



THE EVENTS MAN

RICHARD BARRY



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THE EVENTS MAN



Mr. Stanley Washburn aboard *The Fawan*

THE EVENTS MAN

Being an Account of the Adventures of
Stanley Washburn, American War
Correspondent.

BY

RICHARD BARRY

Author of "Port Arthur," "A Monster Heroism," etc.

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PREFACE

THIS book is not fiction; it is not war correspondence; not history; not memoir. There is here the portrait of a man painted on the background of a tale of romantic achievement. The man is Stanley Washburn, war correspondent, writer of cable news for a syndicate of the chief American dailies. The achievement was the operation of the Chicago Daily News dispatch boat *Fawan* through the months of March, April, May and June of 1904 during the Russo-Japanese war. Victor F. Lawson, proprietor and editor of the Daily News, stood behind the expedition with his papers, his money and his influence. Every statement of fact here is literally true, as it was made to the author during the summer of 1905, in a bean mill at General Nogi's headquarters on the borders of Mongolia. The chart in the back of the volume is reproduced from that used in the pilot house of *The Fawan*.

R. B.

Fakumen, North China,
September 10, 1905.

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Scene of Operations of *The Fawan*

UNDER WAY.

CHAPTER I.

In which, after being the object of all the touts, sharks and beach-combers on the China coast, and succumbing to as few of them as my youth and inexperience warrants, I set out on a cruise around Robin Hood's Barn, accompanied by the Korean Prime Minister Elect.

The *Victoria* was not the boat we chartered. She was a wreck suitable for what she finally became—a blockade runner. She was twenty-seven years old, had been brought up in ballast with coal from Australia, her ribs were of iron, she had no bulkheads, and her engines were old-fashioned compounds. When she finally was bought by the Russians, it cost them ten thousand dollars to put her to sea and then she could only drag her miserable way over to the Port Arthur Channel, where she sat and rotted until the end of the war. She sold for 30,000 mex, and yet the special brand of shark that wanted to take me in on her, tried to stick me for repairs and ten thousand mex a month.

It was but one of the devious ways to rope me into silly extravagance, when word went down the coast that a young American, on his milk, was out for a dispatch boat, and that he

wanted her quickly. The *Victoria* lay, an old forsaken tub, up the Shanghai creek when I was piloted to her. I passed her up without winking an eye.

Then they brought me in succession all the halt, lame and blind among the seacraft of the region. Word went gaily forth that I was the proper mark for every weather-beaten tub in the Yellow Sea. There was the *Pronto*, that got seventeen wounds in her as she slipped out of Port Arthur one bright morning; the *Samsui*, the *Victoria II.*, and a Russian whaler named *George*; a peach she was, and I thought long of taking her on. It was only a week after I looked at the *George*, that her first mate was murdered in his cabin. There was the steam pilot boat *Shanghai* together with a host of others, and I examined them all with that energy and foresight that is expected of a man who contemplates spending \$50,000 of someone else's money, and who is going out thereby to risk his life that the world may have instantaneous record of the sea battles of great powers.

One of the neatest deals to pull my leg was put up in that hotbed of intrigue and scandal

called *Shanghai*. I offered 7,000 mex a month for the boat—she was a ripper, with double engines and a long funnel—and that was a thousand more than she was worth. The gang that held her said (*sotto voce*): “We’ll hold out for \$10,000, but will finally let her go, if need be, for \$7,000. At that we’re to the good a clear thousand a month. Then, when he comes in, we’ll put in a bill for \$10,000 extra, due to inefficient handling. We can say that the hull is strained, the boilers primed or the engines unduly taxed.” One of my pals from down the coast, however, put me on to this deal, and when they refused my first offer I sat tight. They came back asking when I would make another offer, and I told them that there was not going to be any other offer.

Then the *Fawan* hove in sight and I became glad. *Fawan*! That’s Chinese for “Good Luck”! She was a salvage boat for work under the Taku forts, lightering heavy vessels over the bar, and for wrecking in the Gulf of Pechili; as neat a shell as floats the Yellow Sea! When I think of her my heart goes out as to an old and tried friend. The days and nights that I have lain on her, the dangers that she has

seen me through, the seas that we have survived together, the sights that she has led me among, the forces that she has allied me with; these and more bring my memory back to her with the joy of intimacy and the pride of gallant association.

The dauntless old *Fawan!* How I have slipped over the bar to meet her at two in the morning, fingering a wire ordering me straight to the Port Arthur guns, and how she has risen, like a bulldog in leash, to the feat! How I have paced those decks month after month on calm days, and again on tempestuous days off the Korean coast, while she pounded and strained her tough little sides till I thought bar and stave could stand no more! And even now as I wake up in the morning I fancy I can hear the donkey engine just over my head going "clumpety, clump, clump, clump" as the anchor comes up rasping and dripping just outside my port hole. You would hardly guess how intimate one could become with a boat like that, just as one might with a human being. I became so accustomed to her every whim and motion that if the revolutions slowed down ten

a minute, I would sit up with a start, knowing well that the drill of habit was a foul.

The *Fawan* belonged to the Taku Tug and Lighter Company, an English concern, and business being dull just then, they gave me a three months' charter with a three months' option for 3,500 taels a month. That was cheap! She was registered at about 300 tons, and in a seaway rolled like a canal boat, but she could go—as well as any tug boat goes. She was built for towing, was all engines, and when you put that into speed and not weight she boomed like an Eastern liner. Her funnel was forty feet above the grates, and I believe she could have burned bricks—an awful draught! Then she was rigged with water ballast tanks, fore and aft, drew seven feet six on an even keel, so that she could easily make nine feet aft and six forward, or vice versa. And this was hot stuff when we got over in the Korean swells, and down among the shallows of the Liaotung. She was quite new, built in '97, had towing blades, and when she went ahead full speed she shook like a leaf. If the screw turned at the top revolution you felt convinced that you were getting the worth of your

money. It made you feel sick and quittish, but there was wind and steam behind it, and that was what we wanted for a dispatch boat, for the *Fawan* beat the game many a time, and there were four months in the year 1904 when she ranked as queen in the world of news.

As for the rest of her, the *Fawan* was 125 feet long, 22 feet in the beam and she carried a searchlight of 2,500 candle power for wrecking. She had steam steering gear and was electric lighted. She carried a crew of twenty-five, and when she was put on full speed across the Gulf of Pechili, carrying a world beat, she made her steady ten knots, which is good speed for a tug in those waters. Some men grow strangely fond of a horse that can carry them up hill and down for many days and never tire and never go bad. Well, I loved the *Fawan*!

But there was a crew to get, and most of all I needed a skipper. My rooms at the Astor House, in Shanghai, soon became filled with the refuse of the coast, and my days were worn with despair lest I be taken in by some gentry, liquor-logged and ship-soaked. But there came among them a prince—McDonnel! If ever in North China, you will not miss word of Mc-

Donnel. He is known up and down the coast as the most daring pilot that ever took the Taku Bar at ebb. If you need a dauntless spirit for war or peace, seek Mac. Incidentally, if you require the proper ingredients for a Canton cocktail, ask Mac, who swore by all that's holy that he would be mine till death, and I promptly signed him as skipper at 500 mex a month.

There was, however, the necessary confirmation still lacking from the office. I had cabled the beginning of the venture and was still waiting for funds. Meanwhile Mac hung around. Three days passed. The fourth he came asking for confirmation, which I could not give. He told me he had an offer and would hold it off until the next afternoon at five o'clock. He would not tell me what it was, and the next day at five I was obliged to say that no money was yet in sight. The American fleet, it then developed, had offered him fifteen hundred taels to take them out for target practice in Nimrod sound. It was a ten days' job, for which he would get as much as three months would have netted him in my service. I thought it mighty white to hold off for forty-eight hours on a deal like that, and with sadness and de-

spair saw him go to lead the *Monadnock* and Admiral Cooper's ships into peaceful waters. Mac almost sobbed as he left me, and I well know the wrench it cost him to forego a peek at real war. In all the career of the *Farwan*, the loss of McDonnell as skipper was its sorest blow.

However, money will buy anything in China, even to a pilot and a crew. The crew I easily found, but wandered about for two days longer in search of a master, my money having arrived meanwhile, and finally was obliged to put out for Chefoo to look for the proper skipper there.

Before I went, I had stores to lay in, and all the preparations for three months at sea to make. Drake fell on my neck about this time. He was one of those Americanized Shanghailanders who have failed in every quarter of the globe, finally being deposited in that far fringe of civilization. He swore that he knew and revered my father, and had conceived a sudden and most ardent friendship for myself, hinting meanwhile that, as he was the proprietor of a mushroom grocery store, it would be but patriotic for me to put in supplies there. I assented, and passed one jolly morning spending money in his place. To all my questions as to

the price of things he answered: "Should friends talk about money? I assure you I think so well of you that you shall get the very lowest I can charge, consistent with my own sense of justice to myself. I always do well by my customers, but I shall do extra well by you."

I have often wondered what his customers get, for my bill called for \$700. It knocked me flat. Some of the items I knew were wrong. Dried apricots, for instance, he put down at forty cents a pound, while I remembered buying them in the States for fourteen. I went to a Chinaman, had the bill duplicated, item for item, and found it to foot up \$400. I returned Drake's bill with a note which I cannot recall now, but which seemed to me at the moment to be a masterpiece of sarcasm. In it I remarked that while ordinarily in favor of trading with Americans, I did not see why I should pay double for the privilege.

In all, the monthly expenses footed up to ten thousand mex. This included provisions, coal, crew and lease, but made no count of insurance, and when I learned the bill for that, I was prepared to throw up the sponge. The best I could get was five per cent. a month of

the ship's value. In other words, for a year I should have had to pay in insurance, sixty per cent. of the full value. It was bad business, the underwriters said, among mines, sliding in the dark through battleships, and looking every night for a hole below the waterline. In the momentary despair thus occasioned, I suddenly bethought me to go bond for the whole show, and accordingly cabled the office for such authority, which promptly came. I therefore gave bond for \$40,000, and went off to war with my own life in my hands, while over my head hung the small fortune reposing in the chubby sides of the doughty *Fawan*.

Arrived at Chefoo I first ran into the full complications of Oriental red tape. I survived forty-eight hours of official espionage, for which the later investigations of Japanese men-of-war held no parallel. Every member of the crew had to be sworn before the British consul, for the *Fawan* sailed under the Union Jack. I had wired to have the state department from Washington authorize the transfer of the ship's charter to the American register, but the trick could not be turned, and I found I must sail for aye under the British flag. Then the tonnage

dues and the ship's papers had to be overhauled, and at last everything submitted for the clearances. At length, ready to start, I still lacked a pilot, when the brother of a Kobe friend hove in sight, embraced me in the hotel, and promptly volunteered his services.

"But you need a master's certificate," said I.

"For ten years I've held one," said he.

"You're just the man then. How much do you want?"

"Nothing," he replied, leaned over and whispered in my ear. I smiled, frowned, hesitated, blushed, then nodded assent. He dragged me off to the bar, and an hour later there began to be hoisted to the decks of the *Farwan* the half ton of contraband, passage for which was to pay the volunteer pilot's way.

Calling on the various dignitaries, I soon learned that the Korean Prime Minister, just elected to his high office, was in town and eager for a return home. He had left his opera bouffe country a mere plenipotentiary, but a wire had recalled him to the portfolio of state, and now he was stranded, for declaration of war had cut off all direct communication with Chemulpo, the harbor of Seoul, the Korean cap-

ital, and the only way of return then in sight for him was the long, expensive and not certain way back to Shanghai, thence to Nagasaki, and thence by small boat to Fusan. Cables in hand told me I was bound for Chemulpo, via Port Arthur, and I volunteered the *Farwan*.

Gratefully the Korean Minister accepted, in the name of his Emperor, in the name of himself, in the name of his wife, and in the name of his numerous suite. I told him to be on board the next afternoon before three o'clock, and then I spent the intervening time in fitting up his cabin. I looked for a Korean flag for decoration, but found that no one in Chefoo had ever heard of the Korean flag, nor could I get any one of the sailor jacks in harbour to tell its complexion or contour. At last, in the back of the great dictionary at the American consulate, on a plate bearing the flags of all nations, I found a likeness, and hurried off to a Chink. The next noon I decorated the Minister's cabin with a counterfeit presentment of his sovereign's banner.

As the Korean minister came on board, with his billy-goat whiskers, his diminutive wife and his sheepish suite, I was puzzling over the six

cables received within the past twenty-four hours. They came from various parts of the world, and informed me: (1) That the Japanese fleet was closing in permanently on Port Arthur; (2) that the Russian fleet was momentarily expected out to give battle; (3) that the first Japanese army was landed and the invasion of Manchuria begun; (4) that I was not to be allowed north of Porth Arthur; (5) that I was expected to return a news alignment of the situation within forty-eight hours, and (6) that I was to proceed to Chemulpo via Port Arthur.

As I read the last cable to the minister he looked aghast and pointed to the map. There he placed his finger on Port Arthur. It lay due north. He then pointed to Chemulpo. It lay due east. He shrugged his shoulders and his mouth drooped. It was as if a man making time from Chicago to New York should start first for Denver.

A SCAB SKIPPER.



CHAPTER II.

I pass the worst day of my life—the two worst days, in fact—and meet the fate which makes me a scab skipper.

Dawn must be the universal omen for the unknown, for it is the moment of executions and, of the sailing of ships. We weighed anchor out of Chefoo harbor one March dawn and a devilish bad dawn it was—sickly, wind-slopped and tight rammed with gale. And it was into the blank unknown we went—the smart little *Fazwan* with my ill-assorted crew, my sneak-thief of a skipper, my prime minister, his billy-goat suite, and yours truly, than whom a more forlorn and tide-pushed wily wight ever went off to the sea in a boat.

I had long since determined to evade the Port Arthur instructions because (1) there were mines, warships and orders to sink on sight in that direction, (2) I was already leary of the skipper, and (3) I was under orders, being up to that moment, the mere agent for a Bigger Man, whom I was for dashing on to Chemulpo to pick up that I might turn the responsibility of the whole weighty business over to him, filled

with risk and sight-seeing though it might be. So it was for Chemulpo that we headed that weary, sad, over-due dawn.

As I have remarked before, the *Fawan*, in a sea of even decent size, rolled like a canal boat, and we were no sooner clear of the light, than she pitched into an angry belt of souse and scuttle that showed me, straight off the bat, the antics of which she was capable, and the dancing tantrums that lay always snug under her keel.

I soon went topside, and there, in a corner of the bridge, I found my miserable skipper, wound in a Madras shawl and shivering in the depths of a wicker chair. There was a woe-begone Chinese bos'n on the lookout, but the skipper held down the anachronistic chair with that pea-green aspect that spells only internal disorder. I uttered several remarks utterly irrelevant to the thoughts uppermost in my mind, to which he replied in similar quality, though he finally said, incidentally:

“Well, I hope you're satisfied now, with a tug boat lost on the high seas.” To this melancholy observation I replied nothing before he

added: "Don't you think we had better run into Wei-Hei-Wei until this blows over?"

"Yes. That's a pious idea," I answered, and went below. From that time on, mere thought of the skipper was enough to rasp my nerves.

As we pulled into the broad, gay British harbour and all the gaunt, grim old men-of-war dipped flags to us, the drooping tail between my legs resumed life, whipped cur though I was, and I soon regained my animal spirits. Once on my feet after that I was all right, and never since, though I have stood by the wheel through the toil of a typhoon, have I been sea-sick.

Late in the afternoon we weighed anchor and headed on due east. At that time we figured the chart, and found it 145 miles to Northwest Rock, which marked the difficult entrance to the harbor of Chemulpo. At the rate we were going that would have brought us there at 5 A. M., so we ordered the engines slowed down to ninety revolutions, which would bring us in at early forenoon instead. The skipper said he would take the bridge early and, as he needed a shut-eye, asked me to hold it down until 11 P. M., after which he would stay by the wheel to find harbor bearings. To this I readily as-

sented, being too green at that moment to understand that no skipper worthy the name would surrender the bridge to a novice (he knowing well my experience, as I had frankly told him) at so critical a moment.

He went below and I stood there on the bridge that was to see me through the four banner months of my life, through storm and battle, through rain and shine and through many a nerve-breaking race for a beat on the world's cable. It was a trim little bridge, and I remember it with every fondness that any old weather-beaten mariner has for his trusted home. The wheel house was partitioned and glassed in, while from the starboard side of the bridge, led a neat brass-railed companion-way to the deck below. All the lookout was shut in with heavy tarpaulin, except for a round hole that led from a man's waist up well above his head, and from which every sea complexion could be scanned. In the rear was the board that held the telegraph and behind that the funnel. Just around the corner of the funnel ran a shute to the hold. Down the shute I could look to the stokers' way and see them shoveling in the coal that cost fifteen cents a shovelful.

As I looked thus at the rise in the month's expense account, the money slipping into smoke, I was tempted, as MacDonnell would say, to sob like a child, for the limit of my weekly auditing up to that moment had been a dollar fifteen for carfare and downtown lunches. You see I was the city reporter, loose for the first time on a world detail.

In that dreary night wait I inadvertently came across the incompetence of my cringing skipper. Incompetence it was of the worst, and stupidity, and ignorance and recklessness all rolled into one. Racking my brains in suspicion and distrust, for I felt sole sponsor for the forty thousand dollars under my feet, I soon found that the wheel and bridge compasses did not gibe. The latter sheered a full four points shy of the other, for there were water bubbles under the alcohol, and no man could tell which was right and which was wrong. It was the skipper's duty to verify this before he left port. This I later learned, but then I dimly, impotently, felt the confusion, the possible disaster—and I grew faint.

The skipper relieved me at 11:00, but I was back on the bridge at 3:30, to find the same

old Chink wobbling in front of the lookout and his worshipful self asleep in the wicker chair. What could I *say*?

But dawn came—dawn the second, and no longer wind and wave. We were in the lee now of Chopeki point and fair under the shores of the Land of the Morning Calm. They are vermin, these Koreans, but I must admit that under the wide expanse of heaven there lies nowhere to the knowledge of one who has sailed well each of the seven seas, a land more wondrous in color, more uplifting in the joy of verdure than this garden spot that some of those lazy old beggars in the long ago dubbed the Morning Calm. There she stretched before us—dyed in seas of saffron, mauve, lilac, vermilion, sapphire, esthetic in the baths of all new glory, rejuvenescent with the birth of worlds and men, land sired in calm, and girthed in eternal morn, peerless Korea!

As she hove over the port quarter, born queen-like out of the mists, there came upon my vision another sight, newer, grander, far more inspiring—my first glance at war. A side glance it was, a mere peep, but I looked, and knew and grew wise. They were sweeping

lazily away from us, into the north, and I counted them; one, two, three, four, Japanese transports bound for the Yalu, funnels splitting the blue with puffs of black. I could see the new sheds tightening the decks for the horses, myriad tiny slant-eyed faces smothering the taffrail and lazily flaunting over all the zig-zag army flag. I watched them sweep grandly on—two thousand war-like souls in each, bearers of ache and anguish to how many Russian hearts, of slow-nodding pain and ghastly concealing smile to how many Japanese mat-rooms beyond the shogi I knew not.

I was pulled from my joy with a stab. For my incompetent skipper revealed to me that he had left port minus that first essential of the well prepared mariner—a book of sailing directions. The approaches to Chemulpo are littered with the islands of the Prince Imperial archipelago which numbers some odd thousands of spots in the sea, varying from lonely and verdureless granite rocks to fifty-acre plots on which fishermen can pitch drying racks and nets. It is one of the most dangerous entrances in the world and through it pass two channels, the main one to the south, and that

known as the "Flying Fish" to the north. Finding either is quite as difficult a trick as any sea-dog wants, but it is made infinitely light if one had a book of sailing directions which tells every reef, shoal, tide-rip and shallow of every important rock among the thousands. When I asked the skipper where this book was, he lightly and casually mentioned that he had forgotten to bring it, and I wondered what I should say to a hunter if he went after bear without a gun.

We had long since slowed down to half speed, and were now, past mid-forenoon, drifting with the tide. About eleven o'clock the islands began coming out of the mists in every direction and I soon found we were entirely surrounded by them, that the last transport was visible by only a thin smudge on the northern horizon, hiking at twice our speed for the Yalu, that elsewhere there was not a sail in sight and that we were in momentary danger of impalement. Back and forth we argued the question of the northwest rock, the guide by which we were to pilot our course through the Prince Imperial. We could not agree, and so I finally insisted that, for the sake

of the argument, we come together on the proposition and sail for some rock, which was surely better than drifting on any. We picked our "pidgin" as the quartermaster said, and ran for it half-speed. The skipper had remembered at least one detail of moment. The depth about the northwest is twelve fathoms and he knew it, but as we slipped under the lee of our compromise northwest the lead called back five fathoms. We were strictly up against it.

At this critical moment my prize skipper became utterly demoralized, sank into his wicker chair, ordered the engines "stand by" and then "full stop" and, before I realised it, they were throwing off the starboard anchor.

"If you can't go forward at eleven o'clock in the morning?" I cried, hurrying to the bridge, "how about dark?" I was almost in the throes of MacDonnell's only alternative—"to sob like a child," for there was the open sea behind, the reefs ahead, the rocks all about, while the wind had changed and the mist was again closing in. The distant rocks were becoming lost to view and I feared that we would presently not be able to see twenty fathoms ahead.

"The fact is," said the skipper, looking at me with sincerity and frankness, for which he evidently expected to receive a suitable reward, "the fact is, I'm lost."

"What do you suggest?" I cried, not at all unangered by his child-like simplicity of heart.

"I can suggest nothing," he said.

At this interesting moment the Korean Minister sent one of his billy-goat suite to enquire what hour we would anchor at Chemulpo. I realized that the moment was one in which a slack back and a watery voice similar to that exhibited by my beloved skipper would, as Napoleon well said, lose the day, so I replied without hesitation:

"Three o'clock."

This gave me nearly four hours before His Excellency could again be heard from, and some seven or eight hours before night settled upon us that morning might at length reveal a lone wreck undeserving of pity, blame or dole. There comes a moment in each life called the parting of the ways, from which a man goes in one of two ways—either forward or back. I may have found a third way, which lies down. That, however, is the story.

Up to that moment my career as a mariner was limited to the paddling of a skiff down the Saskatchewan, sitting abaft the tiller of a naphtha launch on Minnetonka and traveling first cabin on the *Kaiser Wilhelm* and the *Empress of Japan*. But I rose suddenly to command, born a skipper by the needs of the moment, and assumed sole charge of the lives of thirty human beings, including that of the new Prime Minister of Korea, while my unseasoned head plotted the escape from forfeiture of that forty thousand dollar bond, as I looked out upon the illusions of the chartless archipelago. When I think of what I went through that day and the days that followed I doubt not that I would reply 'Yes!' should some one recklessly ask me to pilot an ocean liner from Frisco to Bombay.

"Half speed ahead!" I rang on the telegraph and turned to the quartermaster.

"Catchee lead, makee soundings, allee same port and starboard" I called, in the vernacular that passes for speech in that benighted region.

Prestige rose skylarking. Before that I had been addressed "Yes, sor!" The reply came now:

“Yes, master!”

From that time on, I was among the Chinks as a ward captain in a precinct election.

SERVING TIME.



CHAPTER III.

I find a lieutenant of worthy steel, go keel-down on a sand bar, run the boat's nose into a loaded collier and become duly surprised at a gold watch presented by the Prime Minister.

Then Cromarty arrived. It may seem of slight importance to you, reader, sitting at ease in your chair, for me to say that Cromarty arrived, but if you had been with me on the bridge of the *Farwan*, with the dense Korean mist closing in, a fat-headed skipper on your hands and those infinite islands of the Prince Imperial dancing weird destructive phantasmagoria before your eyes, you too, would have seen that the arrival of Cromarty was the key to the situation.

He but touched his cap and said to me: "If you'll allow me to be so bold, sir, I would suggest that you hold to your orders, sir. You will find the engines will answer every time you touch the telegraph, just as if she were your own child, sir."

With that Cromarty respectfully withdrew. How well I knew him in the days that came! Cromarty was my chief engineer and the sort

that steps last into a lifeboat when the fog horns grunt, cold and hoarse, above a wreck. He was a Scotchman, but that is saying nothing, for every engineer of consequence is a Scot. Sixty years old he was, grey, frosted by seas of time and gale, bent with service and work.

He knew his engines as I know the keys of my typewriter—nay, as a mother her child. He had seen them put into the *Fawan*. He had served with them ever since, save for an eighteen months' absence on home leave and he knew them so well that when he came back from that leave he sat for days listening to the propeller chug-chug, testing the valves, anxious with an unknown, ill-defined anxiety, as when a hen realizes that one of her brood of twenty is missing. At last a cry of joy! "One of the nuts on the crank shaft is loose!" a hurried twist, and he settled back into repose, his beloved again in perfect trim.

Cromarty had been the *Fawan's* skipper for a brief week of glory as she went up the river in the Boxer troubles and he had stood on her bridge, with British Maxims operating from her bows, while the forts replied. One day he

showed me where the bullets had plowed the hull. Veteran of four wars he at one time had been chief engineer of the private yacht of the Chinese Governor of Formosa and he looked the part—sea-dog to the marrow, wind-stained, weather-racked, with a slash like that from a knife blade in each cheek, where the jaw bone had pulled the flesh. All this I learned later of Cromarty. In fact, nearly all I am telling you I learned later, for I was green then—green as the fresh little boys that light cigarettes as they sit frivolously on kegs of dynamite. All I knew was that Cromarty was the engineer and that he was standing pat.

As Cromarty spoke there passed our bows a fishing smack manned by four Koreans—primitive to a base degree, and dressed in flowing robes like the prophets of Israel. They came out of the mist weirdly and were passing again weirdly into the mist like a piece of scenery pulled across the landscape, when I realized that they could solve the difficulty. So I pulled the telegraph to “Full speed ahead” with a new feeling of confidence born of Cromarty’s silent support, and explained to the

quartermaster that we must confiscate one of those fishermen and take him on for pilot.

The moment we turned, the Koreans scooted like wild geese. Evidently they had never seen a steamer before and they began pushing the water with their hands in their frantic desire to escape the calamity. Some of these Sunday-feature chaps that come out to do war with a field glass and an umbrella talk tall guff about the poetry of primitive man, but give me civilization.

We would have had them easily had the lead held, but the channel went suddenly dry and I had to signal "stop" over a two fathom drop. I sent my Japanese boy down to get the Korean suite up on deck so they might signal to their silly countrymen that we were not cannibals. The six billy-goats arrived with towels and ran frantically up and down the aft rail, jabbering, waving, and leaping to the halyards. Disgraceful the scene was—silly when I think of it, yet we had to have those fishermen. They, however, gaining headway now, for we had all but overhauled them, were renewing efforts to round the nearest island.

With that a brilliant idea came to me and I

told my boy to seize the Korean flag which was then decorating the Minister's state-room. This he did, tearing tack holes through the cloth in his hurry. It was weeping business to see my present so desecrated, but the need was urgent, and the Minister forgave. The flag once out the fishermen hauled to long enough to listen to the jay-call of the leading billy-goat. No argument, however, would convince them, though gold and untold honors were offered. They simply yelled: "Channel south," and paddled off, to be lost in the mist.

Well, there we were, as badly off as ever. The transports had gone north and here was the second proof that Chemulpo lay south. It was fifty or sixty miles back out of the islands and before we could have returned night would have been upon us. There was but one thing to do—take pot luck to the south.

So we turned south at half speed. I got four men out with bamboos and started them sounding on both sides. Our course veered back and up, and at length we had so completely patrolled the coast and had been so repeatedly turned back by slack water that I sized up the situation as admitting of solution on only one

bearing. This lay between two rather largish rocks then on our port bow. Beyond that it seemed to me, with my feeble vision and limited nautical savey, that we should pick up deep water. The skipper's funk had put me to the pole and I was jealous of the pace. I could see Cromarty, from the corner of my eye, leaning against the engine room door, hat cocked over eye, arms folded on chest, in perfect nonchalance. He was the most unconcerned man on the boat. "The devil I care if she does go down," his attitude seemed to say "You pay the shot. Its not my funeral," and I caught him once sizing up the ship's boat with his eye. Well could I guess the mental calculation that lay behind: in a dingy built for six what will become of thirty-two?

"Half ahead" I signalled, and turned her helm due south between the largest rocks. Soon the boys were crying soundings of three fathoms and I had to signal "Slow!" But I was bound to go on till the last possible moment, for beyond lay our only apparent hope that night. I steered for a middle course and kept on.

"Two fathoms, half," the lead called "two"

“one and half,” “one” and I wired Cromarty “slower.”

Nearer, nearer, nearer came the rocks, shallower, shallower, shallower grew the water, and rising, rising, rising came my hair.

“Nine feet!” cried the lead. “Eight feet!” I suddenly remembered that we drew seven feet, six. The telegraph rang “Stop!” to the engines. The keel scraped gravel, the *Fawan* groaned, wavered, and—slid over.

“Half speed ahead” I rang. Three—four—five fathoms, sounded the lead. “Full speed ahead,” and the China boys answered “Mark eight,” “Mark ten,” “Mark twelve,” and then “No bot.” The Rubicon lay behind.

The mist again, capricious as all things Korean, was lifting, and way off to the south I spotted smoke. That meant but one thing—the channel. That smoke came from a steamer, a big one, for she was hull down, fifteen or twenty miles away. As the fog lifted the day loomed out gloriously again and I began to hope we might not be so much after three at anchorage, after all, when I found that a skipper’s education is not complete merely because he has formed a resolution.

It was plain as a man's face that we were creeping too near an island on the port side, so I called to the man at the wheel, mustering to my aid every dictatorial force I knew, "Hard t'starboard!" This I presumed to be the correct command, but, to my consternation, the vessel, instead of veering into the open, turned square in for the island. It was as if, in guiding a horse, I had twisted the reins and turned the animal the wrong way, jerking him right as I pulled left. For when the wheel goes to starboard the ship veers to port.

Oh! I was green. But, there was prestige to be preserved—aye, prestige is the thing, the only thing in Asia! I betrayed not my embarrassment, but, walking deliberately to the compass, all the while we were bound to certain disaster upon the rocks, uttered, after what I considered an appropriate interval for the rapid changing of a man's mind, the word "Steady," and then, without too great a loss of time, "Hard-a-port!"

From then on it was easy. We picked the lights up, one by one, and, about 6:30 rounded Odalmi at the entrance to the outer roadstead and beyond, riding calmly at anchor saw the

Vicksburg, the *Fearless*, the *Pascal*, an Italian cruiser and a Japanese gunboat. The funnel of the sunken *Korietz* showed above tide and beyond I could see like signs of the sinking of the *Varyag* and *Sungari*.

But we were not through, and the most humiliating part of the day was yet to come. The skipper appeared at that interesting juncture, smiling and congratulatory. He showed no ruffle for his miserable flight and said, with a jaunty laugh, "I can take her in all right now." He certainly had the deepest crust I ever encountered.

Still I was green, for I let him hold the bridge. He was all smiles now, the happy skipper pulling into port after travailing the deep. He stood up jaunty and careless, as though calling on every harbor roustabout to come see what a devil of a fellow he was. The Japanese consul in Chefoo had wired our prospective arrival and word had gone forth that the steamer conveying the Prime Minister elect be received with harbor honors. So we soon spied the harbor launch puffing down to meet us, the Korean flag at the mast head and a group of officials grouped solemnly on deck,

waiting the auspicious moment. It was then, too, that, reaching the warships, the flags began dipping. The skipper stood with his glasses, afore the lookout hole, rubbering, first at one war vessel then at another, giving all his attention to the laute who was directing the lowering of our flag to return the various salutes. We were ripping meanwhile at full speed ahead. I was a bit nervous, however, and suggested mildly that it might be better to go slow—the way looked shallow.

“She’s safe now,” replied the skipper, “besides I’m at home here. I know these waters like my own door-yard.” With that he turned the glasses on His British Majesty’s *Fearless*, which was at that moment dipping, and faced around hurriedly, with anger in his voice, to rasp the laute into recognition.

As the skipper spoke we went kerplunk on a sandbar and grounded fast. I grasped the telegraph and pulled her over to ‘stop.’ The skipper handed me a chesty stare and asked, “Who’s running this ship?” Then he began manipulation of the telegraph. First he ordered her full speed ahead. Then, finding that but drove us deeper in the mud, he signalled

full speed astern. But we were too far in by that time and it was no use. The *Farwan* lay wobbling helplessly, as a duck lies flapping its wings when shot in the mud. On our shame there gazed the jeering eyes of the navies of America and Britain, of France and Italy, of Japan and Korea. I wonder that I did not commit hari-kari on the spot.

That *was* the end of the skipper for that voyage. I stepped to the telegraph and put my hand on the handle. The launch had boarded us meanwhile and the officials were kow-towing to the minister. I sat up as though grounding on the sand-bar was part of the program and when the minister approached me, accompanied by his full suite, I received him with every dignity becoming the occasion. But, as he backed away, I nabbed my Japanese boy and swore by all of Bushido that he must get me the pilot from that launch. Then I looked about helplessly for escape from the bar, on which we were every moment grounding faster and deeper, for the tide was commencing its out-race at an eight-mile clip.

Again Cromarty arrived. He approached me with all respect due a skipper from a chief

engineer, touched his hat politely and said: "We're stuck a little aft the bow, if you don't mind my saying it, sir. If you pump out the water ballast from the for'ard to the aft tanks she'll slide off."

"Aye, sir," I replied and dismissed him with a scowl which plainly said that he had found the temerity to anticipate my own thought. No sooner had the water ballast changed, pursuant to my orders, than the *Farwan* began to slip, slip, slip, and in two minutes she was free. I doubt if any of those watchful eyes on the men-of-war could have guessed that we had done ought but halt for the reception of harbor honors.

The Japanese pilot turned up as the launch swung off, and not only politely touched his cap, but bowed to the floor. A ridiculous tiny chap he was, weazened with sixty years, and hardly enough weight in his shrivelled skin to resist a middling hard blow. He led us off past the war ships, which had by that time, without exception, given us the glad hand. We ran to the lee of the big island facing the bund and then struck across the channel to our anchorage. It was pitch dark, with only

the ships' riding lights to guide us on and I could not get replies from the pilot, who answered every question, first with a low bow, then with a smile and a grimace, then with a lengthy string of honorifics in which he praised the virtues of my grandfather and of my great grandfather. After all this was translated by my boy, who did not understand English, I sometimes got the proper signal, and sometimes not.

But on we went and I thought all was well. I breathed with some freedom, saying to myself that the footless trip was over and that I would never again trail the seas so buccan-
neerly clad. This was the very moment concerning which, with later experience, I should have felt most anxiety, for it was just then that I put her head about across the eight mile an hour tide and saw her nose ramming a 6,000 ton collier which lay directly athwart our path.

A steamer is not like a gasoline launch or an auto. She has rather big engines and you cannot put her astern in a minute. Though I grasped the handle of the telegraph and ripped it through the entire six points of the

needle at once with a bang that must have brought old Cromarty to a sense of the needs of the situation there seemed no chance for us to miss an inglorious end there in the muggy anchorage of that obscure port in Korea. The *Fawan* kept full on, speed above normal, and my pulse beat likewise. I could hear men running along the deck of the collier and lowering cork fenders to belay the shock.

"What a finish," I sobbed to myself and saw the great job glimmering, myself going down with my ship, for never could I face the paying of that forty-thousand bond on such a fluke.

We missed the collier by some inches. I felt her cork fenders grind with a sweet crunch as the *Fawan* glided off to Cromarty's swift reply. He was digging her full astern now and I looked aft just in time to find us crashing into a junk. Still a junk was not so bad as a collier. The collier weighed six thousand tons and the junk sixty. The *Fawan* would survive and the cost of the junk would be but a few hundred, at most. I almost laughed with the sense of irresponsibility, but I called, "slow ahead" and ported her helm, then "steady," and

we avoided that tombstone, also, with a margin that no self-respecting skipper would record.

“Stand by, starboard anchor,” and then “Let go” I cried and you should have heard my voice. Togo after Tsushima wasn’t in it with me for gala show of chest tones. “Get away, port anchor,” “Can do,” and we swung into the tide, tethered as neat as a biting horse with a cinch cast lariat. When that was over I removed the superfluous perspiration from my brow and went below to record in my dairy: “The worst day of my life.”

Next morning I was at breakfast when one of the Prime Minister’s suite was hoisted over the taffrail. He was nearest the billy-goat of any and he kow-towed to the floor as he entered. I thought the minister had forgotten something, and rose to greet him with all the superfluous rectitude I had imbibed in the Far East. He held in his hand a little flannel-covered board box and as he uttered his speech he laid it on the table under my hand. It held a gold watch, rather a good one, too—eighteen carat—and as I looked at it he said:

“His Excellency directs me to say that he shall never forget your kindness and courage

in bringing him across this dangerous channel among all the unknown terrors of war. He wants you to accept this watch as a slight token of his regard. It is one which he has worn for some time. He has now purchased another which is its exact duplicate and will always wear it. Whenever he looks at his watch he will think of you, and he hopes that when you look at your watch you will think of him. And if you ever come to Korea for a visit you are to remember that you must grant him the honor of being his guest."

The duplicate watch game was a bluff. They always work that racket. But I swallowed it without a gulp and then hunted the ship over for some memento. I finally hit on one of those bum, pious photos of myself.

Well, that *was* the worst day of my life. It was luck we got out—rank luck!

THE DIPLOMAT WINS.



CHAPTER IV.

We run afoul of the inefficiency of the British flag, are saved from the death of spies by the American Secretary of State and slip—again at dawn—under the guns of Newchwang.

Every port in the East at that time, the beginning of the war, was the centre of the human riff-raff that settles on the heels of mighty conflicts. From the four quarters they assembled as vultures fly in for prospective carrion. But the military fiats of the Japanese and the hopelessly involved red-tape of the Russians put them utterly to the bad, so that consternation reigned from Shanghai up to Fusan, and back to Yokohama. Thus there were touts, gamblers, small-fry contractors, and floating correspondents tucked into every hall bedroom of every hotel along the coast. Everywhere this floating population was ill-at-ease, clamorous, expectant. In each port the crowd believed that easy meat was waiting to be plucked in the next port. Drifting in from the states, or out of Suez, this motley gang usually struck Shanghai first, then Chefoo, then Chemulpo, then Soul, then Newchwang, and

then, perhaps, back up along the Japanese coast.

The next morning, when I found my Bigger Man, one of those writers of reputation whose erratic follies are named by the simple-hearted the vagaries of Genius, he was trailing a full fleet of these gentry and his waters astern looked like the sampan overture to the arrival of an inbound liner. "I had wired I was coming and he had collected the assorted occupants of the hall bed-rooms to come off and dine on his boat. When I saw the gang line up and the Daily News chow slip into these white-handed sons of graft, I was for weeping tears of vexation that my expense account should mount so high. But there was no shift out, he being the chief, so I sat tight. But when he announced that he would bring all the trailers who up to that moment had assured him he was hot-stuff, I gigged the bit.

"It's I who signs the expense roll—it's I the office will size up for the chow bill, and I'm for making good on expense by charging passage money. It's fifty dollars a piece for these ——" said I, waving my hand at his following of touts.

The Bigger Man spread the news and there was considerable backing off. The passage list of the *Farwan* dwindled until it stood simply "one associated press correspondent, fifty dollars to Chefoo." With that the Bigger Man fished a lank and benign-faced individual from the crowd. "Let me introduce you," said he, "to my friend, the Judge."

"What's his name?" said I, aside.

"Well—I don't know his name. Call him the Judge. He's a good fellow." So I found him and so I have always found him, a good fellow. We chatted some and then the Judge withdrew, sending word later, when he learned of the embargo, that he thought he would not go this trip. The Bigger Man went for him and received a confession that the Judge was not at that moment prepared to dig up. It seems that while in Chefoo he had heard that things were booming in Korea and had parted with his watch for passage money. Now, in Korea, he learned that the state of public expenditures was no more healthy than in Chefoo, though if he could but get back to Chefoo he felt sure he would make his fortune. That was the epidemic those days. You heard the same

story everywhere, and at length came near investing in mythical acres of diamonds. The Bigger Man pleaded again for the Judge and the fiat went forth that if he should dig up some freight he might come along.

The Judge's face lighted up when he heard this news and I caught several chance sights of him that afternoon, button-holing people on a search for freight. His was a negative character always. He entered into conversation but took no audible part therein. He always laughed at our jokes at the right time—and moderately. He always wept at the right time—and moderately. In fact, I was thoroughly impressed with the profound sympathy and savvy of the Judge. Later, in confidence, when I inquired of his profession, he explained that he had taken a post graduate course in brick-laying. Apparently that did not seem suited to his eminent talents and he now believed himself to be on the high road toward coming into his proper inheritance of graft. As he button-holed the merchants of Chemulpo that day there was no visible evidence that he was talking to them. He was like a ventriloquist: you could see that he was getting to peo-

ple, but of emotion his countenance showed none. He turned up late that night and said that he had failed. The Bigger Man then promised him a berth, anyway. When he came on board finally he had somewhere rounded up a bunch of booze to pay for his passage. He said nothing, but beamed benignly.

We were off at last—the A. P. man, the Judge, the Bigger Man and myself—and anchored thirty hours later in Chefoo harbor. Ensued twenty-four hours of diabolic hurry, laying in coal, chow, engine room supplies and signing a skipper. The last was the worst.

McDonnell had not yet shown up, and a wire from him declared the quest hopeless. I had taken tip of one Perkis, in Shanghai, the best man then idle, so repute said, on the coast, but he was not due Chefooside for another fortnight and in desperation I temporarily picked up an old salt named Meyer. The next morning as I came from the hotel my first skipper loomed up, big as life, and handed me one.

“I’ve been thinking this matter all over,” said he, “talking with my wife and arranging my affairs, until I quite see my way clear to

take on your job permanently, at the price you offered it to McDonnell—\$500 a month.”

“You’d be a pretty skipper,” said I, “for a picnic party in Bearfoot Lake, but this is war.”

“Now, don’t throw Korea in my face,” said he, “that’s the worst coast in the East and I’ll admit I was green, but I know China side and Port Arthur side like a book.”

I don’t believe he has yet recovered from the blow I dealt him when I said the skipper was already signed. To this day they repeat his slanders in the lantern shops.

Meyer was worn and weary and weak, but he was a man. He came on deck that afternoon with all his worldly belongings slung over his shoulder in a Japanese blue handkerchief. In his other hand he carried a wooden case holding a sextant and chronometer. That he walked upright and showed behind his eyes the light of intellect were the only signs that he was a man. His face was not a face at all, but a sort of parchment slab that had been deeply written on, soaked and dried till the ink all ran. His hands were not hands, but gnarled chunks of flesh slung claw-wise from hairy arms, and his legs were so bowed that he

waddled like a duck. His old head constantly rolled from side to side as does a bear's in captivity, and his toothless gums forever munched and munched. His vocabulary was limited to a dozen words, all monosyllables. He had been wrecked twenty times, in all parts of the world, twice up north after whale, and had been frozen and thawed out, frozen and thawed out past human endurance. But he was game at his post. Once his feet touched the bridge he never came down. I found him one night in port sleeping under the wheel-house bench. He had been thirty-eight hours on duty. I woke him up and he apologized, pretended he had been down on his hands and knees to look for the binnacle nub that had fallen. At first I thought him drunk—but no, he had been without ship for two seasons and the bridge was his bride.

We had quite a row—the Bigger Man and I—over the next destination. I was for putting up to Newchwang, which everybody said the Japanese were about to take and where the Russians had just declared martial law. He was for running to Peking after color, atmosphere and other vegetarian diet beloved by

writers of reputation. My taste was for strong meat, blended of blood and smoke. We wrangled, but finally decided for Newchwang first, then for Pekin.

So to Newchwang we were bound the second day at twelve p. m. Two correspondents were booked to go with us, but they failed at the last minute and I weighed anchor on time, already sniffing action. The Judge still clung to the *Fawan*. He had rapidly canvassed Chefoo and had found his reward yet postponed, so he volunteered that he would accompany us in the hope that he might in Newchwang come into his natural inheritance. He had some extraordinary proposition for condensed milk in flaked tins to submit to the Russians, and was so bland I could not say no. Moreover, he was just the proper man to smile at the right period in a joke, so along he went, smiling benignly. I wish that no one would think I slander the Judge's memory, for although when I knew him he was always about to, and had not yet quite landed, I have since learned that he finally did land—and bought a new suit.

As we pulled anchor the harbour launch came out and handed us a cable dup. from Newch-

wang which read: "Martial law has been declared. No ships are to pass into the inner harbor without permission of harbor authorities. All ships must anchor at Buoy No. 5 on the east spit and there await inspection. Any ship passing beyond, without orders will be sunk by mines or the forts."

Have you ever seen the coast of China where it flings its yellow bluffs north into the Pechili? It lies there stark under the glare of sun, unredeemed by sight or sound, joyless with the naked mint of mother earth, heaved out of the primeval Mongol, slant-eyed and gaunt with Tartar might, as godless a theatre of war as ever slipped out of the Great Hand! Earth slides down and flakes constantly away with the inpounding of ceaseless breakers and the resultant chop-chop far into the deep is thick and rheumish as an o'erripe egg. Well are China waters named The Yellow Sea!

The *Farwan* early struck her gait there, with old Meyer on the bridge. Before twilight we had cut the neck from the gulf and, with our glasses, could see the Liaotung. Our curiosity was scant rewarded, for dark falls rapidly in those latitudes at that time of the year. It

was the end of March, with spring's earliest health blow tickling us under our overcoats. As we approached the promontory around which lay Port Arthur, I grew excited with the nearness to the great drama. Just beyond us lay that tip of Russian steel, nub of the empire's reach into the Pacific, which for nine months was yet to gloriously withstand the pounding of Togo from without and the assaulting of Nogi from within. As our triple expansion chugged on and on I grew weighty with the sober business and, for the first time, awed with a sense of the terrors primed by man.

Then suddenly a flame shot into the water at our feet, reached over and bathed us in molten light and I gasped out with fright. The Chinks on the deck below huddled in against the winch and the yellow of their faces turned sick and sour under white horror. Dazzling, insolent, calm and mighty into the vault of night stretched that shaft, thinner and thinner grown as it reached its hilt, hid in the nether darkness out of the unknown. Thus the Lord must have come to Sinai to sear primeval wisdom into the soul of the prophet,

for it was beyond the gift of man, that blazing devil licking us with titanic tongue. Then slowly, insolently, calmly it moved its majestic way across the waters, while the bleared visages of the yellow boys below glimmed, the winch went out, and a faint ripple of weak laughter from the benign Judge flickered over the deep waters like a sick sunbeam into hell. The searchlight from the Liaotishan promontory had looked us over and not found us worth a shot.

To the north we went stealthily on our way. I felt as on a morning police beat when a fly cop douses you with a glim, tilts up your chin with his rough palm for a square look in the eye, snaps the shutter and walks on, leaving you to rail at law and wonder where conscience sleeps. As we continued on our course there came out frequently from behind a deep shadow, or blaring into the cobalt stillness miles ahead, or other miles astern, still other shafts of insolent light. Then I realized that every square fathom of water within twenty miles of the coast was sleuthed by those sleepless sentinels. Port Arthur was on guard, her nine months' vigil begun. I felt—how shall I say—

for the first time the reality of war. I have since seen what men call war—scientific butchery, shots, smoke, groans, agony, death in every frightful form—but I cannot say that ever again was I brought up standing to be thrust upon my knees as I was before that phalanx of searchlights on the Liaotung.

Off the bar at Newchwang the next day we found many steamers jiggling around, waiting the tide that they might float over. Old Meyer, pleased to show his seamanship, poked the *Fawan's* nose through all the craft, clung to the main channel and we slipped through the outer roadstead, the first vessel in. As we passed up to the east spit there came down the first merchanter of the year. It was April fool's day. The ice had just broken up, and, as we anchored at 2 p. m., a light snow commenced falling. I expected to find a harbor launch to greet us and eagerly scanned the channel with my glasses, but all was bare except for the lone merchant, drawing the limit with beancake and oil.

Presently, with the rising of the tide, *The Newchwang*, a B & S boat, came over and ran in ahead of us. I saw it was but a shrewd

scheme to graft first inspection, so we slipped anchor and gave them a full half mile berth. We had no more than again come to anchorage than a launch could be seen wending its way down the river. With my glasses I found her flying the white, blue and red administrative Russian flag. As she loomed up the decks could be seen alive with big, rough men in astrakan shakos and mud colored clothes, all carrying bayoneted guns and all apparently aching to stick those bayonets into someone. Not since the previous fall had any of them had a bath. It was this latter evident fact that caused me to protest when their chief, a Mephistopheles-appearing chap in frock whiskers and Ascot mustache, came aboard followed by a dozen of the pirates.

"You cannot bring those men on this boat," I shouted.

"Why?" he asked, quizzically, cynically.

"Because this ship is under the British flag. You can come on with officers under side arms, but the law says that to board a neutral ship in neutral waters, *vi et armis*, unless she resists search or is proven to have contraband on board will be regarded by the aggrieved gov-

ernment as a hostile act." I clattered it off to him, for I was well law fed. He understood English, looked at me with a cold pitiful stare, as though to ask me from what kindergarten I had just stepped and came on, followed by his huskies with their bayonets.

"Here," I yelled, "your officers are all right, but no soldiers. If you bring them on I shall appeal to Great Britain for redress."

"We don't care that for the British flag," he answered, snapping his fingers in my face as he passed on down the deck, followed by five or six plain-clothes men and some marines. I was brushed aside, as the comedian is when the hero enters after changing his shirt.

Mephistopheles went for Meyer who had the ship's papers. The old man was for holding on to them and stood parleying a long time, mumbling, groaning, chewing his dilapidated gums and shifting from one bow leg to the other. He hated the Russians and looked at the humiliation of this boarding party as beyond despair. Still, time had been when a company of Cossacks had caught him up the Amur and tortured him within an inch of his life. A jagged scar down his left forearm

and a deep crease in his parchment face told of that agony, so when Mephistopheles motioned two of the mud-clothed soldiers to search him the old man dug into his bosom and produced the papers. They proved nothing. Then began a comprehensive and conscientious search.

Merely to have seen that search you would have known it was part of the red tape of the Russian empire. A year later in Petersburg I followed another Mephistopheles around all day while he got twenty-seven signatures to the release for my revolver and then wrote up the affair under the caption, "How Russia lost the War." The story hit, and I might have put Mephistopheles out of business that moment with dire predictions, had I only thought, as it was, I stood back with the Judge where he was benignly smiling, near the taffrail, interested but not concerned.

They mustered the crew and went through the pockets and down the boot legs of each man. They went through every cabin and pulled out all the chow chests. They pawed over the coal and looked into the furnaces, examined all the stokers' rooms, pried up the plates of the engine

room and examined the keel, went for'ard to the wheel house, ousted the charts and then aft to the water tanks. They were evidently surprised to find no one in the water tanks and for a long time considered the advisability of pumping the water out to see if a spy might be concealed in the bottom, but gave that up, and came away palpably disappointed.

Meanwhile the two Japanese boys—mine and the Bigger Man's—showed up and Mephistopheles beamed with guttural joy. Caught at last! Cromarty at that moment beckoned me and suggested, in a stage whisper, that I secure the papers held by the boys. I went into the cabin where all were assembled—Russ, Japs, Chinks and the Judge together—walked up to the boys and asked for all the papers they possessed. They handed a bunch to me, which I stuck in my overcoat pockets. The officers being outside and my action so direct no one questioned it. Then I tossed my overcoat aside on my sofa, and walked about hands in pockets. Presently the officers came in and all were searched. Nothing doing!

The next day I burned up all those papers and found among them the tow and tinder of

Frank Treboni's assininity. Treboni was the Bigger Man's boy and was one of those industrious apes, who, like the ever busy woodchuck, must burrow, burrow always, though ever after nothing but a reputation for industry. He had filled a common pocket diary full of senseless stuff about location of rocks along the Chefoo side and up Port Arthur way—mere vagrant scribbles with amateur charts and fool diagrams just to prove to himself that he had his eyes open. We would have been ruined earlier had those panned on the search. But we were ruined as it was by Treboni.

The unsuccessful search over, Mephistopheles told us we would have to wait while the other ships were gone through and that then he would return for us in person. Accordingly the afternoon slipped away while he continued his quest and we saw the merchant ships, one by one, stand in up the channel, while we, first over the bar, were held for orders. As dusk came down the launch threw a rope to us and we started to tow her in, the officers with Mephistopheles at their head meanwhile boarding us for drinks and biscuit.

It is a fifteen mile stretch up the river to

Newchwang, all the way the town being visible in the distance, as you wind in and out through the sand bars. Half way in the *Fawan* grounded and the launch directly after. So we could only lay for the tide to float us off. As we lay there the big *Newchwang* which had tried to round our head in the afternoon, again steamed lordly past us and plumped full speed on into the bar ahead. It was then high tide of the full moon in April, the equinox, or in other words, the highest water of any moment in the year, so that the *Newchwang* sunk deeper and deeper into the mud until, three days later, it took two steamers and an army of coolies to dig her out. She sent word the next day for us to come and tow, but we lost a chance to clear \$10,000 salvage, for we received the message at the same hour in which we were told that we were prisoners of His Imperial Majesty, Nicholas II.

HELD AS SPIES.



CHAPTER V.

Held as spies we harass Kuropatkin, lose our anchors,
but, thanks to John Hay, escape with the honors of war.

The *Fawan* was under the British flag, and she lay in a neutral port. Still there we were, prisoners of war in the hands of the Russians! And why? Spies!

I went straight to the British Consul and demanded the aid of his government. But he was a side-stepper, and already bluffed by the frock whiskers. He smiled patronizingly upon me, and in the most blase tone, wondered how I could possibly suspect he might help me.

"Tell me this," I said, "Do you, or do you not recognize the right of Russia to declare martial law in Newchwang, the port of a neutral power?"

I saw the scorn leap from his lip at that, but waiting for an answer, I hurled at him, "And in that neutral port do you recognize her right to seize a British ship?"

Again the blase smile, the serene shoulder shrug. "I feel called upon to answer no such question," he naively replied.

Thereupon I started for the cable office to stir up the international incident which then resulted. I found the American Consul Miller, a royal chap. He offered to do all he could, and together we started for the wire.

Our way led us along the wharf, but as we sped there, our pace was clogged by a crowd of idling hotel hangers-on. Jostling, whispering, laughing, they motioned one another to the center of attention, which lay mid-stream, swinging with the tide. My eyes followed the direction of general interest. It was our tug boat. Ah! thought I, the *Fawan* has at last received her just due of universal admiration! Just then a whiff of conversation brushed my ear, and sent me chill with apprehension. From the nearest spectator, without a formal by-your-leave, I snatched a pair of glasses. Yes—that awed whisper spoke true. There were armed guards pacing her decks. The *Fawan* had been formally seized.

Miller and I hastened to the consulate and he rang up his friends in the Russian provisional government. Shortly he turned from his desk with a sober smile and said: “Nothing tonight, my boy. I hoped to help you, for I have

some good friends here, but the case has gone beyond them. The *Farwan* has been referred from the civil authorities at Newchwang to the divisional authorities at Liaoyang."

That night a rumor came to us. We heard that Kuropatkin, Alexieff and the divisional commander had met at Taschiachaou to confer over the disposition of the *Farwan*. It was then I first felt utterly certain the Russians would lose the war. If they had no more perspective than to take seriously our silly *Farwan*, what would they do confronted by marshalled Japanese divisions. Yet I was not so wise as I thought. There proved reason for our magnititude.

The affair was now serious. We followed Miller's advise and went back to the boat on his promise that he would stir things up in the morning and get us out. Meanwhile the problem of the Judge had startled us. How were we to account for him? Officer he plainly was not, and we had denied being a common carrier. Finally there was but one thing to do. We did it—declared him a correspondent of the *Chicago Daily News* and furnished him with proper credentials.

Accordingly, the next day, while Miller was keeping the wires hot, we called on the best people in Newchwang, including the civil governor, who had some ladies in the house, accompanied everywhere by the benign and appreciative Judge. He sat in the parlors, bricklayer retired, with his hands spread out on his knees like palm leaf fans, and followed the conversation with that unctuous appreciation expected of one in the know.

The United States gunboat *Helena* was lying in harbor and I looked to her to protect us. I spoke to Miller about it and he said she would undoubtedly remain as the captain had been told our predicament. The next morning, however, we woke to find the *Helena* gone. We were now in a Chinese port under the British flag under Russian martial law, momentarily expecting a Japanese attack and with the last hope of American protection gone.

That same night another disaster overtook us. Old Meyer, not onto the anchoring in ice, had left too little slack and the ice came down in thousand-ton chunks, slightly smashed, drifted into the *Farwan's* nose and snapped off both our anchors with eighty fathoms of cables.

From then on we held our place only by turning the helm alternately up and down, so she would be always against the tide, and by keeping the engines constantly in revolution.

A day passed ominously. The second morning we learned the real why of that conference of the powers at Taschiachao—we learned that we were not so flippant a pawn in the affairs of nations, after all.

That fool Treboni did it. He was the sort of Japanese that is afraid he will not be taken seriously—a climber, one of the exotic growths of the new empire. When questioned, he indignantly denied he was a servant, said he was a student. That of course, put all in the soup.

The Russians, led by the frock whiskers, promptly framed up a beautiful tale. Treboni was a captain spy, and my boy a sergeant. We had brought them in under the cover of an ostensible dispatch boat, to make soundings, locate mines, and estimate garrison and forts. On this report Togo would attack.

What a pickle! No wonder Kuropatkin and Alexieff found it worth their while. Miller brought the news. He was grave, and tried to conceal the worst under a tone of simulated

concern. From all the chaff he passed out, I could remember only:

“You two boys will undoubtedly be shot as spies and I cannot guarantee your own lives. A mob is forming in the streets and I can no longer protect you!”

I suggested we go to the consulate, and at that Miller became extremely alarmed. “We might resist for a while there,” he said, “but in the end we would lose our lives, and they would kill him, too. Even my personal influence with the authorities could not save you,” he added, “if the mob once takes it into its head that you are the agent of Togo.”

The Judge, alias bricklayer, alias war correspondent, hearing all this was still benign, though he did admit under cross-examination, that he had not found the expected openings in Newchwang, and that he was quite ready to return to Chefoo, if he got the chance. I asked Miller for advice.

The consul urged us to go to the British gunboat *Spiegel*. “There the Cossacks will not molest you,” said he, “and if the mob attacks it can be fought off with the quick-firers.

If you stay in the consulate, or go back to your boat, you are done for—they'll kill you."

That made me hot! An American citizen in a neutral port—on straight business—and in danger of his life! It didn't take me as long to make up my mind as it took Kuropatkin.

"Can you get a wire to my editor?" I asked Miller. He thought he could, and I dictated: "Our boys likely to be shot as spies. Our persons in danger. Wire Secretary of State to have Russian Government order us released."

While that was traveling around the world we spent a day hardly to be designated as frivolous. The Judge was still in evidence, interested but not disturbed, though he was in that list of suspected spies which Kuropatkin was supposed to be at that moment fingering.

Meanwhile my blessed editor, Victor Lawson, had done the proper thing. He had wired John Hay, who sent to the American Ambassador, McCormick, in Petersburg, this message: "Secure immediate release of correspondents held in Newchwang. If necessary see the Czar in person."

It did not prove necessary to see the Czar in person, but whatever juggling he went through

among the bureaux of Petersburg, McCormick turned the trick in record time. It was but twelve hours from the time of the filing of my dispatch when a miserable orderly handed me an order.

“The *Farwan* is at liberty,” it read, “sail within twenty-four hours.”

Here the Bigger Man turned up his sentimental side. He would not leave the boys, and swore some melodramatic oath about constancy and loyalty. I think he would have enjoyed the excitement of a shooting party with the mob as host—had he been safely off-side.

But Miller kept his sense. “Your only chance is to go,” said he. “You can’t save the boys by staying, and you will surely lose the boat, if not your lives. Should Togo attack while you are here, nothing could save you, not even that pink imperial order. The streets are rife with rumors of your suspected mission, and to-night may see the breaking of restraint. You go at dawn. I’ll guarantee the boys. If they can be saved, I’ll save them.”

He did save them—dear loyal Miller—but that is not part of this story.

We sailed at dawn. As we sneaked past the

forts I felt conscience stricken as one caught with the goods on. Those frowning guns followed us like the deadly finger in a cigar sign, for fifteen miles in and out of that winding river. The soldiers stood on the ramparts, at present arms, as we passed. Our whole crew was lined along the decks as the *Farwan* sped on. Along the taffrail lounged the Judge, looking interested but not disturbed.

Just beyond range of the last fort, a great volley of shots burst aft. I grasped my revolver and sneaked along the deck house. Was it mutiny or attack. There, gathered about the winch, stood a crowd of Chinks exploding fire-crackers!

ANNOINTED

CHAPTER VI.

The Japanese fleet first holds me up, I convey my Chief to the Yalu, bid him farewell on a venturesome journey and am fairly launched on my career of typhoons and battles.

There could be no more monkey business with the *Fawan* when operation cost three hundred and thirty mex a day. Up to this time she had not paid for the crew's chow bill in news-getting service, for the big story that might have gone out of Newchwang I dared not send because the lives of our boys were still in danger there and no risk could be taken in deserving the reputation we already had—that of spies. So I was heartily glad when orders came to proceed with the utmost dispatch to Chemulpo and pick up my chief.

In fee simple the three of us represented the essential component parts of the modern newspaper—the projecting man, the doing man, and the writing man. The latter, the Bigger Fellow, the ever ready with nimble word to turn a phrase around an idea, to flay with quip and sally the froth of the world's events, I left in Tien-Tsin—and left for aye. Now I, the do-

ing man, was bound hotfoot to meet my chief, and there, I fondly hoped, to be finally unleashed to that great game which was the very pith and core of my eye's apple.

First, I must have a skipper. My initial attempt had been a mucker. MacDonnell the prize, had been bought by the Americans. Old Meyer had the nerve, but was without the savvy, and was a bit shy on youth. So up turned Perkis from Shanghai, much to my relief. Perkis was forty-seven, short, stout, with a red face, black mustache, close hair, and—without speech. I was for teaching him the sign language until I found that it was discretion, not paralysis, that held his tongue. For eighteen years crack skipper of the star coast line he had but two months before passed them the go-bye in a huff, for Perkis was a gentleman, came from a good family in England, in fact, received his regular monthly allowance from home, but was a navigator by choice, an adventurer of the high seas. Liquor-tapped one day, after eighteen years' faithful service, he fell from the gang-plank to the wharf and sprained his leg. The company did not discharge him; they gave him six months' rest

leave on full pay, but the manner of giving was an insult. He resigned on the spot. It was not the money that lured him to me, but the game.

"It's a kid trying to put on side and run the show," said he of me as he turned up on the bridge that afternoon. I read the words and the inflection in his eye. So I followed him to the saloon before we started, unsealed a fresh bottle, and talked straight.

"Captain Perkis," said I, "you're the skipper of this boat, and I want to start square with you. The law reads that the minute you weigh anchor you're the commander. Now I don't dispute that. Its best so. I'm here only for conference, but I hope you'll feel we're all out for the same thing, that we are spending money and taking risks, not for the credit of any one man, but for the common end—to get stuff for the *Chicago Daily News*." I told him of my first skipper. "But," I added, "you are a different man. I have full confidence in you. You're not an underling. You and I together are taking a common risk. I hope you will confer with me, and I want you to advise me. You're the man of sea, savvy, and

I look to you for success." That eye changed. He grasped my hand, and went back to the bridge—silent. Old Meyer shipped as first mate. With Cromarty, Meyer and Perkis I felt as if the *Fawan* had survived her trial cruise. Perkis was no buttinski, for when I invited the harbour people in to drinks he stuck to the bridge, but I sent a boy up for him and then motioned him to the head of the table. After that he stood pat through every demand I made on him—with one exception—until we docked finally at Tongku.

We left the Judge at Chefoo, and for the last time bade good-bye to his benign smile waiting patiently to come into its natural inheritance. As we faded out to sea, I still caught sight of his lank form casting after us a sad farewell, interested but not disturbed. He had exhausted every port on the China coast and had at last drifted back to the birth-place of as many lies as ever watered the desert of unintelligence surrounding a great war. It was hard to part, but he was too great a luxury for the quest we were on.

Perkis was O. K. and beside him, on the bridge, I received my first practical lessons in

navigation. It was very beautiful to see the law and order of it slip off under his supple mind. There was the chart with its parallel course, pretty as a new-laid road on a surveyor's drawing, the patent log beside, and the good ship bounding across that mouth of gulf, with dangerous Korea looming beyond, the Korea on which I split my skipper's wisdom tooth. But, with his chart and course, my bully companion now played the northwest rock for me out of the mists as the photographer draws a landscape with developer out of a dry plate. It was a joy, indeed, to find the angles and the channel coming straight as a Q. E. D.

The Chief was not at Chemulpo, and there were no instructions. He had passed on his way to the north, had touched, not landed, and was now well on his way to that first decisive test of arms between the white soldier and the yellow across the mud flats of the Yalu. This was all I could learn. I was up in the air again—no instructions, no army pass, all ways barred, green and alone. But I was keen to follow Yaluwards. We were lying a good bittish out of harbour when the laute called there was a white man aftside.

Presently he arrived, indicating by word of mouth that he was a good fellow, and radiating the charm he evidently intended to convey from many rotundities with good capon lined. "My name is Herbert," said he, "my father used to be Governor. Perhaps you've heard of him. Everybody's heard of him, and most everybody's heard of me. You never heard. Ah, well, you're young. Its forgiven. The fact is, I'm out here to see the war. Always see war, if there's one to be seen. I'm the only officer in the regular army who has seen each of the past four wars."

"So?" queried I, "but are you aware that the coast sports some hundreds odd with the same mission?"

"But," and he touched me familiarly on the arm, "is the coast lined with hundreds who have letters from the President and the Secretary of State? Is the coast lined with hundreds marked in red tape as the authorized bearer of official dispatches? Is the coast lined with hundreds who could pick you out of any scrape as easily as a king can knight a rag-picker?"

He showed me the papers. They were of

the best—from Oyama, Kodama, and all the rest. First of all, was one naming him official dispatch bearer of the American Government from Peking to Seoul. He was wearing the undress khaki uniform of the American army officer, without the insignia. He put his hand in his pocket and drew forth the brass buttons, the bronze insignia and the collar piece that showed him to be a staff colonel. "These," said he, "I can slip on in a moment's notice if you are overhauled."

"But are they yours?" said I.

"Of course," he replied, "but I travel incognito." He passed his eye across our cabin-way, investigated the bunks, climbed to the bridge, asked a few pertinent questions. "Well," said he at last, "this isn't a bad tub. She'll do, and you may have some interesting experiences. I don't mind if I go along." So I nabbed him, with his Oyama screed.

The great Bennett Burleigh, king of war correspondents, survivor of thirty-six campaigns, boarded the *Farwan* the next afternoon, puffing and blowing. "Look here, boy," he cried to me, "give us that story. It's a good story, a good story—that Newchwang affair.

Give it me! Give it me! What an outrage! What a damned outrage!" I smiled as he jotted the words down in shorthand. He caught me.

"It's no jest," said he. "If it will give you any comfort, I may tell you that I have fully investigated this case and I am going to have that consul removed. Yes sir, removed! A word from me will do it." Thus he went puffing and blowing over the side of the vessel, and I could hear his hot exclamations ringing from the sampan clear to shore. A year later I again visited Newchwang and again bowed to the same British consul, promoted to Tientsin, but the puffing and blowing of Bennett Burleigh resounded from one end of the East to the other for many a week.

We stood off next morning for Chinnampo, bearing, besides our direct mission, two objects: (1) a Chinese order on some merchants above Wiju to carry fifteen hundred silk cocoons to Chefoo at three dollars apiece, (2) the official bearer of dispatches from Uncle Sam's government service at Peking to the other branch at Seoul.

Up the coast of Korea, which there resembles

the coast of Maine beyond Bar Harbour, we sighted on the horizon a smudge of smoke which the skipper declared to be that of the Japanese fleet, but it was too far out for us to chase. Besides, I had important engagements up Ping Yang inlet, for there, I thought, lay the Chief. So we hit the *Fawan* up for a speed test and Cromarty gauged the revolutions to 115.

At 3:00 in the afternoon the inlet hove in sight, with a picket ship astride the mouth, with her funnel puffing lazy blue wreaths into the fresh spring air. We received her signal, "B D N" I think it was, and looked directly in our book.

"Abandon your ship!" read "B D N." Perkis looked at me in consternation and I at him for relief.

"It's what Togo signalled the Kow Shing before he sank her in the harbour of Chemulpo during the China war," said Perkis, with clenched teeth. "What shall I do?"

"Put her head on for the inlet," said I.

We went on. "Will they sink us?" rose to my lips. "In broad day, with no hostile sign, and no chance to escape?" The Colonel stood

with arms folded, chuckling, "a fine experience." He was figuring, I presume, how it would look in his memoirs.

At length a boat pushed off from the picket and as we took our kow-towing subaltern aboard we learned the difficulty. They were using the new international signal code; we had the old. The signs they used were entirely unintelligible to us. The officer had passed an examination in English—that was all. He opened his mouth, but no words came forth, only guttural sounds. He went back, dug up someone else. We parleyed, assured him the pass and the Chief was waiting up the inlet, sandbagged him with American bluff—and the next signal read: "You may proceed."

Soon we picked up the fleet. It was all of third and fourth class boats, nothing over one funnel. The flagship refused to let us pass and the Colonel produced his papers. The effect was magical. We received an official apology, an official kowtow, and an official escort. The *Miyaka*, a month later mined and sent plump to the bottom at Dalny, steamed up the inlet majestically ahead of us, showing the way in.

At last the Chief! He produced my pass, primed me with the ins of Tokyo bureaudom and the outs of army etiquette and hurried me off to the Japanese Consul. The Consul said we had no rights in the inlet. We swore that a British dispatch boat had been in. He swore she had not been in. We wired to Tokyo and Washington for equal favours, and, though we were hustled out that day, the Britisher got hustled off with equal smartness the next attempt she made.

Chinnampo was a sight. You have seen the circus arrive at 4:00 o'clock of a summer's morning—the long trains puffing in, the chaos of shouts, the wilderness of luggage, the melee of animals, the whirlwind of orders, the avalanche of trucks, beasts and men. One hour all is ruin and dismay; the small boy thinks the circus has gone smash, that nothing less than a week can ever bring order out of that. When—presto! the caravan moves, the animals extricate, the riders assemble, the clowns kowtow, the tent grows as if beckoned by a magician's wand, the procession moves promptly at 10:00 in the forenoon, gay, brilliant, majestic. The show has come to life.

So it was at Chinnampo, the base of the first Imperial army that balmy April morning when the shore of Ping Yang inlet breathed the tenderness of spring. Transports by the dozen had dumped every imaginable army supply roughly on the beach. It looked as if an invader had been flat upon their heels and they had had barely time to fly. For two miles back the stuff was piled high—telegraph wire strung in huge bales, carts in flat, boarded bundles of axles, shafts in high crates, gun barrels unmounted and rolling in the mud, canvas bellied from the drought, red cross supplies in striped boxes ranging deep and sudden through the hopeless tangle, and, loose among all, inextricable lines of coolies, with here and there a spanking khaki coat. To my eye, illiterate in war's superb mechanism, there had been a collapse and the army of the Yalu would never get its freight.

Thus, in the dawn as saffron, died the Ping Yang hills! Toward sundown, as I came from the Consul's mud room up a dirty street, I glanced into the haze of the military road winding north through the hills of surpassing beauty. There, on the broad highway, in

unison and strength, lay the chaos of a few hours back. The carts had been assembled, the guns mounted, the stores packed and now on toward Manchuria was rolling this relentless juggernaut, the War Machine. I could see lifted in miniature on the highroad every branch of the service. The khaki surtouts of the infantry trudged ahead, a tape of yellow lain on the fresh green. The scarlet cavalry pranced alongside three mounted batteries whose muzzled gun mouths looked down upon us with calm and hidden might. The telegraph corps with jaunty tools and limber poles took up the trail steadily, as did the goose-stepped regulars on before. The commissary and the red cross filed behind, the reserve animals covered the rear and, in behind even them, I could see the sun splitting a farewell on the copper bottoms of the pontoon boats as they rested snug atop the pontoon wagons. My nerves thrilled. I was as a yearling brought for the first time to the pole. Though I knew not from experience the meaning of that curving sea of faces round the Judge's stand, I felt strange delight and wonder stealing through my veins.

Off in the inlet swung the *Hakui* and the *Sado*, the sister ships of the Red Cross Society, as like as peas. They had just been painted a beautiful vermilion and white, the funnels bland as a whitewashed fence and the huge red cross standing out square and forceful. They slept there as pretty a picture as I ever saw away from the triangular course of the American cup race, and the Chief exclaimed: "What enormous boats! Where can they ever dig up enough wounded to fill them? Each would swallow a regiment." Six months later I came back on the quarter deck of the *Sado*, sporting a red cross kimono, and there were ten more like us with anchor dropped in Ujina harbour, and all were gunwale full of wounded. And there were another ten at sea. But that was after the Yalu had sunk into a skirmish before the academas of Liaoyang and the Sha-ho, of Tellissu and Port Arthur.

"Now it's up to you to get me in front of the army," said the Chief, and I could see he was stirring my stumps. "The *News* has put it up to you and me. You take the fleet; the army's mine. And we must skin the world on both branches of the service." Well, he did his

share all right. From the Yalu and from Liao-yang first blood over the field wire trickled from him; mine was the knell yet to ring for nine months through the sounding boards of two hemispheres—Port Arthur.

It was for the Yalu we were bound the next morning. The Chief, in waiting to give me final instructions, had let the army and the correspondents get the star of him a hundred miles. Now he must overhaul, head them off and drop in on the flank near headquarters before the curtain rose on the momentous drama, tidings which the press of Christendom was hourly expecting.

We hurried out of Ping Yang under a cloud of Japanese displeasure, for it was intended that no one should see the celerity of that famous landing, and we hauled up off the Yalu alarmed at—what? Nothing. There was simply nothing—no secondary base for which we looked eagerly and in vain. We thought there would be landing of supplies at Yong-am-pho, near the mouth of the river, but the place was as deserted and inhospitable as ever a Korean village could be—and that capacity is tremendous. There was no sign of war-

ship, no sign, even, of junks or fishing sampans—nothing but the dreary mud nonentity of the Yalu stretching vastly in the northwest. Even the river was invisible. It ought to come down there, the chart said, and Perkis assured us that it did, but for miles and miles there stretched only yellow and shoals, flat and profitless. We stood in the most interesting armies of two great empires were about to spot in the world, the Yalue, where the meet for their first duel—and could not find the spot.

We might not return to Ping Yang. That way the picket had orders to stop or sink on sight. It was here the Chief showed his hand—one steady, wiry, tough. He forced the game and seized a junk. At length one was spotted sailing out of the mud to the North. Yes. There it stretched, a ribbon of lemon on the dreary ochre. We sent the dingy for the junk and brought the skipper off, grumbling and suspicious.

He must put back with that junk up the shallows of the river and land the Chief with the Japanese army. He refused. He had been in Russian pay and he dare not look upon

the yellow faces. We cajoled. We offered money. His hire could not be paid. We threatened. Still he refused. Then we impressed. He should not leave the *Farwan* until he consented. Three hours of durance won him. With a sour face he led the way and I saw the Chief, his boy and his outfit piled over the side of the *Farwan* and speed in the dingy for the side of that piratical junk. In my heart I opposed the affair, but there was no word for me, a novice, to impose upon the veteran of eleven campaigns.

"I'm not for this," said he. "It comes of the wild lust for news. Why am I of it—with a wife and child? What a passing madness—this mushroom of our civilization!"

I could not answer—I, sinful as a gambler caught with the goods. . There was no answer. It was the moment when a man goes on to a success in which his name is nil or to death; or, back to face the broken midstroke of his career. The old Chief—yet not so old—with his steady comfortable million at home and that sweet wife I knew so well—why did he go on? Why do any of us go on?

I saw him rise above the gunwale of the

junk. I saw the dingy return. I saw the lateen sails bend with the breeze and the battered, runty nose stride toward the streak of lemon. Beyond, on one side lay the hostile Russians, on the other the inhospitable Japanese; on all sides the country slumbering lightly for the match which would set it into roaring, ghastly death, and with him a crowd of treacherous, unwilling Orientals of whose language or country he knew not word or latitude. He carried a Mauser automatic conspicuously in his belt, and I said to myself that at least ten of the dogs would go under before they got him. But what would ten yellow lives be to one Chief like that!

The junk looked like the prints of the *Old Pinto* as she left Lisbon in 1491. As I saw the Chief looming, ever more distant, out of her sheets, I wondered how Columbus felt as he gazed his last on the old land from the deck of his caravel. At length the yellow swallowed him. The mud closed in all around. We turned the *Fawan's* nose to the South, I signaled "full speed ahead!" and went back to do his bidding—the snub on the mushroom!

AGAIN A CAPTIVE

CHAPTER VII.

An army at sea bursts upon us and goes out, the Chief escapes, I dawdle about Port Arthur, invite a destroyer out and get a shot across the bows.

As we dropped down past Talienwan bound for Chefoo that night, there suddenly loomed Coney Island off our port bow. Coney Island! with its myriad of dancing lights in the dim vista, and Manhattan Beach beyond and all the dotted indent of the most friendly shore on earth straight to Far Rockaway! In war the recruit says nothing, or next to nothing of home; the loom of love swims too mistily before, the scowl of mockery leers too heavily behind; but he thinks always, remembers everything. So I may confide in you that that night slipping down from the basalt Liaotung, the Chief I fondly loved going to all but doom and I bound upon the sea of daring where he was the lighthouse to steer my course, I felt blue as—well, devils tempted me. Then Coney Island piercing the bowl of night with its thousand curious knowing scenes beckoning on drew me as oint of olives would an o'erroweled horse. Vanished the Yellow Sea,

vanished forbidden Korea Bay! Was I in Asia or Columbus land? Sleeping or awake?

"Captain!" I cried to Perki.

"Yes," came the voice from my elbow. "A pretty sight, eh?"

"What! What!" I still gasped.

"The lost fleet," he said calmly, and I remember wondering at his poise of character. Then I made it out—the regular glow, the electric twinkle of ships at sea. Fifteen miles away they must have been and broadside to in a string that would have reached from the Battery to the Tomb.

"What fleet?" Still unawake, I peered ahead, the nether instincts gone, the superior alive.

"Must be the transports of the second army—cleared Sasebo ten days ago—port unknown."

God—for imagination! How simple! By all means the second army, and I, dull fool, lost in self, on the verge of stumbling past the present great mystery of the wary.

"We must duck the lights and crawl nearer," I called to the skipper.

"If you douse the masthead or side lights

you forego sea law and if they nab you it'll be a blockade runner taken," he answered warily.

"Then out with the port and haul in a few knots. We're hull down anyway, and the mast's ahead."

As we swung in, home faded, and I felt ambition about to come into its own. If what the skipper said panned, there lay but the watery expanse between the *Farwan* and Chefoo to land me the biggest story of the war so far. So distant was the possibility of this great coup that until the fleet crossed my physical vision it had not crossed the mental. If the fleet it was—and what else could it be?—there lay beyond me there in pantomime of Coney Island's gorgeous shows more than half a hundred ships with more than sixty thousand men, headed by Oku and his staff, accoutred as completely as was that wild array I had seen but two days before, scattered along Ping Yang inlet. Well I knew how they had put to sea—with enough sampans on each transport to land all the troops thereon at once, athwart every for'ard davit a new launch fresh from Osaka with steam up, ready to tow the Machine ashore, and elsewhere every sail and button for

the complete mobilization of an army. Afloat somewhere now that the world knew not they were hanging, as it were, in mid air, a Damoclean sword above the Russian head, ready to drop at wireless touch the moment Kuroki struck. Had the first army been driven back, they would have smitten the Russian flank instantly from the upper bank of the Yalu. Kuroki a success this sublime machine of sixty thousand souls could be hurled at will, against Liaoyang, or upon the frightful heights of Port Arthur. This lightning coup in readiness, conceived of a master of thunderbolts, smote upon me alone first there in the darkness, the possibility, the extent, the mystery, the sublime foresight awed me to silence. Then the news! I was the only white, above a dozen few in Tokyo, the only man of any colour capable of whispering this stark wonderment.

I called Cromarty. "How much coal in the bunkers?" I asked.

"Not above eight tons," said he. "Just enough to pull us nicely into Chefoo—if you don't loaf."

"The devil," I cried. "Can't you lie to, 'till

morning? I must make sure. The beat is too big for chances."

The skipper intervened. "You'll be nabbed sure," said he, "and held till the show is over. Better push on now, if you want anything out of this deal." We had pulled in a bit and I could distinguish here and there, from four-masters, the strings of taffrail lights. No war-ships sport such elegance, and where, in that part of the world could one find sixty liners, slow down to four knots, ambling along a barren coast, with no object but to kill time?

At that moment a northwest blow brought in the faint, welcome strains of far distant singing—the lilt and pause of battalions in evening song. "Nippon carte! Nippon carte! Rose marke ta!" "Onward Nippon! Onward Nippon! Russia defeated is!" The Ki-Mi-Ga-Yo clinched it. Who else but Jap dough-boys could sound that ringing melancholy as a gauge of battle? And what less than a battalion strong could boom it, strenuous and sad, across a dozen miles of sullen sea?

"Put for Chefoo at full speed," I said.

The next day the *Farwan* began that series of telegrams which placed her on the bourses

of Europe as the first scourge of the war's froth. Thanks to Burleigh's interest and our subsequent scoops, the tight little tug boat for months gave all the writers of London their first tips on the sea situation—and—alas!—turned all too much of moment toward the Neva. No wonder that we met our fate, and that the *Fawan* was the last dispatch boat that will likely ever be heard from authoritatively in the conflicts of first-class powers. But of that anon!

Putting out of Chefoo again the next day we again carried the Colonel. He was having such a good time he 'lowed he'd make another cruise. The adventure was to his liking, and, as he was good company, I was glad to take him along. We put up past the Liaotishan promontory for Thorntonhaven, hoping for another sight of that mysterious fleet. I had sent the cable of its identity and place, but particulars of movements would now be good any time 'till it landed. We anchored in Thorntonhaven and went ashore in a new cutter I had taken on with four men. We could see wild goats along the ridges of the hills and I wanted to put a shot into one of them, but didn't dare

be gay with firearms just there and then. Some Chinks told us that about thirty vessels had anchored off shore the day before, lighters putting in for water. This was plainly the fleet, so I ordered nose ahead for the north again. I wanted to go back, not only for the fleet, but that I might again reach Tatinkow, on the other side of the Yalu, and give a last look for the Chief. He might fail utterly up the river and we had agreed on a white flag signal should he come back.

Accordingly, all the way up I looked for a tablecloth to the junk mastheads. None showed up, though, not content with scrutiny, I overhauled and put the laute aboard every sail that passed us, to cross-question. We had but reached the mud flats again and felt the shoreless depths of ochre all about when I spied my first mine. We had been warned that the Russians had laid them well through the channel and this first peep prepared me for what I was later to find, shoals and shoals of them lying in treachery to trap us. This was a strange kind, elliptical like a torpedo. As it lay on the surface of the water, its stem protruding at low tide, it was not unlike a floating

porpoise with dorsal fin erect. The same hour we sighted the captured junk coming out. I signalled her and sent the laute aboard, vainly hoping for sight of the real Chief. The laute got the story.

The junk had scarcely gotten from our sight two days before when the Chief piped defection. She was set nor' nor' east, but by looking at his pocket compass he found the yellow skipper had changed her course to nor' nor' west—straight for the Russian strongholds. Evidently he counted the Chief good bag and looked for silver if he turned a white man with a Japanese boy over intact to his former masters.

The Chief again showed his hand, one, as I have before remarked, steady, wiry, tough. He got nigh the tiller, under the sheets, with his boy beside him, pulled the Mauser automatic, drove, with a grand gesture, the yellow devils before him into the prow, and then, helped by his wrist compass, jammed the tiller back to the general direction he knew, the nor' nor' east. Until he left them, thirty-six hours later, he never once closed his eyes or resigned his post, or pocketed his gun, but held them

deadly there to the work. As I heard this my teeth clenched over the resolve that nothing could turn me back, armed as I henceforth would be, with this memory.

It was low tide. Barely had he turned in toward the lemon ribbon that spelled the Yalu than there appeared racing down from the northwest, a sloop. The Chief, passing his gun to his boy for the moment, surveyed the stranger with his glass and discovered her alive with Cossack faces, astrakan rimmed, and rough with Manchu heaviness. The launch signalled the junk to stop and the yellow skipper ran aft, in apparent fear and dismay. The Chief fired a shot into the masthead and then pointed the Mauser straight at the yellow heart. The skipper ran back to his sullen crew, the junk kept on, lumbering and slow, for the river, and the swift sailing sloop closed in at twice the speed from behind.

Now, the water a junk draws is less than would satisfy the thirst of a blue blood Kentuckian. On summer mornings they are alleged to skim through Mongolia across the dew of the millet fields. The tide was then at ebb, and the bar at the Yalu's mouth forbade all

entrance save that of vessels whose drawing power might be limited to that of a pat hand. The question was: who would get there first?

Over the mud flats they sped, the Chief and his impressed crew in the ancient junk before, the Cossacks in their steam launch, weaponed with Martinis, behind. At 2,000 yards they commenced firing and the bullets lapped the water as do the first drops of a heat shower. The Chinamen huddled and jabbered, fast coming to that strength found in union. Reflecting evidently on chances, they found the lesser to be against a single white man with a gun than against twenty white men with as many guns. They grew calm and the spirit of mutiny was about to collect itself for a mighty spring that would surely have annihilated the Chief when the Cossacks fired their last volley, hauled down their sails and came to a sudden stop—grounded!

The junk ran over the bar on fourteen inches, and the next night at sundown was arrested by pickets who stepped mysteriously out of the green woods along the south bank of the Ai fork. The Chief produced some magic paper that took him into camp and set

the junk free. So I knew him safe with Kuroki's vanguard and about to see first proof that the Japs had risen to artillery superior to bows and arrows.

To me, then, Port Arthur beckoned. There was nothing else for the *News* to know. The first army was covered; we had placed the second; the third was not yet mobilized. That rocky crag, the apex of the world's events, the tomb of monster heroism appalling and unbelievable, lured the *Farwan* as its siren sound whispered to all that neared its reach that year.

We anchored that night in the Elliot group, which Togo, three weeks later seized and held through all the seige as his base. Perkis and I agreed the next morning to skirt the Tiger's Tail, running past the mouth of the harbour for "a look see" if Togo was about, and where. As we rounded the Lion's Mane, we could see the muzzles of Riranski corked from the dews and canvassed in Khaki dress, so close did we come that our twenty-six diameter binoculars detected all but the calibre. The patched furze on the hills played up in dazzling freshness under the new sun and far in the haze to leeward we picked up the lighthouse on the

tip of Liaotishan. Then marshalling down between, tier on tier, rose battery and fort, lifted in holy might above the inconsequent waves that floated our peashell in its passing roguery. The four square ribs of the wireless station on Golden Hill pricked the blue and across the narrow V that spelled the harbour's mouth could be seen the castellated ramparts of interior Etseshan which lifted above the august scent a vast series of froned scarps like the storied might of a medieval castle.

No Togo. No fighting ships, no hint of war came to us from that sublime and terrible fortress. It lay beyond us in sear might—a legend. Who dare say that was Port Arthur? I rubbed my eyes. I could be only the favored keeper of Alladin's lamp, who rubbed as he dreamed of Syracuse and Acre! Only a scene from ancient history could have silhouetted such picture joy against the sun!

But through the V of the harbour's mouth masts showed and before I became a mere strolling scribe there rose from that inlet among the narrow protecting hills a straight smudge of black, coming from the V as steam rises from the mouth of a patient tea-kettle.

"I believe there's a boat coming out," I cried.

"No," said Perkis, looking lazily shoreward, "only firing up at the dock, that's all. But I think we'd better lay off a bit. We're too close under the forts. They might sting us." The *Fawan* nosed therefore seaward.

In three minutes there could be no mistake. It was black smoke and it was coming out, full speed, from two boats whose funnels now turned head on to us and might have been a dozen, for all we saw, because one only lay in vision line ahead. They were coming straight for us, seven or eight miles away. Over their bows curled white crests of foam, pushed ahead of them as frothy wedges are driven before three-engine snow plows in snowy Dakota. The speed must have been twenty-five knots and our limit was ten.

"We're in for it now," remarked Perkis, with his imperturbable calm, as he jammed the wheel Chefooside. Then Cromarty stepped up, touched his hat, and said:

"If you don't mind my saying so, sir, I would suggest that it will look suspicious for us to change our course for Chefoo when our papers read we cleared for Ching Wang Tao."

"It's too late now," replied Perkis, ignoring me. Cromarty uttered a groan of despair and disappeared below, but not before he had buttoned me again.

"Don't you think we'd ought to stop, sir?" he asked. "I could have told you it was madness coming within hailing distance of a port like this."

"They're not after us," I said. "At the worst, they'll only look at our papers."

"But your papers are all Japanese," said he, saw he had put his shot home, touched his cap deferentially and withdrew.

I went aft the bridge and watched the race. We were abeam their course, drawing like a freight engine leaving the yard. They, racing along like an express train at full speed.

"A stiff pace, eh?" It was Perkis at my elbow. Speech from him meant more than words.

"Suppose they're after us?"

"No. But even if——"

As he spoke there was a little spurt from the bow of the nearest. I saw the flame spring from the centre and paused to hear the sound.

"A blank!" called Perkis. As the words left

his mouth the shot went kerplunk fifty yards beyond us, directly across our bows. That ended the discussion. Perkis rang "stop" on the telegraph and put the *Fawan's* head hard about.

The Colonel came up beaming. "I wonder if they'll take us in. What a story it will make! I'll go and see Alexieff and say, 'Admiral, do you remember the last time we met? No? It was at the State House, at my father's table. You were only a captain then.'"

"Suppose the rest of us get locked up, or shot as spies," I queried.

"Oh, but they'll not dare touch me—with my papers," called back the Colonel and his jubilation from then on was the only relief the situation bore.

The first was coming head on and would ram us amidships if she didn't change that frightful speed and course. She was a destroyer. Both were destroyers stripped clean for action and painted a dull olive green. The first had slanted slightly to angle our course and I could see her four funnels, chubby as hogsheads, vomiting bituminous smoke in gobs of black spittle. I could see three officers on the

bridge—bearded demons—in sea coats and rubber boots, deluged each moment with spray as the destroyers plowed the swell and standing legs apart tilting the bridge as an acrobat a sea-saw plank. I could see the twelve pounder for'ard and behind and the black plates with the shiny rims where the barrels poked through; the machine guns on the port and starboard quarter decks, the three pounders scattered about, the torpedo tubes lying fore and aft with the nonchalance of champion heavy weights about to enter the ring. A bell rang in the engine room, and I could see the faces of the crew rubbering through the chinks by the long rakish barrels of the devilish naval guns, while a tight chubby Johnnie ran out and pulled the blocks from the muzzles.

As they came on, reckless bent, I surveyed with a thrill of contact these "lancers of the sea"—their perfect lines shielding a box of machinery of constitution so delicate that a single shot through any plate would send every prisoner within to instant scalding death; all engines, built for speed, rammed with device and mechanism to the turning of a hair, and ready, at the word, for any wild deed of craft

or daring. The mere manouver came as fascination to one engine-fond, and I forgot the danger. This till she seemed so near that only a miracle could stop her. Then I gasped in fright.

As I gasped she turned, almost square in her tracks. The other followed and the two slid about us with the poise of circling eagles. Comanches swooped down and circled a lumbering stage in the emigrant days, coursing the prairies with wild and haughty steeds and ranging into their prey with fierce and elegant grandeur; just so these two Russian destroyers turned the bows and slipped under the stern of the *Fawan*.

One bearded rascal on the bridge condescended to look upon us. He saw that he had secured our attention. Then he reached a long fore-arm over the spray-wet deck in front and circled it about with a jerk that read suppressed rage. Then, with his fellow, he put head about, easily as a locomotive is rear-fronted on a turn-table, and steamed slowly toward Port Arthur. We followed.

“The *Petropavlovsk* went down last week by a mine, if you don’t mind my saying it, sir,”

remarked Cromarty at my elbow, "and perhaps they think we're up to the same trick—laying mines."

I had been looking seaward, but suddenly I noticed that my vision comprehended land. So I looked for'ard and found the course veering. We were putting parallel-wise down the coast. But no sooner had I seen that than we put hard astern and followed almost back in our tracks. So the course continued, tacking in and out for the V of the harbour's mouth.

"They're steering us through the mines," shouted Cromarty. "After giving away the plan like that, if you don't mind my saying it, sir, we'll never get out of here."

A WILDERNESS OF MINES

CHAPTER VIII.

Sailing among four thousand mines, we are put harshly under marine guard, hustled to confinement, released as suddenly and face the acres of destruction to ironic laughter.

The sea was sown with mines.

Roughly estimated, thousands at that moment guarded the entrance to Port Arthur. Three hands had done the sowing—the Russian, the Japanese and the sportive fist of Chance. The Russians blew up on their own mines, the Japanese foundered on theirs and the blind god staggered those of ill luck who flew a neutral flag. In deadly intent, and deadly power there was little difference among the three. Sometimes—rarely—execution followed intent, but in the wild, red shambles of war who that takes the sardonic gibe of effect puzzles over curious cause?

The Russians had begun by laying mines in series parallel with the shore and across the channel entrance. These were fired by electricity from the forts. Then among and beyond these were strewn electro-contact mechanical mines insecurely anchored. Every

time there was a northeast blow these shifted and wandered aimlessly with the irresponsible joy of children out of school. Early in the month the *Ying Sing*, laying an outer series, had stumbled over her own stupidity and went to the bottom with every soul on board, which is of no consequence, and would not be mentioned here had she not also taken to the bottom with her the plans for 400 mines which she had just placed. So the Russians were not sure. The Japanese, to add joy to this game of nations, lay outside bright days, watched Wiren's fleet come out for manoeuvres, traced the course, and at night sent daring torpedoers in to drop mechanical mines in the channel. These, of course, drifted, ledged, wedged and played about the bright blue bay, populous as a school of porpoises.

Mere thought of one of these contact rangers, its five revolving prongs pricking as many avenues to the rapid evaporation of two hundred pounds of gun cotton, brought many a peaceful skipper hundreds of miles away at Hong Kong to the verge of blind staggers. Imagine, then, our joy in a field of 4,000 run amock! You may be sure Perkis hugged the

wake of that murderous destroyer so close the *Fawan's* nose almost clipped the screw as we obeyed the crook of the bent forearm.

"Any chance of our getting shot?" I asked him.

"Mebbe, mebbe not," said he, and tended straight to his knitting. How well the skipper rose to the situation that day—like steel, tempered steel, whose storied joy the samurai believe leaps like a charger to action!

This is how I felt about it. The Russian Government had but the week before notified the Powers that dispatch boats would not be permitted within the territorial limits of Port Arthur. True, they had taken us outside the limits, but who could prove it, should they want to hold us prisoners? That was the least. They had also said that operators of newspaper boats using the wireless would be shot as spies. True, we had no wireless, but who could tell how flimsy a pretext the Russians would need for desperate work? I had sampled their bungling at Newchwang, while in the past month they had fired on the inoffensive *Tai-king* and the *Pronto*.

There were no Japanese boys this time. So

much to the good. I determined to have no Japanese papers. So I burnt up my army pass and my Red Cross decoration. Then I got old Meyer's government papers making him a pilot in the Island Sea. Then I went after the Colonel.

"I'm not going to risk confiscation," said I, "so I think it best to burn up all the Japanese papers you hold."

He mumbled, muttered—"Outrage—Useless—Unwarranted——" but I insisted, and he produced two. I put them in the stove.

"Sorry," said I, "but I must have the rest."

"Oh, I say, now," this is too much of a good thing. I want to keep these papers. Here's one with Marshall Oyama's signature. I want that for my permanent collection."

"Sorry, but I must insist. This is my boat."

He mumbled again, muttered, hesitated, stutted "absurd, impossible," and at length produced a bunch from his bosom and they fed the flames of my cabin stove. Then I went to the wheel house, got the Japanese flag from under the charts, tucked it under my vest, sought Cromarty, he led me to the stoke-hole, threw

open the furnace door and I flung the flag on the blazing grates.

Then I was properly disgusted. Coming back on deck I could see we were rounding to under the Tiger's Tail and I felt that all was lost. They would confiscate the boat, and, if we escaped with our lives, we would still be held till the end of the seige, which would be, God knew when. But as we drew near, curiosity supplanted fear and I looked eagerly for each distinguishing mark on this focus of the world's eye. There wasn't much—a hollow curve of rock rising into beetling cliffs, not unlike the entrance to the Golden Gate, slit here and there with dark spots from which gun muzzles peered out. I was in no frame of mind to enjoy the beauty of it. I felt like Rosalind astray. "So this is the forest of Arden!" said she, "when I was home I was in a better place." I appreciated the delicacy of Shakespeare's conception. Why had I not stayed in Minneapolis content with the night whistle of the police reporter?

Through a megaphone came an order, "anchor!" We "let go" in seven fathoms, less than I expected, and lay down menaced by the

guns of a dozen batteries. Suppose they should try pot hunting, just for luck? Well, they didn't, or someone else would be telling this story and his talk would be wild and horrible.

Half an hour passed before the V released a tug boat jammed tight with marines. There was a heavy swell on and the destroyer that lay guarding us was in the trough describing an arc through the heavens with her funnels every time she rolled. As the tug boat pulled alongside and tried to send on a boarding party they found, now twenty feet separating our rails and theirs, and now a few inches. Each time they evened up five or six marines would jump aboard, sprawling over fixed bayonets as an awkward juggler over a split chair. But they righted all right, and soon we had twenty business-looking chaps ranged fore and aft. These marines always have fixed bayonets. I believe they go to bed with fixed bayonets.

The officer in command touched his hat. "I'll have to ask you to go below, sir," he said. Then things suddenly began to move. Herbert had been debating in his cabin whether or no he should appear with insignia, but had paused

too long on decision, and he now tumbled below with me, mumbling something about outrage, indignity, and other strong words. Perkis was looking down on the scene from the bridge, quite calm, and contented, with arms akimbo. The officer glanced up and caught him. "Sorry, I'll have to ask you to go below, sir," he said.

"Aw right—a-aw right," drawled Perkis, and shambled down.

The marines were hustling Cromarty, who had tried to move off with his usual dignity, but they pricked him and he hopped down to the engine room with the celerity of a stoker. They put him over the starting gear and told him to personally obey bridge signals. "Im treated like a dog," he cried to himself. "I can't stand the humiliation." It *was* rough on a chief engineer who had been a master eighteen years.

Old Meyer simply sat in his cabin, chewing his gums, rolling his knotty head, rubbing his shapeless hands and mumbling a lot of stuff from which could occasionally be extricated "soospichus—Rooshians—swine—Rooshians—soospichus." I had given Meyer one

of my revolvers and he was fingering it in his coat pocket. I wore the other, for I didn't know what might happen. If it came to the worst, I had made up my mind for a try myself. I suppose a wiser man would have entirely succumbed to 4,000 mines, the combined batteries of the strongest fortress in the East and the bayoneted marines of an angry garrison. Well, excuses have I none, and I was a bit hot then on the proposition of neutral rights. Moreover, I was not the sort to accept without a struggle the reality that then faced us—a gloomy prison for nine months to be called “home.”

Perkis stopped in the deck saloon, where the officer with four marines was waiting for him to pass below. He stepped over to the pantry, saying as he went: “Will you have a drink?”

The officer ignored the question. “We’re waiting for you to step below, Captain,” he said.

“Aw right, a-aw right,” said Perkis. “If you say I’ve got to go below I suppose I’ve got to go. You apparently have the goods to back it up. But won’t you have a drink first?”

“We’re waiting, Captain,” said the officer.

“Aw right, a-aw right,” said Perkis, “But if you won’t drink with me I’ll have to drink alone.” He took the bottle of whisky and tansan from the shelf, poured out a smacking tumbler full, raised the glass high above his head, called, “Here’s to your health!” and lapped the booze. Then he nonchalantly took the stairs.

They had weighed anchor now and I tried to look out of the port hole, but they had closed the glass and a bayoneted marine stood in the cabin door to prevent our peeking. Two others of those benign natures stood in the passage, so I looked helplessly over at the Colonel—and laughed. He sat on the sofa, his right hand on a revolver sticking from his belt and his left grasping the barrel of a Winchester that stood behind the door. “The indignity!” he shouted at me, his eyes glaring as if I had done it, “That they should hustle me down here—an officer of the United States government!”

They were all over the boat, two petty officers on the bridge, a man at the wheel, marines in every room, even way down in the stoke-hole. Well, we were in for it. That was a

cinch. We had pulled far inside the three-mile limit by this time and they would never have taken us in like that had they ever intended us to get out alive. And they had not even glanced at the ship's papers, let alone search for further incriminating proof. It was plain confiscation!

At length the engine stopped and a voice floated to us from above: "You can come on deck now."

I thought we were probably inside the harbour, but no! As I lurched against the deck-house—we were still lapped by the swell—I looked up into the muzzles of the topmost battery on the Tiger's Tail, so near that nothing over a machine gun with a forty-five degree depression could have raked us. A Japanese fireship lay piled on the beach, aftsides below tide, stark reminder that we floated above Hirose's remains and were on the scene of deeds daring as ever illumined sea history. Here the certain death parties had slipped through storm and dark to plug that channel with six-thousand-ton merchanters and beyond the hari-kari survivors had frothed away in fanatic zeal against those cruel mocking rocks,

climbing hand over hand in blind rage to the ironic bayonets of the jaunty guards above. Here the torpedoers had darted in, like angry wasps, seeking worse than they brought—the scintillant scalding death that comes to men in a box all boilers when one of those machine guns pierces the plate with a ball. A stone's throw from here the *Petropalovsk* a week before went down, and over this spot was yet to pass the death throes of the Pacific fleet of the third navy of the world.

What did I see? A maze of masts through the V, smoke, funnels, rows of brick buildings crowning a hill—and—the leaping Russian pilot. Then I came back to the *Farwan*. The marines were gone. The tug boat had cast away. Even as I looked the boat-hook that held them was released, while, the pilot springing safely to her deck, the *Farwan* to tilt of sea and crash of tide drifted a hundred feet aftside. A voice from the deck-house of the pilot boat floated in, mistily;

“You can go now!”

I gasped, rushed to the taffrail, saw that hole in the sea wherein the *Petropavlovsk* had dis-

appeared, and wailed with every energy in my lungs:

“But the mines! How will we escape the mines?”

“Its all right,” came the voice. “All right. All right. You can go now.” Was it mockery I heard in laughter. I looked up those dark cliffs, dyed now in gold, for night was closing in, and saw silhouetted against the sky the assembled gun crew from those batteries on the tip of the Tail. Was it their voices I heard, for I could see them talking, one to another, and pointing our way.

“Its all right now—all right. You can go now,” floated back the avenging voice.

Go? Where? Before us lay the fortress, on every other side for at least three miles stretched that wilderness of mines, waiting for just such a flippant touch as lay in the nose of the *Fazwan* to spirt us into hell. There were buoys and stakes scattered about, but only the Russians knew the meaning. Perkis had never seen the pattern before. The Colonel was expressing his regret that we had not been taken in, and was divided between indignation at me for loss of his papers and profound sorrow that

he had had no heart to heart talk with Alexieff.

"Any idea how we came in?" I asked Perkis.

"No," he answered. He was a game rascal, from start to finish of that show he never turned a hair.

"We might lie here over night," suggested the Colonel. "In the morning they may take pity on us and take us into the town, or else send a pilot out."

"Not on your life," said I. "That's not their game. It was right here they riddled the *Pronto* and the *Kaiping*. You can't ever tell what these fool Russians will do. They might get firing in the night, put a few shot through us, and then, in the morning, cable out that a fool British boat had wandered too near the forts in the night and had been shot by mistake—thought to be a newspaper boat. Besides, the Japanese might attack, and we'd be between two fires then and be sunk. There's no chance here. That's certain."

"And slim chance away from here," added Perkis.

"No chance," corrected Cromarty. "We'll strike a mine sure."

Then all looked to me for the decision. There was but a few minutes of daylight left. Where we lay, under the cliff, black night had already fallen. Only far out at sea could I detect the fast lowering light. Already the dim stars showed and, in front, the twinkle of the town's lights began to swell. Will I ever forget the scene—not bad for a death setting, as I look back on it—hushed, forbidding, o'er-weighted with the mighty calm of that super-human sentinel, the vast fortress.

These silhouetted forms of the gun crew, now fast disappearing in the murky twilight, had found relief from watchers' tedium. They were laughing—laughing—at what? Why at us, of course. With the joy of devils watching a fresh arrival to the stoking pits their glee resounded through the silence. The taunt lashed me as a goad. What would the Johnnies under the British flag do? I turned to Cromarty.

“All ready, Chief?” I asked.

“Ready, sir,” he answered. I turned to Perkis.

“All right, skipper,” I called. Cromarty

was already on his way down. Perkis paused for orders.

“A straight course for Chefoo,” I said. “And full speed ahead.”

Then Tansan brought a bottle of whisky and we all took a drink—and another—and another. We lit cigars and puffed deeply, watched the Tail wreath into shadow and felt that mocking taunt die in echo. The stars leaned out of heaven and watched us ride on. Fate slipped down and perched upon our shoulders. The Chinks aft the deckhouse were kowtowing before a tiny joss. Perkis told how the *Ting Shan* went down on a mine, in less than a minute, and not a soul saved. We talked about the *Petropavlovsk*. Again silence. Mathematics came to the mind of each. The problem we faced was this: If a boat like the *Petropavlovsk*, of 15,000 tons, 500 feet long and carrying 800 men goes down in two minutes and saves forty-six how long will it take the *Fawan* of 300 tons to go and how many of her thirty-two will be saved?

“I saw a mine blow up off Taku in the Boxer year,” said Cromarty, who, his engines responding gallantly, had again joined us. “The

spurt went a hundred and forty feet into the air. If we strike one and some should be lucky enough to get a spar we would still all go down—caught in the wash.”

The sun was gone. Blackness behind, blackness before, blackness on all sides—and we sped on—reeling on the brink of death.

“When we see the search light on the tip of Liaotishan we’re safe,” said Perkis, puffing his cigar. “Here, give me a new one,” he added, finding the butt flecked and not burning straight as he tossed the half consumed weed into the sea. It fell with a dull singe and we all started. For the first time the Colonel had apparently forgotten the appearance of the stage properties of his experience.

What would happen when we struck the mine? Would there be the least warning, or would it be as sudden as death from a cannon shot? These thoughts occupied my mind. I glanced at the dingy and the cutter, first upon one and then the other. I did not think it even worth time to see if they were cut clear of entanglement. There would be no chance for them. It was all over, but I was glad it was over quickly. I believed I preferred such an

end to nine months in Port Arthur's dungeons. But who would get the news. Then it occurred to me that here was news itself. Who would get it and when would it be gotten out? I wondered if I couldn't turn back now and arrange with those fellows to send the cable—the proper one. It would be a scoop worth a scare head. What an ass I was not to arrange that!

“There's the light,” said Perkis, in his impassive way. “We're all right, boys.”

“No. We're not all right.” It was old Meyer, mumbling through his gums. He had stuck close to the bridge party all the time. “I know these demned Rooshians. They were down that stoke-hole a hell of a while, an' they've put bums in the coal.”

THE QUEST FOR NEWS

CHAPTER IX.

We organize the service, bring the *Fawan* into repute, capture the first guileless officer and learn of the landing of the second army.

There were no "bums" in the coal. We came safely to Chefoo, but without news. Then, nor at any time, did we advertise our troubles. We had our revenge, for ten days later the tug boat that took us in was blown up by a mine almost in the identical spot where we had anchored under the Tail, and three months later the *Reshetelini*, the destroyer that had fired across our bows, committed hari-kari in Chefoo harbor, to escape the immanent Japanese.

Why were we taken in to Port Arthur? Perhaps they expected to find wireless apparatus on us, whereby we should have been condemned. Finding none they suddenly reflected we had been seized out of limits. Then that mocking laugh! If we went down, for which there were nine chances in ten, it would appear accidental, and there would be no one to say nay. If we escaped no newspaper boat would ever come to Port Arthur again. They were

right, too, in the last; none ever did come again—except the *Fawan*!

But the *Fawan* and her operators had now received their baptism. As a dispatch boat the tight little tug had found herself. Surviving the dangers she had already encountered had put her alone in the race, without a rival for first crack at the cable. From the beginning there had been several competitors on our trail, but what we had gone through combined to put them out of business. Learning this kept me at the game through much perplexity that followed, and so, for the next three months, the *Fawan* reigned in her sphere of usefulness and paid for her keep. But the situation was not without its sour aspects.

“Boy, every time you leave this harbour you take your life in your hands,” was the salutation with which John Fowler, the consul at Chefoo, greeted me each time I made port.

“I wouldn’t take your job for \$10,000,” muttered many a correspondent of my acquaintance.

The merchants at Chefoo, with whom I was trading, the bills running as high sometimes, with one, as \$3,500 a month, grew restless, and

curiously hinted that they would be glad of cash, though all well knew I had balance of degree at the bank. "Its not that we don't trust you," said one. "Now we have entire confidence in your personally, and we know there would never be any difficulty about collection if you were here—but—well—couldn't you at least vise each account thus, 'good for the Chicago *Daily News*'—because—well, so they'd be good if anything happens."

Perkis was my main stay. He never bucked once, whatever I asked of him, but he did seem to put a spoke in the wheel, when, after all this gratuitous advice, I sought his opinion. "Well," said he, "You may go out and come back—once—or twice—or a dozen times—but, if you keep on going out, and never take warning—well, you're sure to go down."

"Perkis" said I, "Do you want your time?"

He looked up startled. "Did I ask for it?" Said he, and eyed me with a cool disdain.

"No," said I, "But the *Farwan* is going on and try to scoop all the naval news of this war. If you want to stay with her I'll be delighted to have you, but if you feel that way its time for me to look for a game skipper right now."

“Do as you like,” said he. We were standing on the bridge, he with his arms a-kimbo over the rail and wearing that nonchalant, supreme air that always became him. “If I leave you’ll have to fire me.”

I couldn’t fire him, nor could I let go the *Fazwan*. I went down and looked at her. She had just been painted—I always kept her trim and clean as any warship—and her ivory white with the name of the paper strung abeam from stem to stern in great black letters, sat out of the water like a Christmas cake. The funnel was a bright red, the deck house trimmed in brown, the anchors with ivory black. There was the crew drawn up in line, as always, to salute me as I passed. There was dour Cromarty, holding aloof with his deferential manner, drawing several fathoms on his black cigar, and watching me from the tip of his eye, for the word to fire up. He always had steam ready for a three minutes’ notice. There was old Meyer, taffrail lounging, mumbling in his gums, his shaggy great head ponderously wagging—and the laute, hard-by the anchor, looking to Perkis who still puffed above the bridge, without haste, without delay. And here comes running

the faithful Tansan, with overcoat and glasses and a tumbler, tall and filled with something curling steam. No. I couldn't give her up. As Huckleberry Finn said of his timber raft, "It amounted to something being captain of that."

So we cleared for Chemulpo, still on the lookout for a permit which the government at Tokyo had promised but had not yet granted. It was on this trip we found Fawan Haven. It was there we ever afterward spent our long, lazy days watching Port Arthur. From it we could see the lights of Golden Hill and the Tiger's Tail. From it we picked up the refugees who gave the only accounts that came from the beleaguered fortress until the capitulation. From there we listened to the heavy, low boom of Nogi's bombardments and felt hurling in past us the responding chastisement from Togo's turret pieces. From there we issued forth to pick up the fleet. From there we first saw Togo sweep majestically past in the *Mikasa*.

It was the last of the Miaotao islands, south of Hwang Ching Tao, an oasis in that bleak sea. Sheltered from the Liaotung side was a

tiny harbour—a dear haven—from which the mountains swept back, forming a perfect amphitheatre. These were as a horse-shoe, curving to the ends like the calks thereon, with smashing thin cliffs straight behind. A cave led through these cliffs, and we could pass out to look upon the battered shores of the peninsula. There we saw the sun set in repeating glories of mauve and lilac and saffron and orange and pale cherry and amethystine gold. There we went in bathing, and there, all day Perkis would sit with a piece of salt pork on a hook, fishing. To my knowledge he never caught anything, but that seemed to deter him not. All day, week in and week out, he fished and fished, with the patient unconcern of a master mind in idleness conceiving gigantic plots.

In Fawan Haven I came to know something of the lore and longing of the sea, intensified, perhaps, with the spice of danger that always lurked about it. I lay in my cabin of a morning listening to that most musical of all sea sounds—the drip, drip, drip of the mellifluous anchor slipping up through the water accompanying the merry clink of the cables on the

hawser holes. Or, storm pushed, we lay snug and felt the "heave and the halt and the hurl and the crash of the comber wind-hounded" as it flung itself madly on the rocks outside. There was a small Chinese fishing village in the hollow of the horse-shoe. The fishermen had never seen a white man before and they looked upon us with simple wonder, unmixed with fear. Only, like new puppies, all fresh to life, they kept away from us until we fed them. One day I shot a whale—broke its back with a Martini-Henry—and the following day the carcass drifted onto the beach. The natives got it all and after that they welcomed us each time we turned up.

There, too, I kept on filling Perkis and Cromarty with the news idea. That we should anchor at Chefoo at two o'clock in the morning, that I should put a few words clicked off on my typewriter on the cable, and that these same words, expanded and developed with heads and what not, should appear on the streets of Chicago that same afternoon to be read by thousands of unknown men of strange unheard-of occupations was to them a never-ceasing wonder. Sometimes when important

stuff was in the air, it would be cabled back to London, thence via Suez, to the *North China Daily News* in Shanghai and then perhaps, on our next trip back to Chefoo, less than a week after we had filed the cable, there would come a paper from their own part of the world with its front headlines staring out "The *Farwan* says, etc.—" Perkis took the weekly *London Times*, and after we had been out a month, there he found nearly every week, in the summary of the world's news, accounts of our trips. One day Cromarty got a *Glasgow Herald* from his old home, and the *Farwan* peeping out of that put him on pins for the rest of the season, and for many seasons more, I dare say, had the chance come. So these two men of action gradually became imbued with the fiercest spirit of enterprise and gave me no inch on keenness.

Whenever a cable was ready to send, I would call them below to the cabin and read it aloud. This was a very solemn occasion. Perkis would sit with his hands in his lap and look with fiercest concentration at the table. At each period he would cock his head on one side, look me squarely in the eye, and pronounce critically, "Yes—quite right—couldn't be better." Cro-

marty always stood up, arms folded, and directed that patient, silent, powerful gaze at a point immediately above my head. He made no motion, uttered no word until the reading was quite finished, looked at me, glancing as he shifted his feet, and uttered his judgment: "Just pat, sir." It was never different, never less, never more. Cromarty with exceeding difficulty, composed signatures to the vouchers of his monthly pay, yet he rose nobly to this situation as he did to every other for which I called upon him. Incidentally they lost no prestige in the lantern houses along the sea front which they frequented on shore leave. There, when the worthies were properly ginspurred and surrounded by a silent, gaping crowd, I rose out of obscurity as the tallest writer chap since Shakespeare, and as for sea war knowledge Togo wasn't in it. But the service did not lose.

At Chemulpo that trip we found nothing we were looking for. The permit had not come. The fleet was a thing of myth, the army one of legend. I went to Seoul and received a lugubrious salutation from the Minister. "Young man," said he, "I know all about you, and I'd

advise you to give up that boat. You can't get any news, and it's only a question of a few days when you'll be sunk."

I thanked him politely and went back to my loyal crew. That night, after I rolled in, telegram-less, news-less, permit-less, hopeless (not quite), Cromarty shuffled into my cabin in his felt slippers. I was surprised, for we had come almost to a tiff that afternoon over his collecting mania. He had filled the for'ard hold with skates bought up in every port and from every sampan, at all prices from a sen to a dollar, and there he was keeping them against a return to Taku and winter. I was thinking of that when he held out to me a pink telegram, one of those silly Korean telegrams that look like notes from a boudoir. He scratched a match with his frost-bitten fingers, and there, in my pajamas, I read this sentence from the American Minister at Tokyo:

"Your permit is granted, but absolutely worthless. You are forbidden to go north of Chemulpo and Chefoo. Purpose *Farwan* useless. Had better give up."

Cromarty looked and blinked in his half blind fashion. The match sputtered and went

out. He lit another and stood shuffling, waiting for orders.

"What are you going to do?" at length he asked. Three more matches had gone and still he was standing there, patient in his felt slippers, keen as I was for the news fray. I looked up. His face was obedient eagerness. It seemed impossible he could not know what was in that telegram, yet his face plainly said so.

"Tell Perkis," said I "That we clear for the Yalu at daylight. Have steam ready for three o'clock."

What were my plans, if held up, if captured again? I wasn't at all clear just then. It was one of those moments when a man thinks of but one thing, to go on. The battle of the Yalu had been fought, but that fleet with the second army was still loose and for news of it two hemispheres were waiting. Military persons will tell you it is useless for the correspondent to go against such odds. Humanitarians said the same to the Japs who assaulted Port Arthur.

Arrived off the Yalu we found its yellow as cheerless and as sightless as a bald pate in August. We had stopped every junk on the

way up cross-examining everybody, but there was no word of that mysterious lost fleet.

"Suppose," said I to Perkis when we stood out there in a wilderness of wavy nothing. "That we push right in to Wiju, despite the Russians, despite the Japanese?" It was at a conference in his cabin.

"I'm willing," said Perkis.

"They'll sink us," protested Cromarty.

"With what?" replied Perkis, sneerfully.

Cromarty paused. He was up against it, but for the moment only. As the idea came to him his face brightened with alacrity. "With field guns," he said.

"Pshaw!" said I, "Field guns can't sink us." Having never seen a field gun at close range, of course I spoke with great authority.

It was desperate. We went, saw and conquered—nothing. There was as inoffensive a town as mud and Korean sloth can raise out of Paradise. So we started back—still looking for the fleet. That night we encountered a real blow. We battened down all things and as we went head on into a heavy sea the water swept a full foot over all the decks. Perkis, on the bridge, was rubber cased as tight as a diver.

As the stem went into the froth the bow rose clear and then as she pitched forward the for'ard gunwale disappeared and the screw clawed air. Spray was sifting through the steering ports into the engine room, and sometimes, when, as we drove in to a wave, but could not survive the trough, while the second wave caught us butt on, and the gallant *Farwan* trembled in every fibre like a thoroughbred first lashed, I feared she would start her plates. Clothes were swaying to parabolas on their hooks. Lamps were swinging to the roofs and when we tried to eat at tiffin time we had passed the rack stage and had to hold the tureens in our hands. Even then it was an off chance whether the soup would go into your mouth, your ear, or your neighbor's lap.

"That's the way a destroyer rolls," said Perkis, without relaxing his rapt attention from the business in hand.

We banged ahead and by morning the sea had eased off. We were then outside Thornton Haven, and I said to Perkis (It was the way I always did, letting the suggestion come from him).

"That was a good tip of yours, skipper. We'd better put in here."

"Well I dunno," said he, "We may find a mine, or some of the patrol in there."

"That's just what I want," said I.

"A mine!" he exclaimed.

"The patrol," said I.

So in we went and sure enough—there they lay, a third-class auxiliary cruiser, a converted merchanter, some tugboats and barges. They were hard to see under the grey sky, painted, as they were, a neutral tint, like the landscape. So we were within a few hundred yards before I anchored and went overboard with the bo'sn's crew in the cutter. They lowered a ladder from the cruiser for me and I went on deck. A young officer came out smiling and saluted. I saluted and followed him to his cabin. There were cigarettes and some sake. That was the first time I had grounded sake, and I thought it was beer. I drank it as such, and the effects were—as such. My tongue got loose and we had a fine time. It was a bad day and he was lonely, and had seen no one to talk to for many weeks and—ye gods, the luck—had been far from bases and knew nothing of

the disrepute hanging over the heads of correspondents. He spoke English as they do in the navy—and that's the only place outside of the foreign service where they do speak the mother tongue distinctly in Japan.

"What's the news," said I, when the cigarettes and sake were well commenced.

"O, no news," said he pleasantly.

"Ah, yes," said I and we puffed and talked about the weather.

"Well, you've captured Dalny at last," I ventured.

"O, no," said he, falling squarely into the trap. "But we will take it in a few days."

"So!" said I, "Well, its certain, I suppose, now that the second army's landed."

"Well, we're not landed yet."

"But practically disembarked, I'm told."

"In a few days—yes. We began yesterday, and they'll take off eight thousand a day now until everything is finished."

"It must have been interesting when they commenced."

"Yes. My ship was part of the escort while they held at sea—now for—let me see—two week—three weeks—four weeks."

"Lets see. Where was it they landed? I've heard of the place but have forgotten the name just now. It's slipped my memory for the moment."

"Pitzewo."

"O, yes—yes. Pitzewo. Lets see, how do you spell that?"

"P-i-t-z-e-w-o."

"And lets see. That's just north of Dalny, isn't it?"

"Yes. Its here." He drew a pencil from his pocket and roughly sketched a map.

Well—there it lay, the basis of one of the best cables I ever sent. I was about to go, and started in my chair, but what he next said riveted me to the cane bottom, and for another hour I listened. With singular clarity he related the story of the greatest of all torpedo attacks on Port Arthur, over that very channel where I, a week before, had all but gone down, and in which he had taken part.

Another world scoop!

A MISS IN THE DARK.

CHAPTER X.

Surrounded by the fleet, the admiral condescends to look upon us, warns us from the coast for fear of mines, we call his bluff, and find it—a full hand.

“Permit mailed to-day.—Griscom.”

This telegram from the Minister at Tokyo was handed to me as I entered Chefoo harbour flying signals for coal and water. A permit. Of what use was it? Here we were coming in from our fourth smashing cruise without one. Everybody in town was on the anxious seat about the *Fawan*, for this trip had exceeded any of the others for length. We had been gone ten days and it took but four to run on the Chemulpo reefs, six to raise an international pow-wow at Newchwang and three to kick up thunder at Port Arthur. Plainly I was better off without a permit than with one, but the telegram I bore yielded good fruit. With it I sought the Japanese consul, grateful for the lift given the Korean minister.

“Here,” said I, “is word from the American minister that your government has granted official permission to the *Fawan*. Now, I can’t wait for the mails and as I destroyed my Japa-

nese army pass when captured at Port Arthur. I am without a scrap of paper to show my identity should your fleet overhaul me. It was your well being that caused me to destroy the pass, for had the Russians taken it they might have used it to get one of their spies through your lines. Can't you give me a chit that will make this right should any of your people overhaul me."

The cogency of this hit him amidships. He produced three yards of Japanese script, parchment sealed and stamped. I don't know what it said—I must have it translated some time—but it certainly made a hit whenever I produced it. Possessing that, I received marked consideration from every Japanese who ever dared question the *Fawan*.

One more pippin pulled from that call put my arms full for the next hold up. A copy of "official regulations to dispatch boats," arrived from the war office in Tokyo. Among the labyrinthine restrictions I pulled this: "Correspondents are subject to the orders of the admiral commanding the fleet and will submit dispatches to him for censoring." To the admiral commanding the fleet! The fellow who

drew that up must have been a war office clerk who never saw a dispatch boat and who supposed the admiral spent his nights and days on the picket line.

I had no sooner spotted this in the regulations than I hustled the mate down to fly the blue peter and blow for papers, while I dashed off a cable and followed in the cutter. "Straight for Pitzewo," said I to the skipper. "We'll see the landing of the second army and interview Togo on the blockade."

We weighed at daylight and passed Port Arthur well out. The offing was clear of vessels as the sea of Saragossa and the fortress lay inscrutable and silent in the dim distance. I had now been on four cruises all about these waters supposed to be the center of activity of two great hostile fleets and had not yet seen a first-class vessel belonging to either. So I had smiled when I read interviews in the China papers with portly merchants who had journeyed from Hong Kong to Singapore in deadly fear, and when I read how an old gentleman had crossed from San Francisco to Yokohama in the "Korea" in momentary fear that he would go down over a mine, declaring at the

end that he would never travel by sea again, the risks of war being too great, I told Perki.

“The old boy needs a wet nurse,” said the skipper. “Why, even here his liver wouldn’t be jerked.” Even as he spoke he paused, picked up his glasses, looked shorewards, handed them to me and said:

“Well—there they are—at last!”

We were off Shopingtow, halfway between Port Arthur and Dalny. It was a bright morning, clear as plate glass in May, and I could see them broadside to, in echelon, some ten knots off. There were three in front and two in the spaces behind, battleships and cruisers, all of the first class, but I could not tell which was which at that distance, nor was I so keen a detective then as after floating among fleets a six-month. All had two funnels. I could see that. Yes—and the fourth in line had three. Masts pricked up above all the superstructures and laid delicate tracery of firm lines upon the hills behind, but so slate-grey were the colors of the fleet that even in that clarified atmosphere the details of boat dimension faded against the far landscape.

So delighted was I with the find of these

lords of the sea, the *Fawan* being to my knowledge the first foreign vessel to spy fighting ships of the first class since the war began, that it never occurred to me they might be else than Japanese. So the skipper at my elbow startled me when he said:

“They’re likely Russians out for a reconnoitre this bring morning. It’s so close to Port Arthur they can’t be caught before they can slip back.”

It might be, true enough. There was too much rough scuff and hopscotch in my crop’s memory of Russian courtesy to welcome another adventure, even priced at stiff experience, so I told Perkis to put to sea. It was too late. The masts of the nearest began narrowing as I looked upon her through the glasses. Slowly, slowly they closed, then merged all to one, a thin white slice of spray, curling like the inner rind of a lemon over a beefsteak, spread up the slate grey as her bows clove the water, the other masts slowly narrowed and became one, the whole echelon dissolved and the fleet surged line ahead, square athwart our course.

“Too late!” cried I to Perkis. “Head her in, so they’ll see we’re not trying to escape and

plug us one for luck." The *Farwan* was put head about, her engines stopped, and we lay to, waiting. Meanwhile they came surging on, a vessel Perkis spotted as the *Yakuma*, leading the line and I suddenly felt grow upon me that mighty fear that must paralyze the land lubber when he first beholds a battle fleet out for business, especially when he receives unsolicited attention. Presently the four rear ones stopped, hove to, and waited, while the *Yakuma* came on at a twenty-knot gait, whipping the whitecaps into foam that whistled a wild ascending lash into the jaunty air. Wrapped in her business suit of dull grey, decks cleared for action, hatches battened down, the two yawning muzzles of the for'ard turret pieces hurling ahead her grim command, she made me feel as though I had stood in a pasture about the size of Texas, without a fence in sight, waving a red rag in the face of an unrefined and boisterous bull. I wonder would I have stood lost in wonder at the mighty lash of his tail, the steamy spurt from his nostrils, the clod-clatter from his dashing hoofs? Doubtless, for there would have been no parley and the best a man gets

out of life is to sense the occasion. Prayer? Well—some folks believe in it.

“She’s a Jap all right,” said Perkis. “Look at the smoke.” It was pouring, thick as a molasses catastrophe, from both funnels. Yes, the Russians used hard coal. That we all knew. Only the Japanese squandered sooty black.

She didn’t come as near as the destroyer, but she worked the same racket, went astern with her engines, stopped her headway and then began preparing to board us. There was bustle on the upper deck. They were cutting off the cutter. Flap went the automatic belts down the dull grey. The donkeys lifted her out from the davits, a plank was flung across the chasm, twelve oars stepped in, an officer followed with a tiny flag which he stuck above the tiller, two other officers followed; chug, chug, chug went the lowering donkeys, the port oars holding her offside with a boathook, she slipped into the water like a knife into new flesh, and presently I saluted one of the officers as he climbed over the side of the *Farwan*.

“Where are you going?” said he.

“Up the coast,” said I.

"Ah," said he, "but——"

I produced that lengthy chit from the Japanese Consul. He was duly impressed. "Where's the admiral?" I asked.

"He's not on my ship."

"I must see the admiral."

"You can't see the admiral. He's on one of those ships off there by the coast."

"What are the names of those ships?"

"I cannot tell you the names. It is not allowed."

"Your ship is the *Yakuma*?"

"Yes. It is the *Yakuma*."

"I am very sorry to inconvenience you, my dear sir, but I must see the admiral," I said. "I am just like you—acting under orders. I have my orders from Tokyo and I must obey them. Here——" and I produced the regulations with that silly sentence referring dispatches in person to the admiral. He was floored. So long as you get these chaps in the circle of their orders they are adamant. Spring a new situation, something unforeseen in superior instructions, and they gasp for air. He was plainly distressed. Moreover, the Consul's chit had scored. I wonder what it

could have said. It must have been cracking high guff.

"Then suppose you signal for the admiral," said he.

"I have no new signal flags," said I. "Ours is the old book, I've sent for the new book to Shanghai, but it hasn't come yet."

"I don't know how you will see the admiral, then."

"What's the matter with your signalling the admiral?" I blandly asked. What a crust! The very audacity of it apparently took his breath away, but he was up against it, a petty officer confronted with a decision.

"I—I—don't know," he gasped. "I'll have to ask my captain." Wherewith he tumbled into the cutter and was rowed back. Presently through a megaphone I heard, "Approach nearer!" The cruiser was then lying front across our bows, so the *Fawan* fell to starboard and hung in under her taffrail. There were great dents in her sides where shells had struck recently, apparently, for the paint had not yet been put over the fresh, shiny steel that showed through. The torpedo nets were hitched up about her booms, as a woman in

hoops would hold up her skirts in crossing a muddy street. All over her the sailors were hanging out, leering at tiny us, but the slim, gaunt picture of the titanic cruiser presented us as handsome a ship as floats. We never were able to distinguish the other vessels of the fleet, they being of a common type, but the *Yakuma* is known for elegance and distinction wherever fighting craft are worshiped. But toward us pointed the megaphone.

“We will signal for the admiral and he will come up,” it cried. And instantly there broke from her yard a dozen fluttering ensigns. The fleet had been slowly steaming down the coast toward Port Arthur, but no sooner had that tiny hail burst forth, delicate as the coquettish wave of a lady’s handkerchief, than the immense bulk of those fifteen-thousand-ton monsters turned in their majestic tracks and headed on for us. The spray, the black smoke, the grim power spoke to us as from the *Yakuma*, and slowly, inevitably, had we not been friends, doom would have settled upon us in those four floating forts. Yet no billiard expert ever babied his balls with more precision. Like a cavalry troop they deployed column left,

circled silently about us, and settled down. And here those five enormous battle ships, bristling with the mightiest armament Krupp evolves, sat in a solemn circle and looked composedly upon the insignificant *Fawan*. Did we rise to the occasion? No. It takes five years and five millions to build a battleship; the newspaper does things in days on a few thousand. But we didn't let that worry us.

"The admiral says you may come alongside," wailed the megaphone.

With that the port guns of the flagship swung to in their barbets, so the *Fawan* could slide alongside without rumpling her nose. There on the bridge stood the admiral in the centre of his staff, gaudy with gold aiguillettes. And I on my bridge squinted up at him and felt my back bristle with American bluff. He had long whiskers, a long face and a long body. He towered above all his officers and his pale intellectual countenance made him look like a Spaniard, not a Japanese. It was not Togo, of course, and I felt the hurt of misplaced confidence surge over me, but I was polite to him, just the same as if he had been the Commander-in-chief.

"Where are you going?" said he.

"Up the Yalu," said I.

"Have you papers?"

"Yes. I have a permit from Tokyo signed by General Kodama, but it has not yet reached me, and meanwhile I have a letter from your Consul in Chefoo."

"You may go," said the calm, almost cold, intellectual voice, "but keep away from the coast. It is lined with mechanical mines and I cannot be responsible for your safety there. At night keep close in port, for our torpedo boats are very vigilant and I cannot be responsible for your safety then."

"Thank you, sir."

"I am sorry I cannot receive you in my cabin, but I am engaged just now in my official duties, so I must say good-bye."

Almost as the words left him the five turned slowly, majestically and floated on.

"Who was that?" I turned to Perkis.

"Dewa," he said. Then he led me to the wheel house and showed me the log. There written on it in Japanese was: "Examined by the *Yakuma*." The skipper had had the savvy to get the petty officer's fist on the log and

with that we could put any small watch dog off the scent.

"We'd best anchor in Thornton Haven to-night," said I. "The torpedoers won't catch us there." So for Thornton Haven we put. We had proceeded not more than two knots when another war vessel hove in sight. She overhauled us and we were boarded again. But this was only a pitiful little second class cruiser, and after my experience of the morning who could expect me to be more than civil? A dinky subaltern, plainly itching to show his authority, came up and informed us we could proceed no farther.

"But we have the authority of the admiral," said I.

"Oh," said he, and seemed amused, but not impressed. Whereat I produced the log and he was staggered. It was not even necessary to spring my chit from the Consul. He climbed drearily over the side and flew his kite.

But being stopped again knocked us out of Thornton Haven, for, with the perversity of sea weather in those latitudes, the bright sun had now been displaced by lowering skies. A

mist was sifting down and a heavy fog was blowing in. Night threatened to catch us in the open sea, and in addition to the torpedo boats and the mines, I had to face still another dash to high spirits. The last officer had informed me, not without jibe, when he found his occupation of policeman tampered with, that the waters we then were in had just been included in the proclamation issued to the Powers closing that portion of the high seas to international navigation. So the *Fawan*, in direct disobedience of the admiral's advice, faced a night at sea.

The fog drifted in so heavily that by 8:30 I could not see the light on the masthead, nor could I even catch sight of Perkis' face when he stood away from me on the bridge. We had to close the port lights to shut the reflection from the skipper's eyes and drifted back and forth helplessly in the murk of fog and darkness. I said nothing to the skipper. He said nothing to me. This went on for hours—one—two—three.

"You'd better take a shut-eye," said he, at last.

"I'll stay up," I replied. "You go below."

"No. I'll stay," said he. And we both stayed, wearily pacing back and forth, throbbing with the engines, saying nothing to one another of the danger each felt, both fearful that the next instant the *Farwan* would be rammed by one of those devils going at a thirty-knot clip. Each side had its own signals, privately known to each, neither of which we knew, so we were in momentary danger of being rammed through mistake by either, or sunk on purpose by both.

With dawn the fog lifted a bit and I said to the skipper: "I guess old Dewa was bluffing us. Do you think there is anything in that mine story he gave us?"

"No," said the skipper. "I don't believe they'd line the coast with mines."

At that moment I detected smoke far on the horizon, perhaps twenty miles away. "It's Pitzewo," said the skipper.

"Pull in for it, then," said I, "and we'll see the army landing."

I went below to bang off a story on my typewriter, quite relieved that we had escaped the night, and wondering that even the admiral of the fleet should string us like any subaltern of

the line. I had been there less than half an hour when—bang! went the wheel just above my head. Zip—zip—zip she turned three times full and the *Fawan* swung in her tracks, head about. At the same moment the engines stopped and I rushed on deck.

“Look there!” said Perkis, pointing ahead. There, some twenty feet away, drifting lazily with the tide, whose sea-green wash colored it now olive and now jet black, lay a swaying dark bulk just below the level.

“It’s a mine!” I cried, and began surveying her with bland curiosity. Unlike the Russian spikes her arms were small nubs. I wondered if nubs would respond to the touch as quickly as would spikes. Then I remembered that six Chinamen in a village on our island had carried one of these to Japanese headquarters, looking for reward, had grown curious even as I, had pulled one of those nubs, and—curiosity was satisfied, but the families wailed.

“But look there,” said Perkis, pointing still further ahead and slightly to port. It was another mine, and, far in behind, floated the stem of a junk, gnarled as if hit by lightning.

“And there—and there—and there,” he

called. I counted them—six—in a progressive row.

“That was no bluff Old Dewa gave us.”

“Guess not,” said I.

“Narrow escape, my boy,” said Perkis. “Do you see that those are laid so that no vessel could possibly get through this channel, and do you know that this is the officially charted channel, the one way that every boat going to Pitsewo must follow?”

“But how have they pulled the transports in?”

“Through a new channel, clear off up by the Yalu,” said he, pointing North, and I looked vainly in where that smoke was now quite visible, to where the sixty thousand were preparing to advance on Nanshan. The quest was hopeless.

“Look here,” said Perkis, “do you see what a narrow escape we have had? This is just half an hour of low tide. Two hours earlier or two hours later and we should not have seen those mines. There’s a thirteen-foot fall here. Now a destroyer draws ten feet—just our draught—and so the Japs have anchored them at just the depth that will make them efficient

most of the time. We have skated within an hour or two of death."

"I guess we'd better go back to Fawan Haven and think it over," said I—and Perkis agreed.

There were some black goats to be seen above the cliffs and we went off after them with Martini-Henrys, but at the first shot the natives cried so piteously we quit. It was a mean thing to shoot them for sport, for those goats were nearly all the assets the islanders had—the goats, seaweed and fish. Then we saw a whale in the offing and went after it in the cutter. It winked at us with a sleepy old eye, turned its engines about, and put its screw full speed ahead, while we kept blazing after it each time it rose to blow. Gradually it distanced us, and we came back tired for a quick run to Chefoo in the morning. It was too late to go before dark.

"You'll never know how near you came to being sunk last night." This was a pilot of my acquaintance talking to me three months later in the Beach Hotel in Chefoo. Up to that time I had told no one of our escapade in the fog while the skipper and I stood all night on the

bridge, neither speaking to the other appreciation of the embarrassing situation. Then he told me the other side of the death we faced.

"I was working for the Russians out of Port Arthur," he said, "And that night we started with the fastest torpedo boat they had to sneak up the coast in the fog and try for some transports. The mission pulled nothing and on the way down I was off the bridge—below for a drink or something—when word came hurriedly to me to get back quick. 'Here's a Jap. We're going to sink her,' the boy said. I stood hand on the key, steam ahead, half speed, all lights out. The crew were all to quarters, the torpedo was in her tube and another minute you would have been in—well, I rang astern and cried:

"Don't do that! It's an American dispatch boat."

"How do you know?" the lieutenant at my side angrily asked.

"It's her funnel—tall as a dynamo factory chimney" said I. "There's none other like it on the coast." He sighed heavily at the game gone, turned below and swore in Russian at

the boy who stumbled over him on the dark companion way.

“It was only the space of sixty seconds between the *Fawan* and—you’ll never be nearer the bottom than that night, boy.”

THE SINKING OF A BATTLESHIP.

CHAPTER XI.

The officers show signs of mutiny, we see the bombardment from Kerr Bay, hear gigantic explosions off Port Arthur and run afoul of devilish torpedo boats—the *Hatsuse* sunk.

The *Farwan* now began to feel the loss of MacDonnell. Not that Perkis was not a good skipper and a brave fellow. He was both. We needed more. We wanted a faultless skipper who would do for pay and the love of adventure what a torpedo boat captain did for love of country. Still, I had Perkis and Cromarty and they were not without fine points, brave enough for all ordinary wear, and veterans of deck and shot, both. I utter no blame—only regret.

Now succeeded strenuous times—eight cruises in two weeks—among the mines off Dalny, through the great bombardments, up to the verge of a sea battle, seeing which, I felt, could alone justify the existence of the *Farwan*. Yet a Shanghai paper was kind enough to say once during those memorable times that the little boat paid for herself if she only took pains—which she well did—to record accurately the location, by minute and second of

latitude, of all the floating mines about Pechili and Korea Bay. Through the next month I cabled to the ports and the Powers the direct existence of some hundreds of these, plainly outside of territorial waters.

But before we started again we needed the new signal code. Shanghai was too far off, so I tore the leaf flying them from the rear of Lyons' Flag Almanac and went to the Chink flagmaker in Chefoo for dups. "When can I have them?" I asked. "And what will they cost?"

"Six days, one hundred fifty."

"That's too much money and I must have them at midnight," said I.

"No can do. No can do," he howled like a stuck pig. But when he saw that I meant it, he promised them for one A. M. of the following morning and for a straight hundred. I went around in the afternoon and saw his whole crew of fifteen bushelmen floundering in dabs of ribbon every colour of the rainbow and the master-man himself prostrate over the Lyons' Almanac. Shortly after midnight he came off to the *Fawan* in a sampan, bearing a bushel

basket full of fluttering vari-colored ensigns—and got his hundred.

At one fifteen we weighed, so as to reach the mine zone by daylight, at two we breakfasted in the cabin—Perkis, Cromarty and I. Then I accompanied Cromarty on a tour of inspection, rubbering into everything, to look at the steam gauges and see how the valves were working. Then to the bridge where I stood by the skipper till daylight. This was the usual program, followed without let for four months.

That dawn we found ourselves off Round Island—cursed by the bark of guns. It was off to the north, invisible, mysterious, monstrous! As we bowled along, perhaps three miles out of Dalny, it suddenly came to me what we had stumbled upon, the fleet's co-operation with the army in the demolition of the northern defences. They were just around the corner in Kerr Bay, tearing the lining from the hillsides with long shells hurled from the slim noses of their naval pieces.

“Run her in around the corner,” said I to the skipper, keen as I was for the fray. Then he balked and there began the tussle between us that never ended.

"We'd better stop, sir," said he. "That is, if you ask my advice. This is the real thing."

"I didn't ask your advice," I replied hotly. "And I want you to go on. I didn't come out here ten thousand miles to hear shots around the corner."

"You can endanger your own life," said he calmly, "But you have no right to endanger the lives of the men on this boat."

There was but one reply. The law gave him absolute control at sea. I saw cajolery, not force would—might win, so I called Cromarty and we had a conference on the bridge.

"Look here, Chief," said I, "I don't believe there's any danger over there. They're not in action with another fleet. It's all land work—just tossing shells into the earthworks. Not a shot comes to sea. If we run up around the corner and hold well off shore we can see like we were in a box at the theatre—and no chance."

Old Cromarty scratched his head and looked at his feet.

"I dunno," said he, "I didn't hire out on this job to go into battle. I thought it was just to carry in dispatches. I'd never come if I'd

thought there was going to be shells and warships in it."

"Now look here," said I in my most conciliatory manner, "You fellows just run the boat around that point—just a little way round the point and stand out to sea. Nothing can harm you there, and if we don't see it then I'll agree to come back."

"All right—just around the point," said Perkis, and grudgingly turned to the telegraph, while Cromarty stumbled below, grumbling in his mustache.

The *Farwan* went halfspeed ahead and sort of stumbled around that corner. This was to be my first sight of the fleet in action, and what a picture of battle I conceived—disorder, consternation, wreck smoke, terror and blood! That was before we rounded the corner. I was not quite so green as to expect to see men running down the forecastles, sword brandishing. I don't know exactly what I did want to see, now I come to think of it, but I surely wanted to see something.

What I saw was smoke—just smoke, coming in vagrant puffs at rare intervals from a number of dim, dull ships. It was a kind of

dream battle, like one of those etchings these impressionist painters make. There were five ships—evidently Dewa's squadron—lying off from the shore in no particular order, all slightly broadside to. The air was a bit hazy, enough to dim definition about the cruiser lines. When we first turned in sight they might have been mere phantom ships—as they seemed. After about fifteen minutes a ring of smoke blew from the side of the nearest, the vitreous, thin stuff shooting far and the thick white body hanging close, as when the amateur cigar smoker throws his first long puff out quickly to get rid of it only to find the dense body curling back around his face. I fancied I could even see the shell spring easily to its mark which it must have found almost as soon as the sound touched us. The reverberation came in with a boom—bo-om—bo-o—o——m; three ricochets. Then a long interval passed and a gentle swell lifted the *Fawan* imperceptibly as the tide creeps up, lapping an old hulk.

Then silence in which the phantom ships moved not, when from another the amateur would blow his hasty smoke into the misty air, while the distant bo-o-om would blend and bur-

row with the other. No reply, no haste, apparently not even premeditation. The five, in ragged echelon, were but giving the crew gun play and ridding themselves of cumbersome scrap steel that lazy morning. This reflection came to my disgusted news sense, when I detected far off on shore a low crackle, pastoral as a village Fourth of July celebration heard from the hills. The infantry was going into action against the trenches which the fleet was tearing down.

That was the weakest imitation of a battle I ever saw or heard of. I could only hurry off to cable that the imperial navy and army combined were driving the Russians from the north Dalny defences. Had I landed for details the crew would have mutinied on the spot. Besides, he who sees and runs away will live to tell another day.

We were running for Chefoo, abeam Port Arthur, but well out when I heard that which put the *Farwan* right about and stirred in me again the arch longing that itched the blood of every fighting man in the Far East that year. It was a terrific explosion, nothing small or undeveloped or questionable about it, at all. No

one could have mistaken it for even a twelve-inch gun. Nothing but a mine or a dynamite bomb could have fetched that report. I put my hand on the skipper's arm and he stopped the *Farwan* in a dozen times her length. Before we had felt the stern twist of the screw there came another explosion, seemingly louder than the first, though I suppose it was the same thing intensified by our expectancy.

We lay in one of those characterless seas, non-committal as a Japanese diplomatist. You find them in that part of the world almost any time of the year, and the one only other place I know of them is in the North sea. They're as smooth and quiet as glass, but you can't see any horizon. The mist steals over you on all sides, about a mile and a half distant, leaving you in the centre of a great grey bowl topped with blue. There is nothing sullen or angry about such a sea. It simply puts limitless discouragement on every effort, mocking sight and energy with the impalpable mockery of time and fate.

"Turn her head in, skipper," said I. And then he bucked again, but I insisted. "This is business," I doggedly persisted. "We're on no

pleasure trip. I've got to see that fight, or whatever it is, or bust."

So he slid the wheel over with a grouchy bang and we glided half speed into those worse than shark-infested waters. We had but started when a devil of a row broke out of the mist. It smashed up so big and lifelike that again my battle scent in embryo sniffed a glorious show. There were plenty of shots—short, snappy and rapid—with the angry fuzz and pitch of small beasts scrapping lustily. Three-inch guns or quick-firers, I thought they must be, or possibly twelve-pounders, and these they afterward proved to be—twelve pounders.

Cromarty had come on deck and was lounging below, his arms folded, bitterly chewing his cigar and muttering something about his being a married man, with a child at home, and that he hadn't signed to come to no battle, that all he wanted to do was to carry dispatches. Finally he looked up to where I was on the bridge and called out:

"How much farther in are you going, anyhow?"

"A bit," I replied, cheerily, but at that Perkis bucked, lay down on the wheel and said we'd

gone far enough. He called my attention to the fact that if the tide of battle suddenly veered our way it would catch us and we would be powerless with a ten-knot boat against twenty-and thirty-knotters.

“But,” I replied hastily, “Here’s a fight right under our noses. It’s impossible to pass up at this stage of the game. We’ve got to go in. That’s all there is about it. I’ll stand for no Kerr Bay dodge again.”

“If you go in farther under the guns you’ll get sunk,” said he calmly. “We’re not more than six miles from Port Arthur now.” And it later proved he was right. We were about six miles from Golden Hill.

So we compromised and he agreed to stand in another knot and wait developments. But there is a point where enterprise ceases and recklessness begins, and even my wild, boyish fever had its apogee. Presently the *Fawan* came to a stop of her own accord, Perkis willing, and Cromarty sitting tight. I said nothing, praying—or as near that as a war correspondent ever comes—that the fog would lift.

But now out of the haze spat a huge gob of black smoke, and behind that some more, and

behind that more—and still more. It didn't take long for us to see what it was coming out of that horizonless horizon:—destroyers at the height of their thirty-knot speed! They were cutting through the water as knives rip through wax, little geysers spurting over the bows of each.

“Send a boat,” cried the signal from the fore one as soon as we were spotted. I slipped my precious papers in my shirt, had the cutter quickly lowered and hurried off to meet her, as she slowed down, about a quarter of a mile away. The feel of the air told me it was an unhealthy spot and I knew they were not in the jolliest mood at the forced stop. Still it was business for me.

As we ran alongside they threw an anchor line out, twisted it about our bows and towed us in. She was a long, slim, black bitch, with short, chubby funnels, and a sort of bulldog air that distinctly discouraged familiarity. I scrambled aboard up a nasty tarred rope and looked down a dinky, cramped iron ladder that led to the engine room. They have no conveniences, only necessities on these destroyers. The men are devils doing hellish work—heroes

in martyrdom, if you please—and they ask for neither comfort nor luxury. A lot of good it would do them to ask!

The minute I stepped on deck I knew something was wrong. These were desperate men if there ever were such. Here was no phantom battle on a painted ocean. These fellows had been close up against the real stuff. An officer came staggering out of one of those man-holes that pass for stairs on a destroyer and a lot of sailors stood about looking at me with that same lugubrious tone that can be observed at home among the people who attend executions. They looked as if they would like to break the news that I was to be shot the next minute.

The officer in heavy thigh sea boots had not been shaved for a month. His hair was thick, matted and dishevelled and through the long, deep lines in his face I could read lineaments that spelled catastrophe and woe heaped upon weeks of soul-tearing work. It was not work that bowed him down. That was part of his game. It was not death that hurt him so. That, too, he clasped as fellow. He looked as if he had not slept since baby-hood and the

heavy cords of his neck showed out taut and fierce from the dirty collar of his rough shirt thrown ruggedly away. No ordinary sea peril had hurled him to such dismay—this king of sea spirits daring as any wild, weird gnomes that ever haunted the deep! People tell you the Japanese have no emotions, show no hurt, feel no disaster. They never saw that commander of that black destroyer as I saw him that mysterious grim morning under the unseen guns of Port Arthur.

Into this circle of kill-joys I stepped gaily and smiled pleasantly. But the smile sort of froze and the gaiety died away. Then I folded my arms and waited.

“What are you doing here?” said the voice of the avenging angel.

“I have a dispatch boat,” said I.

“You’re not allowed here,” said he, with the same politeness that is seen in the quick closing of a steel trap.

“But I have a permit,” I showed him the chit from the consul.

“O!” His courtesy was the same that the steel trap would show if you tried to break away. He turned to talk with a subaltern.

“What was that firing?”

“There has been no firing this morning,” said he, without turning to look at me.

“But I heard firing—two big explosions, then lots of small shot—and my officers heard it. Perhaps you were not in this neighbourhood.”

“Yes. We have been here—this morning—and yesterday—and the day before—for some months in fact.” He passed his hand wearily over his face, shut his jaw still tighter and looked again at me with those deep, hollow and inscrutable eyes.

“But,” I cried hastily, “You are mistaken. I’ve been listening to it all morning, sitting right off there in my boat.”

He turned to his subaltern. More Japanese jabber.

“You are right,” said he at length. “There was some firing—a little, but it was only the forts firing at us. They hit nothing. We were on reconnoissance.”

Here was an opening. I tried to be jolly. You might as well have tried to be jolly with a corpse. Even as I spoke he turned square away to give some orders, and, in a jiffy, a

dingy was going over the side like a pancake flopped on a griddle.

“What are you going to do?” asked I.

“I am sending an officer to search your boat.”

To tell the truth I was stumped. Here I had come with malice toward none, charity for all, and been handed the proper ice pitcher. I turned to go, but reached out my hand for a parting shake first. He looked at it as much as to say, “What’s that for?” but finally got on. I jumped over into my cutter and told the boys to beat the dingy, moske the cost.

I went up one side of the *Fawan* as the subaltern climbed up the other, but I beat him on deck and stood there smiling and ready for him when he appeared. I was for showing him how this receiving on board ship should be done, ordered drinks, and tried to make him comfortable, but he received every advance I made with that same irrelevance which I had observed so crudely shown on his own boat. One cannot expect a child well bred when it sees no manners at home. Perkis lugged him off to the log and showed him that fist from the *Yakuma* and it greased, a bit, the wheels of

intercourse. I stayed, all told, perhaps a minute and a half. Then he slipped over the side and the oars of his dingy were in dip before he struck the seat. They covered the quarter of a mile in better than intercollegiate time. Before he had even reached the destroyer she was under way. As he slid alongside rings were tossed over his bow and stern, made taut with a jerk, and, as the davits snapped him up and before he had fairly left water, the fat little monster was under full speed. By the time he stepped on deck she was a mile away.

But they left their tale behind. There, from the rear destroyer were towing three lifeboats—big ones of twelve or sixteen oars such as only battleships or cruisers of the first-class use—great thirty-foot cutters. The paint was scratched off their sides and some of the oars were smashed. Yes—and there on the stern of the first I read in ideograph that one of the only three I knew:—*Hatsuse*. The next destroyer towed three more and the third two, eight all told, and on the last of all I spotted another well-known ideograph:—*Yashima!* Curiously deserted, curiously alive, eloquent of disaster, flotsam of battle or wreck, present

and terrible, they swept on into the mist, still wrapped in inviolable secrecy.

The next morning I stepped into the consulate at Chefoo. Old John Fowler greeted me. "There's a rumor," said he, "that the Japanese have lost two battleships—the *Asahi* and the *Shikishima*."

"It's true," said I, "only they're the *Hatsuse* and the *Yashima*."

The cable to Chicago that day informed the world first of the loss of the only two battleships sacrificed by Japan in her entire history.

After I had told Fowler about our adventure he said: "Boy, you are mighty lucky to get out. There were twenty or thirty torpedo boats from both sides knocking about in that fog. If one of them had seen the *Fawan*, while they were in action, you would never have lived to tell it."

This interested me, so I told Perkis. This was where I made the fatal mistake.

THE STRIKE.

CHAPTER XII.

Led by the skipper and the chief the crew strikes to escape the great risk. I ship a crew of pirates and ruffians and am about to put to sea with certain wreck ahead when I discover loyalty of the finest brand.

Then the crew, led by the skipper and the chief, struck.

After the sinking of the *Hatsuse* we went on four more cruises without obvious incident, except that they grew worse and worse. No big war vessels after that came within sight of Port Arthur. Sixty miles away, in the Elliot group, they had their base and kept a patrol fifteen miles out, where the V of the harbour's mouth could be spied. The *Fawan* would pass between this patrol and the port and each time we passed the men grumbled. These were ghastly trips. No one slept, all were constantly searching for mines, and though we laid up each night in Fawan Haven there was never any cease in fear of gunnery or dismay at those infernal scavengers, the mines.

The *Kasuga* overhauled us one day. "It's very dangerous," said the officer who came aboard, to the skipper and myself. "We do not

advise you to operate. If our boats see you at night or in a fog they will sink you. We sunk a Russian tug boat that looked just like yours two days ago."

Then another misplaced enterprise brought me more trouble. I had trained those that could patter pidgeon English to search for news every time we cast anchor. Thus the laute, each time we made Chefoo, passed about among all the junks, wending his way among the Chinamen he knew, in search of fresh unknown details from across the gulf. He found only that junks were constantly going down on the mines, or under the forts, and that friends of himself or some of the crew were constantly "among those killed."

Finally Cromarty, thrusting his dour face in the cabin one night, said in a pause so thick you could feel it: "I've been alone upon a blockade runner with ammunition and powder, I've been captured by the French and thrown in prison, I ran the *Farwan* up and down the Peiho for two months under Boxer fire with a Chinese crew on the stroke of instant mutiny week in and out—but that's nothing. I can stand all that—have stood it—would go it again. But

I can't stand for the *Fawan* in her present frame of mind. It's too—well, its too risky, if you don't mind my saying it, sir."

This was a very long speech for Cromarty and the effort of making it together with the assurance I gave him that I would wire the office in Chicago for orders quieted him. I cabled asking if I should take the *Fawan* under fire. The reply came: "Not willing for you to take the *Fawan* under fire."

With this pink assurance on a government telegraphic blank, I kept him steady for awhile, but one night we blew in under a gale and out of a crashing sea that had smashed down the aftside deck and twisted two stanchions near the winch till the stroke resembled a typhoon's play. It was a typhoon I guess. To make it blacker that time the laute found that two junks had been blown to splinters within perhaps a league of the course we had but just passed. One man only of the nineteen the two bore, escaped.

I was seated in my cabin, going over the month's accounts, that night, when Perkis and Cromarty appeared. It was strange, for the lantern houses usually called them at that hour,

and we were not to weigh till dawn. They both looked sheepish, obviously constrained. I thought they were drunk, but no. It was only embarrassment. Finally the skipper spoke.

“We’ve been thinking it over, the Chief and I,” said he, “And we’ve decided we’ve got to quit you. No money could hire us to do this. We’ve gone so far only because we’ve rather taken a fancy to you. You’ve got sand, for a youngster, and we sort o’ like the way you tackle this job, but we’ve got to draw the line somewhere. We no longer consider it a chance. If it was we’d take it. We’re good gamblers, but it’s only a question of how many trips—one or two perhaps—before you go down, sure. At least that’s our judgment, sir.”

Perkis added the last, as he saw the frown on my face. If it was bluff or hire they wanted I could hand it to them. “How much of a raise do you want?” Said I, with the coldness of steel bar pickled in ice. It was a mistake. I could see that the minute I said it. Cromarty looked at me with a sad paternal smile and Perkis corrected:

“No. We’re satisfied with the money,” said

he, "It's good pay you're giving us, but the plain fact is we don't want to get killed."

"You apparently think," said I, seeing that nothing but straight talk would do, "That I'm a crazy fool who wants to get killed." Their grim silence, lit by a nod of assent, seemed to indicate that I was talking now more to the point. I could see they quite agreed with me.

"Now you're responsible only for yourselves," I continued. "I'm responsible not only for myself, but for you, and the crew and the boat that carries not a dollar of insurance. I know the risks. I've weighed them. And I think it's a fair deal we're going on. Still, personally, I'd be tickled to death to give up the *Farwan*, but we've finished only half of a three months' charter and I can't afford to stick the paper like that—letting 'em pay for a dead boat a month and a half."

I was not cutting ice. I could see that. "I'll tell you what I'll do," said I finally. "I'll put it up to the office. Let them decide. Meanwhile we'll take a quiet little run over to Fawan Haven and when we come back the answer will be here—how's that, eh?"

They assented grudgingly and trudged off

topside, but I could see the spell of mastery was broken and I put in a blue night. We made a conservative trip to Fawan Haven, without profit, and on return found the inevitable telegraphic pinkness. "Operate the *Fawan* with the least risk possible," it said.

"No," said Perkis. "We stand pat on this. Sorry, but we consider it only common prudence. It's not our war."

"All right," said I, coldly, and I made out the pay vouchers for them. They were for bidding a fond farewell, but I passed them the mit. Then they shuffled out of the cabin and left me for a time to think over the situation. I was properly disgusted. Here I was, just running down the wind with big news, fairly picking up the light on the coast of scoops, when my trusties turn up with cold feet. To add to my peculiar comfort that night, there was handed me a letter from the office in which I read: "At the end of the charter release the *Fawan*, at which time your services will be dispensed with." Slighting allusions from the Bigger Man had knifed me at home, I later learned. So I faced, not only mutiny from below, but dismissal from above. After awhile

Perkis poked his nose into the cabin and asked: "Well, I suppose you'll take the *Fawan* back to Taku now."

"No," said I without raising or turning my head. "We'll weigh for Fawan Haven as soon as I can pick a crew from off shore."

He shrugged his shoulders and disappeared, only to return a moment later. "The Chief and I'll hang around and keep an eye on the boat till you pick up your crew, if you'd like, sir," said he.

"As you wish," said I.

Presently Cromarty came down. With the same sheepish air he grudgingly said: "The engine room crew will leave when I do, if you don't mind my saying it, sir."

"There are other engine room crews on the coast," I replied, without looking up.

"But the deck crew is goin' to leave."

"I suppose there are other deck crews, too."

Cromarty evidently was not prepared for this. He had expected me to wilt at the first fire. He shuffled around the cabin a bit, paying marked attention to the chromos of "Dewey entering Manila Bay," which hung fore and aft the centre table. Finally he blurted out:

"I suppose you think I got them to strike, but its' not so. I told them to stay on but they won't do it. You'd better talk with them yourself."

"Call them in," said I, sharply, without looking up.

They shuffled in, nine from the engine room, eleven from the deck, and stood about constrained, huddled in the corners like a lot of sheep. I was sitting with my back to them, engrossed in the papers before me. I waited till all the shuffling had ceased, and gave them a few minutes of grace to get well oiled with shame before I looked around. At length I faced them with stern unconcern.

"Well, you'll stay with me—eh?" said I to the bos'n, studying him nonchalantly and passing my gaze directly into his eye. His faded and sought the floor.

"No can do. No can do," he wailed.

"How about you?" I turned savagely to the laute. His tanned old Chinese face turned up voluble and sweaty and he poked at me his thin neck (I couldn't help thinking what a good chance it offered to the beheader's sword, having seen an execution of spies two weeks before), as he chattered:

"Boxer can do. This no can do. No blong plover. Plenty fliends have got Takuside. Junk strikee mine. Two piecee man get away. Nother piecee alee same makee die. Master better go Takuside *Fawan*."

I ignored the talk as beneath contempt and told the cabin boy to call Meyer.

"Captain Meyer," said I when he appeared. "You are going to stay with me, are you not? You understand what it is. We operate as we have, no more, no less. I'll sign you as skipper." The old man was wagging his shaggy white head. He had turned his seventieth birthday the week before.

"Yes," he mumbled "I'll stay."

Now Cromarty appeared again, beaming. Apparently he wanted to help all he could. "The cook—he'll stay," announced the Chief with alacrity.

"Where's Choosan? Bring him in," I cried.

Choosan appeared, pock marked, with a slimy pigtail, and grinning all over his sly fat phiz. I well knew he'd go to hell a thousand times before he'd relinquish the squeeze he was pulling each trip. I suppose he is retired by this time out of the profits he made on the

Fawan. "Velly good master," he called shrilly to my gruff question. "Can do."

So there I was—with a skipper and a cook, one so near death by time limit that it made little difference to him how he was pushed over the brink, the other so fattening out of the *Fawan's* purse that he would have cheerfully gone to bottom serene in the knowledge that his family to remote generations was well cared for out of galley sweepings.

I was determined to operate that boat if I had to pick up a scratch crew and go to the wheel myself. I gave it out around Chefoo what I was looking for, and the port riff-raff began drifting my way. Well I knew that no sailors of repute could be mine. First I signed a Scandanavian as mate, a desperate character he was, who had led a life of versatile activity in all quarters of the globe, and I commissioned him to pick up a crew.

At tiffin time he led them on deck—my new crew. Never before nor since have I seen such a lot of pirates. They had been scraped from the four quarters of China, but their heads had not been scraped. That duty, which the humblest Oriental considers before his chow, they

had one and all neglected, and stood before me with unshaven polls, bearing on their lousy pates a lush growth, like the bristles of fresh swine. Faces out of that crowd still leer at me with a nightmare's malediction. Cut, ragged, dirty, shiftless, unshaven, grinned in alternate threat and sycophantic smirk. I felt like a two-spot when I looked at those fellows. The head man stood in front, a fat rascal, with a tremendous paunch rolling great flesh away from a hairy chest not quite covered by the denim crash he slung rakishly across his shoulders. His powerful sardonic chin poked at me from beneath small, colorless pig eyes.

"Can do. Can do," he answered, as I put the questions to him, and his gang gave hollow consent with much muttering and grinning.

But I hadn't the heart to engage them on the spot, so I told them to come next morning, at nine, for my answer. Cromarty and Perkis were standing on the bridge during my colloquy, looking with sedate interest down upon the deck scene. The *Farwan* was home to them, and I fancied I felt their resentment, as they saw what meant business in the delivery of their nestplace over to the black flag.

I was so desperate I think I would have gone to sea, even if certain wreck was ahead, but now I began to grow afraid. There would be but three white men on the boat, the Scandinavian, old Meyer, and myself. Meyer was the only one I could trust, and he was too old for use in a fight. Suppose that gang suddenly took it into its head to cabbage the *Fawan*? In this hour of dismal dread I went to Fowler.

“You’ve got to help me now,” said I to him, when I had stated the case. “I’ve got a crew that will go through the jaws of death, but you never saw such villains, and the fact is, I’m afraid to go to sea with them alone. I want you to get some marines from the *New Orleans* to go along with me on the *Fawan*, so I’ll be safe if the crew mutinies.”

He promised to do what he could. Admiral Sterling was then in port with two vessels of the American Navy, and I looked for solution of some of my troubles there. But then, it occurred to me, that even if the crew stayed put, I might run afoul with the engines. I must have a white engineer. That was all there was about it—I must have him. No Chinaman would do. We might get to sea, find the engines

primed, and before we'd know it they'd blow the cylinder heads off, or God knows what might happen. Cromarty would swear, of course, that they were all right when he left them, and then I would be in for unknown damages. I wired, consequently, to Farnham Boyd, in Shanghai, who built the *Farwan*: "Must have new engineer, five hundred dollars a month."

"Frank Kennedy will accept job, starting two days," came the answer.

By this time all Chefoo was advising me what to do. Young Sterling, a son of the Admiral, a fine chap, wanted to go along, but his dad wouldn't let him, yet he gave me an idea of moment. If I let Kennedy come on without telling him why Perkis and Cromarty had quit, Sterling said, the new engineer might strike, as the others had, when he found out the situation, and that would leave me worse than before, because the week of passage waiting would be wasted. For this reason I wired: "Kennedy must understand Cromarty and Perkis leaving on account of risk."

In four hours the answer came. Kennedy passed it up. Of course, he would, though the sum offered was twice ordinary first-class pay.

Perkis and Cromarty were the best-known, and the most fearless men on the coast. As I passed down to the cutter waiting at the slip, Fowler met me. His face was long, and I presaged bad news.

“It can’t be done,” he said, simply, and shrugged his shoulders as he came up. “You’re under a British flag, and the Admiral can’t let you have marines.”

It was evening. The Chefoo amethystine blue filtered through the balmy air. The mountains cut gorgeous discs against the sunset. The bay limned out a scimiter of might and glory beyond. I neither saw nor felt these beauties. That villainous crew were coming for final word in the morning, and there lay before me abandonment of my greatest quest, or, almost sure disaster if, lucklessly, I persisted in following its trail.

I climbed on deck. There were Perkis and Cromarty still lounging on the bridge, enjoying the cool of the evening. This, too, was unusual, but I paid them no attention. I did not even glance at them as I passed to my cabin, though I thought I detected a sudden halt in the conversation, and attention drifting my

way, a vague longing for the usual hearty salutation which it had been my wont to toss their way whenever I appeared. Well I knew how the gall would cut when they found the show could go on without them—the skipper and the chief, who had fondly looked upon themselves as king spirits in deeds of daring that formed many a chapter of whispered, awed talk in the pothouses of many an Eastern port. I didn't blame them, but I was sore. "I despise their attitude," I remember, is what I entered the night before in my diary. Still, they were the right sort: dear old skipper, sour old chief!

I was again in the cabin, again deep in the papers, when that same backward shuffle again drifted in down the stairs. Presently, the two appeared, unconcerned, veiling their curiosity. I knew they were but itching for the order to weigh for Taku. Then could their faces be held high along the coast as reckless devils, whose caution at the supreme moment had saved the day. I noticed them not.

"Well," said Perkis, at last, after he had exhausted the possibilities of "Dewey entering Manila Bay?" "Going to give it up?"

"Of course, not," said I, without looking,

shifting my cigar, and yawning, as I poked deeper into the papers. "The *Fawan* weighs to-morrow afternoon."

Silence again. One or two coughs. The scratching of my pen, the heavy breathing of Cromarty. At length it seemed that "Dewey entering Manila Bay," held no more artistic secrets, for just as I was about to rise and step forward to my cabin, Perkis advanced. I almost bumped into him, and looked as Beau Brummell did at the Prince of Wales, with a "Who's your fat friend" insolence, when he halted me.

"Sit down a minute," said he, with some humility. I but paused. He backed off. First he looked at my feet. Then he looked at my eyes.

"We don't like to leave you—the chief and I," said he.

I surveyed him shrewdly, with a penetrative glance. The same old gag! Well, I was ready for it. What difference did a few hundred a month make in the game I was playing?

"I can raise your wages," said I, with measured alacrity. "How much do you want?"

"No," he said, with the sad and weary tone

of a friend suspected. "You're paying good wages. We don't want any more pay." Then he advanced a bit, and I thought I detected a sort of paternal yearning in his voice as he said, throwing off for once and the only time, his skipper's manner:

"If you'd only be a bit cautious!" The look I gave him plainly spelled derision, but it deterred him not. "My boy," he cried, "we'd go with you, if you'd only be more cautious!"

"Let's talk it over," said I, and we sat down. Then we reached the compromise. The *Farwan* was to go within sight of Port Arthur at any time, near enough to see the ships on the blockade. If there was a battle, she was to operate within three miles.

I turned to Cromarty. It was like pulling teeth with him, but I could see it was useless to question. The skipper spoke for both.

"But how about the crew?" I asked.

"They'll stay if I do."

"And coal?"

"Plenty."

"All right," said I, and turned to the skipper.

"We weigh at daylight."

I could hear Cromarty's cry, almost gay, as

he ran up the forward companionway, "Number one!"

And the wafted reply, grateful to me at that moment, as a mother's caress: "Hai!"

"Wantchee engines two o'clock!"

"Can do."

"Pump water."

"Can do."

I turned to the skipper. He was ready to ascend. I was about to shake his hand, but changed my mind.

"Guess I need a shut eye," I yawned, as I turned on my heel. "Haven't been in bed for ten days. Good-night!"

OUTCAST.

CHAPTER XIII.

We train down to quick-firing precision, are taken in by the blockade watch, are warned from our last refuge, and at length get the cold shoulder from our only remaining friends.

The crew then became trained like a fire-house company. You have heard the gong ring for a city fire. You have seen the laddies slip down the pole from upstairs, the horses leap into harness, and the huge apparatus go lumbering down the street on the gallop—all in less than a minute. That is not ahead of the *Fawan's* spirit of ever readiness.

We lay the next three weeks, operating under the compromise, in Fawan Haven, steam always ready for a three minutes' notice. A shot from Liaotung way, smoke in the offing, the lap, lap of waves cut by a torpedo boat, and Perkis or I, one of us being always on watch, would leap to the telegraph. At the instant sound of the gong every man sprang to his place, the mate's white hair rising venerable above the wheel, the laute's savage face cut coldly across the starboard quarter, against the blue of deep water. Up the shute came the

merry tinkling of shoveling coal, the rapid slide of opening draughts, and soon from the funnel in heavy clouds poured the black smoke. In two minutes the engines would be head and astern blowing out the valves. In three the wake would have subsided above the last ripple outlining the late anchorage. In four the *Fawan* would be around the corner, with all the grand panorama of the greatest of sea battle-fields stretched full and fair before.

Sometimes a torpedo attack was called. They came every day or two. Lying under the deck awnings, smoking the blackest cigar obtainable for a quarter, feet elevated over head, spring just gone and the green of summer pulsing tremulous and near, just across the haven, I would suddenly leap to my feet. The going! Quick, to the pant of engines and chug of screw, see the *Fawan* sweep around the headland! Then gaze off across the dazzle of brilliant sunbeams, striking aslant the gentle lap of whitecaps!

Yes, there they come, in flotilla formation, line ahead. We see them first by the thinnest smoke on the horizon off Elliot way. Slowly they materialize, and the smoke seg-

regates into four puffs at the blue. The four puffs become in time twelve. The twelve arise into one pall of ink, below which the twelve funnels of the flotilla vomit forth their sweaty excess. Now they sweep well within vision, and we can see those white slices of spray sweeping the decks. The boats, from dancing gnats, have become buzzing bees upon the water.

Then another flotilla out of the blank haze of ether—perhaps half a mile behind the first. It, too, segregates into twelve smoke wreaths, hurling one valiant, if tiny, challenge at the glorious blue day. Behind that another half mile, then another flotilla, finally a fourth. Then even far behind that, leisurely pacing with long, space-killing swell, creep two cruisers. By the time these guard ships have come to a halt, twenty miles from the Lion's Mane, the first flotilla, perhaps three miles ahead, is crowding on full steam for its dash under the forts.

Meanwhile there has emerged from behind the two cruisers, a third vessel, distinctly out of place among those savage little beasts that are bowling along, thirty miles an hour, under the tiny, valiant challenge. It is a converted liner, the *Nippon Maru*, headed straight for us. We

lie to, and wait. She cuts along record speed, and before the attack is fully developed, hauls to, directly athwart our resting place, slows her engines and pauses in expectancy. It looks like the start of the triangular America Cup race, when the stake boats push out to sea, marking the cruising ground. This race course that we now look upon, in which the dash is to endanger lives and risk treasure, lies straight before us, with a vista vast and terrible.

The course is formed by the V of the harbor mouth, the two cruisers and the *Nippon*, each standing for one leg of the triangle. The four flotillas are now half way to Port Arthur. Smoke had ceased pouring from the funnels of the cruisers. The *Nippon* has just lain to.

As yet not a sound from the fortress. It lies, with smiling straight cliffs in grim grandeur, in perfect security. Never from this side will it fall. Only from the land, where Nogi even now is knocking, will it succumb. Even there it holds impregnable. Yes, like man himself, the great fortress can stand secure to the last, inviolate from foes without. From the inner worm along can she corrode and fall.

The first flotilla disappears, swallowed in the

lee of the cliff line. Then the inferno breaks. White shoots of flame; ragged, venomous balls of smoke from crevices concealed and treacherous, in the rocks above, where, from perfect ambush, speak coast defense batteries heavy enough, with one broadside, to send all of Togo's battleships to the bottom. To them there can be no reply. They issue their swift lightning with the omnipotent serenity of the Power above. The third four is gone, and then the fourth, until we see that Togo's flotillas have melted against these barren cliffs, as Nogi's battalions are even then fading into bleeding, shapeless rags against the rocky heights beyond. With painful distinctness the guns speak. After the first broadside the moments are alive with haphazard shooting. No man can tell the effect. No man can guess. All is silence. Can it be else than death? And what meaning can there be in the suicide of these sixteen fat boats? None can tell, and idle is the guess of wonder in this gigantic puzzle, where a thousand motives conflict and intertwine.

At length the firing dies. Out of the lee shadow now creeps again the pall of black,

parented of twelve smoky upshoots. Blessed Buddha! The first flotilla has escaped.

The loss can be no more than twelve. We breathe easier. The gain is something. But now appears the second four, and now the third, until at length, sixteen again make glad our strained and anxious vision. This time, headed square our way, the four black palls merge in one, and, like the charge of an express train on a down grade, the squadrons sweep grandly upon us.

The screw of the *Nippon* begins to turn. She is under way, but not before the first flotilla has rounded her stern, while, from the nearest boat, there slings a dingy, out of which a powder-stained officer emerges. He passes upon the *Nippon*. So that was the purpose of the lone liner—to receive reports. In four hours she will be lying under the shadow of the *Mikasa*, and Togo will know what the sixteen learned in that bold reconnaissance.

But as they steam slowly past us we see what news costs; and smash! goes the prestige of our impertinent service. In the port side of the nearest destroyer of the second flotilla, yawns a great hole, barely above the water line. Al-

ready it is stuffed crudely with huge calks of hemp wadding. The rear funnel of the next is staggering off. What can possibly hold it on? A tiny slip of pipe seems its only support. And in behind we see the signal mast also nearly down and out, its base twisted around until its aftside fronts the bow.

Again we see them chase a junk.

Not a ripple stirs the surface of that quiet ocean. The misty smoke of the guardship, patrolling her beat twenty miles away, is the single evidence of life in all that measureless expanse. When slow in the cream of the afternoon, out of the nowhere that lies under Chefoo, lazily swims into view, the lateen sails of a lumbering junk. With tremulous unconcern she tacks her plodding way abeam the Haven. She may have cleared for Antung. She may be bound for Dalny. She may—she may be full of contraband for the beleaguered city.

Now quickly out of nothing springs a flotilla—and another, pouring foul soot into that masterpiece of Nature's painting. You have seen the fairy prince wave his wand in the transformation scene; you have seen the myriad, kaleidoscopic response. So it is with

the torpedo boats. Now you don't see them—now you do. One moment there is nothing under the horizon but that lifeless ocean; the next the great bowl of water seethes with churning haste. They have been hiding around the promontory and among the islands, where, no one knows, each with a thin pole to the heavens, down which flashes the universal of the wireless. The moment a junk is spotted, upon her swoops the swarm of pickets. They come skating in across the glassy sea, four and five at a time; sometimes a whole double flotilla.

As the first breaks from cover there is hurled from some fore-funnel a burst of fluttering signal flags. The instant they appear, the junk, like a wild thing caught in ambush, halts in her tracks, her sails come clattering to the decks, and she lies to, all a tremble. The first boat in tosses a dingy across and the white clad sailors climb aboard. You can see the Chinamen running around like rats, the white clad boys opening the hatches. Protestations, quick, sharp answers. Another dingy pulls alongside. More sailors climb aboard. Half of them tumble below into the hold. The others wait above, and soon, from both hatches, there is pouring pro-

miscuously into the sea the dozen tons or more of cargo—leaden bags of rice, bolts of cloth, boxes of canned goods bearing Chicago and London labels, hogsheads of spirits marked “Urkhutsk,” and “Manila.” Within a quarter of an hour the deed is done, and within half an hour, save for the lone and pillaged junk, the lifeless ocean again lies before us, calm, beautiful, without sail or smoke.

The junkmen vainly strive to rescue a few floating boxes, and then crawl pitifully into Fawan Harbour to think it over. I send the laute aboard and he comes back with the same old tale of woe. They are good Chinamen, harmless merchants, who never meant any harm to anyone. All that contraband was never intended for the blockade. Those Chicago meats and London preserves were meant for the dirty heathen of Antung, who never heard of Chicago or London, and who would not know what to do with a tin can, even if they should ever see one.

One day heavy smoke curling from Dalnyward, announced the coming of a fleet, and I weighed to meet it. The vessels proved to be two second-class cruisers of the *New Orleans*

type, carrying some six-inch guns, and some four-point-sevens. I sailed abeam their course, and lay broadside to. Presently their signals broke:

“Who are you?”

“A newspaper dispatch boat.”

“Have you any news?”

I was standing by the wheelhouse while Meyer passed me out the signal flags, and as I saw that my heart leaped, for here was a chance, so I flew the combination that read:

“If you’ll permit me, I’ll come aboard.”

Soon a tiny bundle broke from the signal mast, and there flew to the wind a long white pennant, with a red ball in the centre, the universal sea assent.

Immediately I piled over her side, having put on a white collar for the occasion. She was nice and clean like a yacht. All the sailors were in white, romping about, squatting under the bulwarks and the deckhouse, under the heavy muzzles of the guns, anywhere to find shade, for the day was blistering. On the poop deck a group of officers were playing shuffleboard. Directly in front another group were at go. Everybody smiled, and there was a cordial re-

ception. I felt, were it not for the menace of those quiet turret pieces, that I could as well have intercepted a millionaire's outing trip in the Mediterranean. Yet in plain sight lay Port Arthur, forever alert, forever ready to burst at the touch.

An officer led me to the bridge. Warships have so many bridges it is hard to tell which one you are on, but I soon saw this was the signal bridge. It looked like the interior of a railway mail car, with rows of pigeon holes, and many patent mechanical devices. Six or eight halyards on pulleys led to the signal mast, and in the pigeon holes reposed, in neat bundles, the hundred or more flags that form the code. One man pulls the halyards, another snaps on the flags. The halyards taut, the flags break. Thus half a dozen signals can be flown in a few seconds. No merchanter could ever read with the lightning glance these practiced war vessels have. Less than a quarter of a minute is enough to show them an intricate dispatch, and from this vessel, which was evidently the flagship of an interior squadron, I could well see what marvellous efficiency in communication is gained, by the combined fleet, for a general action. Per-

haps for ten seconds the flags remain up, then come fluttering to deck as the Stars and Stripes do at army posts in the States at sunset, drifting with the wind, a mass of color, one of the prettiest sights in all this hideous war drama. In a minute the Admiral can send to every vessel of his command, a long and complicated order.

They led me to the bridge above, behind which the captain had a stateroom. He seemed restless when he saw me, chatted with his lieutenant a moment, then said, with elaborate courtesy: "We're on the blockade, and can't stop, but if you'd like to remain on board, I can signal your boat to follow us while we steam up the coast."

Gladly I assented, and the signals spread almost instantly. The *Fawan* picked up her heels and pattered after, and I suppose the boys thought "pinched again." They could not know where we were going. I felt the faintest throb from the engines, hid somewhere far below, and running as if in oil. What a change from the rasp of the *Fawan*! Then the gentle lap, lap on the sides, and we were running abeam Port Arthur.

"O, it's very dangerous over here," remarked the captain.

"It is rather bad," I admitted.

"Where do you go nights?" he asked.

"I anchor behind one of the Miaotaou Islands." There was a rapid twinkle and a funny look in his eye.

"Where?"

"Give me a chart of the Straits of Pechiii and I'll show you." An orderly produced the chart and I made a little cross. More jabbering; more twinkling in Japanese. Then the lieutenant said:

"The captain says very bad."

"Why?"

"The captain says Russians go there very often and lay mines. Our torpedo boats go there. They watch us and go out in the night to sink." It was a lie, because I had been there every night for six weeks and had never seen a torpedo boat near the island.

"You must not go there any more," he continued. "You must go right back to Chefoo." I thanked him for his advice and asked for news.

"No news," said he.

This was the usual false start, so, nothing daunted, I tried another tack.

"Is it true," I asked, "that the *Novik* got out the other day?"

"Yes—O, yes. The *Novik* is very brave. She came out with three torpedo boats and gave our ships a hard chase to the north." And he went on and told me all about it, the dashing, stern fight of the Russian cruiser, the closing in of Togo's second fleet, the all but cornering of the plucky refugee from Port Arthur, her clever manoeuvre to return to harbour, her narrow, almost miraculous escape. It was news, great news at the time, and he filled it in with plenty of gossip that formed an excellent cable. These officers think that news is only in the number of ships, and the calibre of guns.

But that finished me with the Japanese navy. Never again was I allowed on even so much as a torpedo boat. The cruiser carried me an hour that day and then dropped me back into the *Fawan*, whereon I put straight for Chefoo.

Two days later, lying again at anchorage in Fawan Haven, a torpedo boat called in and a nifty young subaltern boarded us with three sailors. It was his first trip on the blockade,

and he thought he was the most daring creature that ever came down the sea wall. He was all puffed up with importance over his job, and he announced in firm chest tones that the danger was immense, that we must put back directly for Cheefo and never come to sea again. He looked as if he thought our teeth would chatter and our knees knock together like castanets, and seemed weary when we thanked him politely and said we guessed we would stay.

He clambered down and ran out with his torpedo boat. You have doubtless seen a crawfish in water, when you put your hand out, run zip, zip, zip with its claws into the mud and draw hastily under a stone. That is how those blasted torpedo boats do when short hauled in a narrow bay, and the day I saw that one back from me, like a disgusted turtle into its shell, or like a crawfish into the mud, was my last really close view of the navy.

The next day we found two mines, one with spikes, the regular kind, and one that the Japanese call "improvised," made of two iron cylinders bound together with wire. I fired repeatedly at them with a Martini, but could not hit the

spikes, when the skipper announced that three cruisers were on the horizon.

"Put about," said I, "and intercept them. We'll get the ships to put a three-pounder into the mines and sink them."

As we ran up they changed their courses and headed toward Chefoo. I flew the signal: "Heave to, we have something important to communicate," and changed our course to intercept them. They changed their course. The *Fawan* again changed and flew another signal.

"Have to report some mechanical mines."

The only answer was a fourth change in the course, until they had shifted entirely around and were now coursing in the original direction. We puffed along for some time, and at length gave it up. They were too fast for us.

Plainly that story had traveled back, and Togo had made his orders distinct and final. We were to be avoided as a new camp avoids the pest. But we were bound to see a battle, and the *Fawan* would not quit until she had seen one. Gradually we had been frozen out of everything. First the Russians had finished us. The ports had closed. The mines had warned, the torpedoes had bullied, the cruisers

cajoled, the subalterns had lied and the chiefs had acquiesced. And now our only remaining friend, the Japanese navy, had turned its sphinx face. Fawan Haven was our last refuge. To that we would stick, despite everything, until the battle that was to be our excuse for being, was pulled off in those dazzling waters that stretched so solemnly and so grandly on every side.

ONE MORE DESPERATE.

CHAPTER XIV.

A white man lost in the Yellow Sea climbs aboard for a drink and I see him off on his lonely, defiant way against the great fortress.—A junkful of Refugee Greeks brings the true story of Port Arthur, and, after recording a big scoop, I put hard about for battle.

“White man have got aftside.”

It was the laute, poking his muscular face into the cabin where I sat reading on one end of the table, while the Chief and Perkis played dominoes across the other. They played there, month in and month out, the same way—the Chief always with his heavy face in his hands, the skipper, his elbows on the table, his arms crossed, gazing with intense concentration on the board. The laute had grown bold of late. This was because I had taken him often to overhaul junks and obtain news therefrom. He promptly caught the spirit of the occasion, copied dobtless from the freebooter spell cast over the *Fawan* by the last torpedo captain. He would run alongside the prospective haul bellowing like an angry bull, would board her with bluff omnipotence and act as though her fate lay entirely in his hands. Apparently he

had not yet decided whether he would send her the next minute to the bottom or take her in summarily, a prize of war, to Chefoo. The startled Chinks, huddling about, with alacrity would obey his commands to rap off the hatches while he made a bluff of looking for contraband. Then, having them secure in this frightened state, he would demand information on the peril of their lives. He certainly had rich crust.

On this occasion I greeted his temerity with disfavor, and asked quietly, "Why speak lie? No white man can get into Fawan Haven."

"No blong ploper," he muttered, with hurt dignity, somewhat crestfallen, then perked up, "Me no lie. White man have got," he insisted. "Chefooside have come—plenty big nose, long coat, Master come, look see."

The least I could do was "look see," so I went aft. There the crew were excitedly jabbering about a figure which had climbed aboard, clothed in a long mackintosh and a soft felt hat. This was as strange an apparition as we had ever seen, after dark in those war waters, sixty miles from any friendly shore, in the midst of mines and deadly vessels prowling in constant

search of death. The figure advanced, and I could see the long English nose which the Chinaman's eye had first seized as the inevitable European stigmata. The figure advanced.

"Permit me to introduce myself," he said. "My name is Hector Fuller, and I represent the Indianapolis News." Just as a reporter might call at an insurance office the morning after a fire. And here, in the Yellow Sea—at night!

"Yes," said I, thinking of nothing else to say, and shook his hand. "I'm glad to see you. What are you doing here?"

"I've been moulting about Tokyo for three months, and got a pass to go with the Japanese army. That's all I got—a pass, nothing else. A pass is too slow for me. I knocked off on that, and I'm on my way now to call on General Stoessel."

"Stoessel!" I exclaimed, "why, he's in Port Arthur," just as if I were imparting valuable information.

"I know," he replied, without visible concern. "That's where I'm going to find him."

"But what's your plan?" said I. "You'll never get in." I might have omitted the gratuitous cold blanket, but I suppose ninety-nine

men out of a hundred would have said the same thing, and I did not happen to be the hundredth.

“Well, I’ve got a junk out there, have been lying around five days now trying to poke in while the wind blew off shore. When the blow does get favorable I intend to drift in as far as possible, then swim for it if necessary. When I get there I suppose they’ll pick me up for a spy or something. Then when they take me to Stoessel I’ll present my card, and—well, there you are. I’ll have my interview. I imagine he’ll be glad to see someone from the outside world just now.”

“I admire your enterprise,” I admitted, “but I think you’ll get killed.”

“No,” said he, with some precision, and puckering his brows into a critical intention. “I’ve been lying off here now, studying the whole thing out, for five days, and I’m willing to take the risks. I’m willing to stand any losses up to ——” he paused, as though weighing with the utmost care every chance for and against, then added, slowly, “the right leg.” Again a pause, when he added quickly, “Below the knee.”

"But you may find a sentry who will not be kind enough to shoot you below the knee," I ventured to volunteer in my killjoy prudence. "Sometimes bullets go higher."

But he seemed to think not, and I surveyed him with genuine admiration. This put me way in the shade. The *Fawan* was no longer the nub on the mushroom of America's fevered civilization. Here was a reckless devil willing to distance our ventures with audacity unmixed with fear or prudence.

"Come in," said I, "you'd better sleep on the *Fawan* to-night," having the same solicitude one might feel for a criminal condemned to swing at dawn. Censure for the crime of rivalry was past. He was but a fellow mortal, a frapped American mortal at that, thrust without sense or jollity into the froth of war's foam.

"No, thank you," said he, "I must get away at two in the morning, when my men tell me the wind will change. I want the job over. I'm not particularly crazy about it myself."

"How about chow?" I asked.

"I've had a bit, such as it is," said he, then looked up with alacrity. "But have you got a drink?"

"Come in," said I. Tansan brought out the whiskey, and presently some fried eggs, some fresh bacon, steaming coffee and a cold piece of pie. Then I looked him over. He was baked the color of a brick, had a week's stubble on his face, and altogether looked the desperate, hardened character he was.

"How do you intend to get out?" I asked him.

"I'm going to take a life preserver in with me," he answered, "and when they turn me loose I'll drift out. Perhaps a junk or a Japanese warship will pick me up. That will be after my Stoessel interview."

"The water's pretty cold up this way," I remarked, yet I treated him with every courtesy and distinction, just as though he had been a man in his rational senses, gladly agreed to transmit a dispatch to his paper, a chit to his wife, and at last accepted his revolver as a parting present. He thought if he went in unarmed he stood a better chance of fair treatment. At two o'clock he climbed overboard and I thought I had seen the last of him.

But the next morning he blew in again in a sampan. For five hours he had battled against

a head sea, unable to clear the harbor. We lounged about all that day and became rather well acquainted. Occasionally he displayed evidences of human affection and talked with veiled, unadmitted melancholy of Indiana and the Wabash. Late in the afternoon the *Fawan* weighed for Chefoo and we towed him out in front of Port Arthur, until he lay not more than fifteen miles away, with the Liaotishan light plain in the distance. There we bade him good-bye, and steamed off. I lowered the stars and stripes to half mast and blew three blasts on the whistle. As long as I could see him he stood in the stern sheets of the junk, waving his hat and a tiny American flag he carried. Then I went below to examine the revolver he had given me, and he said I could keep it if he were killed. It was a beauty—a big, single-action, forty-four cowboy Colt.

Three days later a fisherman managed to convey to the laute that, running in close to Liaotishan one morning, he had seen a white man “with plenty big nose and long coat” sitting on a rock, smoking a black cigar. He had seen two Russian soldiers come up from behind, seize the strange man, and hurry him off. That

was one of the *Fawan's* cigars. Another week I saw him on the streets of Chefoo, in silk tile, tall collar and a frock coat telling of his interview with Stoessel. Thus I lost my revolver. The foolkiller had been busy those days on the other side of the town where the Japanese battalions were trying to take impregnable positions, without cover, by frontal assault—too busy to bother with Fuller.

After that the days passed rapidly, relieved only by the periodic glint and gleam of torpedo attacks and the wayward drift of junks, until one bleak, grey morning when a sampan came from a neighboring island and managed to convey the information that some white people over there wanted to get to Chefoo. Could a whole gang of war correspondents be out laughing at the rules laid down by boards of strategy? I could think of no others reckless enough to be so far astray. I promised to go and the sampan promptly flew its kite.

As we turned the corner we saw in the lee of the next island a junk flying a bedraggled flag, which presently proved to be that of Greece. There was a place near marked on the charts as drawing three feet, so we put to sea, whereas

the junk showed crazy signs of life. Men and women began running up and down the deck waving towels, blankets and stray articles of clothing, while they yelled wildly. It looked as if we were leaving them, but as the *Fawan* changed its course and bore down upon them the cries of despair changed to glad shouts of welcome, and as we hauled alongside a great cheer went up. It must have been heard as far away as Port Arthur.

There were seven women, fifteen men and as many Chinamen crowded on a bit of junk hardly larger than a parlor bedroom. They had been adrift two days in wind and storm, buffeted in cold, without warm chow, and they well looked the part of castaways. Were the women pretty? No woman is particularly attractive after she has been to sea for forty-eight hours in an open boat till her hair is down and her clothes cling to her as if moulded on. Besides, there were of middle-age, and of advanced age, all but one. She said she was the wife of a Russian officer. Someone said afterward, when she was living openly at the Astor House, that she was not his wife. However that may be, she may have been pretty or not,

for all I noticed. Here was news—big news, for what else could they be than refugees, of which, since the siege began, we had yet had none?

“Will you take us to Chefoo?” asked the spokesman, whom I promptly let aboard. He was a civil engineer, had helped on the forts and spoke English well.

I agreed to take all of the Europeans, but none of the Chinamen, if, in exchange, they would tell me all they knew of conditions inside the fortress. Only too happy, they consented, and I packed them away in the *Farwan* and ordered Perkis to clear straight for Chefoo.

A storm was already brewing, and before we got fairly under way it broke—one of the worst storms we ever had. The spray danced to the top of the wheelhouse, and the screw cleared the stern. But Perkis shoved her through. He never balked at any sea danger. That he regarded as his “pidgin,” and, while it ruffled me worse than the mines or the guns or the torpedoes, he seemed never to mind, but bucked on through everything. The sorry passengers went utterly to the bad and declared they had never been so sick in their lives. I turned over

the cabins to the women, packed some of the men in the hold, one in the wheel house, two in the main saloon, and when I had disposed of all the space two were compelled to crawl on top of the baggage in the bathroom where they lay, deathly ill, like cadavers on ice.

Meanwhile, the news! I sat tight in the main saloon, clearing the end of the table, and brought the civil engineer opposite, while in turn he conducted before me each member of the party who could throw light on the situation. One was a merchant who had sold goods to the various regimental messes, and he knew almost, within a ton, the delicacies held in the city. Another had been a warehouse clerk, and he gauged the flour, meat and hardtack. The civil engineer knew very closely the number of guns—750—and their disposal on the various fortifications. Some of the women had been nursing in the hospitals and knew the extent of the sanitary arrangements and the capacity for wounded, as well as the number of incapacitated. From the others drifted in gossip of the feeling among the men and of the jealousy among the officers. To cap all, was a boy of fifteen, the proper age for the ripest

and keenest sleuth. He had scampered all over town, without suspicion or let, and he could tell me the names of every regiment. From all of these we got a report that the next day appeared in eight different languages in every capital of the world, and three days later brought an inquiry direct through the Japanese consul from the authorities in Tokyo. They wanted to know how and where I picked it up. It was the first accurate, complete story since the siege began, nearly five months before.

But to land it was the problem. I knew that if we let those hungry, voluble Greeks loose in Chefoo before my cable was on the streets of Chicago every hotel correspondent in the place would pump them as dry as I had.

“Look here,” said I to Perkis, in the extremity of fear at this situation. “You tie up under the bluff and wait till morning. Then drift across to the anchorage about seven o’clock, and don’t let a single soul on or off this boat until I come on again. Lie close or the customs office will see you and pull out for papers.”

So there I left him, five miles from town, and took with me four trusties in the cutter around to a little black wharf I knew of, hid in a jumble

of Chinese shipping in the native part of the city. So far as I can make out Perkis walked the deck all night with a revolver, ready to repel boarders should any show themselves. I gave my boys comeshaw money in big lumps, and left them strict orders to say nothing of refugees. Then, with my precious dispatch under my shirt, I sought the cable office, which I entered at sundown.

The next morning we bundled the Greeks out, disgruntled at the delay and yet happy with the free ride in quick time. In less than an hour we weighed again. With the gossip the Greeks had left was one item of impending importance.

Great jealousy, they said, existed at Port Arthur between army and navy. The soldiers on the ramparts were continually taunting the sailors for their fear of meeting the Japanese whose fleet all could see, now and then, on the horizon. Once or twice the *Novik*, whose officers could not stand the sting of the taunt, had ventured out and had returned to the rich applause of the soldiers and the civilians. At length the lethargy of the entire fleet had been permeated, and when they left, the Greeks had

told me, the navy was but waiting for a favorable day to emerge, and at length give final battle to their enemies who for five months had held them effectually bottled. But since the Greeks had gone there had been only bad weather, and I knew from the absence of sounds that no shooting of extent to presage a battle had yet occurred. We that day seemed in the tail of the storm, and as I told Perkis what the Greeks had said and the reason for great hurry in our return to the Haven, he said:

“Yes, the backbone of this blow is broken. To-morrow will be clear.”

“Then it’s battle,” said I, “at last a battle!”

A BATTLE AT SEA.

CHAPTER XV.

Gladly adventuring forth for new sights we come upon the greatest of all—battle. The revelation of reality that lay therein. A modern sea fight, one hundred and thirty years after John Paul Jones.

“The invitation of the road!” Who has yet proclaimed that call? Stevenson laments that one of sufficient power and promise has not arisen; Kipling echoes; Whitman replies in basso profundo, “who travels with me will seize new prizes never yet disclosed—the earth, rude, silent, incomprehensible at first, but keep on! Be well assured he traveling with me will win newer, grander, rougher prizes.” Thus these singers hint and frolic, chanting the song of the open road.

What would I not give were I poet who could properly chant the song of the open sea—the open sea, whereon glide battle fleets! When the dawn wind blows on the fresh ripples, when the night breeze flips up the new white caps and feathers a wee nest with anguish, when the wake climbs through the hawser holes and lights flick out of the gloom—all these and more than these give prop and scenic brush a

lavish say. Then it is good to start forth of a morning and look upon a new sea, for you know that the day will bring a hundred fresh impressions, and perhaps—perhaps, if luck blows slow and cool—a story. As the first sight of the foe to the fighting man, as the pink of conditioned flesh to the pugilist, as the scent of a raw October marsh to a duck hunter, even so is the light of a new day on a battle-field to the modern writer of cable news.

Something of this delight and yearning, but yet rough-stamped with the vernacular, I confided to Perkis as we boomed for the Haven that bright, auspicious morning. He cast toward me a glance of the tender, confiding pity held by a man-eater toward some herb-fed cub.

“It’s precious little you’ll see,” said he, never so much as glancing from chart and binnacle which lay before him. Navigator, thought I, with scant goodwill, no man of mere trade can rise above his calling. Yet with concealed smile I conciliatingly replied:

“But a battle—we must see something if there’s a battle! Three miles away we can get the whole action.”

“You think so,” said he, calmly, with a quiz-

zical lifting of his eyes. "I saw the battle of the Yalu, was in it, in fact—on a converted merchanter—and from the bridge, too. We held off a-ways, a sort of stake boat; you couldn't ask for a better box seat than that for any show. Well, what did I see?" He asked the question savagely. I was coming now to the rock of his buck the day of the strike.

"Well," said I, eagerly. "What did you see?"

He looked me over nonchalantly, then turned to the tarpaulin lookout, over which there now stretched a pink awning to keep out the flash of midday. There he leaned upon his folded arms and calmly gazed out over the sea whose China ochre was fast fading to Liaotung blue. Then he replied:

"Ships."

I waited long for further report. There was none.

"Yes, yes," said I, at length, with petulance. "And what else?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing! There must have been smoke—or something. How near were you?"

"Three miles. Yes, there was a bit of

smoke," he continued with absurd slowness. "A bit of smoke that flew about lazy like a lot of Chinks without a laute."

"Then there must have been firing. So, you did see something."

"Hearing ain't seeing. Yes. There were some explosions, a sort of target practice, and bum target practice, at that."

"But manoeuvres? Could you tell how the ships were going?"

"O, rot!" He turned on me savagely and I could not but feel a glow of triumph. For the first time I had touched the spark of anger in the calm Perkis. Here was to be revealed the secret of that scarcely defined, yet ever felt, disdain which he had shown for me from the first, disdain strangely mixed with derision, derision strangely bred of fatherly affection. Through him now, as he spoke, I caught stray glimpses of the derelict Englishman, heir through past generations to university training, but to whom has spoken once and forever that wild call of the sea.

"You writer chaps make me tired with your talk of battles." He had turned now, was facing me as he leaned against the tarpaulin while

the slant afternoon sun beat through the pink and dyed his rugged beard with the ghostly half-shade of a tropical sunset. "From historian to reporter you are all the same. The admiral writing his report from the cabin of the flagship is no better than a dispatch boat racing with its scoop. All alike, you project what never has been, and tell what never happened. So long as you stick to the truth on one point—the number of ships sunk—you can tell all the lies you want, the more and better told the greater the admiral, the more notorious the reporter. Do you want to know how a sea battle really is fought?"

He must have been assured of my interest by this time. Nothing less than Togo himself could have distracted me.

"It's like a Tipperary scrap, catch-as-catch-can," said he. "With one difference. You see the scrap, you don't see the battle. And if you can't tell how a catch-as-catch-can is won, who will ever tell how a sea battle is won? You know in a single way, and I can tell it to you now as well as any writer of pedigree will, in smart phrases and proper books, after the show is done. The best man wins. That's all there

is to it. Manoeuvres, artillery, practice, and all such are like the buttons on a coat, ornamental, a wee bit useful, but not necessary. The nifty boy with guts gets there. The Jap is that, for he's born to the sea. This Russian navy is nothing but a parade ground for cowherders wearing sea boots. It's got no more chance to win than I'd have at your trade, and me knowing nothing more about a pen than the reputation books give it. Manoeuvres! There are no manoeuvres and if there was, who'd see them—butting, groining, back-heeling, simply a Tipperary scrap pulled off in a dungeon. It's a crazy game—war!"

He turned back and looked out upon the sea and I asked him no more questions.

Liaotishan was off the port quarter some twenty-five miles now. The sea lay like a city park pond a mid-week afternoon, troubled by an only sight-seer. It was three o'clock, when I caught smoke on the horizon off the starboard quarter and at the same moment heard distant sounds of firing, a sound such as floats across a late meadow from the floor where a flail is beating with rhythmic dull chop.

“By Jove, they’re out!” I exclaimed. Let’s get to the south, outside of it.”

Perkis grudgingly obeyed.

“It’s taken them longer than they expected,” I remarked. Perkis seemed little interested, but I continued. “The engineer said they were boasting around town they would saunter out some morning for a jaunt in the offing and be back before tiffin, bringing Togo with them.”

“When Togo tiffins in Port Arthur it will be with Nogi,” said Perkis. Then he had time to say nothing more, nor had I time, for the whole show was drifting our way.

This is what he saw:—a sea untroubled, dazzling as fresh paint; a tender blue sky serene with the bland smile of an infant; a haze of sweeping littoral as unimpressed now before the whirr of steel-skinned monsters as centuries ago when confronted by the bellying bluff of cumbrous war-junks; in the vast offing, perhaps seven miles apart, the growing smudge of two parallel smoke bursts.

“We’d better straight for the Haven,” said I.

Even as we ran for it the parallel lines tacked again and made in for the Harbour V, and as they rode without dismay, without haste, there

broke at fascinatingly regular intervals across the miles of deep that steady lilt of the flail.

The race was now athwart our bows, perhaps a dozen miles off. True, all too true, as Perkis had said, there was nothing but ships. Do you remark it strange if you see ships when you are at sea? Yes, only ships, and a cirrous froth close to the water's edge that might be cannon smoke. That was all, save for the monotonous and not unmusical beat of the flail. And yet we were looking upon that for the seeing of which I would, like Fuller, have bartered a leg-below the knee. It was a naval battle.

"So this is what the engineer says the army has driven the navy to," I remarked to Perkis as we dropped anchor in the Haven. "A try at the blockade. It's not worth the price of a gallery seat, and here we've bought up the house."

"There are not many shows worth the price of a gallery seat," said Perkis, and added, "'specially after the last curtain."

He knocked off and stumbled down to his cabin, muttering, "A Tipperary scrap, below stairs."

I went through the cave and sat in front of the cliffs. It was getting along towards sundown. The Japanese fleet had lain to well out on a line about even with that usually held by the patrol boat for a beat. The Russian fleet was slowly rounding to, under the forts. Scarlet and gold dyed the hills above and the foremost boats had disappeared under the black shadows already made by the cliffs. The panorama was without sound.

As long as light could tell anything to my binoculars I stayed there commanding the harbor mouth, fully expecting to see the Russian ships disappear, one by one, in the V, for it was only there that anything could be detected. Under the cliffs all was dark. In the V alone light showed. The last ray disappeared and still the V was uncut by funnel track or lift of smoke. I sought the *Farwan* and dinner.

"There'll be doings to-night," said I. "The silly fleet has stuck itself down under the forts."

"What!" exclaimed Perkis. I explained.

"It'll be worse than a battle, then," said he, "for them."

I needed no interpretation to know what he meant by "them." The engineer had told us

the sailors had sworn they would not return to Port Arthur without Togo and the officers apparently dared not take them back to town to face the jeers of the army.

"It's playing straight into Jap hands," said Perkis, and as he spoke there blew over the cliffs a hellish roar. I rushed on deck, Perkis following. To my urgent entreaties he grudgingly weighed anchor and we stood around the corner.

It was a steady, frightful sound in which all individual discharge was lost. Not one, not a dozen ships, even in simultaneous broadside could have effected that. It could have been no less than all the fleet and all the forts in constant action. There was a continual roar, like the pulsating vibration of thunder, for from fifteen to twenty-five minutes. Then silence of a few minutes. Then roll, on heavy deep roll, again. So on, hour after hour, without cessation, without diminution, until the heave of the sea rumbled out in spiral lifts, as ether waves to the sensuous diapason of a pipe organ. At last the mighty fortress was telling the stuff of which she was formed. No longer defiance! Angry battle leaped from her ram-

parts now. But could Togo have the audacity to run in for direct attack? We could not answer.

Meanwhile the search lights played us a game of hideous glory. It was the worst night possible for attack, because the moon showed out almost at the full. Added from Golden Hill, the Tiger's Tail, the Lion's Mane came incandescent bursts, less universal, but more to the point. They leaped, caracoled, hesitated, paused, stopped, ricocheted, dashed into the heavens and disappeared like a lost star, dropped into the sea and out of sight like a ball of burning pitch. Thus, in parallel lines, again criss-crossing, again in colossal commotion what seemed a battalion of cyclopean eyes gave proof of the agony with which the dark monster writhed.

When the fort lights played on the scene of battle directly below, the angle of objective became so obtuse that the hoods lapped over and hid from us the weird, gnomish brilliance, but of the lights from the turret tops of the battleships we never lost sight. On our line of vision direct they sometimes pierced even our far haven, again plowed with ghastly ray the

very torpedo nets that hung about their water lines, but ever we caught their dart of vigilance. This kept up for hours.

Soon after two o'clock in the morning the din grew louder, if that were possible. The cliff lights beat a more fantastic dance and slowly we saw the lights of the battleships, inextricably mixed, move toward what ought to have been the direction of the V. By three most of the firing had died down, all except very faint pops that we knew to be musketry or machine guns. Poor devils who had escaped wreck were being potted by the walk guards as they climbed desperate and shivering upon the rocks. The Greek engineer had seen this in the first torpedo attack and impotently felt the horror of the new crime as its faint bark drifted our way.

Togo the next day reported that the Russians had lost four warships, one of the *Peresviet* type, one like the *Sevastopol* and two like the *Diana*. His own loss, he said, was nothing. If noise counts for destruction, then it could be believed, but—we waited.

Another day passed and then we picked up a junk and found the only thing Perkis said

ever came out of a sea fight sure,—the number of ships sunk. The *Sevastopol* alone was injured. Even she came out right in a few days.

The silly thing was done by the Russians, as Perkis predicted. Instead of taking the torpedo boats, one by one, as they came in, the entire fleet shot with one discharge at all the attackers. The effect was that which a man finds hunting ducks when he aims promiscuously at a flock over his head and discharges both barrels. He may get some: the chances are he will get none. When he picks out one duck and lets one barrel after another go for it—well, that was what the Russians did not do on that night of the twenty-third of June.

Then we went hotfoot for Chefoo, with the news straight, but as for seeing—pshaw!

“No foreigners will ever see anything of a naval battle,” I remarked on the bridge as the dawn wind searched us out rounding the big bluff to our anchorage.

Perkis looked on me with a comprehensive leer and said:

“I told you so.”

SOLD OUT.

CHAPTER XVI.

Mistaking a merchant boat for the *Fawan*, the Russians sink it, while the Japanese buy our precious dispatch boat from under our feet—cornered at last—farewell, and off to join Nogo.

Still, in spite of cynical Perkis, in spite of the very apparent difficulties, I should have staid on for the smashing of the Russian fleet on the tenth of August, even for Togo's overwhelming victory the next year, were it not—well, there is little left to tell.

Ten days later the *Hipsang*, a merchanter from Newchwang to Chefoo in bean-oil and general, was signaled to stop one dark night off Liaotishan by a Russian destroyer. She tried to, reversed her engines and was fast rounding to, when a torpedo was inserted under her left side and she went down in three minutes. You cannot stop a 1200-ton boat in her own length. Eight men were drowned. The rest were picked up by the destroyer, taken to Port Arthur, jailed, scurvily treated, and after two weeks turned adrift in a junk, without chow. While in prison, a Russian officer told the mate that the *Hipsang* had been sunk because the

destroyer supposed her to be: "That damned newspaper dispatch boat."

We had up to then been hugging the Haven close at night, but now even in the daytime, Perkis objected to going too near Port Arthur. So we never ventured so close that we could not, if necessity in the shape of destroyers, should drive us back, make Fawan Haven in the territorial waters of China before even the fastest boat could get within range. This permitted us within fifteen miles of the V, close enough to detect all important movements.

The cruise following our information about the *Hipsang*, I was lying in my berth one morning, about to get up, when the boat came to with a sudden jerk, and I leaped to the deck in my pajamas. The crew stood away with that pitying respect shown by the crowd at a street accident when the word passes that the father has arrived. All made way for me as I hastened to the bridge. To my cry of inquiry Perkie could only point some twenty paces to port.

It was a mine.

"The trouble is," said Perkis, "not so much that it's a mine, but that none of us saw it in broad daylight. I have two men on constant

lookout in the bows, and there were three of us on the bridge with eyes wide open. Not one of us saw it, and we shaved it about three yards to port."

"Who did find it?" I asked.

"Cromarty."

I looked below. There in the engine-room door stood the Chief, with a superior "I-told-you-so" smile on his lean face.

"It proves," said Perkis, "that we are never safe and never will be safe in these waters."

As we docked at Chefoo after that cruise, I was handed a telegram from the Taku Tug and Lighter Company, who owned the boat.

"Must demand release of *Fawan* at expiration of charter," it read.

I hurried to Taku. It was too true. The Russians had not been able to sink us, the Japanese navy had been unable with lies and threats to scare us out, but the Japanese government had bought us out. The *Fawan* had been sold for use in the Sasebo docks. My charter expired in two weeks, and I must make up my mind to a farewell to my gallant friend and servant.

On the next to the last cruise I thought it all

out. Perhaps it was well to stop. Already the *Fawan* had stayed out her last rival in the Great Game by two months. For four months she had been the newspaper talk of Europe and America. Her dispatches had influenced the stock markets of the whole world, she had been the concern of three governments, had aroused the antagonism of two great navies, had survived more perils and seen more dangers than na ynon-combatant in the war. I loved her for the enemies she had made. But I loved her, too, for what she had seen—storm, battle, hidden might, revealed strength, sea-glory and sea-hell. She had made thirty-three cruises and had covered distance that, lain like a tape along ocean paths, could have taken her half-way around the globe—a petty tugboat just like those that saucily ply the dirty silt of the Chicago river. Perhaps it *was* time to stop.

But no—that was not the game. Accordingly I wired to Chicago that I wanted to charter a new boat, that I already had an option on three and that we could again be in commission in a week. It was to be the great battle or bust. I don't know what we would have done for a crew, still—

“Release *Fawan*,” the wire came in reply. “Do not think it advisable to charter new boat. Risk does not warrant further enterprise. Proceed to Tokyo, thence Manchuria, join Nogi Port Arthur.”

That settled it. No more water in mine. Week after week, as we had sailed down the Liaotung I could hear them—pounding, pounding at the land defenses. And week after week as we returned the sounds came nearer, nearer—at first twenty miles up the peninsula, then eighteen, fifteen, twelve, and now, the last cruise out, but twelve miles from the V of the harbour’s mouth I had heard the clatter, clatter of Nogi’s maxims and the sullen reply of the land forts.

I told Perkis and the Chief and they told the crew. Gladness smote me with welcome eye the first time I appeared on deck. Though all were on double pay and it meant the end of a fat job none felt the loss. My message was more than a reprieve. It meant release from the death sentence.

My agent at Chefoo urged that I cut the last cruise. There was nothing to get, he said, and it was folly to tempt fate at the very brink of

safety. The dangers were greater than ever and the gain to be had less. Why not go right down to Taku and finish the job then and there—a bad job at best.

We put to sea for the last time. The next morning the agent was awakened by the hotel proprietor.

“Have you heard the bad news?” said he, “that *Farwan* was blown up last night and no one escaped?”

“I don’t believe it,” said he, and waited.

Then the vulture correspondents gathered. The rumor of our destruction had spread and they wanted first blood. A fisherman had seen us go down off Liaotishan light. The cables became promptly busy. The capitals and the powers knew it that day. Editorials were published headed, “Audacity and Folly.” Condolences went to the family. The *News* was about to make a claim on the Russian government for indemnity.

That afternoon I appeared on the streets of Chefoo, my career as a sailor ended. I met a correspondent. He looked at me crestfallen and startled.

"I thought the *Farwan* was blown up," said he, with visible disappointment.

"No," I replied, hurrying to the hotel. There I learned the idle rumor. How hard on my colleagues—hard as it must be on you, reader—that I can give you only anti-climax to the story.

We crossed the Taku bar at eight the following morning. A tug hurried off, overhauled us and passed me a telegram.

"Thank the officers and men of the *Farwan* for faithful service and advance them half a month's pay." It was from my editor.

I called Perkis and Cromarty to the cabin, where the checks were made out. I explained that money was nothing for what they had done, that I wanted to give them a gold watch or something by which they could always remember our four dashing months, but that they could buy a bit of a reminder with this filthy lucre. The Chief snuffled and the skipper turned away his head. They took the checks. It was a very affecting scene.

Usually when you go on a ship you think of anything but the starting of it. For all you know it may be superhuman power that sets it

going. But to have a whole steamboat wait on your word, just as might a horse, or a wheelbarrow or a bicycle—well, that's what I had for four months, and it was hard to quit.

As we docked at Tongku where I was to take the train for Peking at noon, a crowd showed up on the pier. As I came on deck a string of fire-crackers about as long as the *Fawan* began to explode, and as I walked off the gangplank they kept on exploding. As I trudged off down the pier they were still exploding. I wanted Perkis and Cromarty to walk with me, but they insisted on falling in behind. So I went alone into that crowd deafened by that noise, feeling a proper two-spot. I fear that when I said goodbye to the skipper and the old Chief I failed to see them. There was something in my eyes.

Then I started for Japan, and the Third Army, Nogi, and Port Arthur, where I could hear something and see something on that field which nearly all but four months of my life I had called home—dry land.

FINIS.

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