an order, despatching them in different directions. Then he gently drew out the American's watch, and pointing to the open face, held out five fingers.

"That means he 'll have the change ready in five minutes," I suppose," said Liddon.

"Of course, just as they 'd do at home. Sent round to the bank for it, probably. Let 's walk on a bit, and come back here when the time 's up."

They indicated on the watch what their plans were, and with many smiles and nods and amiable gestures on both sides the officers proceeded on their way.

There was not much to see in Seoul, after all. The buildings were for the most part miserable little one-story affairs, built of wood, clay, and rice-straw. Some of the meanest dwellings were thatched, but in general this primitive protection had given place to tiles placed in rows along the joints of the boards forming the roof.

"Let 's go back and get our pocketful of change," remarked Starr. "Then we 'll call on the minister, hurry up our shopping, and get back to the ship. It 's too hot to linger in this proud capital all day. I never was cut out for a hermit, anyway."

On the way back the queer expression returned

to Liddon's face, but he said nothing until they reached the shop. Then he gave one look at Bob's countenance and burst into a roar of laughter.

Bob was speechless. There on the floor lay his change, surrounded by perspiring coolies. It consisted of about ten bushels of copper coins, each punched in the middle and strung on a wire. The four labourers must have worked hard to get it there within the allotted time.

"Well, this beats me!" exclaimed the midshipman at length. "Is this all mine?"

"Every *sapeke* of it," said Liddon gleefully. "Put it in your pocket and jog along, son!"

Fortunately an interpreter, attracted by the naval uniforms, happened to be near, and with much difficulty the shopkeeper was made to understand that but a small portion of the mountain of "cash" would be needed. Purchases were made, at exorbitant prices; a pound or two of the coins preserved for keepsakes, and the visitors departed.

"For fifteen minutes I've felt like Rockefeller," said Bob sadly. "I never shall have so much money again. It's a dream!"

"When a fellow tells his very best girl, in Seoul, that she's worth her weight in specie, it is n't much of a compliment, eh, Bob?" laughed Liddon.

"Equivalent to valuing her at about thirty cents, I suppose," sighed the disconsolate midshipman.

“What a copper mine this place is! It beats Helena, Montana, all out!” *

They paid their visit of respect to the American minister, who insisted on their lunching with him, and laughed heartily over Bob’s financial experience. Late in the afternoon the officers returned to Seoul by train, and were glad enough to reach the deck of the *Osprey*, fanned by the cool breezes of the Yellow Sea.

As they distributed the gifts they had brought, and recounted their adventures in the Korean capital, while Dave, Staples, and Dobson shouted at the midshipman’s woful face when the “temporary Rockefeller” was described, they little guessed what was befalling their old friend the war correspondent, whom we left in company with the renegade Stevens, running away with one of General Kouropatkin’s war balloons.

Larkin’s first movement, as they rose above the roofs of Liaoyang, was to throw out a whole bagful of ballast, with plenty of which the air-ship was fortunately stocked. The two men crouched low in

* Since this paragraph was written a despatch in the daily press of the United States has announced that a short time ago a syndicate of American capitalists was formed to buy up the “cash” used by the natives of China, and sell it for the pure copper used in the coins. In this way enormous profits have been made, it is said, by the promoters of the scheme, and the larger cities of the Empire have been almost stripped of small change.

the basket to avoid stray bullets from the victorious Japanese army, and in ten minutes they were out of all danger from that source. Fred had made more than one ascension, in a professional capacity, from Boston Common, and felt quite at ease as the swelling bag above his head bore him farther and farther from the scene of the late battle. Not so Stevens. He continued to crouch in the bottom of the wicker car, and his teeth fairly chattered with fright.

“Come, come, old chap,” said Larkin cheerfully, “we’re all right now. It’s only a question of making a safe landing somewhere in the rear of the Jap army. I’m sorry to leave my friends the Muscovites, but needs must when the wind drives. I wish the inventors would hurry up with their dirigible balloons! Sit up, man, and take in this view. You may never have such a chance again.”

The panorama spread out beneath them was indeed a wonderful one. The wind, following the direction of the mountain range, was now sweeping them rather to the south than to the east, and at a height of about a mile the balloon passed swiftly over lower Manchuria with its fair streams, valleys and cornfields. Here and there a blur of smoke indicated a military encampment, and long trains of waggons could be made out, conveying stores to the front or wounded men toward the sea. The earth

presented the odd appearance of a shallow cup, rather than of a convex surface. Now and then the landscape was blotted out by a low-lying cloud which, travelling in a different current, was quickly left behind. Once or twice, from a cottony puff of smoke, Larkin guessed that his big aerial craft was a target for Japanese riflemen; but no bullet came near to corroborate his surmise.

Stevens, meanwhile, recovered nerve enough to sit upright and peer once or twice over the edge of the car; but each time he sank back with a shudder.

"I always was giddy in high places," he muttered, resuming his former abject attitude.

Larkin glanced at the pallid face, and felt a touch of pity for the miserable fellow.

"No wonder the navy did n't suit you," he said. "You look half sick, Stevens. Anything special the matter with you? Hungry?"

"No," said the other, his teeth chattering again. "I don't want anything to eat. I have n't been well lately. Those men who were after me—" He stopped abruptly and turned so white that Fred thought he was going to faint. Recovering himself with an effort, Stevens continued: "This balloon business is getting on to my nerves, I guess. Is n't it about time to think of landing?"

"Landing!" exclaimed the other. "Not by any means. We must put a little more real estate be-

tween us and Oyama's front before we get down to terra firma. But we're going like an express train now, unless I am mistaken. It's hard to judge our speed, because we're just drifting with the current. I can't say I like so much southing, either. As near as I can tell, we're just about following the line of the railway. See—there it is—that long straight line!”

But Stevens did not care to look.

“Why were those fellows chasing you, if I may ask?” demanded the reporter, settling himself to a comfortable position in the car.

“They—I don't know—well,” said Stevens desperately, “if you must know, they were Boxers.”

Larkin started. “What, the society that started the trouble with the missionaries two or three years ago, and pretty nearly did up the foreign embassies in Peking?”

The renegade nodded. “I had time on my hands,” he muttered, “and—and interested myself in their private matters. I meant to have made a good thing of it in Peking.”

“I see,” said Fred, looking at his companion with unmitigated disgust. “At your old tricks, of course. I'm not sure that I would n't have started without you, if I had known.”

“Then it's fortunate for me that you did n't,” said the spy, with a sardonic grin. “Don't let's

quarrel, Larkin. You 've saved my life, and I won't forget it. It was a shabby trick I played you, in Port Arthur, but I really did n't mean you any harm. All I wanted was time to get out of the city."

"All right," said Fred lightly. "I 'm not a man to hold a grudge; but I would n't try any more tricks of the sort, my lad. They get tiresome, after a while. Look here, I 'm hungry, and we have n't investigated the commissary department of the balloon corps. Here goes!"

Dipping into a pile of packages at the bottom of the car, he brought up several cans of condensed beef and some hard biscuit, which had evidently been abandoned in the hurried flight from Liaoyang. There were also a couple of bottles of *vodka*, or Russian whiskey, upon which Stevens seized eagerly. Larkin, however, wrested them from his grasp and threw them overboard.

"I hope they won't do any damage when they strike," he said, but they certainly won't do any in this ship, while I 'm captain. No *vodka* for you, my friend. What 's this—*Limonade gazeuze*—ah, that fills the bill! Bottled lemonade, straight from Paris—two pints for each of us. Have some?" And he opened a can of beef and passed over a bottle of lemonade.

Stevens scowled, but accepted the situation, and the two made a hearty breakfast.

They had just flung over the empty can and bottles when they heard the report of a musket.

"I don't like it!" shouted Fred, springing up so quickly that the basket rocked, and the spy turned pale again. "While we were eating we've been dropping, I'm sure I don't know why, unless there's a rip somewhere aloft. We are n't more than a thousand yards up, and they're taking pot shots at us from a Jap encampment. Out goes some more ballast!"

He suited the word by emptying a bag of sand, and the balloon rose at once, as he ascertained by throwing out a few scraps of paper, which seemed to drop like lead.

One or two more shots were fired, but the balloon quickly swept out of range, as before. The aeronauts had not gone far, however, when it became evident that they were again slowly sinking.

"I don't like it," said Fred, shaking his head as he threw out another sand-bag. "Some of these bullets have punctured the old bag aloft, as sure as you live."

"I thought you said you meant to land somewhere in the rear of the main Japanese lines!" exclaimed Stevens apprehensively. "What's the use of keeping up so high?"

"What I really want now is steam enough to take us right across the gulf to Chefoo," answered

the other. "We 're heading straight for it," he added, consulting a small compass that dangled from his watch-guard. "If we can fetch that port there 'll be no more trouble. But I don't like this sinking. It looks as if we had sprung a leak somewhere, and, don't you see, man? there 's only one bag of ballast left!"

In the course of an hour they had descended to within a few hundred feet of the ground, and Fred reluctantly parted with the last pound of sand. The sea could now be plainly discerned, to the southward.

"Look—there are two of Togo's ships!" exclaimed Larkin. "Oh, what a sight! Don't I wish I had a good kodak!"

Again the balloon dropped, and Fred flung out every movable object in the car. They shot up a thousand feet, but the relief was of short duration.

"O for a couple of hundred-weight of ballast!" groaned Fred. "Or a gale of wind to take us over the water!"

Once more the balloon gently descended. The breeze seemed to be dying out. They were now directly over the outworks of the Japanese forces besieging Port Arthur.

Bang! bang! rang out the guns, far below. The great gas-bag quivered and began to drop faster.

"They 've hit us again!" said Fred. "We 're in



THE END OF THE TRAITOR.

for it now. The question is, whether we shall get as far as the town. Somehow I don't fancy dropping down on our brown friends there, they're so handy with their rifles. Let's see what effect our ensign will have on them!"

He unrolled the Japanese flag he had caught up in running through the streets of Liaoyang, and displayed it as prominently as possible; but this only seemed to exasperate their assailants, who now were keeping up a regular fusilade.

Suddenly Stevens gave a scream. "I'm hit! I'm hit!" he shrieked, clasping his hand to his breast. Springing to his feet, he tottered, and before Fred could seize his unfortunate companion the spy lost his balance and fell backward over the side of the car.

Lightened of his weight the balloon made one more leap toward the clouds, crossed the outer trenches and forts of Port Arthur, and with a graceful sweep descended in the heart of the city. A hundred hands seized the wicker car and the rope, and Fred Larkin, still shocked and benumbed by the terrible fate that had overtaken his comrade, mechanically climbed out and stood, half-dazed, on the pavements of the very square where he had met Stevens three months before.

A babel of voices greeted him, but before he could explain his involuntary descent the Japanese

flag caught the eye of an officer who had joined the crowd, and the reporter was roughly seized, blindfolded, and hurried away to a prison cell.

Early in the evening he was visited by two or three officials of rank, who had him searched and even stripped, for evidence of guilt. "Amerikansky," said Fred, over and over, seemingly without effect.

The next morning, however, he was told that he was to be taken before General Stoessel, who would judge his case. The tones of the officer making this announcement were much more bland than on the preceding evening, and the prisoner was given a good breakfast before taking up the march, blindfolded, across the city.

The walk itself seemed interminable. Down one hill and up another, along street after street, stumbling over rough pavements, with the roar of cannon constantly in his ears, and an unpleasant consciousness that a shell might fall in his immediate vicinity at any time, Fred was conducted into the great man's presence.

General Stoessel recognised him at once, and asked a good many questions, all of which Larkin answered promptly and fully, except those pertaining to the Japanese forces and defences.

"Look here, General," he said, "I've been called a spy more than once since I landed in your town.

Now if I tell you all I know about the Japanese, you will have good reason to believe that I shall carry information to them, on leaving Port Arthur, concerning the Russians. This would fairly rank me as the mean thing I have been called—a spy. Not a word do you get from me, sir, regarding the Japs.”

“But what if you never leave Port Arthur? Why shall I not order you hung at once?”

“Because, General Stoessel,” said Fred Larkin, calmly, “I am an American citizen, innocent of any offence against your country; a journalist, pursuing his profession, and representing a friendly nation.”

The bluff soldier gnawed his moustache. “You shall not stay here,” he said with decision. “I do not want any newspaper men in Port Arthur.”

“I’m ready to go,” said Fred, “the moment you open the door. My arrival was unintentional, and——”

“Restore his papers, and send him to Chefoo,” said the General, rising.

“How shall I go, General?” asked Fred.

“In a junk. You must take your chances of safe arrival. And mind, sir, you must not come here again. Twice is enough!”

“I certainly will not,” said Fred, “if I can help it.”

General Stoessel asked a few more questions concerning the reporter’s escape from Liaoyang.

“It was like a crazy American,” he said, more good-humouredly. Then he shook hands with Fred. “I hope you will have a safe voyage to Chefoo. Farewell!”

With the same precautions against the correspondent's discovering anything of value to report outside the walls, he was led back across the city and the next morning he left Port Arthur in a *droschka*, or light road-waggon, and — still blindfolded — was driven to a plain near Loisa Bay. At this point the bandage was removed from his eyes and he scrambled down a hilly path to the shore, where he was locked up in a small stone hut until late in the afternoon, when — blindfolded again — he was led over the beach to a sampan and taken off to a junk, one of three which were getting under way—a huge, dirty craft, like that in which he had sailed on his outward trip.

A Russian naval officer and boat crew accompanied him to the outer roads, where they said good-bye, entered their own boat and returned to the city. Fred noticed, the bandage having now been finally removed, that the *Czarevitch*, *Retvizan*, and some other damaged ships had been patched up and were changing anchorage under their own steam.

The next morning the daring reporter once more set foot on the dock at Chefoo.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DOGGER BANK AFFAIR.

IN the middle of September the following startling despatch appeared in the newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic:

“**ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND, Sept. 16.**—A passenger who arrived to-day on board a coasting steamship reports that two Japanese officers and nine sailors came on board the vessel from London.

“As soon as she arrived at Aberdeen they jumped into a small boat and proceeded at once to a mysterious low-lying craft in the offing, apparently a torpedo-boat, which, on receiving the men, steamed seaward.

“It is believed here that the intention of the Japanese is to lie in wait for the Baltic fleet.”

In order to understand what Oto Owari and a brother officer were doing in the North Sea at the time when the Associated Press gave out this startling piece of news, we must return to the day when

the battle-ship *Petropavlovsk* "turned turtle" in the bay of Korea, and, attacked by some mysterious agency which was generally supposed to be either a Russian or Japanese submerged contact-mine, sank with nearly every soul on board.

The *Octopus*, which had made its way under cover of the darkness of the preceding night to the western extremity of the Yellow Sea, and was lying in wait for its huge adversary, had remained awash until daylight. Then, closing the main hatch, she sank until only the end of the camera projected above water. This easily escaped observation, looking, as it did, like a bit of floating wreckage. According to directions from his admiral, Oto made no move to attack the Russian ships when they were coaxed out of their safe harbour by the wily Japanese, it being deemed best not to risk a hasty assault at a time when the enemy were fully alert and in the best condition. In case their squadron should escape from the Japanese force outside—vastly superior to the Russians—and should retreat towards Port Arthur, then the *Octopus* was to strike its blow, quickly and decisively.

The result is known, although naval authorities still dispute as to the cause of the *Petropavlovsk's* destruction. Oto, conning the *Octopus* through the camera, observed the battle-ship returning to port after the brief conflict in the open sea. He touched

an electric knob and the submarine quietly sank to a further depth of six feet. Being now entirely out of sight, the terrible war-engine approached without difficulty to within less than a hundred yards of the Russian ship, discharged her torpedo with unerring aim, and accomplished her work. The waters in the immediate vicinity of the huge victim were violently agitated as she careened in her dying agony, and the *Octopus* herself, lingering near to inflict another blow if necessary, was in danger of being drawn into the vortex made by the battle-ship as she went down. The little submarine reversed her engine quickly enough, however, to escape sharing the fate of her prey, and swiftly glided away to re-join the Japanese fleet. The agent of destruction, known only to the admiral and the heads of the War Office, was not disclosed in Tokio, as it was deemed best that the Russian Admiralty and the world at large should know nothing of the terrible power Japan was wielding beneath the waves.

Oto remained on duty in command of the *Octopus* for several weeks longer, and was then detached for a more complicated task, one requiring an extraordinary exercise of intelligence and adaptability, as well as courage.

It was known that the Russians were preparing a formidable fleet at home, to take the place of the war-ships that had been put out of action in the

East, and to establish the Muscovite power upon the seas. If this could be done, it was conceded in military circles that Japan's fate would be sealed. With her immense army cut off from supplies and from retreat, the Russian ships could ravage the coast of the Island Kingdom, and the army in Manchuria would be compelled to come to terms. It was all-important to prevent the sailing of the Baltic fleet if possible, or to damage it after it had started on its long voyage.

The Russian secret-service system has often been called the most effective and far-reaching in existence; but the Japanese have learned the methods of their huge neighbour, and with Oriental wit and alertness have surpassed their teacher. At about this time several accidents happened in the Russian navy yards at the head of the Baltic. One ship suddenly sank at her moorings; another was severely damaged by an inexplicable explosion; other strange mishaps befel the newly organised fleet before they left their moorings. Everybody read in the newspapers the reports of these "accidents," and everybody was puzzled to account for them—everybody, except the authorities at Tokio!

In spite of every hindrance and disaster it became evident that the fleet was nearly ready to sail, fully equipped and manned for the long cruise which was to terminate, according to general expectation, in

the greatest naval battle the world had ever seen, should the fleet reach Eastern waters.

Taking a swift liner across the Pacific, Oto, with ten picked men of the Japanese navy, arrived at Vancouver on the 1st day of September. The Canadian Pacific, Grand Trunk, and New York Central railways landed the party in New York on the 7th; one week later they were in London. Here they took a small steamer on a local line, reaching Aberdeen on the 15th. On reaching shore the men, most of whom were dressed as common sailors in the merchant service, scattered among the water-side boarding-houses, and, in a city where seamen of every nationality are an every-day sight, excited little notice or comment.

Oto himself, having first consulted his note-book, repaired to a shop on an obscure street where tea, carvings, and cheap Japanese curios were sold. The shopkeeper eyed him sharply, glanced at a slip of rice-paper which Oto presented, then made a low obeisance to the visitor, and having locked the outer door of his shop and lowered the shades, led the way to a narrow and steep stairway, murmuring in his own language: "I break my bones to Your Excellency. Be honourably pleased to mount your servant's despicable stairway to the private office."

What communications passed in that office cannot be known with certainty. Oto, however, received

from his countryman several despatches, and entrusted to him a return message of utmost importance. On the following day the nine Japanese met at the wharves by appointment. A boat was awaiting them, manned by a crew of the same nationality. In the offing the boat was taken up by a small, rakish-looking black steamer which some observers declared to be a torpedo-boat, others a "trawler," as the ships of the fishing-fleet were called. Whatever its nature, the craft had heels, for, with black smoke pouring from her short funnel, she soon disappeared to the northward. There were those who averred that they had plainly seen the English ensign flying over her taffrail.

Not to make a further mystery of this odd little vessel, it may be stated at once that she was no other than the *Kiku*, or "Chrysanthemum"; the same small war-ship which had hailed the *Osprey* in mid-ocean in her outward voyage, and had received and restored by a piece of incomparable naval dexterity the cabin steward of the gunboat.

The *Kiku* was a combination of torpedo-boat and destroyer; that is she was a small, swift steamer, fitted with both torpedo-tubes and three-inch rifled guns. Her efficiency in attack would depend largely on her speed, which was not less than twenty-six knots an hour, under forced pressure. For this reason, too, she was used as a despatch-boat.

During the first six months of the war she was coaled and provisioned at obscure ports, often making long runs to escape observation.

In the weeks that followed Oto's embarkation, the *Kiku's* appearance was changed in several important particulars. She now might easily have passed for one of the trawling fleet that were familiar to every sailor in the North Sea. Her torpedo-tubes were concealed by canvas shields, painted black and so arranged that they could be easily drawn aside in action. Her guns were rigged out of sight, and port-holes closed so cleverly that only a trained eye would discover them, and that in broad daylight. At night the *Kiku* was an innocent fishing steamer, pursuing her honest avocation under the protection of Great Britain.

The sailing of the Baltic fleet had been again and again announced, and as often postponed. Vice-Admiral Rojestvensky knew that he was surrounded by spies, and more than half guessed that danger was awaiting him when once the home sea should have been left behind. At length, on the 21st of October, the great battle-ships and cruisers weighed anchor in earnest and started for Port Arthur. If that stronghold was to be saved, the relieving force could no longer be delayed. The Japanese were tightening their grip daily, and with an enormous sacrifice of life were taking position after position.

Kouropatkin had made a vain attempt to march southward and succour the beleaguered fortress, and had been beaten back. Relief could only come by sea. It was believed at St. Petersburg that Stoessel could hold out until February, when Rojestvensky's fleet would be at hand to effect a diversion and open the harbour.

Slowly and majestically the ponderous ships moved onward, the lookouts, doubled in number, watching every suspicious-looking craft, the officers scanning the sea, from the bridges, with powerful marine glasses. Just after sunset the fleet entered the North Sea and turned their massive prows toward the south.

Between latitude $54^{\circ} 10'$ and $57^{\circ} 24'$ North, and longitude 1° and $6^{\circ} 7'$ East (from Greenwich), a huge sand-bank lies under the waters of the North Sea, midway between England and Denmark. It is called the Dogger Bank, and affords extensive fishing-grounds which are frequented by all sorts of craft, from a wherry to a thousand-ton steamer. Here the Hull fleet set their trawls, and, with lights twinkling from bow and mast-head, toss and swing at their anchors through the long hours of the night. Every pilot in the United Kingdom, and on the coasts of the adjacent European states, knows of these trawlers and plots his course to avoid them in crossing the North Sea. The admiral of the Baltic

fleet either forgot them entirely, or recklessly took the risk of their lying in the path of his heavier ships.

As the night—an unusually dark one—of October 21st closed in, the Hull fishermen were anchored as usual over the Dogger Bank. There were half a dozen or more of them, and before midnight their number was increased by one—a low, black hull like their own, which brought up just north of the main group without attracting attention.

The lights of the *Kiku*—for the newcomer was no other than the disguised destroyer—were made to conform exactly to those displayed by the trawlers. No one could have taken her for a war-ship, with her big fourteen-foot Whitehead torpedoes waiting to be unleashed behind their canvas tompions.

Far away to the northward a light twinkled in the darkness; another, and another.

“Slip the cable,” ordered Oto quietly, not daring to recover his anchor lest the noise of the chain and pawls should be heard. “Clear decks for action!”

A low hum of voices sounded through the ship. Bare feet pattered to and fro as the decks were cleared, the guns were run out, screens removed, and ammunition hoisted. All this had been done in repeated drill until the men knew exactly where to place their hands in the dim light afforded by carefully shielded lanterns.

“Cast loose and provide!” “Load!”

The orders were in a strange tongue, but varied little from those taught at the Annapolis Academy. Like some black kraken of old, crouching for a spring at its approaching prey, the *Kiku* silently awaited the approach of the Baltic war-ships. Across the water from one of trawlers came a rough sea-song from the English sailors at their work.

Nearer and nearer came the great battle-ship leading the fleet, the flag-ship of the vice-admiral. A much smaller vessel, corresponding in class to the *Osprey*, scouted at a little distance to the west.

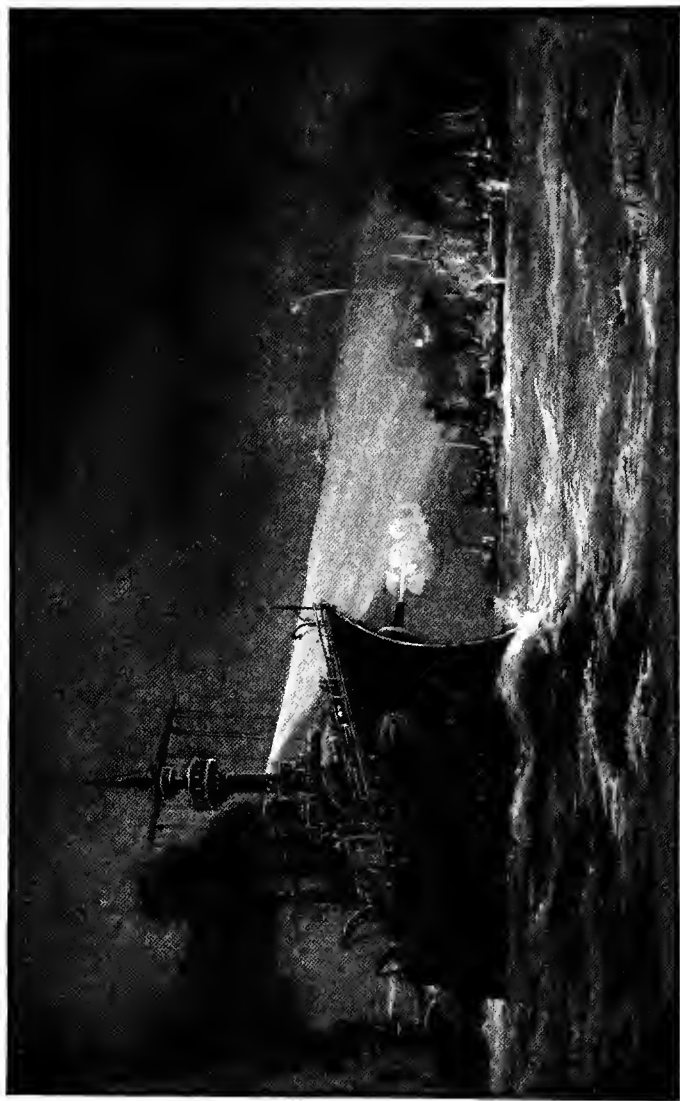
Suddenly a glare illumined the water. The scout's search-light was turned full on the *Kiku*. Instantly the rattling report of the gunboat's main battery roared out, followed by the heavier guns of the battle-ship.

Rojestvensky, who, strange to say, had been below decks, now rushed to the bridge, and caught sight of the black hulls of the trawlers.

"Fire into them! Sink them! Ahead full speed! They are torpedo-boats!" he ordered without a moment's reflection.

The search-light of the flag-ship picked up a fishing steamer, and a moment later a solid shot passed through the hull of the unfortunate trawler, below the water-line, and she began to sink.

A few more shots were fired wildly from the



ON THE DOGGER BANK.

panic-stricken Russians, but in five minutes it was all over. The fishing-fleet were miles astern, and the battle-ships were furiously rushing from the scene of the brief and inglorious action. One of the trawlers was sunk, two men killed, and twenty wounded. This was the story that was brought to Hull the next morning, and set every Englishman's blood boiling at the reckless, needless disaster inflicted by Rojestvensky's ships.

What, meanwhile, had become of the *Kiku*? When the first gun was fired and the shot struck the water beside her she slapped a steel bolt into the transport *Kamschatka*, taking one of her funnels off neatly. The enemy were too distant for torpedo work, and before the Japanese gunners could determine where to fire (they had aimed hap-hazard at the search-light of the scout, for the first shot), or in what direction to steer for an attack at close quarters, a shell plumped into their engine-room and exploded, killing four men and putting the ship completely out of action. Another shot hulled the *Kiku* and fatally wounded three more of her crew. Oto, standing on the bridge and hitherto unhurt, calmly gave orders to lower the boats. There was confusion in the darkness, and the sudden calamity, and only one of the *Kiku's* four boats was in the water before the ship sank. Oto was one of the half-dozen men who were picked up; every other

on board went, with their vessel, to the bottom of the North Sea.

Driven away from the trawlers by a fresh breeze, the Japanese survivors headed their boat westward and pulled lustily. Early the next afternoon they landed near Yarmouth and made their way to London. Their leader knew where to send them, in that great city, to find friends, and within a week they had shipped in various vessels for Japan. Oto himself, having sent a cipher despatch to Tokio, took passage on a Cunarder for New York, and was once more on board a ship in Togo's fleet in time to witness the fall of Port Arthur.

To anticipate the course of this story, and complete that of the Dogger Bank affair, it may be added that for a time war between Russia and England seemed imminent. An agreement between the two Powers, however, was finally reached, by the terms of which an international inquiry was to be held, conducted by a Commission of naval officers of high rank, one British, one Russian, one French, one American, and one to be selected by these four. Evidence as to the presence of torpedo-boats on the Bank was widely conflicting, but after many protracted meetings the North Sea Tribunal, as it was called, finally announced its decision, which was, briefly, that the Russians had not, in reality, been attacked by torpedo-boats, and that the vice-admiral

was not justified in firing into the fishing-fleet; that, however, "under the circumstances preceding and following the incident there was such uncertainty concerning the danger to the squadron as to warrant Rojestvensky in continuing his route." They did not positively condemn the Russians for firing, but they decreed that they should pay an indemnity to England, for the property destroyed, and to aid the families of the killed and wounded fishermen.

There was much criticism upon this verdict throughout the countries represented upon the Commission; but it was indeed impossible for the judges to determine where the fault really lay. The trawlers testified, one and all, that there was no torpedo-boat present. Certain officers of the Russian ships, on the other hand, testified point-blank to having seen the hostile craft, and the commander of the *Kamschatka* stoutly alleged that he had been fired upon by a torpedo-boat, and had signalled the fact to the flag-ship, at the outset of the affair.

On the whole, the best comment upon the verdict was made by Bob Starr, on the *Osprey*, when he read the despatch in the papers.

"It reminds me of the Western jury," said the midshipman, "who knew the prisoner well, and liked him too much to convict him; so they brought in a verdict of 'Not guilty, but don't do it again!'"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FALL OF PORT ARTHUR.

AT about the date of the miscarriage of Commander Oto Owari's plans in the North Sea, the regiment in which his old friend Oshima * commanded a company was detached from Oyama's army of invasion and added to the forces under General Nogi, besieging Port Arthur.

It will be remembered that Port Arthur was completely isolated on land when the Second Japanese Army, under General Oku, captured Nanshan Hill, in the latter part of May, 1904. On August 9th the Russians were driven into their permanent works, the real siege beginning three days later, when shells fell in the streets of the city for the first time.

The task before the small brown men of Nippon seemed an impossible one. There were seventeen permanent forts to be taken, forty-two semi-perma-

* The Captain Oshima who figures in these pages must not be mistaken for Lieutenant-General Oshima, whose gallant services during the siege of Port Arthur have already been chronicled in the daily newspapers of America.

ment improvised fortifications, two miles of fortified Chinese wall, and a triple line of trenches over eight miles long. The forts were so arranged that each was commanded by several others; and the whole were manned and defended by some of the bravest soldiers the world has ever seen.

“You are expected to do the impossible things,” was the first order from the Mikado to his troops in the field. The expectation was fulfilled; the imperial edict was obeyed. Ten thousand men, in the face of a deadly fire of shot and shell, trampled the word “impossible” under foot, buried it beneath their torn and mangled bodies; and over them the soldiers of Japan marched to victory.

Baron Nogi did not assume command in person until the siege had fairly begun. He had two sons, Hoten and Shoten. Shoten fell on Nanshan Hill, and his body arrived in Tokio on the day when his father was to sail for Manchuria. “Delay the funeral,” said the General to his wife, “until Hoten and I are brought home to lie with Shoten.” Hoten gave up his life on the deadly ramparts of “203-Metre”; Nogi still lives—a man “with face parchment-crinkled, brown like chocolate, with beard grey shaded back to brown, eyes small and wide apart, perfect teeth, tiny, regular nose and a beautiful dome of a head.” So he is described by one who has often stood in his presence. Twice

conqueror of Port Arthur, he is a mighty force in the Japanese army.

Within the city the Russian soldiers, and what was left of the civilian population, kept up a brave front. The long hours were passed by the ladies in making garments for the invalids. The hospitals, under the care of the Red Cross, were beautifully kept, the laundry work being done by poor women and the soldiers' wives, in place of the regular "wash men," who had left months before. Every day in the week a military band played in one or another of the hospitals; one day in the New Russian town and one in the New Town. Mrs. Stoessel, the kind-hearted wife of the commander-in-chief, visited the sick men, bringing such dainties as the lessening fare of the fortress could furnish, and speaking encouraging words. For every thousand invalids were thirty trained nurses, in addition to volunteer helpers. Every day came a sad procession, bringing wounded men in litters from the outer works. Every day the shells fell in the doomed city. The streets were full of great gaps, where they struck and exploded. Before October the Old Town was a wreck.

Every three days the men at the front were relieved, and as their comrades took their places the troops came marching back, singing cheerfully, although there were many vacant places in their

ranks. When they overtook a litter with a dying comrade the songs would cease, and crossing himself each man walked with bared head until he had passed the brave fellow; then he donned his cap again and continued his song. Not a man of them would admit that the Japanese could ever take Port Arthur. Help would come from Kouropatkin or from the sea. So the days wore on, the leaves fell, chill winter winds began to sweep over the gulf, October gave place to November, and still the longed-for relief was withheld; still the terrible artillery of the foe roared from the surrounding heights and from the mighty battle-ships; and day by day the thunder was louder, the hospitals filled, and the heart of the gallant general grew heavy.

After the futile assault in August the Japanese settled down to the slow process of mining and sapping. No one realised more fully than General Nogi the tremendous task that was before him. Batteries and forts not only commanded one another with their guns, but were connected by meshes of barbed wire which must be cut in the face of a devastating fire before the assailants could advance. In places these wires were charged with electricity. When the cutters attempted to ply their nippers they fell in their tracks, electrocuted. The outer slopes of the fortresses were formed of slippery concrete, or of loose sand in which the Japanese

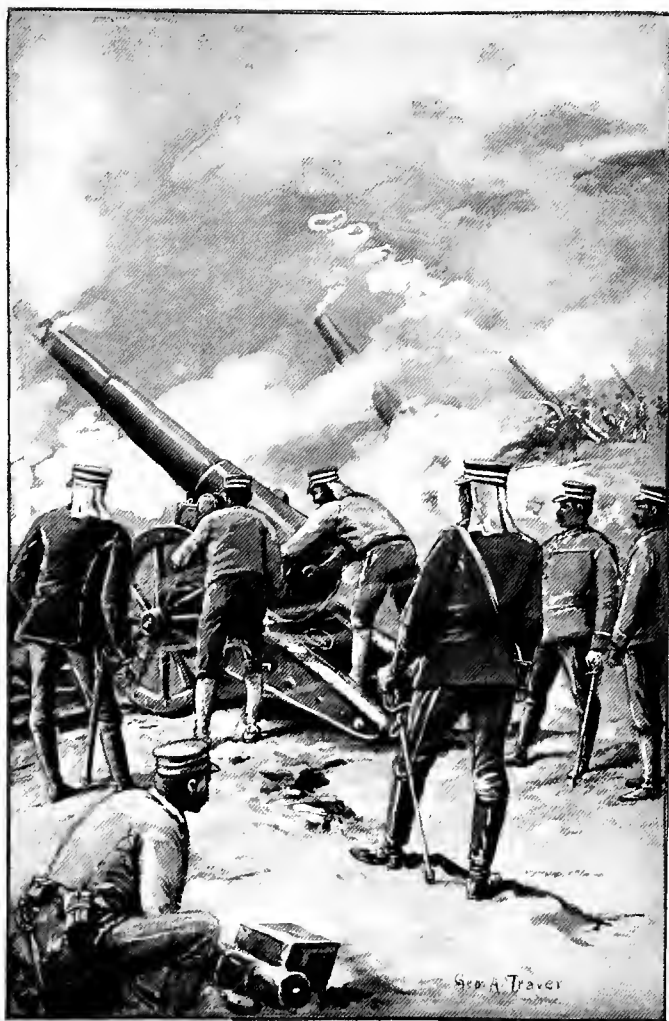
floundered and slid backward, while the Russian marksmen picked them off with their rifles.

Buried in these formidable slopes were mines and torpedoes, some to be exploded by the touch of an electric button, some by mere contact. These hurled hundreds of the assailing troops into the air, torn and mangled. Deep moats surrounded the earthworks, and were so constructed that they could be raked by machine-guns. In at least one instance the moat was filled with combustibles which were fired as soon as hundreds of Japanese had leaped down into it. They were burned alive.

But every stratagem, every defence, every death-dealing manœuvre of the besieged was met and overcome by the relentless besiegers. To approach the fortifications across the zone of fire they dug zig-zag trenches at night, through which the troops, after great sacrifice of life, could get within striking distance and carry this or that battery by sudden assault. They tunnelled like moles, under the moats and through the earthworks. It might take two days or two months to advance a hundred feet, but the advance was effected.

When the soldiers of the two nations actually met, the scene was terrible. As the opposing ranks drew near, the men tossed balls of gun-cotton—an explosive to which powder is as a toy-cracker to a twelve-inch turret gun—among the enemy. They





THE OSAKA BABIES.

screamed defiance. They fought with swords, with bayonets, and finally, like wild beasts, with claws and teeth. No savage tribes of Darkest Africa ever grappled in more frightful conflict.

The Japanese set their hearts upon taking Port Arthur on the birthday of their Emperor, October 29th, and the fiercest assault of the siege took place that day. On the evening before, Captain Oshima rested with his company in a trench which paralleled the defences of one of the strongest of the Russian forts. Until late at night his men were busy cleaning themselves as best they could, and changing their linen. They were preparing for death. The Japanese must die spotless in body as well as soul, to inherit eternal happiness. Oshima sat under a "bomb-proof" prepared by placing timbers across the trench and covering them with earth. He talked calmly with his line officers, and explained the plan of the coming attack, as he had received it from headquarters.

At intervals came the sound of the heavy siege mortars, two miles away, firing over their heads into Port Arthur. These huge eleven-inch guns were affectionately dubbed "Osaka Babies," because they were built at the Osaka arsenal in Japan. There were eighteen of them distributed about Port Arthur. Each gun was emplaced on a concrete foundation eight feet deep, which required

three weeks to build. The shells used weighed a quarter of a ton and each discharge cost Japan \$400. The expense of a six-hour bombardment was something over three hundred thousand dollars.

"The 'babies' are crying," observed Oshima drily, as he paused a moment in his instructions. "To-morrow night—who of us will hear them?"

"To-morrow night," exclaimed a young lieutenant with enthusiasm, "they will cry no more, unless it be for joy. The fortress will be ours!"

Oshima glanced at his junior officer from beneath his dark eyebrows, but said nothing.

The night passed, and the morning of the Mikado's birthday dawned upon the beleaguered city, upon the fair hill-tops and the rippling sea, upon the stern, bearded faces of the defenders and the eager brown hordes crouching in the trenches outside the fort.

Slowly the hours dragged past, the siege-guns dropping their shells into the sand-slopes and tearing open great craters. Then shrapnel was hurled at the parapets, a hundred shots a minute. Not a fort replied. As silently as the Continental troops at Bunker Hill, the Russians awaited the approach of their foe.

At last the signal was given. The little brown men swarmed out of their trenches and up the fatal slope. Then at last the answer came, in a blinding flash and stunning roar from the embrasures. When

the smoke cleared away not a living man was left in sight, save a few whose wounds were not immediately fatal, and who lay in the hot sun helplessly awaiting death.

Another onrush of the diminutive assailants, another crashing discharge of artillery and rifle fire. A few survived, this time, and sheltered themselves in the gaps made by bursting shells. Again a host of assailants springing upward over the bodies of the fallen. Among them were the men commanded by Oshima. The young lieutenant, escaping the first fire and forgetting all caution, sprang ahead of the line, waving his sword and shouting "*Banzai!*" He reached the ramparts and for an instant stood erect upon them, a brave young figure against the blue sky. Then he toppled over into the fort and was never seen again by his comrades. Once more those who had not fallen burrowed in the sand-holes until the final charge was ordered.

An Osaka shell had made a breach in the ramparts through which the Russian rifles barked viciously. Oshima's company sprang toward the opening, only to find it guarded by a bristling hedge of bayonets over which the rear ranks were firing as regularly as on parade.

"Forward!" ordered Oshima, pointing to the breach with his sword.

A clump of Japanese soldiers sprang in front of

the entrance and dropped in their tracks, pierced by half a hundred bullets. Their places were instantly taken by another squad, who reached the line of bayonets. There was a fierce hand to hand fight for a minute. The opening was so narrow that only a few could occupy it at the same time. These few, overpowered, pierced by the lunging bayonets of the Russians, staggered backward and fell, heaping the pile of slain before the redoubt. There was an instant's hesitation—then a dozen brown men *dropped their muskets* and ran in directly upon the bayonets, which flashed in the sunshine as they were driven home. Before they could be withdrawn from the bodies of their voluntary victims the remainder of the Japanese company sprang in over the bodies of their comrades and the Russian defenders met the same fate. Five minutes later the flag of the sunrise floated from two corners of the fort, and the ambulance corps spread out over the outer *glacis*, succouring the few wounded who survived the awful carnage.

Who were the gallant twelve who, like Arnold von Winkelried, sheathed the bayonets in their breasts to disarm the foe and so afford an entrance for their comrades? Generations of schoolboys have told upon the platform how the brave Switzer fell:

“ ‘ Make way for Liberty ! ’ he cried !

Made way for Liberty,—and died ” ;

but few, save the keeper of the military archives of Japan, know the names of the twelve heroes of Fort Keekwan.

The end was not yet. No sooner was the fort occupied by the Japanese than the fire of two others was concentrated upon it. The victors were in turn forced to evacuate that deadly enclosure, and plying their spades busily, entrenched themselves just below the parapets.

So assault after assault was delivered, and the slain lay in heaps inside the fortifications and without, and still Port Arthur was not taken; but slowly and relentlessly the besiegers moved forward, a few feet, a single earthwork, a point here and a point there being occupied, always nearer the heart of the citadel.

The last stage of the defence began with the capture of 203-Metre Hill, on November 20th, by which the Japanese secured a position from which they could search out with their shells every nook and corner of the inner harbour, where the last hope of the defenders, the remnant of their proud "Port Arthur Squadron," had lain in comparative safety since the actions in the earlier part of the war. The patched-up hulk of the *Retvizan* was sunk at her moorings. Again and again the other vessels in the harbour were struck. The great Keekwan Mountain fort was at last taken and held, and on Decem-

ber 30th the Japanese stormed the key of the inner defences, Ehrlung fort, and put its weakened garrison of five hundred men to the sword. The hospitals of the city were crowded and medicines lacking.

On the last day of the year General Stoessel ordered the remaining battle-ships and cruisers to be blown up, and the torpedo-boat destroyers, with a transport containing eight hundred wounded, to make a dash for Chefoo; all of which was successfully carried out.

January 1, 1905, dawned peacefully. The besiegers prepared themselves for a final rush, before the contemplated horrors of which the civilised world stood aghast. But it was not to be.

Early in the forenoon a man bearing a white flag was seen mounting the parapets and approaching the Japanese lines. He was courteously received and conducted to headquarters. An hour later cheers rent the air, through all the trenches around Port Arthur. The city had capitulated. General Stoessel had surrendered, to save his remaining half-starved, emaciated, faltering but gallant troops from sure destruction. What it cost that brave heart to speak the word, no one can tell. In the person of her general, Russia knelt before the despised islanders and sued for peace. It was a terrible humiliation to him, to the army, and to the

haughty Empire whose boast had been: "Russia never withdraws."

So ended the greatest siege, characterised by the highest art of warfare and the uttermost personal bravery of line, rank and file on both sides, that the world has ever known.

CHAPTER XXII.

ON BOARD THE "KUSHIRO."

AFTER the fall of Port Arthur came a lull in the operations of both sides, at sea and on land. The Russians were still busy entrenching themselves in and south of Mukden, the ancient Manchurian capital. Here Kouropatkin had made his stand after the disastrous defeat at Liaoyang. Immensely strong works were thrown up, the defensive front made apparently impregnable, and St. Petersburg breathed more freely, although various indications of internal disorders gave the court concern.

Oyama's men, meanwhile, prepared themselves as best they might for a winter campaign. They burrowed in the hillsides and lived in dug-outs and shanties almost within pistol shot of the Russian outposts. Supplies of food and heavy clothing reached the army by the Yalu River and from Newchwang over the railway to Liaoyang, whence they were forwarded in waggons to the front. Oshima shared a small mud hut with two other line officers. His men cheerily cooked their rations of rice over

little fires in front of their dug-outs. The scene would have resembled Valley Forge, but that the troops were well clothed and under absolute discipline.

On October 2nd, Kouropatkin had issued a proclamation declaring that the period of retreats was over. "The army is now strong enough to advance and compel the Japanese to do our will." This was the last effort to relieve Port Arthur—a "forlorn hope" indeed. A battle ensued, the carnage and desperate valour of which even exceeded those of Liaoyang. The Russian losses alone were nearly seventy thousand, killed and wounded. After ten days of terrific fighting they were forced back to the Hun River, where they held their own and settled down for the winter, with the Japanese facing them.

The Baltic fleet, under Vice-Admiral Rojestvensky, after the Dogger Bank affair, resumed its voyage southward. It rounded the Cape of Good Hope safely and proceeded to Nossi Bé, a port at the northern end of Madagascar, where it was welcomed by the French with as much cordiality as they dared to show their natural allies, without open breach of neutrality. Here the vice-admiral spent many weeks, cleaning, provisioning, and coaling his ships and drilling his crews.

A second squadron of ships, meanwhile, started

from the Baltic for the East, by way of the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal, followed by still a third division. No one, outside the inner circle of the Russian Admiralty and War Office, knew where these three squadrons were to unite. Their port of destination, after the capture of Port Arthur, could, of course, be no other than Vladivostock, where two powerful cruisers, disabled by Togo in August, had been repaired, and, with a few smaller craft, still formed the nucleus of a fleet.

Commander Oto Owari had hastened at once to Tokio, on his unexpected return from the North Sea, where his strategic attack upon the Baltic ships had so signally failed. He was acquitted of blame, by a court of enquiry, and was at once given the command of the torpedo-boat destroyer *Kushiro*, then fitting for service in the Sasebo docks.

At this time O-Hana-San was a nurse in the military hospital at Hiroshima. She knew of Oto's appointment and, if the truth be told, dreaded the time when the *Kushiro* should be put in commission. One day early in March she wrote to her old play-mate that she and another nurse were to have a few days' leave of absence, and that one of the hospital surgeons, with his wife, was to take them on an excursion to Sasebo to see the navy yard—a privilege not often accorded, save to those in the service. Oto was delighted with the prospect of seeing Miss

Blossom, and replied at once, inviting the whole party to inspect the *Kushiro* and lunch with him on board; an invitation which was immediately accepted.

It was a bright, cool day when the little nurses, wearing the scarlet cross on their arms, traversed a great paved square in the navy yard under escort of the good surgeon and his wife (also a nurse), and enquired where the *Kushiro* was lying. The marine who had been questioned pointed out the three black funnels of the destroyer, and the commander himself met the visitors at the gang-plank. The greetings between himself and Hana were full of courtesy and entirely free from any display of sentiment. When the two pairs of dark eyes met for an instant, however, Miss Blossom dropped hers immediately and her cheeks showed a warmer brown than usual. Oto led the way to his cabin and at once offered refreshments to his guests. It was a cosy little place, with its bunk, wardrobe, writing-table and book-case, and a tiny connecting bathroom about four feet square.

The party now went on deck and to their amazement found that the boat was moving swiftly through the harbour toward the sea.

"It is a little surprise I planned for you," explained the gallant commander. "We were to make a short trial cruise of eighteen or twenty miles at

about this time, and as the water is smooth to-day I thought you would enjoy the excursion."

It is needless to say that after the first sensation of fear the guests were delighted, and even the timid nurses soon stood on the quarter-deck, surveying the scene and drinking in the cool sea-breeze with quiet happiness.

On a platform just in front of them was a six-pounder rifle, fairly dazzling their eyes, so beautifully was it polished. Behind them was a screen, sheltering the "after steering position."

Farther forward were the great "nostrils" of the boat, the torpedo-tubes, and alongside them was a hatch which led to the chief petty-officers' mess-room—a very small apartment, clean and shining with constant scrubbing. No one can appreciate neatness better than a hospital nurse, and Hana and her friends were loud in their praises of the condition of these hidden niches in the vessel.

Going farther forward and looking down another hatch they saw the ship's cook in his galley, hard at work preparing dinner. Here also was a dynamo for supplying electricity for the search-light, which was placed between the engine-room hatches on deck.

"How many men are there on board, Captain?" asked the surgeon.

"Our complement is fifty-two," replied Oto.

"How can they ever find room to sleep!" exclaimed Hana.

"Well, there 's not much room to spare," laughed the commander, who seemed very happy. "Some sling their hammocks and others sleep on the lockers. We shall seldom take a long cruise, like those of the larger ships. Here is a collapsible boat," he added. "We have two, you see, one each side. They are hoisted out by that derrick on the mast, and if we had to abandon ship they would take seventeen men each, as well as provisions and water."

"What is this deck covered with, sir?"

"A kind of linoleum. It is found to answer our purpose much better than wood, and is used also in regular torpedo boats. Here, by the way, are our two six-pounder guns: these and the twelve-pounder up there constitute our bow fire, to be used when we are in chase of an enemy."

O-Hana-San shuddered, but said nothing.

"How large is this ship?" enquired the medical man, who was bent on acquiring statistics.

"About two hundred feet long, and twenty feet beam. She draws about six. Here is our conning-tower, with half-inch steel armour on it. We can steer from here, and in bad weather we have to, as one would be washed off the bridge."

The diminutive Japanese ladies peered inside.

There was just room for two people to stand up, in the tower, and it was fitted with a compass, steering-wheel, telegraph to the engine-room, and voice-pipes to the torpedo tubes and various other parts of the ship.

“Only half an inch thick?” queried the surgeon, examining the armour plates. “How thick, then, is the ship’s side?”

“Oh,” said Oto, with a smile, “about an eighth of an inch. It’s just as good as a foot, unless a shell strikes it. Will you step down here?” he added, leading the way to a lower deck.

The surgeon and the ladies tiptoed daintily down the short ladder, and found themselves in a long, low-ceiled room, with a table running along the centre, fore-and-aft, and two rows of lockers along the sides.

“This is the mess-deck of the sailors—the ‘Jackies,’ Americans call them,” explained the commander, who of course, like every one else on board, spoke only in Japanese. “We are now under the turtle-backed fore-castle-deck, you see.”

A few men were down here, one stitching canvas, another mending his clothes, one writing a letter, and one stretched out, fast asleep.

“About twenty men live down here,” added Oto. “These are their hammocks, and that is the capstan engine.” He pointed above his head as he spoke.

"There are storerooms under our feet," he continued, "where we keep the explosive war-heads for the torpedoes. We have two eighteen-inch torpedoes carried, without the heads, in the tubes themselves. Now, shall we go up to the fore-bridge?"

The surgeon, who had gazed with something of dismay at the deck which concealed such terrible munitions, mounted the ladder with alacrity, followed by his wife and her friends.

All five now stood beside the great twelve-pounder. The *Kushiro* was well out of the harbour and standing directly toward the Chinese coast. To the north-east the mountains of Korea could be dimly discerned, like blue shadows on the horizon. The ship was moving so smoothly through the water that it seemed impossible that she was slipping along at the rate of nearly twenty-four knots an hour, as the quartermaster stated, in reply to a question from Oto. The only indication of her speed was the fountain of spray rising at the sharp, straight stern, and sparkling with rainbow hues in the flashing sunshine.

At this moment a petty officer approached the commander, touched his cap, and said something which the others did not hear. Oto caught up a pair of binoculars and peered intently through them at a low line of smoke ahead and a little to the

north of the *Kushiro's* course. After a moment he put down the glasses.

"Port half a point," he said quietly.

"Port half a point, sir," repeated the quartermaster.

After a minute, "Steady!"

"Steady, sir."

"I think it is an American war-ship," remarked Oto pleasantly, turning to his guests. "We shall run down near her, that you may see how the foreigner looks. I—I am quite familiar with the American ships myself."

The commander and O-Hana-San exchanged a swift glance of understanding, but no further allusion was made to Oto Owari's former experience, of which the little Red-Cross nurse was well aware.

"Ah," exclaimed the surgeon, drawing a long breath of delight as he looked out over the sparkling waters of the Yellow Sea, "I could almost wish to change places with you, Captain! This is delicious, after the atmosphere of the hospital, the sound of groans, the odour of antiseptics and anæsthetics! I do not wonder that you chose the navy for your calling."

"Well, well," said Oto, with his gentle laugh, "it does seem pleasant now, especially [here he bowed gracefully] in such exalted society. But come out on a cold, wet night in January, when a

heavy sea is running, and you have to hang on to the rails of the twelve-pounder, here, to prevent yourself being carried off your feet; when the waves come pouring over the turtle-back and flood the upper deck; when your 're soaked to the skin, and shivering, and thinking of — of [he glanced at Blossom] thousands on shore, snug and warm and fast asleep; when the blinding spray and sleet are lashing your face like whipcord, so you can hardly open your eyes to see the lights of the vessel you are watching ahead; and when everything down below in the wardroom is sliding about on the deck—well, I think a comfortable, dry room in the hospital would seem rather more attractive than the bridge of the *Kushiro!*”

The girls smiled at his eloquence, but O-Hana-San looked troubled, and her slim brown hand shook a little as she turned to accept her old friend's invitation to inspect the engine-room.

“I 'm sorry,” said Oto, “that we 're going only two hundred and eighty revolutions now. You should see them at three hundred and fifty, with forced draft!”

The engine-room was hot and oily, and not even the fascinating sight of the bright steel rods flashing up and down and the cranks whirring at the rate of four revolutions a second—a mere mist of metal—could long detain the party. They were rather

glad, it must be confessed, when a hail from the deck sent the commander flying up the ladder and the rest could follow, holding their garments carefully aloof from the glistening metal work.

On their reaching the deck a glorious sight met their gaze. About half a mile away was a war-ship, white as snow, coming toward them. The beautiful stars and stripes blew out over her taffrail, and a string of flags fluttered from her yard-arm. The signalman was just sending up an answer on the *Kushiro*.

"It is the United States gunboat *Osprey*," said Commander Oto, with unusual excitement in his voice, and a glow on his olive cheeks. "We have invited her commander to come on board, and he has graciously consented to do so, although his ship is of a larger class than mine, knowing that a Japanese officer is forbidden to leave his ship at sea, on any pretence, in war time. See, they are lowering a boat!"

The *Kushiro* had already stopped her engines, and the *Osprey*, which had slowed down several minutes before, now followed her example. The two vessels slowly approached each other until they were but a few hundred yards apart.

A boat was now seen leaving the American, and the destroyer's side was manned by jackies to receive the visitor with naval honours. In five

minutes the boat was alongside, and Dave Rexdale sprang up the steps to the deck of the *Kushiro*. Oto was awaiting him, and with a smile that showed the flash of his dark eyes and white teeth, held out his hand to the American officer.

"Welcome, sir," he said, in good English. "I am glad to see you again, and on the deck of my own ship."

Dave stared a moment, then darted forward and wrung the hand of the elegantly uniformed commander, in whom he recognised his former steward.

"Oto!" he exclaimed.

"Commander Oto Owari, of His Imperial Majesty's Navy," said the Japanese, returning the other's cordial grasp. "Permit me to present you to these ladies, who do not speak English, but for whom and yourself I shall be glad to act as interpreter."

Well, Commander Rexdale made his most gallant speeches to the blushing little nurses, who in turn murmured their earnest desire to break their bones and knock their heads abjectly in his august presence. Introduction to the surgeon and the officers of the ship followed.

"I had my suspicions, when you pointed that gun," laughed Dave, turning again to Oto. "And when the torpedo-boat carried you off so neatly——"

But here Oto interrupted with a significant glance

toward his subordinates, showing that he did not care to have all the events of that voyage made public.

With true Japanese hospitality he begged Rexdale to remain and join the party at luncheon; but Dave could not leave his own ship so long, and after a few minutes' conversation was obliged to leave. He explained that the *Osprey* had been docked at Cavite during the winter; then detailed to her old station as guardship at Chemulpo, whence she was now on her way to Shanghai.

"I suppose you heard this morning's news?" he said carelessly, as he stepped to the gangway.

"What news?" asked Oto, with a keen look.

"Rojestvensky's ships have been sighted, about half-way between Chagos and Singapore, steaming east at full speed," said Dave, in a lower tone. "It looks as if he were going to try the Strait of Malacca. Forty-two vessels reported, including transports and colliers. Good-bye!"

The blue-jackets of the *Kushiro*, at the instigation of her executive, gave the departing visitors three cheers as the men let fall their oars. Sam Bolles and Dick Scupp, who happened to be in the boat's crew, stared, with open mouths, at the Japanese commander, who nodded to them in a friendly way. A few minutes later the foam gathered under the *Osprey's* bows as she bore off toward China, and the

Kushiro, making a graceful turn, headed toward Nagasaki, both vessels dipping their colours in salute.

The news which he had heard affected Oto deeply, but he let no sign of his emotions appear to diminish his courteous hospitality to his guests. They dined in the officers' mess-room, the captain's cabin being too small for the purpose. Everything passed off happily and gaily.

"Going into the harbour, sir," reported a boatswain to the commander, as the repast was finished.

In a few minutes the *Kushiro* approached her dock and made a near landing. Oto bade the visitors farewell. O-Hana-San, drawn by something in his dark eyes, lingered just a moment, as he took her hand in his own.

"When you hear from me again," he whispered, "I shall have been in action. The Russian fleet is close at hand, and we may be ordered south before morning. Farewell, O-Hana-San!"

"Oto! Oto! *Sayonara!*"

CHAPTER XXIII.

TRAPPED IN MANCHURIA.

A LESS energetic and determined individual than Mr. Frederic Larkin might well have felt discouraged when, successively fired upon by the Japanese and rejected by the Russians, he was thrust out of Port Arthur and landed in Chefoo. His pass from the War Office at Tokio had been taken from him when he first entered Port Arthur, and had not been returned. To present himself again at General Stoessel's headquarters was out of the question, even if the means were possible.

“The balloon route seems to be indefinitely suspended,” mused Fred, as he rested on the hotel verandah in the Chinese city, “and without much doubt I should be definitely suspended—by the neck—if the Russians caught me a third time inside the fortress. No, there 's no use in wasting time (and a good, serviceable neck) in trying to carry out home orders. I 'll cable the *Bulletin* and ask for instructions.”

This he did at once, and the answer arrived before night, from the editor of that enterprising sheet: "Get new pass. Join Japanese army at front. Remain till ordered home. No more balloon!"

Fred laughed as he crumpled the dispatch and thrust it into his pocket. With characteristic energy he obtained passage on a vessel chartered for Nagasaki, and within a week was on his way back to Manchuria with brand-new credentials from Tokio. Landing at Antung, at the head of the Korean bay, he engaged a man and a couple of ponies to take him and his baggage to the Japanese advanced lines, north of Liaoyang. This was in late February, 1905, when the ground was frozen hard and snow lay deep in the valleys and over the ice-bound streams of Manchuria.

It will shortly be seen that for once the reporter's energy proved his undoing, so far as active service at the front was concerned.

It was a bright, cold morning when he mounted his pony, after many provoking delays and setbacks from the local military authorities, and rejoiced to feel that he was really on his way northward. Kanuka, the guide and porter, strode along the path in advance, leading the pack pony, while Fred followed on the other little beast, whose bad temper was out of all proportion to his size.

Kanuka appeared to be a Chinaman who spoke,

besides his own language—a Manchurian dialect—a very broken sort of English and Japanese. Larkin had not liked his looks, but time was precious and he hoped to get rid of the man after three or four days at the utmost. Kanuka was under-sized, and had a droop of the head which gave his eyes a sort of malevolent expression as he peered upward, under his shaggy brows. He stooped slightly, was sallow-faced, and, oddly enough, had grizzled, curly hair and a full black beard, like a Russian. He was in reality, as Fred afterward learned, a native of Eastern Siberia, though he dressed like a Chinaman and spoke like a Manchurian.

For a while the little train proceeded in silence, broken only by the snorting, kicking ponies and the harsh, guttural expletives of the guide, who belaboured them with his cudgel until Fred checked him.

“These ponies must last four days, my friend,” he sung out. “If you keep up your style of correction there won’t be more than two hoofs and an ear left by the time we reach Liaoyang.”

Kanuka muttered something Larkin could not understand, and pointed to a low line of clouds in the west.

“What does that mean—storm?”

The man nodded.

“H’m. What ’s the nearest large town?”

“Feng-Weng-Chang.”

“That ’s too far. There must be something nearer than that!”

Kanuka nodded again and made a gesture toward the north. “Good place to stop, near Yalu.”

“Near the Yalu? But that ’s off our route, old chap. I guess we ’ll push on toward Feng-Weng-Chang. There must be some villages along the road.”

The guide stolidly turned and plodded on without another word save a native oath or two addressed to the pony, which responded with a squeal and a sidewise kick with one hind-foot.

The clouds rose rapidly, and the cold grew more intense. The sky was now entirely covered, and a biting wind swept down through the valley of the Yalu. At noon Fred called a halt in the shelter of a clump of trees, and a hasty meal was prepared over a small fire, while the horses were given food and drink. The guide remained sullen and taciturn, but performed his duties well. Fred had a belt around his waist filled with gold pieces, as well as a pocket full of change.

“Look here, Kanuka,” he said, as the cavalcade resumed their march, “you bring me to a house where we can be decently comfortable for to-night, and I ’ll hand you ten yen, in addition to your regular pay. See?”

The man shrugged his shoulders under his shaggy sheepskin cloak and pointed up to the sky.

"Snow soon," he said gruffly. "House that way"; and again he indicated the north.

"Well, we may have to come to it, but I don't want to go a foot off the main trail if I can help it. There are too many loose characters floating about these regions to make the country healthy for foreigners, away from the military roads—eh, Kanuka?"

A gleam came into the guide's dark eye, but passed like a flash. He only shrugged his shoulders again, and resumed the weary tramp along the frozen path.

Now a snow-flake floated downward and alighted on Fred's coat-sleeve. He surveyed it with interest.

"Kanuka," he observed, "you 're a genius. You 'd be a valuable aid to General Greely, over in my country, forecasting weather. The snow has arrived—a 'local area' of it, anyway. How long do you suppose it will last?"

"Two days."

"Whew! It 's a poor lookout for equestrian excursions to the rural districts! Here it comes, in dead earnest!"

A gust of wind rushed down from the mountains, and in a minute the air was full of fine drift which stung the faces of men and horses like needles.

The ponies whirled round and it was only by the utmost efforts of the rider and his attendant that they were forced to go on.

The landscape was now almost entirely lost to view. All Fred took note of was the snowy mane of his pony and the bowed back of the guide, urging the pack-horse up the path, which had of late grown much rougher and steeper. Hour after hour passed. Fred, buffeted by the blast and half-frozen as he crouched on the saddle, suddenly realised that it was growing darker. Night was falling. The new snow was now over the horses' fetlocks, and in places the drifts were nearly to the stirrups.

"Where are we, Kanuka?"

"Not far from Yalu. See—good house ahead!"

Fred wiped the frozen snow from his eyelashes and peered over the horse's head. Sure enough, there was the welcome sight of a light, gleaming hospitably through the gathering darkness.

"Good!" he ejaculated with stiff lips, under his icy moustache. "I thought we should find somebody living on this old Feng-Weng turnpike."

"This Yalu road," said the guide.

"What, have we left the main trail?"

"Two hours ago. No good to keep same road. All go sleep there—no wake up." The man had to shout to make himself heard above the roar of the storm.

Fred did not like this independent change of route, but going back was out of the question, and he was too cold to argue, with fire, shelter, and food close at hand.

“All right,” he said briefly. “Keep on. We ’ll talk it over afterward.”

Ten minutes later Kanuka halted before the door of a rude hut, which communicated with two or three small wings or out-houses. It was built of mud and rough stones and thatched with straw. There were several houses similar in character farther down the road. The little settlement was in a sheltered nook between two high hills, which, as the valley ran east and west, protected the huts, or hovels as they might well be called, from the full force of the gale.

Kanuka knocked at the door with his club, but it was some time before it was opened, although the light burning within, shining through the small window, showed that the occupants were awake. The guide was redoubling his blows and shouting in his own language, when the door swung inward, and an old woman appeared in the opening. A low colloquy ensued, and then Kanuka turned to his employer.

“She says we may spend the night here,” he said, in better English than he had yet used. “Go you in and get warm, sir. I will care for horses.”

With some difficulty Fred dismounted and stumbled in at the open doorway. He found himself in a small low-browed room, so filled with smoke that his eyes tingled, and so dirty that, hardened traveller as he was, he hesitated for a moment before removing his heavy coat.

The aged crone paid no further attention to her visitor, but resumed her preparations for the evening meal, which had been interrupted by Fred's appearance on the scene. There was a broad, irregular fireplace on one side of the room, and here a fire was blazing, with a black pot, from which rose a not unsavoury steam, suspended over the flames. Mumbling to herself, the mistress of the hut—for such she seemed to be—occupied herself in stirring the contents of the pot, and in dragging a small wooden table to the centre of the floor, which, like the table, the chairs, the walls, and the old woman herself, was grimy and redolent of filth.

Accustomed to adapt himself to all sorts of strange surroundings the reporter now removed his outer garments, and approached the fire with a propitiatory word to the woman; but she responded merely by pointing impatiently to a bench, and turning her back upon him. Nothing daunted Fred drew the bench nearer the fireplace and proceeded to thaw out his benumbed fingers with every outward appearance of content and satisfaction. To

please himself rather than his hostess, who he knew could not understand a word he spoke, he continued to soliloquise aloud.

“You are not very sociable, ma’am,” he said cheerfully, spreading out his hands to the blaze, “but actions speak louder than words, and the prospect of that ‘boiled dinner’ in the kettle fully compensates me for the lack of conventional attentions. Permit me!”

He saw that she was about to lift the pot from the fire, and stepping in front of her he proceeded to relieve her of the task, to which, in truth, with her bent and aged form, she hardly seemed equal.

A minute later the contents of the pot were heaped in a large wooden platter on the table. At this interesting point Kanuka entered from a rear door, stamping off the snow, and took his place on the bench beside Fred.

“Don’t apologise, brother,” said the latter, with perfect good-humour. “In great emergencies all men are free and equal—as they were born. See Constitution of the United States of America, line 3. Suppose we draw this seat up to the board, which groans with the delicacies of the season?”

Kanuka assented with a grunt, and, their hostess having supplied each with a large wooden spoon, they proceeded to eat from the dish; the “deli-

cacies" being found to consist of rice, with some other unknown vegetables and bits of boiled beef.

There was but little said during the meal. The two natives ate in silence, and Fred was too much occupied in avoiding doubtful ingredients, in his own share of the common mess of reeking food, to put any unusual strain upon his conversational powers. The withered crone now produced a flask of vodka, which Fred at first refused, but of which the others partook freely. The effect of the liquor was to loosen their tongues somewhat, and they conversed with each other in low gutturals. Presently the woman took the vodka flask and left the room, returning shortly with a mug full of liquor, which she again proffered her guest.

"She has mixed it with snow," interpreted Kanuka, as she urged it upon him. "It is weak and will not hurt you."

Not to seem discourteous Fred drank a little, but soon drew back from the table.

"I 'm not thirsty, Kanuka," said he, "but I am tired and sleepy. Are the animals provided for?"

Kanuka nodded. "Warm, and supplied with food."

"And my packs?"

"They are in the out-house."

"Very well; I 'll go to sleep, if the lady of the house will point out my bedroom."

Kanuka spoke to the woman, who withdrew for a moment. She came back with two skins, one of a reindeer and the other a shaggy pelt which Fred did not recognise. She threw these down in a corner of the room, opposite the fire.

"There is your bed," said the guide. "Sleep well."

"Same to you," said Fred, yawning. "Good-night, ma'am!"

"Neither of the Manchurians paid the slightest attention to him as he spread the rugs and stretched himself at full length between them. The wind roared around the little hut, and he could hear the snow beating against its sides. Before long Kanuka and the woman left him alone, having carefully covered the coals of fire with ashes, just as he had often seen his grandmother cover them in his New England home. Thinking about that home, and listening to the storm, he was soon sound asleep.

The travel-worn correspondent had a curious dream. He thought he was back on the old farm in Brookfield hoeing corn. There was snow between the hills, and instead of drawing up warm, brown earth around the six-inch blades of corn, he packed them nicely in snow, shivering as he did so. There were icicles on his hoe and he could hardly have kept at work had he not been aided by two Manchurian ponies who pawed the snow toward the

hills, and asked him to hurry, for a balloon was coming for them at precisely four o'clock. He was by no means surprised to hear them speak, especially as one of them was dressed in a ragged gown and the other in a sheepskin cloak.

"What time is it?" asked the old-woman pony sharply. He was too cold to look, and both ponies started to fumble at his watch-guard with their hoofs. Their eyes flashed fire. He began to be afraid, and made a tremendous effort to push them back, but he could not move a finger. With a cry of terror he awoke.

Awoke to find himself bound, hand and foot, with the light of the greasy lamp shining in his face. The old hag was stooping over him and drawing his watch from his pocket. By the dim light in the room he saw half a dozen wild-looking men standing around him. All were armed and their bearded faces were wolfish. Kanuka knelt beside him tying the last knot in the rope that bound his ankles together. As he caught sight of Fred's wide-open eyes fixed upon him he uttered an exclamation and drew a long knife from his belt.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE LITTLE FATHER.

ALTHOUGH the correspondent of the *Bulletin* was not aware of the fact when he started on his eventful journey northward, active hostilities had already begun at the front. The two immense armies, as we have seen, lay entrenched, facing each other, in lines extending, nearly one hundred miles from east to west, across the railroad south of Moukden, the ancient capital of the Manchus. While the Japanese had thrown up temporary earthworks here and there, and of course had taken advantage of the configuration of the ground to secure their positions against surprise, as well as to afford shelter for their troops against the inclemency of the Manchurian winter, the Russians were far more strongly fortified and were determined to hold their ground. Railroad trains, running between Moukden and Harbin, their great military base, supplied them with constantly renewed stores of ammunition, food, and clothing, and, moreover, removed the sick and wounded from the front and

filled their places with fresh recruits as fast as they arrived from the west over the Trans-Siberian route.

Such was the situation when Field Marshal Oyama, having kept his vast armies under perfect discipline all winter, and replaced the losses incurred at Liaoyang, determined to move on the enemy, who, refreshed and confident, awaited behind their ramparts the advance of the Japanese.

Exactly the same tactics were employed as at Liaoyang. The ends of the hundred-mile frontal line struck heavily, and bent the Russian bar of steel inward at both extremities. The attack began on February 20th, and four days later the Japanese were in possession of a strong Russian position at the village of Tsinketchen, far to the east of Moukden. At the same time the Japanese left wing began its march on Sinmintin, at the western end of the line. The Russians, out-flanked, fell back. The extremities of the two wings would doubtless have been effectively reinforced had not the crafty Oyama delivered a simultaneous assault upon the very centre at Putiloff, or "Lone-Tree Hill," to use the name that soon became familiar to newspaper readers all over the globe. A furious artillery fire was opened upon this hill by the Japanese. It was taken and retaken. The scenes that had horrified the world at Port Arthur and Liaoyang were

repeated. Assault after assault was delivered, but for a week the devoted band of Muscovites held that little acre of ground on the hill-top, while regiment after regiment of the soldiers of Nippon melted away before the terrific fire from the fortress. It was like wading up streams of molten lava, to fight a volcano in full eruption. The Russians were never driven from the hill by direct assault; but Kouropatkin, seeing his wings bent inward and backward farther and farther, and his front once more assuming the terrible horse-shoe shape, reluctantly gave orders to his brave men to withdraw from Putiloff and fall back on the line of the railroad.

In the division of the Japanese troops to whom the capture of this hill—the keystone of Kouropatkin's arch—was assigned was the regiment in which Oshima served. Thus far Oto's old friend had seemed to bear a charmed life. He had fought in battle after battle, but had received no wound of any moment. His company had been decimated again and again, but the ranks had been filled and the stern young captain still held his place in front, as it wheeled into line when the regiment was called upon for new duties.

Upon hearing the order to move upon Lone-Tree Hill, the men set up a cheer. The officers burnished their swords and stepped alertly to and fro, align-

ing the ranks and glancing along the files to see that every equipment was in order and every man ready. This was in the early afternoon. It was understood that the artillery would open upon the hill batteries at sundown, and two hours later the assault would be made.

Impatiently the compact mass of small brown men waited for the word. The great siege guns, brought with infinite labour from Port Arthur, roared and thundered. Putiloff answered, and shrapnel burst over the Japanese troops, who burrowed as best they might in trenches and holes and behind every hillock, while they hastily devoured their scant field rations. The night came on, dark and heavy. At last the welcome word was received.

“Forward!” cried Oshima, brandishing his sword so that it glittered in the flashes of the cannon.

The regiment hurled itself upon the slopes of the hill, solid shot ploughing awful furrows through their ranks. The survivors kept on, undaunted. That night meant for them victory or a glorious death. No one thought of retreat.

As he saw his men swept downward by the pitiless hail of steel, Oshima lost all sense of danger, and the old spirit of his Samurai ancestors blazed out. “Strike! Strike!” he shouted to his men, springing in front of them as the broken line faltered for

a moment. "Up the hill! It is ours! *Banzai dai Nippon!*"

With the wild cheer of Japan upon his lips he suddenly threw his arms aloft and fell headlong to the ground. The column swept by and over him in the darkness. Then two slightly wounded men raised their captain, his hand still grasping his sword, and tottered down the hill with him, stumbling over the bodies of the fallen.

Not far in the rear were Red-Cross workers, and the silent figure of the brave officer was borne swiftly to a hospital tent, where he partly regained consciousness. He was shot through the body, and the surgeons shook their heads as they examined the wound. Still, there was a chance for his life, and Oshima was despatched to the coast, the first part of the way in an ambulance, then by railway. At Antung he remained until the hospital ship was ready to sail with its sad freight of torn, pierced, and mangled soldiers. The staunch vessel—painted white, with a broad green stripe along its hull, like the sash of a military surgeon—conveyed him safely to Hiroshima, where he was placed in a cot near an eastern window. Kind hands ministered to him, and gentle faces bent over him. As he recovered full possession of his senses he saw one sweet face that was familiar to him.

"Hana!" he whispered. "O-Hana-San, is it you?"

Day after day the battle raged in Manchuria. Shells began to fall in Moukden, and in an hour the city was a scene of ghastly confusion and panic. Hospital trains, loaded to the doors with wounded and dying, pulled out of the station, the groans and shrieks of the sufferers mingling with the clank and clatter of the iron wheels. Men and women rushed to and fro in the muddy streets—for this was the first week in March, and a few warm days had turned snow and ice to mire, ankle deep—and fought each other in a frenzied fear as they struggled for places in carts and railway cars, with such of their personal effects as they could carry in their arms. Thieves and drunken soldiery looted shops and private houses boldly.

It was rumoured that the awful Japanese line was closing in on the north, and that the railroad would be cut. This added to the panic. Dazed, mud-stained, deafened with the roar of battle, half senseless with intoxication, thousands of stragglers and camp-followers staggered through the city, joining the mad rush. "To the north! To the north!" was the one thought, the one wild cry. Emerging from the densely populated town, the throng of refugees fled up the valley. Wherever the defile narrowed, the crowd crushed together, screaming, pushing, fighting their way on; through back alleys of little villages on the route; along the railroad

track, separating to allow a train to roar through their midst, shaking frenzied fists at it as it passed and left them behind; flinging away food, clothing, household treasures to which they had thus far clung mechanically; shouted at by retreating battalions whose progress they blocked, and cursed by artillery-men as the horses sprang forward over the clogged and miry road, or crashed through the low willows and over mud-walls surrounding the hovels of the natives; still on and on, through the black night and the chill grey dawn, the frantic multitude streamed northward toward Harbin and safety.

At Tie Pass there was a halt. Here Kouropatkin made a desperate attempt to stand, and did succeed in checking the enemy until the shattered Russian forces could reunite in the semblance of a disciplined army, while the wounded, and such stores and guns as had been saved from the disastrous defeat, were sent northward. Then the army fell sullenly back, a few versts each day, repulsing the attacks of the exhausted Japanese. These attacks diminished in number and force, until Kouropatkin could breathe more freely and even consider establishing a new line of permanent defence. Before, however, he could reorganise his troops or lay out a single line of fortifications a despatch flashed over the wires from St. Petersburg removing him from the

supreme command of the army and appointing General Linevitch, his former subordinate, in his place.

Like a brave and generous soldier he not only laid down his command without a word of protest, but at once petitioned for and obtained permission to serve under Linevitch. Truly, the "Little Father" had reason to be proud of his children!

But the Czar of all the Russias, in his white palace on the Neva, had cares beyond even those which gathered, bat-winged, around the prospects of his army in the Far East. Throughout his vast realm, from the Caucasus to the Baltic, from Sebastopol to the Arctic Seas, in the remote provinces and at the very gates of his palace, signs multiplied that a long-dreaded event was coming to pass: the Russian peasant was awakening! Aroused by proclamations of Nihilists, by sermons and appeals from religious leaders, by stinging words from such patriots as Tolstoi and Gorky, the peasant stirred in his long sleep, he smiled in his stupid, good-humoured, harmless way; he grew graver as the import of the fiery words that were borne on every breeze penetrated his dull brain. Cruelty—oppression—injustice—could it be true? Nay, the Little Father would put it all right. They would tell him about it; they would go to him with these

wrongs as a little child kneels at his bedside and prays sleepily and trustfully, to his Father in Heaven; and he, the Ruler of all the Russias, the White Czar, the father of his people, would listen and would hear their prayer and grant relief, if relief were needed.

A great throng of such peasants, headed by a priest, flocked to the city, asking, poor, bewildered souls, to see the Czar, and to be allowed to pray to him. They were rebuffed and roughly ordered back by men with glistening bayonets. Then, still childlike and foolish, they actually tried to force their way to their father's house, believing that although his minions might use them rudely, he, whom they loved with all their big, ignorant, devoted hearts, would suffer them to come unto him, and forbid them not.

Another surge forward, over the paved street, to the fatal bridge. "Halt! Disperse!"

They would not. Their priest leader held his cross aloft and waved them on.

Then it came—a rattling crash like the near thunder close upon the lightning. Shrieks and moans of dying men and children. Another volley, and another. And the Little Father was so near—could he not hear them?

The people fled from the cruel streets, the red pavement, the hoofs of the war-horses and the flash-

ing sabres of their riders. Back, in a helpless, frightened throng, to the open country, as the fugitives fled from Moukden. But the fierce enemy that was behind them was no foreign foe, thirsting for their lives. It was their Little Father!

Did the young, black-bearded Czar think of all this, as he sat in his gorgeously draped throne room in the palace? Did his cheeks blanch and his lips quiver at the distant sound of musketry in the streets of St. Petersburg? Who can tell? Only He who knoweth all hearts and whose love holds both Czar and peasant.

While Russia was thus torn with internal troubles, the situation in the East grew daily more threatening. The danger was now apparent to all. At Harbin the great railway forks, one branch going southward to Port Arthur, and the other continuing eastward to Vladivostock. If the Japanese, pushing northward with their victorious hosts, could cut the line east of Harbin Junction, Russia's one port, her last hope of sea power on the North Pacific, would be at the mercy of the Japanese.

Despatches were sent to Rojestvensky to hurry his ships to the scene of war. Two squadrons were already united under his command. A third was on its way through the Mediterranean, and shortly afterward rendezvoused at Jiboutil, near Aden, at the southern end of the Red Sea. This third

squadron was also ordered to proceed eastward across the Indian Ocean at full speed, and overtake the Baltic fleet if possible. Early in April Rojestvensky's ships were sighted off Acheen, at the extreme north-western point of Sumatra.

CHAPTER XXV.

LARKIN RETIRES FROM BUSINESS.

WHEN Fred Larkin grasped the full significance of the situation in which he found himself, on awaking in the Manchurian hut, he felt that he was nearer death than ever before in all his hardy, adventurous life. At Santiago, indeed, he had thought himself led out to execution, but this had proved to be a mistake. The Spaniards were but conducting him, under a flag of truce, to the American lines, where he was exchanged for a prisoner of war, one of their own countrymen. In this lonely hovel, in one of the remotest and dreariest districts of Manchuria, cut off from all hope of help, not only by the leagues that lay between him and the travelled road to Feng-Weng-Chang, but by the storm which now shook the hut with its fierce blasts; surrounded by lawless men who thirsted for gold and cared not a whiff from their pipes for a human life; trapped by the cunning guide, and completely at the mercy of his wolfish captors as he lay before them pinioned hand and

foot; he realised in a swift flash of thought that he could be saved by little short of a miracle. Still he would try. He was not a man to give up while the faintest shred of hope remained.

“What do you want, Kanuka?” he asked quietly, looking his treacherous guide straight in the eye.

The villain hesitated, and Fred knew his life hung by a hair. The blade did not fall.

“We want everything you have, everything!” said Kanuka. “If you resist we kill you.”

“You would gain nothing by that,” said the prisoner. “I am perfectly helpless. Who are—your friends?”

“They are not my friends; they are my men. If I lift my finger to them, you are dead. Is it not so?” he added, turning to the motley crew and speaking in his own tongue.

A low snarl went round the circle, and they showed their teeth. They drew still nearer, and fingered the hafts of their knives, which Fred could see sticking in their girdles. Two of the men carried guns. One of the band, younger than the rest, seemed to have no weapons, and remained in the background. The old woman had succeeded in getting possession of the watch and dangled it so that the light shone upon it.

“I don’t doubt your word, Kanuka,” observed Fred in the same calm, even tones. “Those fol-

lowers of yours seem quite willing to finish up the job. But you know better than that. *You* are an intelligent man."

The guide could not conceal a gratified expression, and drew himself up a little.

"*You* know," continued the reporter, "that if I should be killed there would be a hue and cry after the American war correspondent. The newspaper I represent would spend a fortune in hunting down every man that took part in the murder. Very likely the United States Government would take the matter up, and you would be caught and executed, every man of you, at Peking, if it took ten years. Probably you remember what happened to the men that put two or three American missionaries to death, a few years ago? Yes, I thought so. And the Chinese method of execution is so very unpleasant, in such cases!"

Kanuka stood erect, motioned back his men, and gnawed his moustache, frowning irresolutely.

"*You* joke!" said he, with a meaning gesture of his knife.

"Joke? Not a bit of it. I never felt less like joking," said Fred honestly. "I want to get out of this scrape alive, and to do that, I must save you. If I die, you die, and the old lady and your hopeful crowd there, as sure as fate. Peking never lets an international offence go; and if Peking would,

Washington would n't. You know that as well as I do."

"What you propose?" asked the chief.

"Well, as I said, I can't help your taking all my worldly goods," said the reporter. "The next thing is to get rid of me without imperilling your own head—or limbs," he added significantly. The bandit shuddered in spite of himself. He had witnessed the execution of a Boxer murderer, near Pekin. Fred went on: "I would suggest that as soon as the storm will permit you to move—I assure you I am ready to take considerable risk on the road—you take me, blindfolded if you wish, to some point from which I can strike out for the settlements. You, meanwhile, with your men, could make tracks for parts unknown—of which there happens to be a good supply within easy reach of this forsaken hole."

"You would inform on us," growled the ex-guide. "We should have Japanese police on our trail in twenty-four hours."

"I would give you my word of honour——"

The rascal shrugged his shoulders. "I would not trust you. You newspaper men tell what stories you like."

Fred flushed, and felt an overpowering desire to plant one good blow between the man's sulky, sneering eyes.

"Oh, well," he said, "settle it yourself. You asked my advice and I've given it. When the Chinese authorities are getting ready to deal with you, don't blame *me*, that's all."

Kanuka turned to his men and talked to them rapidly and in low tones. So far as Fred could judge, the old crone and the youngest of the bandits, who, he afterward learned, was her son, were advocating his liberation. The rest clamoured for blood. The chief seemed undecided, and fingered his knife nervously. At last he spoke to his followers sharply, with an abrupt gesture of dismissal. To Fred's relief they all filed out, leaving him alone with the chief.

"They think it would be foolish to let you go," said the latter. "Dead men tell no tales. But they are beasts—pooh! As you say, I am an intelligent man. You shall not die to-night. In the morning we shall see."

He knelt again beside his prisoner and rummaged his pockets thoroughly, drawing out their contents and surveying them by the light of the lamp. The papers he threw contemptuously into the fireplace; the silver change and small articles he thrust into his own pouch. Fortunately Fred had taken a purse containing about fifty dollars worth of gold pieces, to use on his trip. To the Manchurian this was an enormous sum of money, and it did not

occur to him to examine his captive's belt, which contained a much larger amount.

"Look here, old chap," said Fred, as Kanuka rose to his feet with his plunder, "ease up these ropes a little, will you? They cut me, and I want to sleep."

The man gave a contemptuous grunt, and, bestowing a kick on the helpless prisoner, retired without a word. Again Fred's blood boiled, but he realised his utter helplessness, and lay quietly, trying to concoct some plan for escape, or for action, on the following day.

It was evident that he had fallen into the hands of that dangerous and as yet only partly understood power, the Boxer element of north-eastern China. In 1901 these bandits, or highwaymen,—for such they really were, and are—terrorised a district extending from Newchwang to Kirin. Their operations were so systematic and successful that Chinese as well as foreign merchants finally had come to recognise their authority, and it is said that an office was actually established in the port of Newchwang where persons desiring to import goods might secure insurance against molestation from the robbers. When the insurance was paid for, the bandit agent gave the merchant a document and a little flag, and with this document in his possession, and the flag nailed to his cart or boat, he travelled in safety.

As soon as the real Boxer movement was disposed of by the Powers, and by China herself, the Russians undertook the suppression of this systematic brigandage, by which some thousands of outlaws were living in insolent security. Moukden was garrisoned with twelve thousand soldiers, and troops took the field against the robbers. In less than six weeks three thousand bandits were killed and nearly as many captured. The remainder scattered and fled to the fastnesses of the mountains, where they were hunted like wild beasts. As an organised force, they were, indeed, "suppressed"; but strong gangs of criminals escaped, and during the early months of the Japanese war they gained courage and assumed their unlawful calling with something of their former boldness.

Fred knew all this—he had followed the recent history of China carefully—and he had no doubt whatever that he had fallen into the hands of one of the scattered bands of this still powerful organisation. He knew, moreover, that a more daring and remorseless set of men never gained their living by highway robbery than these same bandits, through whose agent, Kanuka, they had so cleverly entrapped him.

Revolving these things in his mind and trying to concoct some sort of plan for escape, the reporter at last fell asleep from sheer exhaustion, in spite of

the pain caused by his bonds, and the presence of two bandits who had remained to watch the prisoner.

When he awoke it was broad daylight. The mistress of the hut was occupied in preparing another seething mess over the fire, exactly as she had been when he entered the hut. Fred felt lame and sore from head to foot, and soon discovered, moreover, that he had taken a severe cold. He was hot and feverish, and had a weak longing for his mother's cool, soft hands upon his burning forehead.

The old hag presently lifted the pot from the fire, groaning as she did so.

"I wish I could help you, ma'am," said Fred, trying to assume a cheerful tone, "but 'circumstances over which I have no control,' you know!"

She seemed to gather the import of his words—perhaps remembering his courteous assistance on the preceding night—and dishing out a portion of the nauseous mess offered it to him. When she saw that he was so tightly bound that he could not help himself to food she uttered an exclamation in which he recognised the first hint of pity among his captors. Looking over her shoulder with evident apprehension, she freed his right arm, and when he indicated with a feeble smile and shake of his head that it was benumbed, she rubbed it with a not unwomanly touch until he could use it and feed himself. Having forced down a little of the distasteful

food, to avoid hurting her feelings, he lay back on his couch and motioned to her to lay the rope lightly over his arm, giving it its former appearance of confinement. This she did at once, and not too soon, for the whole gang of seven men, including Kanuka, trooped in for their breakfast a minute later.

The storm continued through the day, and Fred found his condition unchanged, save that he was allowed to walk about the room a little, under guard of three of the ugliest-looking of the bandits. As night came on once more, his feverishness increased. He felt faint and giddy. He had no doubt that his drink was drugged the day before, and it was quite possible that the process—though for what purpose he could not guess—was being kept up. He was too feeble to care much what he ate or drank. All he wanted was to be left alone.

At about midnight on the second night in the hut, as the sick man was tossing on his filthy bed, the inner door of the room opened softly, and the woman appeared, shading the flame of the lamp with her hand. Her son, who had been left on guard, was standing silently by the window, gun in hand. The aged crone now knelt beside Fred, and noiselessly cast off the ropes, which had been tied with less caution than at first, it being deemed impossible that the captive, weakened as he was, could make his escape. Fred managed to gain his feet,

and stood stiffly, half supported by the woman. She led him to the outer door, which she opened. The stars were shining, and it was bitter cold. The young bandit now slipped around the corner of the house and presently reappeared with one of the ponies, upon which Fred managed to scramble. The old woman gave the reporter a soft pat on the back and whispered something to her son, who stooped and kissed her! Then she went into the house, wiping her eyes on her ragged skirt, and leaving the two men outside, free.

Fred soon found that he could not sit upright in the saddle without help, and the bandit, slinging his gun over his back, put his arm around the rider and so held him on, while the pony picked his way down the mountain trail. In places the drifts made the path almost impassable. The wind still swept fiercely through the defile, although the night was clear. Once the young robber stopped suddenly and unslung his rifle; but the noise he had heard was but that of a falling tree, and he resumed his steady walk beside the pony.

How he survived that night Fred never knew. It was a vague, horrible dream of snow and ice, of piercing chills and fever heats, of monotonous plodding through the snow, alternating with plunging descents over rough ground, that seemed to jar him to pieces, while every bone and muscle was a sepa-

rate anguish. Still on and on, the guide saying never a word.

Before dawn Fred dimly understood that they had struck the main road to Wiju. Less snow had fallen here, and their progress was more rapid. Early in the forenoon the noise of wheels and loud voices was heard on the path behind them. Whether or not it was a band of pursuers he neither knew nor cared. The world was one wide horror of pain and glaring light and bursting misery of head and limb.

The cavalcade in the rear overtook the rider. It was a train of three ambulance carts returning from the front with wounded Japanese. The guide spoke briefly to the leader and Fred was lifted from his horse with delicate brown hands as gentle as a woman's, and was placed on a cot in one of the wagons. The young bandit disappeared. Fred never saw him again.

Four days later the editor-in-chief of the *Bulletin* took up a bit of yellow paper and read: "Frederic Larkin, Correspondent, sick in hospital at Hiroshima."

The chief smiled grimly as he laid down the cable despatch.

"In one of his scrapes again!" he said, tossing the paper over to his sub. "We shall have to depend on the Associated for a while!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

“THE DESTINY OF AN EMPIRE.”

ON the morning of the twenty-seventh of May a light fog hung over the Yellow Sea and the Straits of Korea. Gulls sailed in leisurely fashion above the dull-green surface of the water, or dropped with sudden scream as their keen eyes discerned some floating scrap of food; but the supply was scarce, for few ships had of late passed that way, and the sea, ordinarily alive with junks and steamers and modern sailing craft, was as deserted as some far-off Polar bay which no adventurer's keel had yet ploughed.

The gulls seemed uneasy, in spite of the desolateness of the broad expanse of heaving swell. They called to each other with warning cries as if some hidden danger were near. What lay concealed beneath those fleecy folds of mist, which already began to mellow to golden in the rays of the rising sun, and to drift southward before the light breeze which was springing up? What would be revealed when the white curtain should lift?

For many weeks, since the day when the Russian fleet passed the Straits of Malacca and had been reported from Singapore, the naval forces of Japan had seemed hardly more than a myth. "Where is Togo?" was the question on every lip. "Will he proceed southward and meet the enemy in the China Sea? Will he lie in wait for them between Formosa and the mainland—that mine-strewn sea where the fair Isles of the Fishermen, bristling with fortifications, bait the open trap? Will he lure them eastward, past the Philippines, to the Pacific, and attack them there, or will Japan allow her enemy to take refuge in her one port of Vladivostock, there to be brought to bay and pulled down as were her proud battle-ships and cruisers at Port Arthur?"

Back and forth under the sea flashed the questions and the appeals for news; but Japan gave no answer; her admiral was dumb. He and his ships disappeared from view. Newspaper correspondents burdened the cables with surmises, but no news. Every naval expert had his opinion to give—at space rates—but home editors and the great, waiting, impatient public clamoured in vain for authentic information.

At the War Office in Tokio a few men, small of stature and suave in demeanour, bowed and smiled as of old. They were gentle, courteous, mild, and

inscrutable. They received and sent despatches without a gleam of emotion in their dark faces. They saw, in these despatches the North Pacific, with each bay and port and headland, the approaching Muscovite enemy and the leashed fleet of Japan, as a crystal-gazer holds a far-off scene in the hollow of his hand. One day their smiles faded, for a moment, and their eyes grew stern as they dictated a new order. They were crushing an empire.

In the Winter Palace of Tsarskoe-Selo a slightly built young man with a dark beard and pale, irresolute countenance paced the marble floor nervously. He had seen his proudest fortress in the East reduced to submission; his armies, whose watchword had been, "Russia never withdraws," driven back, beaten, overwhelmed by the soldiers of despised Nippon; his war-ships tortured by shot and shell, by enemies upon the sea and beneath its waters; and he had read report after report of their loss and of the death of countless thousands of men, "at the Czar's command." And now his new fleet, brought together and built up at enormous expense, but ill-manned and ill-managed, had all but finished its long voyage, and had entered hostile seas. Upon this fleet hung all his hope of retrieving the disasters of the war. One great naval victory, and Russia would be wild with joy. The past would be

forgotten and the name of the Little Father once more revered.

The Baltic fleet halted, for coal and provisions, off the friendly port of Saigon, the leading city of the French possessions in Lower China. Nebogatoff, with a third squadron, was hurrying across the Indian Ocean to join Rojestvensky, who now anxiously awaited his approach. The sympathies of the French ports were but half concealed; the needed supplies came in abundance. Japan calmly but sternly remonstrated at this apparent breach of neutrality, and France was obliged to warn the Russians off her coast. Nebogatoff, however, had succeeded in adding his ships to those of the larger squadrons, and Rojestvensky, with his entire fleet coaled and provisioned, was now ready for the decisive battle. Week after week passed, and still no smoke of the hostile armada appeared on the northern horizon. Compelled to change his station day by day, the Russian moved nervously here and there in the China Sea inviting attack. He sent out reports that he was about to essay the narrow passage west of Formosa, either east or west of the Pescadores; he harboured his fleet under the lee of the great island of Hainan; he professed an intention to thread the dangerous passages north of Luzon and make a dash across the open Pacific, for the friendly port. Still the wily Japanese remained

silent, unheard, unseen, until the supplies of her harassed, perplexed, impatient enemy once more diminished and her bunkers were again nearly empty.

At last, driven to desperation by the refusal of the inscrutable, invisible foe to emerge from the obscurity where he lurked, Rojestvensky set the signal to advance. He hoped that the Japanese had been misled by rumours of his escape to the open Pacific, and that by a direct course northward through the Korean Straits he could reach Vladivostock, now so few miles away, after his weary seven months' voyage from the Baltic. The fog of the early morning was dense. No scout-ship of the enemy was visible. It would take time to notify Togo of any movement of his adversary. Forming in double line, with strict orders for silence throughout every ship, the great flotilla got under way and started northward through the early morning mist.

In days gone by the leader of an armed force could obtain information of the manœuvres of his enemy only by means of trusty couriers. Later, written messages were despatched by aides, who brought the news and conveyed orders, riding hard or traversing the sea in swift boats. Centuries passed and the telegraph began to play its part in the transmission of despatches, to be succeeded in its turn by the field telephone. But as the Russo-Japanese war brought into practical use for the first

time the terrible submarine torpedo-boat, so it found a new and marvellous medium for communication between headquarters and outposts of an army or fleet. The ancient Samurai of Nippon fought with two swords; their descendants in 1905 wielded the submarine and the wireless telegraph. As Rojestvensky's sombre fleet moved forward there were no armed scouts dashing across the waves to announce their coming; the electric cable, far below, was dumb; but the very sky above, the waters that were ploughed by the black keels, at the moment when the harassed Russians began to breathe freely, were betraying them.

"At exactly 5.30 A.M., on Saturday, May 27th, a wireless message was received at the naval base of the Japanese: '*The enemy's squadron is in sight.*'"

Under shelter of the island off Fusan, on the east coast of Korea, lay sixty or more grey ships, their fires banked, smoke slowly floating from their stacks. They had lain thus for weeks, waiting for that message. The instant it was received the decks of every vessel became alive with nimble sailors. Cables were slipped, fires scattered and heaped high with coal, ammunition-hoists handled, and garments flung aside as the men stripped for action. The fleet slowly moved eastward over the waters of the Japan Sea, which roughened under the wind that gathered force as day broadened.

Eagerly the small brown fighting men sprang to quarters and pointed to the east, where the sky grew golden with the emblem of their nation, the Rising Sun.

Before noon wireless messages brought news that the Russian fleet had chosen the eastern passage of the Straits, between the Tsu Islands and Japan. At two o'clock the smoke of Rojestvensky's flagship blurred the southern horizon. Instantly a line of signal flags fluttered to the yard-arm of the Japanese battle-ship *Mikasa*: "*The destiny of an empire depends upon this action. You are all expected to do your uttermost.*"

Straight on, with superb courage, came the armada of the White Czar. In the double column the weaker ships held the port positions, thus offering the least resistance to attack on that side, and at the same time blanketing the fire of the heavier turrent guns of their own first-class battle-ships.

A roll of smoke burst from the bows of the *Kniaz Souvaroff*, followed almost instantly by a roar from the huge twelve-inch guns of the *Mikasa*. The greatest naval battle in the history of the world had begun.

The action became general. The Russian ships at the opening of the fight changed their course and endeavoured to break through the enveloping line of their foe, but were driven back at every point.

The old tactics of Oyama at Liaoyang and Moukden were repeated by Togo on the sea. Once more the fatal horse-shoe front closed in. To starboard, to port, ahead, and astern the thunders of the Japanese guns dismayed the untrained sailors of the Baltic fleet. Within less than an hour the *Borodino* was seen to be on fire. Five Japanese war-ships bore down upon her. To rescue, to save? To pour a deadlier storm of shot and shell into the doomed ship; to pierce its wounds anew, to sweep its struggling, bleeding, shrieking crew from its decks and send ship and men to the bottom. Through and through the barbette, and the hull itself, plunged and exploded the steel projectiles. Dead and dying men lay in heaps everywhere about the decks; the ammunition hoists were wrecked and the steering-gear disabled, so that the great, tortured battle-ship could only stagger over the water round and round in a circle, her remaining guns still firing at intervals, until the merciful waves swept over her, and with all on board, living and dead, she went down.

The flagship bearing Admiral Rojestvensky was early singled out for attack. When the ship was in flames and in momentary danger of sinking the admiral was transferred to a destroyer, from which he was soon after taken by the Japanese and sent ashore, a prisoner, severely wounded.

So the battle raged, and vessel after vessel, bearing the Russian flag, was battered to pieces and sent to the bottom, while Togo's fleet seemed to bear a charmed life. At last the merciful night, that so often has laid its quieting hand of peace upon maddened, struggling combatants by land and sea, brooded over the waters of the Sea of Japan. The few ships from the Baltic that could still move under control crept northward in the vain hope of reaching safety. There was no longer any dream of victory; escape, escape from this horrible, relentless foe, was the only thought.

But while the heavier ships had been dealing deadly blows that fair May afternoon, the pack of smaller craft, the torpedo-boats and destroyers, had been for the most part held back under the lee of the islands; held back with difficulty, for their crews and officers were wild to enter the engagement. In the conning-tower of the *Fujiyama* Commander Oto Owari chafed and fretted over the forced inaction, his dark eyes blazing and hands twitching. Before midnight the signal came down the line to advance.

Silently, like wolves gathering about a wounded herd, crouching low to the ground, the pack gathered around the ill-fated, shattered fleet. Then the word was given, and they rushed upon their prey. Searchlights flashed from the beleaguered ships, as

they bravely turned at bay. Again and again the wolves were driven back. More than one of the fierce assailants never returned to the charge; but the rest closed the gaps, and cutting out one after another of the Russians, set their teeth of steel into her ribs until with a great cry she succumbed.

The *Fujiyama* was foremost in every rush, and staggered under the blows she received. Oto was everywhere, with his savage little ship, launching his torpedoes at the biggest vessels of the enemy. He was in full attack upon the *Sissoi-Valiki*, one of Rojestvensky's finest battle-ships, when a great shell exploded just in front of the conning-tower of the destroyer. It was a fatal blow. Oto, with a dozen others, all of them wounded, was hurled into the sea, from which he was rescued and taken on board the *Kasuga*, insensible, and therefore blissfully unconscious that his ship had gone to the bottom. The fight drifted northward.

Sunday morning dawned, “so cool, so calm, so bright.” The battle was resumed, each flying ship of the Russians with three or four of the enemy hanging about her and hammering her with shell and solid shot. As on the preceding day and night the terrors of the Baltic crews were increased by the evident presence of submarines. Several of the western ships, with no hostile craft visible in the open sea, had suddenly felt the impact of an

awful blow from below, followed by an explosion that tore her hull to pieces, while the unseen assailant darted off beneath the waves for fresh prey.

The terrible drama was brought to a close by the surrender of Admiral Nebogatoff's ships, on Sunday afternoon, off the rocks of Liancourt. The next morning the world stood thunderstruck as it heard of the utter annihilation of Russia's proud fleet. Six battle-ships, five cruisers, and many other smaller vessels sunk, and two battle-ships, with several defence ships or destroyers, *captured*. It was this last item that was most significant. Even Spain had gone down fighting, on the coast of Cuba and off Manila, under the withering fire of Dewey, Sampson, and Schley; for the first time in modern warfare a battle-ship, nay, two of them, had run up the white flag. Truly Russia, haughty Russia, which "never carried to the front material from which to make a flag of truce," had been humbled in the dust. And in the Winter Palace of Tsarko-Selo the pale young Czar was weeping.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ORDERED HOME.

“OW-YOW!” yawned Midshipman Robert Starr in the wardroom of the *Osprey*. “I ’m tired of this dodging back and forth between two fires, with no chance for a slap at either of them. We might have got up a good scrap over Junk, here,” he added, patting the Newfoundland’s broad head, and looking reproachfully at Liddon.

The dog yawned, as if in sympathy with the young officer, and stretched himself at full length on the deck, his paws under the mess-table.

“You ’re teaching our coloured friend bad manners, Bob,” laughed the ensign, giving Junk a playful push with his foot. “Get up, there, you old peripatetic door-mat, and muster on the forecastle. There ’s no room for yawners down here.”

“I consider that remark personal,” retorted Bob, as he rose. “I ’m going to—” Here he was interrupted by the entrance of a marine, who announced that the captain wished to see his officers in the after cabin.

“What ’s up now, I wonder?” said Staples, leading the way to the commander’s quarters.

“Oh, another wildly exciting cruise to Woosung or Chemulpo, or Cheefoo, or some other old Che,” sighed Starr. “I never was very fond of cheese, anyway!”

When they entered the cabin their undignified deportment was laid aside.

Rexdale’s eyes were sparkling. He evidently had important and pleasurable news to communicate.

“Gentlemen,” said he, “I have just received orders from the Department. The *Osprey* is to change her station once more.” Bob groaned softly, under his breath. “This time,” continued Dave, “our port of destination is not Cavite or Shanghai. We are to sail due east. We are ordered home!”

Every officer sprang to his feet. “Hurrah!” shouted Bob, forgetful alike of dignity and discipline. “I beg your pardon, sir,” he stammered, the blood rushing to his cheeks; “but that ’s grand news! If the Secretary were here I ’d hug him!”

The commander now explained that the *Osprey* was ordered to proceed to Mare Island, where she would be thoroughly overhauled, renovated, and practically remodelled. She was old-fashioned, but the Department believed they could make of her a valuable defence ship, in accordance with modern

ideas of ship-building. As soon as she should go out of commission her officers and crew were to report, some on various war-ships in the eastern Pacific, some for shore duty, and still others, including the three officers of highest rank, at Washington, where they would be assigned to new duties. Bob's face fell a little at this announcement, but he was happy in the thought of a change, and a sojourn in home waters. Little Dobson was one of those who were to go on shore, and he had visions of a leave of absence which would give him time to race across the continent to his own home and that of a certain commandant whose daughter was named Mary. By the next mail letters went to Wynnie and Edith Black, from Bob Starr and Liddon respectively. It is needless to say that Dave wrote to Hallie within two hours after the receipt of the orders. The news quickly spread through the ship, and great was the rejoicing.

While the Russian fleet was irresolutely moving to and fro in Eastern waters, and Linevitch, having succeeded Kouropatkin, was reorganising his shattered army and preparing for a new encounter with the victorious Oyama south of Harbin, the women of Japan worked unceasingly for home and country.

The great military hospital at Hiroshima comprised eight divisions, with a total capacity of

seventeen thousand beds. In the largest of the divisions a visitor merely passing the foot of each bed would walk six miles. Nearly all of these beds were now occupied, and Red Cross nurses from the United States passed to and fro among the sufferers, side by side with their dark sisters of the Orient, in gentlest ministrations.

Fred Larkin had soon recovered sufficiently to be removed to private quarters, from which, pale and emaciated, but with indomitable pluck and returning energy, he emerged a few weeks later. Letters from the *Bulletin* recalled him to Massachusetts, and he unwillingly obeyed, realising that the great naval battle was close at hand. He read the news of the destruction of the Russian fleet the day after his arrival in San Francisco.

In a small room—one of those set apart for officers—a Japanese soldier lay on a cot bed, gazing languidly out of the open window toward the east. Walls, counterpane, and the single garment—a kimono—which the patient wore, were of spotless white. Beside the bed sat a little nurse, fanning the sick man, who now and then spoke to her in his own language, though so quietly that his attendant could scarcely hear him.

“O-Hana-San——”

“Yes, Oshima, I am here!”

“The time?”

“It is morning—five o’clock.”

The sick man was silent for a few moments. Then his eye fell upon a streak of gold which fell upon the wall.

“Ah!” he said softly, “the rising sun!”

Again he was silent. When he spoke once more he turned his head toward the girl and looked into her eyes.

“And—you must go—you must leave me, Hana?”

“Yes,” she answered sorrowfully. “I am ordered. The naval hospital at Sasebo is crowded with new patients from the great sea battle. There are not nurses enough. I am ordered to go to-day.”

“If you find Oto—tell him—Oshima sends his love by O-Hana-San. Tell him Oshima—is—ordered home! *Banzai dai Nippon!*”

His eyes closed. O-Hana-San bent over him, then hurried for the surgeon on duty.

“He will not waken,” said that official. “He was a brave man.”

Two days later a grey-haired man passed slowly out of the door of the villa that had been the home of Oshima’s boyhood, in the little town by the sea. He paused beside a red slab which was posted before the house, and on which was written, in Japanese characters, “*Gone to the Front.*” Then he

stooped painfully and placed beside the first post another, like many in that village, and before other homes, all over Japan. It was black, and bore the simple inscription, "*Bravery Forever.*"

"Oto, Oto Owari! It is I! See, it is O-Hana-San! I have come to help you—to make you well!"

Oto opened his eyes and turned his bandaged head on the pillow. His little playmate of years gone by was kneeling beside his cot, her great brown eyes moist and pleading—pleading with him not to die, not to join Oshima in the strange unknown shadows to which he had gone. She was quite satisfied that her hero should be deprived of the inscription "*Bravery Forever*"—for the present at least!

It was a hard fight for life, but the good surgeon of the ward, and the girl's unceasing care, and Oto's own fine constitution and determination to live for her, won the victory. While many died on every side, and the mournful stretchers came and went, and the black posts increased in number throughout the empire, the young commander steadily grew better, until he was discharged "well"; to take his place once more, with higher rank, on the quarter-deck of a fine new cruiser. On the day when he left the hospital he married O-Hana-San. On that

same day, the fifth of September, 1905, the Treaty of Peace between Russia and Japan was signed by the envoys of the two countries at Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Two weeks after the great battle of the Sea of Japan a war-ship, with hull white as snow, was ploughing the waters of the Pacific with her prow pointed due east. Land was still in sight astern, and over her taffrail floated the beautiful Stars and Stripes. The *Osprey* was homeward bound.

THE END.

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