FRANK FORESTER

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A Story of the Dardanelles

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A STORY OF THE DARDANELLES

BY

HERBERT STRANG

Cover

IN TWO MINDS

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A MEETING IN THE HILLS

One afternoon in July 1914, a party of five men was making its way slowly through a defile in the hills of Armenia. The singular verb is strictly appropriate, for the five men kept close together, always in the same order, and, being mounted, might have appeared to a distant observer almost as one monstrous many-legged creature, hideously shaped.

At a nearer view, however, the spectator would probably have been interested in the various composition of the party, and in certain picturesque elements pertaining to its individual members. The foremost, preceding the rest by three parts of the length of his grey horse, was a study in colour. A black turban surmounted a copper-coloured face, the most striking feature of which was a thin aquiline nose hooked at the extremity, with finely arched nostrils, and a deep dent between bushy brows out of which gleamed sloe-black eyes. On either side

of his nose streamed a long, black, fiercely twirled moustache, and his shaven chin stuck out with a sort of aggressive powerfulness. A blue tunic clothed him from shoulders to waist, where he was girt with a red sash bristling with a dagger, a long knife, and several pistols. Baggy white trousers were tucked into long red boots fitted with large spurs. In his right hand he held a long bamboo lance, from which dangled a number of black balls.

The two men who rode behind him, the necks of their horses level with the buttocks of his, were not so picturesque. On the right was a young Englishman of about twenty years, whose clean-shaven face was ruddy with health and exposure to the weather, and whose grey-blue eyes were shaded from the sun by the peak of a white pith helmet. He wore white drill, with a leather belt, and brown riding boots. His companion, a slight, sallow-faced youth of about the same age, was also dressed in white, but there was something in the cut of his garments that forbade his being supposed an Englishman. Close behind these two, mounted on mules which were laden with bundles of odd shapes, rode two sturdy bearded figures, whose dark features were markedly oriental. They wore turbans and tunics which had once been white, baggy red trousers, and heavy boots of undressed leather. Rifles were slung on their backs, and long knives stuck out of their belts.

The track was stony and tortuous, winding through a jagged cleft in the hills. On either side, at varying distances from the path, rose pinnacles of rock, through fissures in which the riders caught occasional glimpses of fertile valleys below, or of solitary fastnesses or monasteries perched high among the crags. Now and then a bend in the defile opened up a view of the distant peaks of the Taurus mountains. It was wild and desolate country, growing wilder as they advanced.

They rode almost in silence. The two muleteers addressed each other sometimes in murmurs, and it might have been gathered from the expression of their countenances that they did not relish their job and were becoming increasingly uneasy. The sun was hot, and the heat reflected from the rocks struck up into the riders' faces and made them shiny with sweat. But the uneasiness of the muleteers was moral rather than physical. They were Armenians, and their journey was taking them deeper and deeper into the wilds of Kurdistan, among the strongholds of the immemorial oppressors of their race. They were not without a lingering suspicion of their leader, the picturesque person of the hook nose. He was a Kurd, and though he had guaranteed the safety of the party, they had no great confidence in the good faith of a Kurd.

No anxieties of this kind troubled the Englishman. But as the afternoon waned he became a little impatient. Ali the Kurdish guide had assured him twenty times that the end of the journey was near, yet hour followed hour,

and they had not yet arrived. Since there was no doubt that Ali knew the way thoroughly, it could only be supposed that his notion of distance was imperfect. There were camp gear and provisions on the mules' backs; Frank Forester had already spent one night in camp since leaving Erzerum, and did not view with any pleasure the prospect of a second night; in these heights, 6000 feet above sea-level, the nights, even after the hottest days, were bitterly cold.

"Come now, Ali, aren't we nearly there?" Frank said at length, addressing the Kurd in a mixture of Arabic and the local dialect.

"Very near, very near," said the man, extending his arm towards what appeared to be a blank wall of rock.

"He's a man of two words," said Frank, with a shrug, to his companion on the left. "I hope we shall get there before dark."

"Yes, before dark," repeated the youth, in a thin scrapy voice.

There was silence again. The track became rougher, the wall of rock on each side steeper. At one spot Frank noticed a number of boulders, large and small, piled on a ledge almost overhanging the track.

"That's rather dangerous," he remarked. "If they fell they would block the road."

"That is what they are there for, effendim," said Ali, turning and flashing a glance at the pile. He explained that expeditions led by Turkish governors had more than once come to grief in these hills. The Kurds knew how to deal with the Osmanli.

A few minutes afterwards Ali came to a sudden halt, and hurriedly bade the other members of the party draw in towards the left, under cover of a projecting spur.

"What is it?" asked Frank.

"Men coming towards us, ten or twelve," replied the man. "We must wait until I can see who they are."

"Have they seen us?"

"Who can say? But I think I stopped before they saw us."

"Why?"

"Do they not call me Eagle Eye?" said the man proudly.

Frank smiled. There was an amusing simplicity about Ali's self-esteem.

"Well, what do you make of them?" Frank asked after a minute or two.

The Kurd, peering round the edge of the rock, had shown more and more interest as the approaching party drew nearer.

"Wallaby! It is Abdi the cursed. I know Abdi and his evil eye. A bad man, truly, for he will sin against a true believer as readily as he will kill a Giaour. He is hated by all and feared by most. We must not meet him."

"But you don't fear him, Ali?"

”Allah knows I fear him not; but I gave my word for the safety of your nobleness and these poor creatures, and it is not well we run into danger from Abdi and his larger party. Besides, there is with him, riding by his side, the dog German—-”

”What, Wonckhaus?”

”Even so, effendim. That curdles your cream, or call me a liar.”

”He has stolen a march on us, Joseph,” said Frank, turning to his companion. His tone expressed deep annoyance. ”He wouldn’t have come into these parts on any other errand, and I shall be mad if he has pulled off the deal.–I don’t want to meet Wonckhaus, Ali. Can we get out of the way until he has passed?”

Ali cast a keen look around. In a few moments he discovered what he sought–a gap in which the party might remain concealed. He led them through the narrow passage between two large masses of rock, turned the corner, and instructed them to cover the animals’ heads with cloths. They were now within twenty yards of the track, but wholly out of sight from it.

Some ten minutes later they heard the ringing clatter of hoofs on the stones, and the voices of men. Peeping out, Frank and Ali watched the party ride by. By the side of a villainous-looking Kurd rode a big German in loose grey clothes with a blue sash about his ample waist. Behind came nine or ten Kurds variously attired, all armed to the teeth, mounted on horses laden with packs. It was a wild fierce group, and the Armenians, peering timorously round the edges of the rock, heaved a sigh of relief when the last of the party had disappeared. The sounds died away. When all was silent Ali chuckled a ”Wallahy!” and led the way back to the track.

”Very near now, effendim,” he said.

”I hope we are,” rejoined Frank. ”Joseph, I wonder whether Wonckhaus has got my carpet?”

”God forbid!” said Joseph solemnly.

CHAPTER II
CONCERNING A CARPET

Frank Forester was the son of the owner of a large oriental carpet business, whose headquarters was in Constantinople, with branches in several parts of Asia Minor and Persia. Except for his school years in England, Frank had lived all his life in

the East. He spoke Turkish like a native, and could make himself understood in Arabic and in the various local dialects in which Turkish, Arabic, and Persian all have component parts.

For some months he had been in charge of the small branch house at Erzerum, where he conducted the business with the aid of Joseph, his Armenian clerk. A few days before the incident just related, a bazar rumour had come to his ears which suggested a promising stroke of business. It was to the effect that an important Kurdish chief, living about two days' journey to the south, had been so heavily squeezed by the Turkish governor of the province that he felt himself forced to raise money by parting with a very valuable old Persian carpet that had long been an heirloom in his family. Tradition said that it was part of the loot obtained by an ancestor of the chief at the sack of Shiraz during one of the civil wars that ravaged Persia in the seventeenth century. It held among his hereditary possessions the same place as a precious jewel or an Old Master among the treasures of a western house. The rumour that it was coming into the market caused as much excitement among carpet dealers as the announcement of the approaching sale of a Correggio or a Rembrandt would cause among the connoisseurs of New York.

Frank Forester was thrown into a flutter when the first whispers reached him. He had not hitherto taken an important part in his father's business, and it was only recently that he had been placed in charge of a branch. The chance of signalizing his stewardship by securing the carpet appealed to his imagination as well as his business instincts. But the problem was, how to bring off a deal with the chief. The old Kurd was not likely to condescend to travel to the town. On the other hand there would be some risk in making a journey to his mountain fastness. The country in which it lay bore the worst of reputations. Even the Turkish authorities never ventured into it without a strong military escort, amounting in fact to an expedition. The peaceful, timid Armenian traders would have ventured into a den of lions as soon as into the hill country where for centuries no Armenian had ever penetrated except as a captive.

Frank's interest in the matter was complicated and heightened by business rivalry. A year or two before, a German named Hermann Wonckhaus had come to Erzerum and set up in business as a carpet dealer next door to Mr. Forester. The Englishman, who had been established there for many years, felt too sure of his position to regard the arrival of his competitor with any alarm. He met him, indeed, in the friendliest spirit, and at first did him some small services in a business and a social way. But it soon became clear that Wonckhaus was a snake in the grass. There were signs that his object in settling next door to Mr. Forester was to keep a watch on him, with a view to discovering with whom he traded and endeavouring to cut into his connection. Once or twice Mr. Forester

found himself forestalled in business transactions by the German, and as soon as he became aware of his rival's crooked methods he put himself on his guard and maintained only the coolest of relations with him. Still, he was not greatly troubled. The Armenian, shifty as he may be himself in business, respects rectitude in others, and Mr. Forester knew that if it ever came to a straight pull between himself and the German the result would be in his favour. He lived very simply, without parade; Wonckhaus, on the other hand, kept up a considerable style, and aimed at a kind of leadership in the small European colony. He was a man of good presence, great ability and certain social gifts, by means of which he became a personage; but though he had pushed himself into a position of influence he was always regarded with some distrust by the Europeans other than his own countrymen; and the natives, very shrewd in their silent estimate of western strangers, had taken his measure pretty thoroughly.

Knowing that the bazar rumour would certainly have reached Wonckhaus's ears, Frank was anxious to lose no time in opening negotiations with the Kurdish chief for the purchase of the carpet. It was obvious that his best course was to make a personal visit to the owner. He sent for a Kurd whom his father had sometimes employed and found trustworthy, and enlisted his services as guide to the distant stronghold. Ali confessed that the journey would entail some risk, but he promised that he would do his utmost to ensure the safety of the party, and in fact they had come without adventure within a mile or two of their destination when the appearance of Wonckhaus on the track showed that he had again forestalled his rival. The only question now was, had he managed to strike a bargain with the chief and brought away the carpet among his packs?

When Frank resumed his journey, he discussed the chances rather anxiously with Ali. The Kurd took a pessimistic view.

"Abdi is a nephew of the chief Mirza Aga," he said. "Does he not always boast of his relationship in the bazar? He is a liar by nature, but in that he speaks the truth. Therefore it is that the German has taken him as guide. Without doubt Abdi said to him: 'I am in high favour with my uncle, Allah be good to him, and when I say to him, this is the excellency that will give a good price for the carpet, he will bless me, and perhaps bestow upon me some poor fraction of the money.' Without doubt we have eaten the dust of our journey for nothing."

"Well, we'll go on and prove it. Having come so far I won't go back without knowing the truth."

A march of a little over an hour brought the party to a narrow side track that wound up into the hills. It was some time before a turn in the toilsome ascent opened a view of the chief's stronghold. Perched high up on the mountain side, it resembled in the distance a child's building of wooden bricks; but its massive proportions and structure became impressive as the travellers gradually mounted

towards it. In this country of mean hovels its appearance was palatial. The lower part consisted of solid masonry broken by one large gate and two or three small square windows, unglazed and shutterless. Upon this stout pillars supported a number of arches surrounding an open chamber or arcade rectangular in shape and covered with a flat roof. To the left of the arches was a second storey whose walls were as solid as those of the lower; within these, as Frank knew, were the women's apartments. The whole place was silent; to all appearance it might have been uninhabited.

Ali went forward to the great gate and shouted for admittance. After a while a peep-hole was exposed by the sliding of a small wooden hatch, and a man inquired his errand, then slid the hatch to, and departed. Frank had become accustomed to oriental sluggishness and the need for patience. Presently the gate-keeper returned and held a lengthy conversation with Ali, after which he retired again.

"What are we waiting for?" asked Frank: remaining in the background he had not heard the colloquy.

"Wallahy! Mirza Aga will not show the light of his countenance to a German, and required me to swear by the beard of the Prophet that your nobility is not German but English."

"That's promising," said Frank cheerfully. "It looks as if nephew Abdi is not quite such a favourite as he pretends."

"Allah is wise!" said Ali.

In a few minutes the massive gate swung open, giving admission to a large courtyard. Here a handsome youth, the chief's grandson, came forward with a smile of welcome. Frank dismounted, gave his horse into the care of an attendant, and followed the youth up a stately stone staircase, ornamented on either side with richly-carved oak balusters, into the salamlik or presence chamber of the old chief. It was a lofty and spacious apartment, the walls and ceiling composed of curiously carved cedar wood. The floor was covered with thick Persian rugs; the walls were embellished with texts from the Koran, and blunderbusses, scimitars, curved daggers and other weapons arranged in tasteful patterns. At the further end a fire of logs roared in a huge fireplace, the wall above being decorated with arabesques and scrolls.

Near the fireplace, reclining among an exuberance of silk pillows and cushions, was the old, white-bearded, turbaned chief, smoking a long chibouque. At the entrance of his visitor he rose, bowed several times, murmured "Salam aleikam," and clapped his hands. An attendant immediately came in, bearing a number of rugs and pillows which he spread on the floor near the chief. Luxurious as they appeared, Frank knew that they were probably swarming with vermin, for Kurdish magnificence takes no note of such trifles, and he racked

his brains for an excuse to avoid the use of them. Explaining that in his country such soft seats were only proper to the ladies, which seemed to amuse the chief, he squatted cross-legged on the floor, and spent some minutes in exchanging the flowery salutations usual in oriental society. Then the chief, who had already learnt the object of his visit from Ali through the gate-keeper, invited him to partake of supper, declaring that there must be no talk of business that night. Without waiting for an acceptance, he clapped his hands again, and servants brought in a profusion of dishes–meat, fish, poultry, and various fruits–a pleasant meal after the long day's journey, even though Frank had to use his fingers instead of a knife and fork. The meal was prolonged; fatigue and the heat of the room made Frank sleepy; and he was glad when the old man's grandson came to conduct him to the guest chamber.

"He has honesty and benevolence written all over him," thought Frank, as he stretched himself, rolled in his greatcoat, on the bare floor, after bundling the doubtful mattresses and cushions provided for him into a corner. "I rather think I may score off Wonckhaus this time after all."

Next morning came the business interview.

"You must know, O welcome guest," said the old man, "that yesterday there came to me one from Erzerum, under the guidance of a graceless nephew of mine, a man in whom there is no truth or virtue at all. The stranger, a man of the German race, they told me, wished to buy my carpet, and offered me a sum that would scarcely have purchased the clothes on my back. Wallahy! Did he wish to pull my beard? I answered him shortly that I was no bazar merchant to haggle and chaffer; whereupon he made excuses, and perceiving that it was truth I said, he offered a price that was fair, and one that I was fain to accept. But lo! when I asked him to pay over the money, the infidel spoke of a written paper, for which, he told me, they would pay me money in Stamboul. Wallahy! His tongue was smooth, but his eye was deceitful. I said forthright that I would not trust him. Little I know of the German race; they are a new kind of Giaour to me; but so much as I have heard of them did not tempt me to part with my carpet against a German promise. Whereupon our words waxed hot, and Abdi my worthless nephew must needs take part with the German–verily he hoped to fill his pouch at my expense; and my wrath was kindled, and I bade the German depart. And Abdi my nephew flouted me to my beard, and I spoke my mind freely to him, a dog that slinks about the houses of better men, snapping up what falls, and licking what is cast out. And they departed, he and the German.

"Now therefore come and look upon the carpet."

He conducted Frank through the open arcade into a lofty room on the other side of the house. On the way Frank throbbed with mingled hope and fear. Orientals were prone to exaggeration: the much-talked-of carpet might turn out to

be a very ordinary specimen, even a modern fabric cunningly "faked," for he was aware of the tricks practised by dishonest dealers to delude the unwary. Once, indeed, he had himself detected by the sense of smell the use of coffee to give a new rug the mellow tones of age. But hope was stronger within him than fear. The old chief looked honest: he had refrained from boasts and the flowery puffs of the huckster, and Frank felt that the carpet was probably genuine, though possibly not quite so valuable as rumour declared.

The old man opened the door, and stood back with a courteous inclination of the head to allow his visitor to pass in before him. He did not speak a word. Frank halted in the doorway, transfixed with wonder and delight. Hanging on the wall opposite was a beautiful rug, about eighteen feet by twelve, in which his expert eye discerned at once an antique product of the looms of Khorassan. He had lived among carpets from childhood, and knew the characteristic features of all the many kinds of eastern fabrics. On a deep blue ground were woven floral patterns in magenta, red, and blue, with spots of ivory here and there; and on the wide border was the unmistakeable palm-leaf design of Khorassan, with details that proved it to be the workmanship of a particular family of weavers, renowned for its artistic ornament and harmonious colouring. Age had mellowed the tints, but their brilliance was little diminished, for the ancient dyers had secrets which are the despair of the chemists of to-day.

He crossed the room and touched the surface of the rug. It was soft as velvet. He examined the knots and the stitches, felt the thickness of the pile, then turned round.

"It is magnificent, chief," he said.

"It is good work, effendim," replied the chief. "My family has possessed it for two hundred years."

"Well now, let me tell you my method of business. We are not hucksters of the bazar, you and I. Their custom is to ask more than they expect to get, or to offer less than they are prepared to pay. That is not my way. I offer at once the sum which I am ready to give, and I never make a second offer. If it is acceptable, well and good; if not, we part friends."

"That is well, effendim. My ears are open."

"I will pay you £500 Turkish for the carpet."

The old Kurd reflected a moment or two. Then he said:

"That is a fair price, effendim. The carpet is yours."

"Thank you. I have not brought the money with me; it is dangerous country, chief," he added with a smile. "But I will either send it you when I return to Erzerum, or—-"

"It is enough, effendim," interrupted the chief. "You are an Englishman: your word is good. Your countrymen, it is true, are not the good friends of mine

that they used to be. It is told me, indeed, that the German Emperor, and not your King, is willing to help us to regain the lands we lost in the late disastrous war. But I trust the word of an Englishman. The Germans I do not know: that one who came to me came with my nephew Abdi, the master of lies! Take the carpet: it is yours. You may send the money when you will."

"I thank you for your confidence, chief; but such an arrangement would not be fair to you. Something might happen to me; you would have no security. I will ask you to take a draft on the Ottoman Bank."

He took out his cheque-book and fountain pen, and wrote the draft, which the chief accepted with a deprecating bow. Orders were given for the carpet to be rolled up, covered with sacking, and placed on the back of one of the mules. The business having been thus satisfactorily concluded, the chief invited Frank to share his morning meal, after which he accompanied him with a small escort of horsemen for a few miles on his return journey.

CHAPTER III
DISTURBERS OF TRAFFIC

About noon on the following day, when Frank and his party were proceeding slowly northwards through the hills, they met a Kurd on horseback. Ali exchanged salutations with him; he was on his way, he said, to the house of Mirza Aga.

Some ten minutes afterwards, at a bend in the track, they were met by a second Kurd. The usual greetings again passed between the fellow-countrymen, and this traveller also explained that Mirza Aga's house was his destination. But when the party passed on, Ali, whose manner with the stranger had been cold and curt, glancing over his shoulder, noticed that the man had ridden a few paces in the same direction, then halted as if in irresolution, and was at that moment apparently making up his mind to continue his journey southward.

"Wallahy! Effendim, here is a strange thing," said Ali in a low tone. "I know that man. Surely I saw him with Abdi the Liar when he passed us the other day."

"Strange indeed! He cannot have been to Erzerum and back."

"Abdi devises mischief, effendim. It is well that we watch that man."

Riding slowly on until the bend in the track hid the Kurd from sight, Ali slipped from his saddle, and, asking Frank to accompany him, cautiously climbed

the rear of a rocky bluff a little way off the track. From the top of this eminence, themselves unseen, they were able to overlook a long stretch of the track behind them, and in the distance, something more than half a mile away, they descried the stranger, no longer proceeding towards the house of Mirza Aga, but coming in their direction.

"Verily it is some evil device of Abdi, effendim," said Ali. "Let us go on our way, and consider this matter. Abdi is cunning as a serpent, but it will go hard with me if I do not bring his tricks to nought."

They returned to the track, remounted, and resumed the march, keeping a wary look-out in all directions.

"Consider, effendim, why did that man delay and turn when he met us?"

"That is nothing strange in this lawless country," said Frank. "A man would naturally be curious and suspicious of strangers."

"True; but having seen that we are a party of peaceful travellers carrying merchandise–for the Armenians and you yourself, effendim, wear no pistols in your belts, though I know you have revolvers somewhere in your garments–having seen that, I say, why does the dog march on a little way, then turn about and follow us? Is it not the work of one that spies on another?"

"It looks possible, certainly."

"Of a truth it is so, and I swear that Abdi and his crew are not far ahead."

"What of the first man, who preceded him? Was he watching us too?"

"Who can say, effendim? He has gone quite out of sight. Who can sound the depths of Abdi's craft? He is a liar and a worker of mischief. May it not have been told him by some gossip on the way that we had gone to seek Mirza Aga? Well he knows for what purpose, and would it not be an easy thing, in these solitudes, to lie in wait for us, and to fall upon us, they being the greater number, and slay us, and rob us of that we carry? Truly there is no bottom to Abdi's wickedness, and I beseech you, effendim, pardon me in that I have unwittingly led you into a snare."

"That's nonsense, Ali. Whatever happens, it's not your fault. If it is as you say–and I shouldn't be surprised, for in wild country like this they've endless opportunities of surprising us–we must see if we can't defeat their schemes."

This conversation had been conducted in low tones, in the hearing of Joseph only. Ali had an inherited contempt for the Armenian porters, who indeed would have been paralysed with fright at a suspicion of danger.

It was clear that to continue on their present course would be to run straight into the trap which Ali suspected was prepared for them. Ali suggested that they should halt, allow the man behind to overtake them, and observe his bearing when he encountered them again.

Accordingly they drew rein at a secluded spot, where the track broadened

a little, making a salient into the precipitous sides. Ali climbed to a position whence he could scan the track in both directions. Some time passed, and when the supposed scout did not appear, Ali crept back stealthily along the track to discover what had become of him. In about ten minutes he returned. "Come with me, effendim," he said mysteriously.

After walking rather more than half a mile, Ali raised his hand and pointed to a spot high up in the hills on their left hand. At first Frank failed to discover the object indicated, but presently he noticed a whitish speck moving along the greyish face of the rocks.

"Is that he?" he asked.

"That is the dog, as I live," replied Ali. "He has gone up into the hills by a track that I know not. See, effendim, he moves fast; he comes this way. Is it not his intent to outstrip us, and give tidings of our coming to Abdi where he lurks beyond?"

"You may be right, Ali. We can spoil his game by not going on. Let us return to our men, bring them back, find out where he left this track, and follow him over the hills."

"It is good, effendim. To watch the watcher–yes, it is very good."

Soon the whole party was retracing its course. The halt and the movements of their employer had made the Armenians uneasy; but there was only cheerful assurance in the demeanour of Frank and the Kurd; and the men, if not reassured, at least gave no utterance to their fears.

About a mile back they discovered a spot, marked by a few stunted trees and bushes, where a narrow mountain path branched from the broader track. Into this they struck. It wound up into the hills, at first so steeply that the laden mules with difficulty maintained their footing; but after a time it became less arduous, and the party pushed on with greater speed. It was nearly two hours before they caught sight of the man. From that moment they had to combine speed with caution: to keep pace with the Kurd so as not to lose him from sight, but to take care that he should neither see nor hear them.

At length the mountain path took a downward trend, suggesting that it would ultimately rejoin the main track from which they had diverged. Here they lost sight of the scout through the frequent windings of the path. Presently they came to a narrow ledge dropping down very steeply. The ground was rough, and crumbled under the hoofs of their beasts. In spite of all their caution, they suffered a misadventure when still some distance above the junction of the the tracks. The ground gave way beneath the mule of one of the Armenians. It slid over the edge, and rolled with its yelling rider for nearly a hundred yards down a steep incline, until the fall was checked by a clump of prickly bushes. Neither man nor animal appeared to be seriously hurt, but the mule's load was scattered

broadcast. Consisting as it did partly of camp utensils, to the clatter of displaced stones and the cries of the muleteer was added the clink and rattle of tins and iron pots as they bumped on the rocky ground.

The din was a greater misfortune even than the delay and the dispersal of the load. Just as the Armenian picked himself up, rubbing his elbows and shins, a head showed above the rocks a little to the left of the junction. In another moment Frank caught sight of the Kurd they had been following, riding at full speed back along the main track. Apparently he had been resting for a spell.

"Wallahy!" Ali ejaculated, cursing the mule and its rider and the ancestors of both.

There could be little doubt that his suspicion was well grounded. Abdi and his party–if Abdi was in truth the plotter–could not be far off, for the Kurd must have reckoned on being able to warn them before the expected prey reached the spot where they were waiting. How far away the ambush had been laid Frank could not guess.

"Cursed be that howling son of a cat!" cried Ali. "We must ride on with all haste, effendim. Peradventure the rascal Abdi is so far away that we shall have time to reach a village of the plain before he can overtake us. Wallahy! But our beasts are laden, and he has many horsemen without encumbrance. Yet there is no other way. We must leave that shrieking jackal and his load; there is no time to gather up the many things that are scattered."

"No, we can't leave him, but we'll leave the things," said Frank. "Get on your mule and ride with us," he called to the man.

Hastening down to the track, they pushed on with all possible speed in the direction of Erzerum. Laden as they were, the mules could not go at any great pace over the rough ground, and the carpet being the heaviest part of the load, the speed of the whole party was regulated by that of the mule bearing it. Frank suggested that Ali should ride ahead and bring back an armed escort from Erzerum; but the Kurd resolutely refused to divest himself of his responsibility for the safety of his employer, who for his part was determined not to lose sight of the carpet. They made what progress they could, then, Ali falling behind to act as rearguard and give warning of pursuit.

They had covered something less than two miles and were entering a long, fairly straight defile, when Ali closed up.

"They are coming, effendim," he said, "riding furiously, and the foremost of them is Abdi the Liar."

"Ah! And look at that," said Frank, pointing ahead.

Near the further end of the defile two figures were seated on a loose pile of rocks overhanging the track. Ali shot a glance towards them.

"Wallahy! the German!" he exclaimed.

Almost at the same moment the two figures rose. Clearly they had recognised Frank. And then Wonckhaus and his Kurd companion began with haste to roll rocks from the pile down the slope, obviously with the intention of blocking the track.

"Come, Ali!" cried Frank. "Joseph, look after the rest. Bring them along."

Urging their mounts to their best speed, the two men dashed along the track, and reined up only when they were in danger of being crushed by the rocks crashing down from above. The narrow path was already almost impassable. Frank sprang from his horse and began to clamber up the face of the cliff, followed, after a moment's hesitation, by Ali.

Twenty feet above them Wonckhaus stood irresolute. He held a jagged boulder, and seemed to be in two minds about hurling it straight upon the climbing Englishman. Some prudential instinct–it may have been a scruple–gave him pause, and his Kurd companion, taking the cue from him, held a large stone similarly poised.

"Wait a moment," said Frank coolly. "I won't keep you long."

Wonckhaus, somewhat taken aback by Frank's calmness, and the absence of hostility from his tone, watched him in silence as he climbed to his side.

"Another stone or two would have completely blocked the track," Frank went on.

Shooting a curious glance at him, Wonckhaus replied:

"That was my intention, Mr. Forester."

"Exactly. I don't want to interrupt your amusement, Herr Wonckhaus, but you will wait until my party has passed. A few moments will suffice. If you loose another rock till then, I shall throw you after it!"

Frank's nerves were tingling, but he spoke as quietly as if he was announcing the merest matter of fact. The German recognised at a glance that it was no empty threat, and his Kurd looked by no means comfortable under the menacing attitude of Ali, who had now joined them. Meanwhile, Joseph had come up with the carriers.

"Come straight through, Joseph," called Frank, "and lead my horse and Ali's. Go forward: we will overtake you."

As the mules were passing through the narrow gap that remained between the obstacles on the track, Abdi's party came in sight at the southern end of the defile half a mile distant.

"Now, my good sir," said Frank, as the last of his mules emerged from the gap, "we will help you to complete your amusing work. Ali, shove these stones down as fast as you can, and get your countryman to assist you."

Ali grinned and hurled a threat at the other Kurd; the two pushed the stones down the slope one after another in quick succession, while Frank, taking out his

revolver, stood guard over the German. In a few seconds the track was wholly blocked up.

"We have saved you the trouble, Herr Wonckhaus," said Frank. "Good-day."

With Ali he slipped down to the track, ran after his party, sprang to the saddle, and was already some distance ahead and rounding a corner when Abdi and his cavalcade rode up. The Kurd leapt from his horse, scrambled up the barrier, and in his rage and disappointment fired after the retreating figures before Wonckhaus, uneasy about future developments, could check him. The shot flew wide, and Frank rode on.

To clear a way for the pursuers' horses would probably consume at least half an hour, an interval long enough to allow the party to reach the outskirts of a settled district where an open attack upon them would be dangerous. And Frank knew very well that Wonckhaus could hardly afford to be publicly associated with a manifest act of brigandage. Thinking over the circumstances of the trap from which he had escaped, he surmised that the German had intended the party to be intercepted by the Kurds several miles behind, and that he had gone ahead in order to arrive at Erzerum in time to establish a clear alibi if there should be any suggestion of his connection with the contemplated attack.

"A lucky thing for us you discovered that scout, Ali," said Frank. "I owe something to your eagle eye."

"Inshallah, effendim, I am not so named for nothing," returned the man, beaming with pride and satisfaction. "Of a truth I am more than a match for Abdi the Liar."

CHAPTER IV
THE COMING STORM

Two hours' hard riding brought Frank and his party, in the dusk of evening, to a large village on the edge of the plain of Erzerum. There was little or no danger of further molestation; in populous places an attack on a well-known English merchant might entail disagreeable consequences, since the authorities would be almost forced to take action; all the same, Frank wished that he could have completed his journey without pause. But that being impossible, he put up at a respectable khan or inn, where he persuaded the innkeeper, by means of excess payment, to agree to keep his door closed against any travellers who might arrive

subsequently. Frank preferred not to have to spend the night under the same roof as Wonckhaus, who could not be far behind him on the road.

His forethought bore fruit. Soon after he had retired to rest, with his head pillowed on his precious carpet, there was a loud banging on the door, and a rough voice bawled for the khanji. That amiable hosteller at first feigned sleep, but the pretence could not be long kept up through a din that might have roused the fabled sleepers of Ephesus. He got up, cursing, and moved to the door.

"Remember our bargain," Frank called through the partition dividing his select guest-chamber from the common room of the inn.

The man mumbled something in answer, and Frank, wondering whether his promise would hold out against the importunity of the newcomers, listened anxiously to the colloquy that ensued at the door.

"O khanji!" bawled the voice outside.

"Ahi!" was the sleepy response.

"O khanji!"

"What is it I hear?"

"Are you Khanji Abdullah?"

"Ahi!"–a sleepy drawl that meant nothing.

"A curse on the deaf one!"

"Am I deaf, or to be cursed, or do I hear the ugly voice of a camel-driver?" asked the innkeeper artlessly.

"Where is Khanji Abdullah?"

"Who?"

"Khanji Abdullah-ah-ah!" yelled the voice, prolonging the name.

"Why do you wake honest sleepers, you dog of a dogson?"

"*I* wake folk? *I* wake folk? Have *I* the voice of an old dromedary? Have *I* the voice—-"

Here the speaker's shrill tones were drowned by a chorus of curses and expostulations from the guests in the common room, among whose voices Ali's was raised the loudest. When the clamour had died down, the voice of the man outside could be heard again.

"Wallahy! May Allah cast his blight upon the khan and the khanji, upon your religion and your affairs, upon your wife and children and kinsmen and cattle."

"What is this outcry and cursing, O son of a camel?"

"Open your door for honest travellers in the night."

"Wallahy! My house is full; there is not room for one honest man, much less a rogue. Get you gone, and split the ears of Khanji Muhammad yonder; his khan is the place for rogues."

"What say you, O vile khanji? Know you that here is no rogue, but a noble

Alman effendi of great size and weight, whose money-bags are brimming over like a cup overfull! Open then, khanji, without more display of ignorance and folly."

"It is easy to lie in the dark. What know I of an Alman effendi? Of his nobility I say nothing; but if he be of great size and weight as you say, mashallah! there is no room for him here. Let him begone with his money-bags to Khanji Muhammad; he is very poor and needy, whereas I am in no straits, praise to Allah! Get you gone, you with the voice of a camel, and let me return to my sleep. Ahi!"

A stream of imprecations burst from the lips of Abdi, dying down in the distance as he departed with Wonckhaus and his party towards the khan of Muhammad at the other end of the village.

"Was it not well done, and worthy of large bakshish?" said Abdullah, through the door of Frank's room.

"It was well done, khanji," replied Prank, "and the morning will bring what it will."

"Alhamdolillah!" the innkeeper piously ejaculated as he returned to his couch.

His guests settled themselves to slumber and were not disturbed for the rest of the night.

Frank's first act on reaching Erzerum in the afternoon of the next day was to lock up the carpet securely in his strong room. The warehouse was an annexe at the back of the dwelling-house. This was a substantial building of stone, backing on a hillside, with a flat roof covered, like the most of the better houses in the town, with green turf. It had a large arched door, but small windows, hardly bigger than portholes, filled, however, with glass, and not with oiled paper, which the natives commonly used. Mr. Forester had made the interior comfortable in an English fashion. The stone floors were strewn with Persian rugs; on the white-washed walls hung a few engravings, together with hunting trophies. The furniture was of English make.

As he passed through the office on his way to the strong room, Frank noticed on the desk a letter, in his father's handwriting. The carpet having been safely stowed away, he returned, put the letter in his pocket, and hurried out into the street: there was something to be done that brooked no delay, for Wonckhaus had arrived before him. He hastened down the street, which crossed a valley between his house and the Government buildings on the hill opposite, and made his way to the quarters of the military governor, with whom, after the long delay usual in the East, he was accorded an interview.

"I have come to lodge a complaint against Herr Wonckhaus and the Kurd Abdi," he said, when the preliminary courtesies had been exchanged. He related

the incidents on the road. The Turkish governor listened to him coldly.

"I take a note of what you say, effendim," he said; "but you must know that Wonckhaus Effendi has already preferred a charge against you–that you blocked up the road with rocks, so that it was impassable. That, you are aware, is a serious offence. No one but a military officer in the exercise of his duty is permitted to block a road."

"As I have already explained, excellency," said Frank patiently, "I merely completed what Herr Wonckhaus had begun. His design was obvious: the steps I took were taken solely for the purpose of safeguarding my merchandise."

"It is told me that you threatened him with violence."

"I said that if he threw down any more stones–committing, as you remarked, excellency, a serious offence–I would throw him after them. That, I submit, was perfectly justifiable in the circumstances."

"I will not argue with you, effendim. You ought to have engaged zaptiehs for your protection on your journey. The matter cannot rest here. I must submit it to the governor of the province; it may have to be referred ultimately to Stamboul. Meanwhile, I must order you to keep the peace with Wonckhaus Effendi, who has felt it necessary to ask for protection."

Seeing that no satisfaction would be derived from further parley, Frank took his leave and set off for home. He was somewhat surprised at the coolness of his reception. The military governor had only recently taken up office in the town; his predecessor had been a close personal friend of Mr. Forester, and Frank had assumed, almost as a matter of course, that the new official would be a man of the same stamp and equally well disposed. It was clear, however, from this his first official interview, that the governor was unwilling to hear both sides of a case and come to a just decision, or that he was ready to exercise partiality on the side of Wonckhaus. Frank was not troubled about the ultimate issue. The reference of the matter to the provincial governor, and possibly to the authorities at Constantinople, would postpone any decision for months, perhaps years. Meanwhile he would put all the facts before his father, who would know, better than he, how to deal with them.

Thinking of his father reminded him of the letter in his pocket. He took it out, tore open the envelope, and read:

MY DEAR FRANK,

A serious storm is brewing in Europe. Austria has sent an ultimatum to Serbia that on the face of it means war. Serbia can't accept its terms without losing her independence, and Russia will certainly support her. That will as certainly cause

Germany to move; then France is bound by the terms of her alliance with Russia to come in. Unless something very suddenly intervenes, all Europe will be in a blaze, possibly before you receive this. In the opinion of certain important people here the whole thing is a put-up job on the part of Germany, who is backing Austria with the deliberate intention of forcing a war before Russia has reorganized her army. There is great excitement here. German agents have been active for a long time, but the general opinion is that Turkey will keep out of it. She had enough of war two years ago, and her finances are now at the lowest ebb. Still, one can never be sure how far the Germans may succeed in duping or bribing the Turks. In my belief, everything depends on whether we shall be drawn in. Grey will work hard for peace; he may succeed as he has done before; but if he fails I can't see any possibility of our keeping out of it. France will be knocked out in a month if the German fleet gets to work; and we can't stand by and look on at such a catastrophe. Well, if we do come in, Germany will move heaven and earth to induce the Turks to make a bid for Egypt; and certain firebrands here are silly enough in their self-conceit to play Germany's game and ruin their country. I hope for the best, but you must be ready to clear out at a moment's notice. Unluckily I have an urgent call to London; am starting at once, but hope to return soon. Keep your eye closely on events: our consul will have the latest or all but the latest news; and if affairs look serious, I shall come to Erzerum, close down and bring away the stock. We should be all right here for a time, at any rate; and if the worst does happen it will be easier to shape our course here than in your wilds. Meanwhile hold on, and be circumspect.

P.S. Just as well to keep your eye on H. W.

Frank replaced the letter in his pocket. Here was food for thought indeed. He knew that, so complicated were the relations of the European Powers, the outbreak of war between any two of them might easily involve the others, and bring about that vast and universal struggle which had often been talked about, and as often dismissed as improbable if not impossible. To a rational person it seemed sheer madness that Europe should be plunged into strife over the affairs of one little Balkan nation: was it possible that the prophets who had foretold just such a cataclysm would prove to be right after all? And what of Britain? Frank had unbounded faith in the British navy, but would Britain be able to limit herself to the exercise of sea-power? Yet how could she take an effective part in land warfare with her small army?

Pondering these questions, Frank arrived at his house almost unawares. He was roused from his reverie by the sight of Wonckhaus standing at his door, smoking a big pipe. The German smiled and seemed to be about to address him;

but apparently he changed his mind. Frank paid no attention to him, but passed into his own house and sat down to his evening meal with a preoccupied air.

CHAPTER V
UNDER ARREST

During the next few days, the town seethed with ever-increasing excitement. It became known that Germany had declared war on Russia and France, and the sole topic of conversation among the Europeans was, what would Britain do? Rumour flew apace; authentic news was slow in coming in by telegraph; but at last it was officially announced that Britain was at war with Germany, and almost immediately afterwards that the British Grand Fleet had been shattered in the North Sea. Frank, in common with the few other Englishmen in the town, scoffed at this; but the story found many believers, and it was noticed that Wonckhaus ran up a large German flag on his roof-top. Frank paid frequent visits to the British consul, who depended for his information on the Turkish telegraph officials, and there was reason to suspect that a strict censorship had already been established.

As usually happens in Asiatic Turkey when Europe is disturbed, there was growing racial excitement among the natives. The Armenians, a timid unstable people, incapable of effective combination, talked of revolution, and the lower-class Moslems of the town assumed a menacing attitude towards them. The Kurds in the country districts, it was rumoured, had already recommenced their attacks on the Armenians, and Frank was gravely apprehensive of massacres on a large scale. He instructed his Armenian employees to keep within doors as much as possible, and to avoid collisions with the Moslems. His chief clerk, Joseph, while sharing his fears, was not alarmed for his own safety. His father, a man of considerable business astuteness and organizing power, was a contractor to the 9th Army Corps, whose headquarters were at Erzerum, and in good relations with the military authorities. They hated him as an Armenian, but found him useful, indeed indispensable, as a business man, and when business is concerned, religion counts little with the Turk.

Public feeling was stirred to its depths when news came of the arrival of the *Goeben* and the *Breslau* at the Bosporus. There was at once manifested a great deal of military activity. New levies flocked into Erzerum, and there were move-

ments of troops along the whole Black Sea coast. Large supplies were needed for them, and the contractor was busily employed. Frank found it hard to believe that Turkey would be so short-sighted as to take the field against the Allied Powers; but he noticed that Wonckhaus, whose air of self-importance was growing day by day, was frequently in communication with the military governor, and the announcement of German victories became a daily occurrence. Joseph reported that these victories were the talk of the town, and it was openly declared that the Germans would soon be in possession of Paris, that rebellions had broken out in India, Ireland, and South Africa, and that the Sultan was on the point of recovering Egypt, the British garrison having been withdrawn to fight in the West. Frank met black looks in the streets; trade was at a standstill: and in the absence of trustworthy news he began to fidget and to wish that his father would return.

One day a man ran into the office with a message for Joseph. A low-class mob had risen against the Armenians in the quarter in which his father's house was situated, and when the messenger left the rabble were battering on the contractor's door. Joseph at once rushed out, followed by Frank, who snatched up a revolver which he had made a practice of carrying in the streets during the past few weeks. There were unmistakable signs of commotion in the town. The Armenian shopkeepers were hurriedly shutting their booths; some were barricading their doors, others already speeding away with their portable goods to seek safety in remote quarters of the town or in the country without.

When Frank arrived on the scene of the disturbance the mob had broken through the gate into the courtyard, and were battering at the door of the storeroom.

"Stand aside there!" called Frank impulsively, elbowing his way through the throng.

He set his back against the door, and drawing his revolver threatened to shoot any man who ventured to renew the attack. The ruffians, who were armed only with sticks and clubs, fell back, overawed by the Englishman's authoritative voice and mien. Two elderly zaptiehs were looking on from the opposite side of the street. Without much faith in these official defenders of order Frank called on them to disperse the mob, or he would report them to the Governor. The policemen lifted their rifles and moved sluggishly towards him, pressing the mob aside without much energy. But the display of authority, such as it was, had the effect of thinning the mob. One man tried to work them up to resist, but finding himself left with a diminishing number of adherents, and perceiving a half company of regular troops marching up at the end of the street, he slunk away and disappeared.

For the moment the danger was past. Frank returned home with Joseph.

"That man, the ringleader, was one of Abdi's gang," said Joseph as they went along. "I noticed him among them that day in the hills."

"We'll have him arrested. You know where he lives?"

"I do not know. Ali will know."

"Then find out from Ali, and I will see the Governor."

But within an hour or two Frank was himself summoned to the Governor's palace.

"It is with grief and surprise I learn," said the Governor, "that you, a foreigner, have taken it upon yourself to give orders to my constables. What have you to say?"

"Seeing that the zaptiehs were looking on unconcerned at a set of ruffians assaulting the premises of your army contractor, excellency, I think that perhaps a foreigner's intervention may have done you a service."

Frank took a higher tone than he would have adopted had he not still felt the sting left by his previous interview with the Governor.

"It is inexcusable," was the reply. "You will henceforth keep to your own house. If you are seen in the streets you will be arrested. You English take too much upon yourselves."

Frank was too much surprised to expostulate, even if there had seemed any use in so doing. It was clear that his crime was the being an Englishman. Filled with a new anxiety as to the future, he left the palace, to find that he was to be escorted home by a file of infantrymen. On reaching the house he sent Joseph at once to ask the British consul to visit him.

"I think you had better remain quiet for the present," said that gentleman when the matter had been explained to him. "You are technically in the wrong, though the late governor would have thanked you for what you did. Wonckhaus is in the ascendant here. The authorities won't take any serious steps against you at present. Until that affair of yours with Wonckhaus is decided you need have no anxiety. Your course is certainly to lie low and refrain from the least appearance of provocation. You are expecting your father?"

"Yes, I am surprised that I haven't heard from him."

"Well, everything is more or less disorganized. Probably he will turn up unexpectedly one day and take you away with him. All indications point to the entrance of Turkey into the war. She has closed the Dardanelles–an ominous sign. Wonckhaus put it about to-day that Paris had fallen. I don't believe it, but the authorities are absolutely hypnotized by the Germans, and Enver Pasha, their tool, seems to be having it all his own way at Constantinople. I hope to get trustworthy information through a courier shortly; I don't believe what they dole out here. If Turkey does enter the war, I shall have to go, of course; and if your father hasn't arrived by that time, you must come away under my safe-conduct."

On leaving the house the consul perceived that the Governor's order to Frank was to be enforced: a sentry was already posted at the gate. He returned for a final word.

"It means that you are practically a prisoner," he said to Frank, "and it will probably be inadvisable that I should be seen coming here. But we can communicate through Joseph. I will make a formal report to our ambassador at Constantinople, who may possibly make a peremptory demand for your release, though while that unfortunate affair with Wonckhaus is still *sub judice* it may be difficult to move. But there's no need to be uneasy."

"That's all very well," replied Frank, "but my business is at an end, and the sooner I can get away the better. I don't think I ought even to wait for my father."

"You must be as patient as you can. In the present state of affairs you would never get your stock across country safely. I'll do all I can, and keep you informed through Joseph how things are shaping."

CHAPTER VI
RIGOUR

It was now the beginning of September. Frank had received no letters from Europe for two or three weeks, nor the parcel of London newspapers which he was accustomed to get by the weekly mail. He suspected that this had been confiscated by the officials. All the news he heard was that given out by the authorities, together with that which was brought him by Joseph, who was in a position to learn more than was common property. His father, Isaac Kopri, the contractor, included in his business organization a private intelligence department. He got important news as a rule long before the general public, and often before the officials themselves. The value of his information of course depended on its source, and his agents could only pass on what was officially given out in the towns where they were stationed, and the unofficial rumours that passed from mouth to mouth. Thus it happened that, even five weeks after the outbreak of war, Frank knew next to nothing of the actual course of events, and, if he had believed what was reported, would have been wretched because Paris and Warsaw were in the hands of the Germans, the British navy was annihilated, all the British colonies in revolt, and London at the mercy of the enemy.

One day, happily, Joseph brought in, hidden in the folds of his garments,

a number of London newspapers which had come into the hands of his father. From these Frank learnt that though Belgium was occupied by the Germans, their offensive had been checked in all quarters, and their hope of an easy and a speedy triumph was shattered. What most deeply interested him, however, was the news that Lord Kitchener was creating an immense new army, the ranks of which were being rapidly filled by volunteers from every class and section of the people. This did but increase his eagerness to get away from Erzerum. He longed for the day to come when he might hurry back to England and enlist in what promised to be the first national army that Britain had put into the field since the far-gone days when every citizen was a soldier as a matter of course.

Day by day it grew clearer from Joseph's reports that Germany would drag Turkey into the war. Wonckhaus was constantly at the Governor's house; the Governor's aides-de-camp were frequent visitors to Wonckhaus. The 9th Army Corps was being brought up to full strength, and German officers were drilling the recruits. It was even announced that the Governor himself would shortly be replaced by a German officer of high rank. One morning Joseph announced that Wonckhaus had appeared in the uniform of a major in the Turkish army; it had become known that in his own country he had been a captain of Landwehr. The ostensible merchant had been all along, it was clear, an agent of the German Government.

Weeks passed, irksomely, drearily. No letter came from Mr. Forester. Frank was never allowed to leave his house. Night and day a sentry stood on guard. Frank could take exercise only in his yard and on his roof. He did his best to keep himself in condition by means of gymnastic practice, but he was becoming low-spirited and sick of his life. Ideas of attempting escape often came to him, but were always checked by the thought of his stock, worth several thousands of pounds, which he felt he could not leave to be confiscated. To sell it was impossible. In the present situation no one would buy it; if any one were so rash as to purchase, he would probably be making a present of his money and the goods to the Turkish officials.

Frank's fears in this regard were confirmed by the news brought him one day by Joseph. The *Goeben* and the *Breslau* had been attacking Russian vessels in the Black Sea. War was certain. A matter that affected Frank more closely was a conversation which Kopri had partially overheard between the new German Governor and Wonckhaus. Frank's name had been mentioned, in what connection Kopri, being ignorant of German, did not know. But he suggested that the authorities were only awaiting a formal declaration of war to seize the Foresters' stock, among other English property. Wonckhaus was well aware of its value, and apart from its usefulness in assisting the Turkish finances, Wonckhaus had a personal grudge to pay off.

This news set Frank in a ferment. Every other consideration was now subordinated in his mind to the question of saving his stock. He was at his wits' end. He consulted with Joseph, but Joseph seemed unable to suggest any likely means. It was only at the end of a long conversation that the Armenian sprang a surprise upon him.

In Erzerum, owing to the constantly recurring troubles, the Armenians have various hiding-places in which they secrete their valuables and occasionally themselves. The whereabouts of these spots is jealously guarded, and it was only when Frank had given up his problem in despair that Joseph divulged a secret locked up in his breast.

"Why on earth didn't you tell me this before?" demanded Frank with some indignation.

Joseph begged for forgiveness on the plea that the secret belonged to his community, and he had his father's permission to reveal it only in the last resort.

"Well, send the servants out of the house on some errand or other, and then show me the place."

The house was an old one, which had played a part in the troubled history of the city. When the servants had been disposed of, Joseph took Frank to one of the lower rooms. The back wall was apparently built against the solid hillside; but a sliding panel, cunningly disguised, gave access to a narrow passage which bent abruptly to the left. Groping his way through this for some distance at Joseph's heels, Frank found himself in a small chamber about eight feet square. He sniffed.

"What is this smell of smoke?" he asked.

"There is a narrow pipe running into the chimney next door," Joseph replied.

"Does Wonckhaus know of it?" asked Frank instantly.

"It is not at all likely. Karamin, who owns this house, probably does not know of it. If he does, he would not tell Wonckhaus. I should not have told you but—-"

"Yes, yes; I understand. But this is capital. We can bring here the most valuable part of our stock; it won't do to bring it all, for Wonckhaus would suspect a hiding-place if he found all our things gone. Come, let us do it at once."

Together they worked for an hour or two in transporting the most valuable rugs, including Mirza Aga's, to the secret chamber. When this was done, and the panel replaced, Frank felt exultingly confident that the inevitable search would completely baffle the enemy.

He had not long to wait for confirmation of his faith. October dragged away; on November 2 the streets were filled with excited people, cheering the news that the British and Russian ambassadors had left Constantinople. In anticipation of the outbreak of hostilities troops had been for some days marching

eastward and north-eastward towards the Russian frontier and the Caucasus, deluded by their German officers into the belief that Russia had withdrawn the greater part of her forces from Transcaucasia to withstand the German onslaught on Poland, and that they would have an easy task in recovering the ground lost in the war of 1878.

On the same day, a Turkish officer with a file of men came to Frank's house. Leaving the men at the door, he entered.

"I regret, effendim," he said to Frank politely, "that I have orders to arrest you and convey you to the citadel."

"For what reason, and on what charge?" asked Frank.

"Your country and mine are now at war, effendim. As an alien of military age, you cannot remain at large. Besides, there is that matter of blocking the road. The higher authorities at Stamboul have not yet given their decision; but in the meantime the Governor deems it necessary to imprison you. I assure you of my personal regret, and on the Governor's part that your treatment shall be as mild as possible."

Frank did not then know what mildness meant, as interpreted by German military officers. The Turkish lieutenant's politeness and apologetic manner prevented him from feeling any personal resentment at the moment.

While he was gathering a few things together, Wonckhaus came in. The German was so impatient to secure his booty, and possibly to enjoy the spectacle of his victim's humiliation, that he had not waited for Frank's departure. Accompanied by one of his clerks, he hastened to the storeroom, and taking from his pocket a list of the stock, obtained Frank knew not how, began to call over the items.

"You take an inventory for the purpose of safeguarding my property and returning it at the end of the war, I presume," said Frank to the Turk.

"That I know nothing about," was the answer. "The Governor will no doubt do everything in order. Are you ready, effendim?"

"In a minute or two, if you don't mind waiting until Major Wonckhaus has completed his task."

Wonckhaus's voice could be heard from the storeroom.

"The rug of Shiraz, 16 by 12. Where is that? Not here? And the Khorassan rug of Mirza Aga. Not here? But it must be here. It has not been sold. It has not been removed. Pull down that big Ispahan carpet; it may be under that."

A few minutes passed. Wonckhaus was growing furious. He uttered a resounding German curse.

"Come, we must search the house," he cried.

He returned to the room where Frank stood, glared at him savagely, glanced around, and assuring himself that the rugs on the floor were of no great value,

proceeded to a systematic search of the premises. He ransacked every room, and went so far as to strip the roof of its turf. But nowhere could he find the Khorassan rug of Mirza Aga, or several other rugs representing some tens of thousands of German marks.

Frank, in spite of his situation, was amused. Wonckhaus, he thought, could hardly show his hand so completely as to demand information about property which was in no way his concern, and his rage and air of bafflement when he returned to the lower room was certainly comical to witness. Frank's amusement would have been less if he could have foreseen what the discrepancy between the actual stock and the list was to cost him.

Plunder was Wonckhaus's object, and, to Frank's surprise–he did not yet know German shamelessness—Wonckhaus now made no secret of it. He went to the office desk, wrenched it open–"He might at least have asked for the key," thought Frank–and examined the stock book. He wheeled round.

"The stock is short," he cried. "What have you done with the goods?"

Frank looked at him with a smile, but said nothing.

"Do you hear?" shouted Wonckhaus, the charm of manner which had won him a certain popularity among the Europeans dropping from him like a loosened garment. "What have you done with the goods?"

Frank turned to the Turkish officer.

"Major Wonckhaus is curious about my business," he said. "I have no information to give."

Wonckhaus blustered. He roared at Joseph, who had been standing silent in the background.

"You fellow, where are the rugs? What have you done with them?"

"I am my master's servant," said Joseph quietly.

"And your father's son!" cried the German. "You will tell me instantly what I want to know, or you will find yourself laid by the heels, and the army will have another contractor."

Wonckhaus had lost his temper, or he would have reflected that a change of contractors at this critical moment was out of the question. Joseph was shrewd enough to perceive the emptiness of his threat, and merely replied that he could say nothing without his master's orders.

At this moment, while Wonckhaus was glaring with baffled rage at Frank and his faithful clerk, a non-commissioned officer came in.

"A message from the Governor, effendim," he said to the lieutenant. "The Englishman is to be kept a prisoner in the upper storey of this house, the lower storey will be occupied by his guards."

To Frank this was very agreeable news. He had felt unhappy at the prospect of being shut up in the common prison, or even in the soldiers' prison at the

citadel: Turkish jails are unsavoury places. In his own house he would at least be able to keep clean. Moreover, he would then be able, in a sense, to watch over his carpets. The hiding-place could hardly be discovered without his hearing of it, and there would be a certain satisfaction in knowing that his property was still safe, or, if it were found, in learning definitely what had become of it. He afterwards discovered that the change of plan was due to the British consul, who had learnt of the order for his arrest when he applied for a passport for him, and had obtained this indulgence from the Governor.

Frank noticed that Wonckhaus also appeared to get some satisfaction from the change. The German made no further attempt to obtain the information he desired, and left the house. Frank was taken upstairs and locked in his own bedroom. Joseph, however, was marched off by a couple of the soldiers, and it was some few days before Frank learnt what had become of him.

CHAPTER VII
TEMPTATION

Frank felt that while things might have been worse, they were quite bad enough. The ostensible reason of his imprisonment being that he was of military age, he foresaw the possibility of his remaining a prisoner until the end of the war–perhaps a year, for while he had a great respect for Germany's military power, he did not think it likely that she could withstand the forces of the Triple Entente for more than twelve months.

At first he had no great hardship to endure. His own servants had been dismissed, but he had been given as personal attendant an old Arab named Hussein who combined the natural courtesy of his race with another Eastern characteristic–a keen appetite for bakshish. Frank had been allowed to keep his ready money, and was thus able to purchase many comforts to supplement the prisoner's fare supplied him. Hussein, of course, made a handsome profit out of every transaction in which he was thus employed, and Frank soon saw the necessity of self-restraint, for money would not last for ever, and there was no chance of obtaining more.

Hussein was talkative and intelligent, always polite, and, Frank suspected, sly. It was from him that Frank learnt, after a few days, that Joseph had been released from the common jail and had left the town. The Turks were straining

every nerve to collect supplies for their campaign in the Caucasus, and Joseph's father the contractor was too useful a man to be alienated. It was not long before Frank had proof of Hussein's slyness.

"The days are getting colder, effendim," he said one day. "There was snow in the night."

"Very uncomfortable for the army," said Frank.

"True. Our winter is very long, very bitter. It is not so in your country, effendim?"

"Not so bitter, perhaps, but quite as long as we like it."

"Wallahy! This country is not a healthy place for Englishmen in the winter. Hundreds of them have left Turkey, so it is told me. Of a truth Turkey is not a healthy place for them now! A pity you are not gone too, effendim."

"Well, I am certainly not here by my own wish."

"A wish is the father of an action, effendim. You have but to wish, and—-"

"What are you driving at?" said Frank as the Arab paused.

"There was a man of Trebizond who being falsely accused and unjustly cast into prison, nevertheless after taking thought confessed with tears that he was guilty of that crime; whereupon the heart of his jailer was softened and his hand was opened to receive the slight gifts that were the tokens of the prisoner's repentance, and within a little that man was free, and able to sin again or to lead a virtuous life as so pleased him."

"A parable, Hussein?" said Frank with a smile.

"For the ears of the wise, effendim. Wallahy! what are a man's goods in comparison with his freedom?"

"Which being interpreted means that you will let me go in exchange for what you call a few slight gifts?"

"Truly such gifts, here a little, there a little, will unlock prison doors and unbar city gates. But there is first one small matter, and that is that you breathe in my ear the nook where those few paltry rugs lie hid. Wallahy! what are a few threads of wool against the open road and the boundless sky?"

"Oho, friend Hussein! I must contrive a double debt to pay, is that it? The pipe sings sweetly when the fowler is snaring a bird, but this particular bird, I assure you, is not to be snared. You will waste your breath, Hussein."

"Allah is great!" said the Arab, as he made the salam and left the room.

A few days passed. Frank noticed that there was a slight deterioration in the quality of his food. Then one morning he had a visit from Wonckhaus.

"Good-morning, Mr. Forester," said the German pleasantly. "What an unfortunate thing this is!"

Frank made no answer. After a pause the German went on:

"We have been rivals in business, and now, through an unfortunate mis-

understanding between our Governments, we are enemies. But the enmity is official, not personal, I assure you. We have crossed each other in business, but business men do not quarrel. And there is one circumstance that should make us friends. After all, you and I are Europeans among Orientals; that is a bond between us; and you will not take amiss advice honestly given by one European to another. You may not credit it" (Frank didn't), "but up to the present I have stood between the Turks and you. But for me your life would not have been worth a snap. Now I am about to leave the city for the front. The Turkish army, led by German officers, is about to deal a smashing blow to the barbarous Russians in the Caucasus, and to occupy Batum. Before I leave, it would give me great pleasure to see you in a safer position. It merely needs the exercise of your capital English principle of give-and-take. Why not disclose the whereabouts of your useless stock? In return, I would contrive that you should be sent to Constantinople and ultimately released."

Frank did not speak. His fingers were drumming on the table, his eyes fixed on the German's.

"I merely drop you a friendly hint," Wonckhaus resumed. "Things are looking very serious. The Turks are making a beginning with the Armenians: when the appetite for blood is whetted, they may easily fail to discriminate between Armenians and other enemies. You will not forget that you are in a very remote place. Erzerum is not Constantinople. Take a friend's advice and get back to civilisation. I will act as a go-between. If you will confide in me, I will make your peace with the Turks."

"What guarantee do you offer?" asked Frank, opening his lips at last.

"My word; you will not require more; the word of a German and an officer."

"But surely, Herr Wonckhaus, unless I am mistaken your word has not hitherto been accepted even by your allies the Turks. Pardon me for asking what has happened to give it value."

"You insult me!" snapped the German.

"Really I don't think so; I merely state a fact. You offer me something of no value as security for something of considerable value. That is not a business proposition."

Wonckhaus, stung as much by Frank's scornful tone as by his words, flushed darkly, and took a step forward, laying his hand on his sword.

"You English swine!" he cried. "You dare to insult me–me, an officer of the Kaiser?"

Frank had sprung up, and seized the handiest weapon available–a small three-legged stool. Keeping the table between himself and the German, he grasped the stool by one leg, and said:

"Keep your distance!"

Wonckhaus, whether daunted by Frank's threatening attitude or for some reason of policy, stood still, glaring venomously. Then he banged his half-drawn sword into its scabbard, and swung round. At the door he turned suddenly.

"Before your English carcase is flung to the dogs of Erzerum," he sputtered, "you will have time to–to repent your insolence."

He swung round again, slammed the door behind him, ordered Hussein outside to lock it, and clattered down the steps.

Frank dropped the stool and sat down, smiling at the feeble end of the German's explosive sentence. But the smile soon passed. His English spirit would not allow him to be cowed by Wonckhaus's threat, but remembering his isolated situation he could not help feeling uneasy. It was well for his peace of mind that he was not aware of what German frightfulness had already accomplished in Belgium.

It was not long before he began to feel the effects of Wonckhaus's malice. The cold weather had set in, and the Armenian winter is excessively cold. His apartment had been warmed by a nargal or charcoal stove. This was not replenished.

"The fire has gone out," he said to the Arab, when he brought his dinner.

"Fuel is very dear, effendim."

"I have still some money; I will pay."

"It cannot be bought, effendim. It is all required for the troops, who are slaying tens of thousands of Russians in the bleak mountains."

"Buy me some blankets, then."

"That also is impossible, effendim. Our brave soldiers need all the blankets in the frosty heights. Why does not your nobility send for those wasted rugs?"

The man's sly look made Frank itch to thrash him. It was clear from his manner that he was acting under instructions. Frank noticed, too, that his food was being reduced in quantity as well as poorer in quality, and suspected that this was directly due to Wonckhaus; the Turks as a rule do not treat their prisoners inhumanely. More than once he had thought of trying to escape, and with his increasing hardships his mind recurred to it again and again. To get out of the building might not be very difficult; Orientals are notoriously slack in guard; the lock of his room might be forced, and the soldiers in the rooms below evaded. But then the real difficulties would begin. He would be recognised in the streets as a European; even before he could reach the walls discovery and arrest were certain. Escape was impossible without assistance from outside, and he had no means of communicating with friends, nor was it probable that any European friends remained in the town.

Tortured by cold and hunger, Frank spent the most wretched month of his life during December. Strong though he was in constitution, he felt that he

was growing weaker. For a time he tried to keep himself in condition by daily physical exercises; but insufficient food and lack of fresh air–he was allowed to mount to the roof for an hour a day–gradually reduced his energy. There was nothing to alleviate the tedium of his imprisonment: no newspapers, no books, nothing to occupy his mind. He was often tempted to purchase his freedom by surrendering his secret; but his native resolution and the mental picture of Wonckhaus's triumph kept him steadfast. And it was no ordinary will that could have withstood day after day Hussein's sly reminders of how easy it would be to command all the comforts he lacked.

One day early in January he heard unusual sounds on the staircase–a series of heavy clumping blows slowly ascending towards his room. The door opened, and Wonckhaus hobbled in on a crutch, assisted by an orderly, who stood in the doorway as if on guard, motionless, with expressionless face. The German looked pale and worn. He was swathed in heavy furs.

"I had not thought to revisit you so soon, Mr. Forester," he said, "but a Russian bullet has enforced me to return to the city for a short time, and I felt bound to see how you were faring."

Frank was silent; he was, in fact, amazed that Wonckhaus should have cared to show his face again after what had passed at their last interview. "The Germans must have uncommonly tough hides," he thought.

"Is there anything I can do for your comfort?" Wonckhaus continued. "You are not looking very well. I have some influence, a very little, with the Turks."

The German's manner was so subdued, his tone so courteous, that Frank wondered whether after all he had misjudged him. Perhaps he had been over hasty; perhaps there was some decent feeling in the man, which his own uncompromising attitude had prevented from showing itself before.

"I want warmth and good food," he said.

"Not warm enough?" exclaimed Wonckhaus. "Yet it does not appear cold. Indeed, I am too warm." He unloosed his fur coat. "And food, too; why, what do they give you?"

Frank saw that the German was playing with him. In a revulsion of feeling he flushed hotly, and was about to give utterance to his thoughts, but he restrained himself with an effort and remained silent.

"Call Hussein," said Wonckhaus to the orderly, whom Frank had seen without observing.

The Arab entered. The orderly followed him, and stood in the background. Frank just glanced at him, and was surprised to see him raise a finger to his lips, then drop his hand quickly and stand motionless as before, looking, however, hard at Frank. Wonckhaus and the Arab had turned towards each other, or they might have noticed the slight start and the enquiring glance into which Frank

had been surprised by the orderly's movement.

"The effendi complains of his food," said Wonckhaus. "What does he get?"

While Hussein, with a look of sly enjoyment, was retailing the list of the meagre rations supplied, the orderly drew from his tunic a watch, apparently of cheap European or American make. He did not look at it, but held it up, then glanced at the window in the wall above his head on the left. Wonckhaus, following Frank's eyes, turned round. The orderly was affecting to look at the time.

"You surprise me, Hussein," said the German. "The diet is more than liberal. How often during the past month should I and my brave men have been grateful for such rations! Ah! these luxurious English! They have lived on the fat of the land. And what is the result? They are degenerate; they have fed the body and starved the mind. They are learning their mistake. That will do, Hussein."

The Arab left the room. The orderly returned the watch to his pocket, holding it significantly suspended by the chain for a moment. Then he stared straight in front of him, unintelligent, impassive.

"Well now, Mr. Forester," said Wonckhaus, "the lot of a prisoner can never be quite comfortable, though it is preferable to the hard lot of the fighting man. If you feel discomfort, the remedy is in your own hands. I need not repeat the explanations which you received so churlishly at our last meeting. I will give you another week for reflection. At the end of that time–well, we shall see!"

CHAPTER VIII
A LEAP IN THE DARK

"What does it mean?" thought Frank, once more alone.

The German's orderly, it was clear, had signalled to him. Who was the man? What message had he intended to convey? From whom was the message?

Frank had at first hardly noticed the man. Even when his attention was attracted, he had observed the man's actions rather than the man himself. He did not recognise him. The man was young; he wore the ordinary uniform of the Turkish soldier; whether he was a pure Turk, or an Armenian, or an Anatolian, or a member of any other of the races that are represented in the Turkish army, Frank could not tell. Whoever he was, the one plain fact was that he was a friend, and it was remarkable enough that a friend should have appeared in company with Wonckhaus.

What did he mean by his stealthy manoeuvres with the watch? Frank remembered how the man had glanced from the watch to the window. Did he suggest a connection between them? Almost unconsciously Frank took out his own watch and noted the time; then he replaced it in his pocket, looking absentmindedly at the window. And then an explanation flashed upon him. The messenger, or his employer, knew English. He knew it well enough to play upon words. "Watch the window!" That must be the message.

Frank got up and paced the room.

"There's somebody working for me outside," he thought. "Very likely Joseph. Though I never knew Joseph to make a pun. Still, he does know a little English. But why should I watch the window?"

He stood beneath it, and looked at the small square frame, scarcely larger than a ship's porthole. It might be just possible to squeeze through it. Did his friend, whoever he was, intend that he should escape that way? Would he find a ladder placed against the wall? Such an escape would be possible only on some dark night, and what was the good of watching the window in the dark? Besides, with soldiers in the lower rooms, was it possible to place a ladder so silently as not to arouse their attention? If it were possible, would not his movements be seen at least by some prowling dog, whose barks would give the alarm?

Frank was puzzled. As he walked up and down, his head was constantly turned towards the window; it seemed as though he dared not take his eyes from it for a moment, lest in that moment he should miss the chance of release. When night came, he threw himself on his bed, and lay for hours wakeful, gazing in the one direction. No light was allowed him. He looked up at the stars until they appeared to dance, and his eyes ached with following their fantastic movements. That night he scarcely slept. If he found himself dozing, he would rouse himself with a start, and stare again at that spot in the wall which was only distinguishable from the blank spaces about it by the winking stars.

Next day it was the same. Worn and nervous, whether he sat or walked, even when Hussein brought him his meals, he stared at the window. The Arab noticed the fixity of his gaze, and told the soldiers downstairs that the Ingliz would soon go out of his mind. And indeed, when two days and a night had passed, and nothing had appeared at the blank pane, Frank himself felt that suspense and the strain of watching would drive him mad.

On the night of the second day, just after dark, when Frank for the sake of warmth was lying beneath the bedclothes, wakeful and hopeless, he was suddenly startled by an unusual sound–a slight tapping, like the flapping of a blind-cord against glass. His heart was thumping as he sprang out of bed and ran to the window. It was too dark to see anything, but there was unmistakably an object of some kind lightly striking the glass at irregular intervals. Excited with

expectation, he mounted on the stool and reaching up for the fastening of the casement, slowly and cautiously, to avoid noise, he undid the rusty latch, and drew the casement inwards. The blast of inrushing air was bitterly cold. He thrust out his hand, moving it from side to side, but felt nothing.

At this moment he heard heavy footsteps clumping up the stairs that led past his room to the roof. He closed the window, though the sound had not surprised him: it was only the men going up to fetch the sheep which were taken up every morning to graze on the turf-covered roof, and brought down every night. He heard the footsteps coming down: then all was silent again.

Shivering with cold, Frank had remained at the window. Would the signal be repeated? It seemed hours before he again heard the flapping. Once more he opened the window, and now his groping fingers touched a thin cord hanging from above. He caught it and pulled it in eagerly. Presently he grasped a stout rope attached to the cord. He drew in a few feet of it, and then could draw no more. The rope was taut. On the roof some ten feet above some one held or had fastened this rope for his deliverance.

It was clear that the next move was with him. He was expected to emerge through the window and climb up the rope to the roof. The window was so high in the wall that he could only reach it by standing on the table. Swiftly he moved this to the spot, wondering whether after all the window was wide enough for his body. And when he stood on the table, preparing to make the attempt, he paused with a sudden dread. Who were these people outside? Were they indeed friends? Was it a trick on the part of Wonckhaus, who had laid this trap for him, so that he might have an excuse for removing an insecure prisoner to the common jail? But on second thoughts he dismissed the suspicion. Wonckhaus had no need of trickery if he wished to increase the rigour of Frank's imprisonment. "I'll risk it," he murmured.

And now his difficulties began. Inside, the window had only a narrow ledge; outside, it was flush with the wall: there was no sill. When once he had got through, there was no possibility of returning; but to get through–that was the problem. There was no secure foothold after he left the table; the window was too low for him to stand upright on the ledge, or even to sit on it. He would have to haul himself out by main strength.

He placed his chair on the table, and standing on that, found that his head was now higher than the top of the window. Then he stooped, put his head out, braced himself for the effort, and taking a grip on the rope as high above his head as he could, he lifted his feet and threw his whole weight on it. For a moment it yielded slightly, but then became taut again. Then he got his knees on the ledge, rested a few seconds, grasped the rope a little higher, and managed to drag his legs out so that he swung clear.

At this critical moment his energy was almost paralysed by the fear of falling. The roof was only ten or twelve feet above him, and a few months before he would have made light of swarming up a rope of double that length. It was only now, when he was committed to the enterprise beyond recall, that he realised how his strength had been reduced by privation and want of exercise. But exerting his will to the utmost, he began to haul himself up hand over hand. Bits of earth struck him, and thudded on the ground below. The fear that the sound would bring the soldiers out made him try to climb faster; but finding his strength failing, he twisted his leg round the rope and steadied himself for a further effort. More material fell from above, and struck the ground with a heavier thud. Sounds from the lower floor warned him that the men's attention had been aroused, and he climbed on, ascending by slow and painful inches. In spite of himself he was forced to rest again, but the support his legs gained from the rope was not sufficient to relieve the strain on his arms, and he had almost given himself up for lost when he felt the rope being slowly drawn up. Too weak to climb further, he could only grip the rope and ascend passively, bumping against the wall and scoring his knuckles.

Below him there were voices, of which he was hardly conscious, so intense was the strain. Then there was a flash upward from an electric torch, and a shout. He felt that his grip was loosening; he was at the point of despair when his wrist was grasped from above. The touch braced him for a final effort; his other wrist was gripped, and next moment he was dragged by main force over the low parapet on to the roof, just as a shot rang out.

Half fainting, he was hauled to his feet, and half carried, half dragged across the turf towards the hillside sloping behind. Up this his rescuers stumbled with him until they reached a narrow track beyond Wonckhaus's house. They heard shouts on the roof they had just left, from the ground below, dogs barking, sounds of growing commotion. The darkness concealed them; their flight was favoured by the clamour. On and on they stumbled, the two rescuers finding their way like cats in the darkness. The shouts became fainter. They moderated their pace, and in a few minutes came to an open doorway. Into this they dived. The door closed silently behind them, and Frank sank in the swoon of exhaustion.

CHAPTER IX
A REHEARSAL

AT THE POINT OF DESPAIR

AT THE POINT OF DESPAIR

It was two days later.

On the slope of the hill, not a stone's throw from the house where Hermann Wonckhaus was nursing his wounded leg and meditating on carpets, was a modest dwelling, huddled among more pretentious buildings, and so inconspicuous that a passer would hardly have thought it worth while to wonder who lived there. At the rear of this house, hollowed out of the hillside, was a small dark chamber with neither door nor window. Any person who might have been brought there in a state of unconsciousness would have supposed, on waking, that he was sealed up within four walls from which he could not escape.

On this particular day three men were in the room, one elderly, the others young. A small oil lamp placed on a wall bracket gave a dim light, and the air was oppressive with staleness and the flavour of smoke. It was not a place where one would have desired to remain long, but its three occupants had chosen it as the scene of a somewhat important rehearsal.

The elderly man was Isaac Kopri, the astute and capable Armenian contractor to the Turkish army in Erzerum. One of the youths was his son Joseph. The second was to all appearance one of those humble Armenians who are employed in driving caravan horses from the Persian frontier to Erzerum and thence to the Black Sea port of Trebizond. He stood at one end of the room, facing his companions at the wall opposite.

Kopri stepped forward, and, speaking in Turkish, asked sharply:

"Who are you?"

"I am your servant, effendim," replied the young man, "Reuben Donessa, the son of Aaron of the Five Wells."

"Where do you come from?"

"From Bashkala, effendim."

"How old are you?"

"Truly I know not, effendim, but my years may be nineteen or twenty."

"Why are you not in the army?"

"Because it is the will of Allah and the noble governor that I should be dispensed from the war service of the Illustrious."

"Where is your paper?"

"Behold it, effendim."

He took from the breast of his shaggy tunic a dirty crumpled paper, which Kopri took and read aloud. It set forth the style and titles of the Sultan, then those of his deputy the governor of Erzerum, and finally declared: "Certifies that the bearer, Reuben Donessa, is employed in the service of Isaac Kopri, contractor to the army of the Commander of the Faithful."

"Isaac Kopri should employ older men, but your paper is in order. You may go."

"Peace be with you, effendim."

"Very good, very good," said Kopri, handing back the paper. "But you must pitch your voice a little higher. Joseph, say 'I am your humble servant, effendim.'"

Joseph repeated the words.

"That is the tone, mark you," said his father. "Now we will go through it again."

The dialogue was repeated, the driver, who seemed somewhat amused at the gravity of the others, imitating Joseph's reedy intonation.

"That is better," said Kopri at its conclusion. "But remember, effendim, tone and accent are not everything. You must bow, and stand humbly, and cast down your eyes, not look forthright into the eyes of your questioner when you answer him. We Armenians have been oppressed for five hundred years. We move meekly on the face of the earth. You Englishmen bear yourselves differently. You walk and stand as if you were the lords of the world. If you would pass for an Armenian you must remember that in the eyes of the Turk you are less than the smallest grain of dust. Keep that in mind, and all will be well."

Frank smiled as he made a humble salam.

"How will that do?" he asked.

"Very good, very good–with a little more crook in the knees. And now I will explain my plan."

Frank had been rescued by Joseph with the help of Ali, the faithful Kurd, and brought to this secret chamber in the obscure house, from which it was entered by a passage beneath the floor. His escape had raised a commotion in the town. Search had been made for him in all directions until Kopri started a rumour that he had bribed Kurds to pass him through Kurdistan into Persia. Wonckhaus was furious, and had promised a high reward to any one who captured the fugitive.

When Joseph was released, in the early days of Frank's imprisonment, his father thought it politic that he should leave the town, and had taken him away on one of his business journeys into the country. Then, fearing that the Armenians were about to suffer in one of the wholesale massacres which break forth in times of disturbance, Kopri had sent all his family to Constantinople, where they would be for a time, at least, safer than in Erzerum, and whence they might in case of need slip across the frontier into Bulgaria or Greece. He himself had the protection of the military authorities, but this might fail him at any moment; indeed, he had already been forced to part with some of his profits in the way of war contributions.

Having thus disposed of his family, Kopri was now intending to join them. The Turkish army in the Caucasus was hard pressed by the Russians, and in great need of supplies. With the ostensible purpose of fetching provisions, Kopri was

arranging to take a large number of mules to Trebizond, to await his return from Constantinople. Most of the mules were already on the road. He would follow at the tail end of the caravan, which was in charge of a few specially trusty men, and his plan was that Frank and Joseph should slip out of the city by night, and join him at Ilija, a village at the foot of the hills to the west.

Kopri was well aware of the risks he was running in assisting the Englishman's escape. But Mr. Forester was an old friend of his, and learning in Constantinople that the merchant, on his return there, had been greatly distressed at being unable to communicate with his son, he had willingly yielded to Joseph's entreaty that they should attempt to rescue Frank. He remembered also how Frank had run risks in defending his house from the mob. Mr. Forester had of course left Constantinople with other British residents at the outbreak of war, but he had left word that he should not travel farther than Malta, where he would remain until he had news of Frank.

The arrangements having been thoroughly discussed, Kopri left the house, where his son was to stay with Frank until nightfall. As soon as it was dark, the two slipped out, and crossing roofs, threading alley ways, stealing over gardens, they came at length to the ramparts of the city. The old walls, defended by sixty-two towers, had long been demolished and replaced by mounds of earth with ditches. Guns were mounted at intervals, and the four gates were closely guarded by sentinels; but between them there were many spots where discreet persons might scale the ramparts, and at one of these an Armenian servant of Kopri's was awaiting the fugitives, with a rope by which to let them down on the outer side.

They had taken the precaution to wear white garments, so that dark figures should not show against the snow that covered the ground. Safely over the ramparts, they hurried by a roundabout route across the snow-clad plain, and near midnight arrived at Ilija, where they found Kopri in a small inn with five muleteers. Here they rested for the night. Next morning they started as soon as it was light.

Few would have recognised Frank in the rough garb of a muleteer. Nor was he so pale as might have been expected after months of confinement and privation. Joseph had utilised the two days of hiding to effect a transformation in his master's complexion. He had lightly stained his face, hair, arms, and the upper part of his body. There must be no tell-tale patches to rouse suspicion. And with his dark skin and rough dirty clothes Frank bore little likeness to the well-dressed fair Englishman for whom Wonckhaus's emissaries had sought high and low.

For ten days the caravan marched over plain and hill, on a road on which the snow had been beaten down and hardened by the passage of many travellers. The mules were laden with articles of merchandise for Constantinople, includ-

ing a number of carpets in rough bundles. Frank was in charge of one of these bundles.

Scarcely anything broke the slow monotony of the journey. Here they would meet a line of bullock-carts, groaning and creaking under loads of uniforms and equipment for the Caucasian army. Then would come a long string of shaggy Bactrian camels, padding noiselessly along with their drivers in sheepskin caps marching at the side. Once they met a family of turbaned Moslems on horseback, sitting astride their overhanging mattresses, from which hung a jangling cluster of cooking-pots. Sturdy Armenian peasants on foot, Kurdish horsemen, a regiment of infantry for whose passage the mules had to leave the beaten road for the soft snow at the sides, formed part of the traffic which the caravan encountered from time to time.

The journey imposed a considerable strain on Frank, weakened by his imprisonment. But he had a good constitution, and it was gradually re-established by the keen air, and the plentiful food which was obtained at the khans en route. And when, on the afternoon of the tenth day after leaving Erzerum, the caravan defiled into the streets of Trebizond, he was conscious of having recovered something of his old vigour, and refreshed by the sight of the sea on whose waters he would soon be borne to Constantinople. But, not having the gift of second sight, he was far from imagining the strange and perilous adventures into which he was shortly to be plunged.

CHAPTER X
A BRITISH SHELL

The caravan jostled its way through the crowded streets of Trebizond towards the landing-place. The port was in a state of exceeding liveliness. Ships were loading and unloading in the harbour; caravans were starting for the interior; and throngs of people of various nationalities made kaleidoscopic patterns as they moved about in dresses of every hue, the Persians conspicuous by their high black caps and long green robes reaching to the ankles.

Kopri's mule train was directed towards a small coasting steamer, lying alongside the quay, in which the contractor was a part owner. She had arrived the previous day with arms and ammunition from Constantinople, and was to leave again that night on her return voyage, which would be interrupted only

by a call at Sinope to take in coal. Large crates of her recently unshipped cargo lay on the quay, awaiting transport, and though most of them were covered with tarpaulins, Frank noticed that many bore German marks. Having given orders for the stowment of his cargo, Kopri went to an inn overlooking the bay to pick up what news was bruited. He left Joseph in charge, and recommended that Frank should go on board, ostensibly as shipping clerk, so as to be out of harm's way. The perishable merchandise was quickly stowed away below; the bales of carpets strewed the deck.

When the contractor returned some hours later, he said that Trebizond was greatly excited by a report that British and French warships had begun to bombard the forts at the entrance of the Dardanelles. It was said, too, that Russian torpedo boats had been seen outside the harbour, and the harbour-master had refused to allow the vessel to leave that night. Frank wondered whether he had escaped from the hands of Turkish officers only to fall a victim to a Russian gun. He remained on board all night, looking forward with more interest than uneasiness to what next day might bring forth.

Early in the morning the skipper was about to cast off when a messenger came up from the military authorities ordering the vessel to await the arrival of an important passenger. Kopri was irked by the delay, and had worked himself up into a state of nervous agitation when, after the lapse of nearly two hours, the passenger arrived. And then his nervousness almost betrayed him: the passenger was Hermann Wonckhaus. He had discarded his crutch, but walked stiffly over the gangway, and at once demanded that the captain's cabin should be given him. Frank was standing by the forecastle when the German came on board, and he instantly turned his back on him. He felt that his disguise was not so complete as that Wonckhaus would not recognise him, and wished that he had aged his appearance by the addition of a beard. When the steamer put out to sea, he was careful to keep out of the German's sight, which was the less difficult because they were naturally in different parts of the vessel, and under the brisk north wind the sea was sufficiently choppy to keep Wonckhaus in his cabin, prostrate with sickness. He did not reappear until they had left Sinope with their cargo of coal, and then he urged the skipper to hug the shore as closely as possible and to make all speed for Constantinople: seasickness and the dread of a Russian attack had made him nervous. The breeze had moderated, and Frank from a safe coign of vantage watched Wonckhaus pacing the deck in conversation with Kopri. Presently the German sat down to rest on one of the bales of carpet, and Frank's heart leapt to his mouth: the bale thus unwittingly chosen for a seat was Mirza Aga's rug. Kopri moved away to speak to the skipper, and Wonckhaus, left alone, began by force of commercial habit to peer at the bales by which he was surrounded. He lifted the covering of one at his right hand, and was stooping to

examine the one on which he was sitting, when Joseph, hovering near, suddenly gave a shout and pointed excitedly seaward. Wonckhaus sprang up and went to the side, with the skipper, Kopri, and some of the crew.

"A dark speck on the skyline," cried Joseph, with outstretched finger.

The group peered anxiously across the watery expanse; the skipper raised his telescope.

"Where? Where?" cried Wonckhaus, hastily unstrapping his field-glasses.

Joseph only pointed. Nothing could be seen. They continued to gaze for some minutes, and then the skipper declared that Joseph must have been mistaken. The false alarm had effectually diverted Wonckhaus's attention from the carpets. He remained at the side, sweeping the horizon every now and then with his glasses, and he even ordered his meals to be brought him on deck, lest if he went below the dreaded warships should heave in sight. Joseph's quick wit had once more served his master well.

It was a sunny afternoon when the vessel steamed between the well-wooded shores of the entrance to the Bosporus. To Frank the scene was too familiar to hold any fresh charm; but his interest was quickened when he noticed the long low shapes of the *Goeben* and the *Breslau* at anchor in the strait. There were signs of repairing work proceeding on the former. Wonckhaus, who had now recovered his courage, talked to Kopri about the vessels with swelling pride, while Joseph superintended the rolling of the carpets to the side in preparation for unloading. Frank was not quite easy in mind until Wonckhaus had crossed the gangway and disappeared among the crowd on the quay.

The cargo was unloaded, Kopri undertaking to convey the precious carpet to a place of security. Frank remained on board until the contractor should return with information that might guide his future course. That information was not reassuring. The British residents who had not been able to get away from Constantinople in November were more or less under arrest. For the present Frank must remain an Armenian. And since Kopri had been ordered, instead of returning to Trebizond, to take on some heavy crates and proceed at once to Panderma and Gallipoli, it seemed better that he should remain on the vessel until she reached the latter place, and then seek an opportunity of getting into Greece or Bulgaria.

The new cargo was brought on board without delay. It consisted of heavy cases, which Kopri surmised to contain ammunition, and quantities of food stuffs for Gallipoli, whither troops were being despatched in all haste both by land and sea. Several German and Turkish officers came aboard when the cargo had been stowed, and Frank was annoyed and somewhat alarmed to see that Wonckhaus was among them. It was irksome to him to be continually on the watch, dodging the German.

The vessel ran down the Sea of Marmora to Panderma, the terminus of the Smyrna railway, where some of the officers disembarked with the heavy cases. Frank was on deck when these were swung out of the hold. As one of them was in mid-air the tackle broke, and the case fell heavily on to the quay, striking its edge. In spite of the iron bands that held it together it broke open, and one of the Turkish officers ordered Frank among others standing by to run over and try to put it together. The break disclosed the top of the periscope of a submarine. Frank had time to notice the label of the case: it was addressed "Adramyti." But he saw no more, for a German captain rushed up in a rage, drove off the crowd that was gathering, peremptorily ordered the crew to return to the ship, and hurled volleys of abuse at the men in charge of the crane.

The vessel cast off the same evening and arrived at Gallipoli soon after dawn. It had hardly come to its moorings when the air vibrated with a heavy boom. A big gun had started work far away. Every half-minute, as it seemed, during the unloading of the vessel, the booming sound was repeated, and Frank thrilled with excitement at the bombardment neither the source nor the effects of which he was able to see.

When the cargo had been removed, he went on shore with Joseph, and wandered about the beach, discussing the past and the future. It was now noon, the sun was bright, and Frank was debating whether to go for a swim in spite of the cold breeze when a slight buzzing in the air caused him to look up. For some minutes he saw nothing in the cloudless sky, though the sound increased; but presently he caught sight of a speck far aloft, moving in a line that would soon bring it straight overhead.

It enlarged, soaring on like some strange bird.

"One of our aeroplanes," said Frank.

"Where shall we run?" asked Joseph, alarmed.

"We had better not run at all. It may be only scouting, not out for dropping bombs: and if it does drop a bomb, it will be on the wharves. We are safer here on the open beach."

"But he might aim at the wharves and hit us," Joseph protested.

"I think better of our men," replied Frank with a smile; "but to please you, we'll get away into that pocket in the cliffs yonder."

They hastened across the beach to the left. At the same moment the aeroplane slightly changed its course and seemed to be following them. Joseph in a panic darted to the right. Frank stood still, watching the droning machine with a curious interest devoid of fear. It passed overhead, at the rate of an express train. Joseph was moving back slowly when a long wail came down the sky. Next moment there was a crash. Joseph flung himself face downward on the sand. Frank had jumped a little, but his gaze had passed downward from the aeroplane to the

wharf. A huge column of smoke, dust, splinters of wood had risen just at the end of the landing-place. Men were running about in all directions, horses and mules were galloping, maddened oxen were lumbering away with heavy-laden wagons; and the humming bird soared on serenely.

When the agitation was stilled and order restored, Kopri beckoned up the two young men.

"I have now a little leisure, effendim," he said to Frank. "I propose to take you to the house of a good friend of mine, on the cliff yonder overlooking the plain. He is a man of my race, and with him you may dwell in safety until such time as your future course is made clear."

He led the way up through the pleasant little town. The streets were thronged with Turkish soldiers in ill-fitting uniforms. The town was the base of the army operating farther down the peninsula, and accommodated the headquarters staff. Among the numerous officers Frank noticed several Germans. From the heights he had a good view of the bay, in which lay a dozen transports, while caiques, with cases of ammunition bulging over their high sides, were passing to and fro between the European and the Asiatic shores.

Kopri halted at a little house at almost the highest point of the town. On being admitted, he was met by a patriarchal Armenian named Benidin, a merchant of standing, to whom he introduced Frank under his own name. The old man was greatly perturbed on learning that his visitor was an Englishman.

"My friend," he said to Kopri, "it is not well, that which you have done. The town is not safe, even for me. Already I have sent my family away; at any moment I may have to flee for my life, and if it is discovered that an Englishman lodges with me, my days are numbered. The town swarms with spies. Every man is spying on his neighbour. It will be far better for your friend, and for me also, if he returns in your vessel to Constantinople, and makes his way thence to the Bulgarian frontier."

The old man's distress was so patent that Frank at once assented to his suggestion.

"It is not fair to involve you in my troubles," he said. "I will leave at once."

"It will be two or three days before I can take you back," said Kopri. "I am ordered to go on to Chanak with ammunition for the forts. Benidin will perhaps give you shelter until I return."

"I will do so much for you, Kopri, in the name of our old friendship," said the merchant after some hesitation. "If the English gentleman will remain strictly within doors, he shall be my honoured guest. That must be the firm condition. And I pray that your return be speedy, Kopri, for I know not that I shall be safe even for two days. There came yesterday from Stamboul a large reinforcement of Kurds, who being hillmen will be useful to the army in the heights. You know

them, my friend. At any moment the blood passion may burst forth; they may begin to hunt for men of our unhappy race. Then I must flee, and I dare not take the Englishman with me. He will be left to his own devices."

"I go to-night," said Kopri, "and in two days I will return. It is but a little while, and the Germans here will keep the Kurds in order."

"Alas! I have no great confidence in them," said Benidin. "Their emperor has never stayed the massacres of our people, and though his officers are stern with the Turks for their own ends, they will, I fear, show no sympathy for us. Then have I the Englishman's promise?"

Much against the grain, yet unable to contest the wisdom of the old man's condition, Frank gave his word not to leave the house until Joseph returned to take him on board. Kopri and his son remained with Benidin until the evening, then went down to the harbour.

Next day Frank mooned about, finding nothing to occupy him, restive under this new confinement, and uncomfortable because of his host's nervousness. The old man started at every sound, and twisted his hands in panic fright if Frank approached the window. There were sounds of great activity in the bay–the snorting of tugs, the clang of donkey engines, and the rattle of chains, reverberated in a hundred echoes from the hills. Frank longed to see what was going on; but there was nothing for it but to be patient; after all, another day would see his release.

On the following morning, just after the weird notes of a Turkish trumpet had announced the dawn, there came the rumble of distant guns, which continued like a remote prolonged thunderstorm for some hours. In the afternoon, when Frank was sitting with Benidin in an upper room, they were startled by a tremendous boom close at hand.

"A shell from a big gun," cried Frank, springing up.

"Keep away from the window," the Armenian pleaded. "I do not fear your English shells as much as I fear the Turks. I will go out and see what is happening."

Frank was left to himself. He wondered whether an aeroplane had dropped another bomb on the harbour. The fact was that the British fleet had begun to bombard the town by indirect fire from the Gulf of Saros. When Benidin descended into the town, he found the people fleeing in all directions. Many were hurrying to the caves which cut into the cliffs. The largest of these had already been appropriated by the headquarters staff.

A few minutes after Benidin had left the house, a second bang shook the place, shattering the glass. Frank's heart beat fast as he looked out of the window: there was no danger at this moment that any one would notice him. Towards the harbour he saw a geyser of black smoke spreading its top in the air. Then he was

conscious of a rushing humming sound coming towards him. He looked up with curiosity. Nothing could be seen. Suddenly there was a tremendous crash on the roof of the house. The place collapsed like a house of cards, and Frank, in the first conscious second of his fall, heard an ear-splitting explosion, accompanied by a blinding flash, and felt sharp blows upon every part of his body. Then he knew no more.

CHAPTER XI
DANGER

The return to consciousness was a painful experience. Frank's head ached violently; his nostrils stung with dust and smoke and foul gas; his ears rang with strange noises; every part of him seemed bruised. For some time he lay simply bewildered, trying to recall how he came to be on the floor, half smothered with dust and fragments of wood and stone. Two splintered beams lay criss-cross just above him: if they had not fallen one upon the other they must certainly have crushed the life out of him.

A loud bang which set the place quivering and the dust dancing about him recalled the explosion he had heard at the moment of falling. He stirred, shook off the litter half burying him, and stretched his limbs. To his joy they were sound. He took out his handkerchief and wiped the dirt from his face. It was streaked with blood.

He looked around him. The house was a mere mass of wreckage. Fragments of furniture were embedded in extraordinary positions among heaps of stone. The roof was gone, the walls had fallen in and out, forming a rampart in which here and there were chinks through which light came. He was on the level of the street.

Shaken, bruised, half-deafened, he lay staring up at the open sky. What was to be done? The bombardment had apparently ceased. He looked at his watch: it had stopped. Where was Benidin? Was the promise to stay in the house any longer binding? But he felt disinclined to move: the shock had left him listless and devoid of energy. It would be no good adventuring until he had recovered something of his strength.

Presently he heard the hum of voices outside. People were apparently moving about now that the havoc-working shells had ceased to fall. He distinguished

a question, evidently from a stranger to the town.

"Whose house is this?"

"Benidin's."

"A dog of an Armenian?"

"Even so."

There was a laugh.

"Is he inside?"

"Who knows? If he is buried in the ruins, so much the better."

"A rich man? All these Armenian dogs are rich. Let us see what we can find."

Frank heard scuffling footsteps approaching, and was tempted to call for help. But the recollection that he was dressed as an Armenian checked the impulse. The men outside began to poke at the rubbish; they would discover him; he must try to evade them. At this moment there was another roar and crash close by, and the group of would-be looters scattered with shrill cries. Frank once more wiped from his face the dust which the concussion had showered upon him. A slight movement of one of the cross-beams hinted that his position was still dangerous. They protected him, indeed, from falling rubbish; but another shell, even if it spared the house, might disturb them, and cause them to settle down and crush him.

"I must get out of this," he thought. "It must be getting on towards evening, and Kopri will be back."

Wriggling out of his narrow prison, he climbed up one of the slanting beams, wrenched away some shattered woodwork, and scrambled over the jagged heaps of masonry until he reached a gap in the ruins overlooking the street. Through this he clambered, and stood amid the wreckage outside. The neighbourhood was deserted.

The bombardment had now apparently ceased, though guns could still be heard intermittently from the south. The inhabitants were beginning to reappear. Dusk was falling. Far down the hill Frank saw troops engaged in extinguishing a fire.

He was at a loss what to do. There was no sign of Benidin. His neighbours would soon be returning to their houses, and then Frank must be discovered. Yet discovery was equally certain if he made his way to the harbour, and in spite of the rehearsal in Erzerum, he felt in no condition to parry successfully the questions of some inquisitive officer who would certainly intercept him before he reached the quay. On the whole it seemed better to hang about the ruins until Benidin returned. If he did not return, Kopri would come as soon as his vessel was moored.

Frank went round to the rear of the house, where he was least likely to be

seen and questioned by the returning owners of the adjacent dwellings. As he contemplated the ruins, he marvelled at his good fortune in escaping so lightly. No one who knew that a human being was in the house at the time of the explosion would suppose that he had not met his death or at least suffered hideous mutilation.

While he was standing thus, a figure came round the corner of the ruins. Though it was growing dark, Frank recognised the uniform of a Kurdish officer. His first impulse was to slip away and avoid a meeting; but he realised instantly that any sudden movement of departure might seem suspicious. Keeping his back to the newcomer, he continued to examine the wreckage, at the same time edging slowly away.

The Kurd stopped, and appeared to be interested in the scene. He came up to Frank.

"Whose house was this?" he asked.

"The house of one Benidin, a merchant of the town," Frank replied, humbly, in the reedy falsetto learnt from Joseph.

"Was he within when the shell fell?"

"No, effendim."

"You are his servant?"

"Not so, but a humble visitor."

"Then make haste and search that rubbish heap. Before the merchant returns, it may be that you will find for me some few precious things. Make haste, I say, before it grows too dark."

Frank could not refuse compliance. The Kurd was bristling with weapons, which he would not hesitate for a moment to use on a supposed Armenian. But Frank, while he stooped and made a show of turning over the rubbish, was determined not to find anything of value. His object must be to waste time in the hope of darkness putting an end to the search.

The Kurd walked up and down, a few paces in each direction, watching alternately Frank and the vicinity. Every now and then he halted for a few seconds within a few feet of Frank, who pretended to be diligently sorting over the confused heaps in the light of the sunset glow. The prolongation of one of these pauses made Frank uncomfortable. The Kurd, to whom his back had been turned, had moved to a spot where he could see his side face, and Frank was uneasily conscious of being watched with peculiar intentness. He was relieved when the officer moved away again, but next moment was filled with anxiety when he noticed that the Kurd was edging round so as to look at him from the front.

"Ahi! You find nothing? Try in this place," said the Kurd.

Frank went forward, stooping, and keeping his head downbent. He was

pulling aside a broken piece of furniture when, with a suddenness that startled him, the officer demanded:

"Who are you?"

"I am Reuben Donessa, son of Aaron Donessa of the Five Wells, effendim," he said.

The sentence came from his lips pat enough, but there was a strange variation of tone between the first words and the last. In the first moment of surprise, Frank had spoken in his natural voice; but instantly remembering Kopri's instruction, he raised its pitch to a passable imitation of Joseph's voice, hoping that the Kurd had not perceived the change.

"Ahi! And what is your town?" the Kurd asked.

"Bashkala, effendim."

"Mashallah! This is a marvel, surely. Are there Five Wells in Bashkala, and does one Aaron Donessa dwell there? Stand upright, dog, so that I may behold you."

Frank realised that the game was up. For the first time he looked straight at the Kurd's face, and recognised with a shock that he was Mirza Aga's nephew, Abdi the Liar, whom he had met on that one occasion in the journey over the hills. It was clear that Abdi had penetrated his disguise. There was a look of malicious glee on the man's face.

"Mashallah! I have found you, dog of an Englishman," cried the Kurd.

His hand was moving towards one of the pistols in his belt. Frank had only the fraction of a second in which to take action. He shot out his right fist, struck the Kurd on the point of the jaw, and hurled him backward into the ruins.

When Abdi regained his senses it was dark, and the so-called Reuben Donessa had disappeared. And a revolver was missing from Abdi's belt.

CHAPTER XII
IN THE HILLS

In the hills of Gallipoli, between Uzundere and Biyuk Anafarta near the Salt Lake, a platoon of Kurdish troops had just joined a half-company of Anatolians. They were taking their midday meal on a level stretch of turf some seven hundred feet above sea-level. It was the only clear space of considerable size in a wilderness of scrub. Below them ran the rough track from Biyuk Anafarta to Boghali. The hill

of Sari Bair, nearly three hundred feet above them, blocked the direct view to the nearest part of the sea; but north and south of that eminence the blue waters were clearly visible. The horizon was dotted with dark shapes, no doubt warships and transports of the Allied fleet. To the south, over the lower hills between them and Boghali, they looked down upon the Narrows, with Kilid Bahr on the European shore and Chanak on the Asiatic. To the north-east stretched the Dardanelles above the Narrows, and here too vessels, but Turkish, were passing up and down.

It would have been apparent to the most casual observer that the arrival of the Kurds was not welcome to their Anatolian brethren-in-arms. The Kurd has a habit of assuming a swaggering air of superiority. The Anatolians were in charge of a captain and a lieutenant, the Kurds of a lieutenant only; but this latter officer, seated with the others a little apart from the men, was treating the captain as though he were a subaltern. Ignoring his inferiority in rank, he had questioned and cross-questioned in a bumptious way that raised the captain's gall. As the captain remarked in an undertone to his lieutenant, this barbarous Kurd could not have been more insolent if he had been a German. And as it was with the officers, so with the men. They ate their simple food together, but the Anatolians maintained a sullen silence amid the loud talking of the Kurds. When it was a question of fetching water from the stream that flowed through the rocky bottom below, it was two of the Anatolians who were told off to the job by the Kurdish sergeant, and went sulkily to obey.

The Kurdish lieutenant was holding forth to the other officers.

"Wallahy!" he said. "Here I am, but it is not where I would wish to be. The fight against odds is the breath of his nostrils to a Kurd. If there had been a few squadrons of Kurds in Egypt the other day we should have been in Cairo by now."

"But there were Kurds–many Kurds," the captain ventured to remark. "It was told me by my cousin in a letter."

"Ahi! Are we in Cairo? In truth we are not. I repeat, if there had been Kurds we should have been in Cairo. Therefore there were no Kurds. Mashallah! Did not Liman Pasha whisper in my ear, the day after we set foot in Gallipoli, 'With ten thousand Kurds, noble Abdi, we could conquer the world. Therefore take me now twenty of your excellent men and catch this Englishman. Have we not had for ten days half a company of Anatolian asses on the trail?'"

This was more than even an Anatolian captain could stand.

"You wish to insult me?" he cried.

"Wallahy! What is this? Insult you? I do but repeat the Alman Pasha's words. Mayhap I understood him wrongly; but it seemed to me that he spoke of Anatolian asses. Who am I to correct him? But come now, tell me what you have done and where you have been; what caves you have searched, what woods you have beaten."

Unwillingly, sulkily, the captain gave particulars of his doings during the past few days. He felt that though nominally in command as senior officer, the Kurd was in reality superseding him. And he resented the implication that he had failed in what was at best a thankless task.

Some ten days before, his information had been, an Englishman disguised as an Armenian had been recognised in Gallipoli as a fugitive from Erzerum. How he had contrived to reach Gallipoli was a mystery. Before he could be arrested by the person who had discovered him, he had made a violent attack on that person, and escaped to the hills. When the alarm was given, the Anatolian captain had been sent in pursuit. About sunset a peasant had seen an Armenian who answered to the description of the fugitive crossing the Karaman river near the Bergas road. Darkness prevented his being followed up, but the hunt was resumed at dawn next morning. It had proved fruitless hitherto. The captain complained that not a hundred, but ten thousand men would be required to beat thoroughly those rugged brush-covered hills.

"Think of it!" he said. "Climbing up and down these almost perpendicular hill-faces; through dense scrub; down one side of a valley, across a stream or a swamp and up the other side; beating bushes; exploring hill caves; searching secluded farms–and all the time without proper food. We were sent away in a hurry. 'Hunt till you find him,' was the order. We had two days' rations, and since then have had to depend on what we could pick up at the farms, and they, as you know, are in lonely places far apart. And we have not so much as caught sight of this elusive Englishman, though we have heard of him often enough. Wallahy! a farmer at Taifur Keui told me that a young Armenian had walked uninvited into his house and demanded food, holding a revolver to his head. Stricken with amazement and terror at this boldness on the part of an Armenian dog–but in truth a famished dog is bold as a lion–the farmer gave him bread and honey, and having satisfied himself, he paid for his entertainment and went away composedly and without haste, threatening to shoot any man that followed him. This being told me, I hunted diligently for two days through the Taifur district, and behold, it was then related that the fugitive had appeared at Kum Keui, ten miles away on the high-road, and there he had waylaid a supply wagon, and taken for himself a great quantity of the good things it contained, and forced the driver to unyoke the mules, and when this was done in fear and trembling because of the revolver, this bold brigand caused the wagon to run down a sloping place and over a precipice into the Ak Bashi river."

"Mashallah! These are marvels indeed," said the Kurd, "and there is no truth in them. But say on, captain; let my ears feast on these fairy tales."

"I speak what I have heard; as for the truth, Allah knows. It was told me also that the dog was seen at Kachili and Kuchuk Anafarta, but when I came to

those places and was searching every nook and cranny, behold, one brought me word that he had been seen elsewhere. Yesterday, as I live, a major of artillery came wearily into Maidos, sick with shame at the garments he wore, which in very truth were the rags of an Armenian. And he told me that when he was riding without escort on the Gallipoli road near Boghali yonder, a young giant that was Armenian in dress but a very devil in mien and bearing leapt forth suddenly from the bushes of the wayside, and laying a mighty hand upon him, dragged him from his horse, and compelled him there and then to exchange his uniform for those filthy tatters the Armenian wore. Yet did the major confess that his ravisher was not without courtesy, for even as he put on the major's heavy coat he prayed his pardon for the robbery, saying that he would fain have left him the coat, but that he could not, because the nights in these hills are bitter cold. And that this is truth I tell is sure, for that same day–yesterday in the afternoon–an officer of artillery was seen, alone, above Baghche Keui, the hamlet you see below us yonder. And I came last night in haste to Biyuk Anafarta, and rose with the dawn, and for six hours I have been scouring these hills, and not a glimpse of that bold Englishman have I seen."

"Wallahy! Truly it was time I came," said the Kurd. "Know you that it was I, Abdi, that found the Englishman searching for treasure in the ruins of a house in Gallipoli which an English shell had smitten. It was I, Abdi, whom the dog, taking me unawares–who can contend against deceitfulness?–hurled fainting to the ground. To me should have been given the task of hunting the dog; now to me it is given; and by the beard of the Prophet I will catch him and flay him; I, Abdi, say it."

While the others were thus conversing, some of the men, having finished their meal, had got up and begun to stroll about the hillside. Others had gone down to fill their water-bottles at a spring that bubbled out of the rock some two hundred yards from the spot where the officers were sitting. Abdi, lighting a cigarette, watched them with a speculative eye.

"Your Anatolians may stray too far," he said. "That will not my Kurds do. Come now, let us make our plans. We must beat these hills as we beat for bear in Kurdistan. See, here and there below us are clear spaces in the scrub. Into the scrub between them I will send my own men; them I can trust to let nothing pass, not a rabbit nor a stoat nor any small creeping thing; they are not plainsmen, blind and deaf. Your Anatolians shall move six paces apart towards the spot where my mountaineers are posted: even they, surely, cannot let anything through so small a mesh. You will form them up in a crescent line, the horns pointing to where my men lurk in the scrub. So shall we beat a large circle, and if our quarry is not started there, we will go on and do likewise farther afield."

They flung away the ends of their cigarettes, rose to their feet, and blew

their whistles. From various directions the men hurried back, the Anatolians lining up on one side of the open space, the Kurds on the other. When the ranks were formed and numbered off, a Kurdish sergeant called out:

"There is a man short. Where is Yusuf?"

The men looked up and down the line, as if seeking their missing comrade; then one of them said:

"I saw him go down to fill his bottle."

The sergeant blew his whistle, and took a few paces in the direction of the stream. A few minutes passed. The absentee did not appear. The sergeant reported his absence to Abdi.

"Take a couple of men and look for him," said the Kurd, twirling his moustache.

The three men went off and disappeared over the brow of the hill. Presently there were shouts from below, and one of the men came back at a run, saluted his officer, and cried excitedly:

"We have found Yusuf, effendim, lying on his back, with his hands and feet tied with his own straps, and his cap thrust between his teeth."

Abdi scowled, and would not meet the Anatolian captain's eye. In another moment the missing man appeared over the crest, led between the sergeant and his comrade.

"What is this, Yusuf?" demanded Abdi roughly, going to meet the man, whose bare head was streaming with water.

"Wallahy! I have been most grievously entreated. I was filling my bottle at the stream there below when there came a step behind me, which I heeded not, thinking one of my comrades had come to fill his bottle likewise. And then, behold, a strong hand seized me, and thrust my head under the water, and held it there until I well-nigh burst for want of breath; and when all the strength was gone out of me I was cast upon the ground, and my wet cap was thrust between my teeth, and my hands and feet were tied, and I was left half dead."

"Who was it did this thing?" asked Abdi.

"Truly I know not, but he had the form of a major of our army, if in the confusion of my senses I could see aright."

"Where is your rifle?"

"It was taken from me, together with my pouch and the hundred cartridges therein."

Abdi spat and cursed, twirling his moustache more fiercely than ever. His fury was increased by a look of amusement on the faces of the Anatolian officers. Aggrieved that a Kurd should have been sent to make good their deficiencies, and enraged by his insolent and overbearing manner, they took no pains to conceal their delight in the discomfiture of the boaster at the hands of the man whose

rumoured exploits he had derided and whom he had declared his intention of flaying. His chagrin almost reconciled them to the escape of the fugitive whom they had been vainly hunting for a week.

But the incident spurred them to activity. The fugitive could not be far away. Here was an opportunity of proving whether Kurd or Anatolian was the better man. Abdi's deliberate dispositions were forgotten or ignored. While Abdi led his men at a furious pace in the direction of the stream, the Anatolian captain ordered his party to extend and advance methodically through the scrub. The hunt was up.

Some two hours later a young man in the uniform of a major of Turkish artillery, but carrying a rifle, might have been seen threading his way through the dense scrub on the northern slopes of Sari Bair. Reaching a point where it was possible to obtain a good view to the north-east, he looked cautiously around, halted and listened. There was no sound but the whistling of the wind through the bushes. After a moment's hurried survey of his surroundings, he discovered a spot where he could see without being seen, unslung his field-glasses, and swept the opposite slope of Karsilar. For some little time the glasses moved slowly from left to right, then the watcher held them stationary and took a long and steady gaze. A line of figures was moving like ants across a clear space and disappearing into the scrub beyond. A little later they reappeared in another break in the vegetation, working towards Baghche Keui.

Apparently satisfied, he shut up the glasses, and returned them to their case. The name of the maker caught his eye.

"Good English glasses!" he murmured, as men do who have lived for some time alone. "I am uncommonly obliged to you, my dear major. I needed something to equalise the odds."

CHAPTER XIII
SHARING A SEPULCHRE

Keeping well under cover, Frank worked his way upwards through the scrub round the north-east shoulder of Sari Bair. Every now and then he stopped, as it were to "sniff the air." He smiled to himself, thinking how like his movements

must be to those of a fox that knows that the hounds are out. "I can believe now," he thought, "the huntsman's theory that the enjoyment is not all on one side."

From the height to which he had now ascended he had a bird's-eye view of the pretty little village of Biyuk Anafarta, surrounded by tall and stately cypresses, lying below him in a gap in the hills to the north. He paused for a moment to admire the scene. Just above him was the head of a nullah forming a ravine on the northern face of Sari Bair, and joining as a tributary a larger nullah running westward past the village to the sea. A hundred yards up the hill a large cedar jutted out from the side of the nullah, here only a few feet deep, and towered above the prevailing scrub. Six or eight paces from the tree, near the bank of the nullah, there appeared the stone door of an ancient sepulchre, probably dating back before the Christian era. The stones were perfectly cut and squared, and solidly cemented together. The weather of twenty centuries had but lightly touched them.

At this point Frank redoubled his precautions. The vegetation grew closely about the sepulchre; this solitude was apparently never visited by men; but he could not afford to leave anything to chance. He dropped into the nullah some eighty yards below the tree, and carefully worked his way up the bed of the ravine. Arriving at the tree, he took a final look round, pulled himself up by the roots, and climbed up on the western side, having the massive trunk between him and the men who were hunting for him far away to the east.

At the first big fork the tree was hollow. Letting himself down within the hollowed trunk, he stood upon a litter of leaves, brushwood, and soft detritus, which he stooped in the semi-darkness to stir over. After a while he uncovered a hole about two feet across. Through this he wriggled, into a narrow passage not high enough to walk erect in, ending in a small square room a little higher than the passage, but still too low for the upright posture.

The air was full of the sickly odour of decay. A feeble light filtered through a number of tube-like orifices bored in the stone on one wall of the room. At the further end, reaching almost from the floor to the roof, stood two enormous earthen jars. They were filled with human bones. This little room was the interior of the sepulchre.

Frank had discovered the place by accident a day or two before. He had climbed the tree to learn, if he could, the whereabouts of his pursuers, and discovered the hollow trunk. Thinking that this would afford a secure hiding-place in case of need, though the quarters would in truth be rather cramped, he had dropped down and started to clear a space for sleeping. It was then that, in lifting a mass of brushwood, he had discovered the passage and the chamber beyond.

The discovery set his imagination at work. The building was obviously so much older than the tree that this strange connection between them must be

an afterthought. Within the sepulchre he found some articles of Greek pottery which suggested an explanation. Back in the middle ages the peninsula of Gallipoli, then a Greek possession, was overrun by the conquering Ottoman Turks. Was it not possible that some Greek fugitive, fleeing before the barbarians, had lighted upon this hollow tree just as he himself had done, and cut a passage through it into the ancient and forgotten tomb? How many centuries had passed before the Byzantine fugitive, if such he was, had intruded upon the solitude of its fleshless inhabitants?

The stories which the Anatolian captain had related to Abdi did not exaggerate the truth. Frank had acted on the impulse of the moment in hurling Abdi into the ruins of Benidin's bomb-shelled house. He had not taken a moment's thought for the future, nor indeed, after his shattering experiences, was he in a condition to think collectedly. All that he was conscious of was a desperate anxiety to get as far from the Kurd as possible. He ran into the gathering dusk, retaining just enough presence of mind to direct his course away from the lower town. Benidin's house was on the outskirts, and in a few minutes he came into open country. He had met no one, but hearing the rumble of an approaching wagon ahead, he left the road and struck off into the rough ground at the side.

It was now dark. He checked his pace, to recover breath and self-possession. What was he to do? Kopri had perhaps returned by this time in the vessel which was to convey him back to Constantinople, but to retrace his steps and seek the harbour was more than he dared. On regaining his senses the Kurd would certainly raise the hue and cry through the town: Gallipoli would be too hot for the fugitive. What then was left? It had been suggested that he should seek safety in Bulgaria, but the frontier was far away, he had no guide, and he had been so shaken by the recent explosion that he felt a nervous dread of the encounters that were inevitable if he attempted to find his way through strange country. A better course, he thought, was to hide among the hills for a few days, until he had recovered his nerve and will-power. With money in his pocket and a command of the Turkish tongue he might purchase food in some hill village or at some outlying farm.

Guiding himself, therefore, by the stars, he struggled on for a while towards the hilly district south-westwards, intending presently to take refuge in some sheltered spot where he might pass the night. As he went he remembered that off the south-west extremity of the peninsula lay the British fleet; but at this moment the fleet seemed as remote from him as the stars themselves. After a time he heard noises below him–the creaking of carts, the voices of men; at short intervals he saw faint lights. Clearly there was a road beneath, and a convoy was on the road. He stood still; listened; watched. The convoy was moving in the opposite direction to his own course, and from the sound of the wagons he

inferred that they were empty. Then they must be returning from the forts at the further end of the peninsula. He knew nothing about the geography of the interior of this tongue of land; but he was aware that a road ran close to the shore of the Dardanelles. That must be a shorter route to the forts than this second road, which apparently traversed the centre of the peninsula; and in a moment or two it occurred to him that the Turko-Germans employed the longer road in returning their "empties" in order to avoid congestion on the more direct route.

Frank waited until the convoy had passed, then groped his way down to the road. It was so dark now that he might trudge the highway with little risk of discovery, and with a greater chance of finding a hovel where with good luck he might take shelter. But fatigue overcame him before he had gone more than a few miles, and he climbed up the hillside again, threw himself down under the lee of a rock upon a stretch of moss, and wrapping his sheepskin garment around him, slept until the verge of dawn.

Resuming his way over the hills, within sight of the road, he saw by and by in the distance a village of considerable size. He was hungry, but his heart failed him; he felt that he could not face inquisitive villagers, and endure their cross-questioning. He passed above the village and went on. From the distance came the rumble of guns. Presently he caught sight of a farm in a hollow of the hills, and turned his steps towards it. As he drew nearer to it he became more and more nervous. How was he to account for himself? What story could he invent that would pass muster with people who probably seldom saw a stranger, and would certainly be suspicious? He could not think of anything that seemed plausible; yet he must have food, and at length, with the courage of desperation, he resolved to throw off the mask. He obtained food there at the point of his revolver, and betook himself with it to a thicket on the hill-top beyond, where having assuaged his hunger he slept through the rest of the day and the night.

Next morning he finished his provisions and set off again on his journey– no longer aimless, for during the night the idea had come to him of making his way to the coast and swimming out to one of the British vessels whose guns he had heard. The project had seemed to him, in the hours of darkness, wonderfully easy; but in the cold light of morning it assumed, as such night thoughts often do, a very different complexion. "Silly ass!" he thought. "The ships will be miles out. I'd never get to them." And his mind was soon occupied with more immediate concerns.

Looking back from his elevated position along the road, he perceived a number of soldiers, not marching in orderly ranks on the highway, but dotted here and there on the heights on either side. In a moment it flashed upon him that the troops were on his trail. This conviction acted as a tonic. There was a definite danger to contend with, a problem on which to exercise his wits. To proceed

directly on his former course would be fatal. His best chance of ultimate escape was to worry the pursuers in the difficult hill country and tire them out. And so he had commenced that brief career of semi-brigandage which had up to the present supplied his needs and stimulated his mental activity. Now and then, of course, he was sunk deep in depression. He was very much alone, surrounded by enemies, often hungry, still more often very cold; but the necessity for constant exertion helped him to conquer despondency, and prevented him from dwelling over long on the darker side of things.

Now, as he squatted on the couch of leaves which he had made for himself on the floor of the sepulchre, he pondered his situation seriously and with anxiety. It was clear that a determined effort was being made to capture him, and he ruefully acknowledged to himself that the very successes he had had in obtaining food, clothes, and arms would tell against him: they furnished his pursuers with an additional motive. The troops would certainly begin a methodical search of Sari Bair. They could not fail to discover the door of the sepulchre, and though this was sealed, and there was no entrance to the place from the ground, the entrance through the tree might be discovered by one of them in the same accidental way as in his own case. Fortunately, the surrounding rocks were too hard to show tell-tale traces of his footsteps, but if the pursuers should continue to haunt the neighbourhood, he might find himself compelled to remain in hiding, and the idea of being cooped up in these narrow gloomy quarters was far from inspiriting. The tomb was in truth a dismal abode. The sepulchral vases were not cheerful pieces of furniture. On the previous night he had had an attack of nerves, and climbed into the fork of the tree to sleep. But the physical discomfort due to the attentions of innumerable insects was less endurable than the intangible companionship of ghosts, and ashamed of his weakness he had clambered down again, and fallen asleep to the dull boom of British guns bombarding the forts.

"Well, I've got a rifle and ammunition now," he thought, as he settled himself for his second night's sleep in the tomb. "But I dare not go game-shooting with them. To-morrow I shall have to go foraging again. I'm getting tired of this."

CHAPTER XIV

'A CHIEL AMANG THEM'

Next morning he woke late. Climbing into the tree, he saw that the sun was already many degrees up the sky. He looked around, up and down the nullah. No one was in sight. He clambered to the ground and made his way carefully to the hill-top, taking cover of the scrub. From this post he had a view, on the one side, of the upper channel of the Dardanelles, above the Narrows; on the other, of the waters of the Ægean. Vessels were to-day, as on previous days, moving up and down the former. One small craft, apparently a motor launch, which he had noticed before, was again slipping across the channel towards Chanak, the township which he could clearly see on the opposite shore. No doubt it had started from Maidos, which was tucked away under the hills beneath him: he had seen it many times from the deck of a steamer.

"Lucky beggars!" he thought, envying the occupants of the launch as he watched it through his borrowed field-glasses, and recalling trips, among the most enjoyable of his experiences, at home and in the Sea of Marmora.

"Now to forage," he said to himself.

It was unlikely that the pursuers, after the excitement of yesterday, had abandoned the hunt, and in descending the hill he used as much caution as though they were still in sight. His destination was a small farm which he had noticed standing by itself some little distance westward of the village of Biyuk Anafarta: the village itself, of course, he durst not venture into. His progress was slow, for in flitting prudently from one patch of scrub to another, he had to make considerable detours to avoid more or less open spaces. Every now and again, too, he stopped to listen, placing his ear to the ground.

Coming after some hours' difficult wandering to the outskirts of the plantations about the village, he was alarmed to see a herd of cattle in the charge of several herdsmen moving along the rough track that led past the farm, the direction in which he had himself intended to go. It was unsafe to continue his journey at present. He took a drink from a hill stream, and plunged into a thicket, resolving, in spite of his hunger, to wait there until late in the afternoon, when movements along the road were likely to have ceased.

It was about four o'clock when he ventured to leave his hiding-place. There was no sign of movement in the hills. In the distance smoke was rising from the village chimneys. Stealing his way as carefully as before, he struck off in the direction of the farm. The husbandmen, as he had hoped, were still at work in the fields. There would not be many persons at the farm.

Taking advantage of every inequality of the ground he crept to the back of the homestead–a small stone-built place with wooden byres and barns attached. He was well aware that the methods which had formerly served him could not be employed now. Without doubt his description had been circulated throughout Gallipoli. Whether he offered to buy food, or sought to extort it, he would run

equal risk. Even if he escaped the hands of the country people, eager to obtain the reward which had probably been offered for his capture, he could not show himself without their putting the troops on his track. With every man's hand against him he could not afford to indulge the scruples that would be natural to him in normal circumstances. He meant to obtain food as quickly and as secretly as possible. But he was not going to steal. He would take what he could find, but leave a fair price.

All was quiet around the farm. Gaining the outbuildings undetected, he slipped along under cover of them until he had nearly reached what was apparently the kitchen: a light smoke rose from the chimney above. More than once during his excursions he had realised how greatly his difficulties would have been increased if the dog were as popular in Turkey as in England. He had not the watchful farmyard dog to fear. The action which had cleared Constantinople of the curs that used to infest its streets seemed to have its counterpart in other parts of the country: at any rate, he had not hitherto been worried by dogs.

But he found now, with as much surprise as consternation, that he had another kind of guardian to reckon with. He had almost reached what he supposed to be the kitchen when a small flock of geese advanced towards him in a mass with much hissing and cackling. There was no alternative but to beat a prompt retreat. He slipped through the open doorway of one of the outbuildings, closed the door behind him, and seeing another door ajar at the further end he hastened towards it, took a cautious peep outside and passed into the open. A glance round the corner of the wall showed him a middle-aged woman–dressed in the rusty black which the male Turk, himself inclined to bright colours, thinks appropriate to his women folk–hurrying from the kitchen to ascertain why the watchful geese were protesting so noisily.

Here was his chance. He darted across the open space between himself and the kitchen, peeped in at the open door, and seeing that the room was empty slipped inside. From the upper floor came the voices of children. There was no time to waste. Frank knew nothing about the room except that it was large, that a pot was on the fire, and that some flat loaves of bread, recently baked, stood in a row upon a slab of stone beside the oven. Without a moment's hesitation he began to cram these into the capacious pockets of his military great-coat, and was on the point of taking out some money to replace them on the slab when he heard the woman returning, grumbling audibly at the geese for the needless interruption of her cooking.

To escape by the door was impossible without being seen. The wooden steps in the corner invited him to the upper floor, but the children's voices repelled. There was no other door. He was caged. He was just making up his mind to brazen it out and trust to his ready wit in explaining his intrusion to the house-

wife when his eye fell on the long wide board, set against one wall and raised a few inches from the floor, which serves the humble Turk as a sleeping-place. On the impulse of the moment he tiptoed across the room, dropped to the floor, and was just able to wriggle under the board before the woman entered. For a moment he was doubtful whether, quick as he had been, the woman had not caught sight of the skirts of his coat, and he pressed himself against the wall in a fever of anxiety. But she clumped across the floor straight to her cooking pot, the sizzling of which mingled with her exclamations of annoyance. She stirred the pot, made up the fire, called to the children to go to sleep–and noticed that some of the loaves were gone.

"You limbs of Shaitan!" she called up the stairs. "Bring down those loaves. Gluttons you are. Did I not give you a supper fit for princes? Bring down the loaves, I say."

Shrill voices answered her. A boy came half-way down the steps and protested that neither he nor his brothers or sisters had left their room above.

"Wallahy! are there evil djinni abroad?" exclaimed the woman. "Get you to bed. Allah preserve us! What will the man say when he returns?"

She went to the door and looked out for her husband; it was time for him to come for his evening meal. Frank already regretted his hasty action. If only the woman would go out! If only she had not believed her small son, but had gone upstairs to prove him! Apparently he was a truth-teller. Frank felt himself condemned to a long and wearisome detention. The farmer would return; he would eat his supper; then rugs would be spread on the board, and the good people would sleep there. How in the world was he to get away without disturbing them? Meanwhile he could at least eat some of the bread which the woman supposed had been spirited away.

The woman came back to her cooking. Frank's nose was tantalised by the savoury smell of the ragout simmering in the pot. It was growing dusk, and the woman lighted a small oil-lamp, then sat down on the board, muttering incantations against evil spirits. Presently footsteps and voices were heard from outside. The woman rose hastily to her feet and went to the door. A man's voice said a few words, which Frank could not catch. The woman responded with exclamations of surprise and annoyance. Then they came into the room, followed by several pairs of legs. Frank started and shrank more closely against the wall. In the dim light on the floor beyond his hiding-place he saw military boots. There were still loud voices outside. He heard the farmer speaking.

"It is a humble place, effendim, but you are welcome."

"Ahi! That stew has a savoury smell. I have an appetite. Haste you, woman, and set before us what you have in the pot."

Three pairs of legs moved towards the board. Three heavy forms dropped

upon it, with clanking of accoutrements. The wood groaned above Frank's head. A chill perspiration broke out upon his skin. He was in the midst of his pursuers.

So narrow was the space between the board and the floor that, lying flat, he could not lift his head more than two or three inches without striking it. To this grovelling posture he saw himself condemned for an indefinite period. He groaned in spirit. What an ass he had been! He breathed dust and smells; the air was stifling; how long could he endure it? Suppose he sneezed!–the very thought made his blood run cold, and he pinched his nose in anticipation.

Meanwhile the three officers above him were conversing until their meal should be ready. Frank's attention was distracted from his woes to the conversation rumbling on above his head.

"Mashallah! It is useless," he heard one say: he thought it was Abdi.

"But the shells do enormous damage when they hit," said the Anatolian captain.

"True, but what do they hit? It is marvellous, I grant you, that they hit anything at all–anything of value–when the guns are miles away and the gunners can see no mark, and without their aeroplanes they would have wrought less havoc even than they have done. But what then? They cease bombarding, and our engineers repair the damage with exceeding swiftness."

"Taught by the Germans," remarked the lieutenant.

"Ahi, the Germans! Your masters!"

"And yours."

"Not so, by the Beard! We Kurds will never own them as masters. They are great men of war, truly, great devisers of machines; no soulless man, such as you Anatolians and the English, can stand against them. But if they think to crush the free spirits of us Kurds in their machinery–wallahy! I hate them."

"Think you the English have no souls?" asked the captain. "That wily fellow we are hunting has, methinks, a spirit free as yours."

"Allah choke him!" growled the Kurd. "It is a knife in my heart that I may not stay to catch him. Yet to spit Armenians is fitter work for a Kurd than to hunt an Englishman, and be sure that few of those dogs who are fleeing to the mountains near Antioch will escape us."

"Did I dream, or did my ears hear from your lips the boast that you yourself would flay this very Englishman?" asked the captain gently: perhaps he could afford to be ironical now that Abdi was recalled for a more congenial task.

"Mashallah! would you taunt me, you pale knock-kneed son of an Anatolian cabbage?" shouted Abdi. "By the Beard, I will carve your carcase into gobbets before—-"

"Peace!" said the lieutenant soothingly. "Here is supper. Let us comfort our souls in all peaceableness."

The storm blew over, and for a brief space Frank heard nothing but gobbling above him. Then the Kurd shouted for more bread.

"Peace be with you, effendim," said the woman, "but there is no more."

"No more!" roared the truculent Kurd. "What are these few crumbs that you have set before three illustrious officers, and me the most illustrious, even me, Abdi the Kurd?"

"Wallahy! noble effendim," the woman faltered, "I was but even now telling my man of the ill that befell this pious house this very night. Behold, there was a fair array of loaves fresh from the oven upon yonder stone, and I went from the house but for one moment to learn the meaning of a great outcry among my geese, and when I came in, lo! of all those fair loaves only two were left, and those two you have even now consumed, effendim. Surely an evil spirit has flown in, and stolen the loaves, and departed again secretly."

"What is this tale, woman? You were absent but for a moment?"

"Even so, effendim; and we know the spirits move swifter than the wind."

"By the Beard, it is that Englishman again," cried the Kurd, thumping the board. "Is it not his doing, like those other deeds that we have heard of him? Of a truth when the woman's back was turned he crept into the house like a dog and departed with our supper. Mashallah! to-morrow I must go to Chanak, or I would surely catch him and flay him alive."

"We cannot seek him to-night in the darkness," said the captain. "Truly he has more than a dog's cunning."

"Let us eat and drink," said the lieutenant. "The stew is good, even without bread. To-morrow we will run the fox to earth."

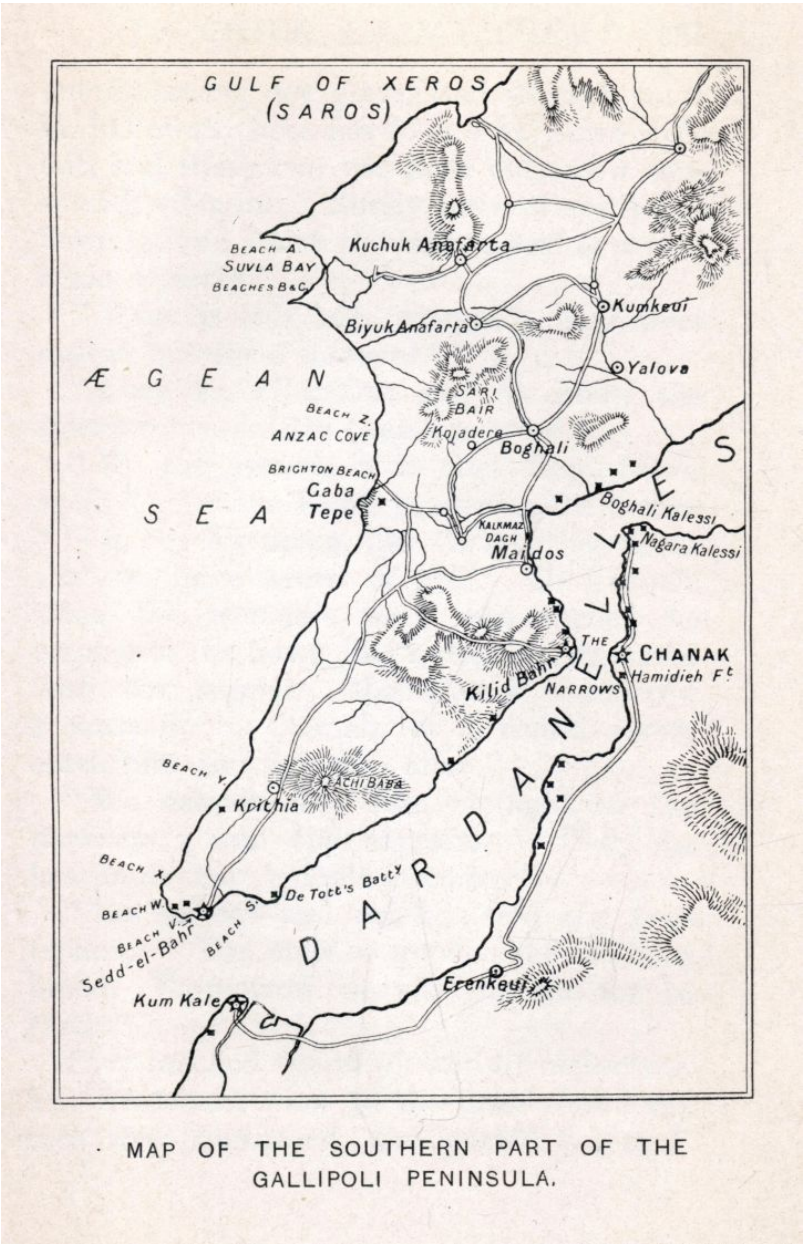
They finished the meal, and lit cigarettes. The lieutenant went to the barn where the men were quartered, and posted a guard. He remarked on his return that it was a useless precaution, since there were no enemies on land.

"Except one–the Englishman," remarked his captain with a rueful laugh.

"He will not return here unless we ourselves bring him in bonds," returned the other.

Piecing together the scraps of conversation he had already heard with those he heard subsequently, Frank came to the conclusion that Abdi had been recalled to take part in a battue of Armenians in Asia Minor, and was to leave next morning by motor launch for Chanak in advance of his men.

By and by the officers stamped about the room while the housewife arranged rugs and cushions on the board for their night's repose. She then followed her husband upstairs to the higher floor, and the officers, after removing their boots and accoutrements, arranged themselves on the simple bed. The lamp was left alight, and, door and window being closed, the room was filled with a heavy, smoky air which soon lulled the three men to sleep.



MAP OF THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE GALLIPOLI PENINSULA.

MAP OF THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE GALLIPOLI PENINSULA.

Frank was by this time suffering painfully from his cramped position and the foul air. At first he had intended to remain in his hiding-place until the officers departed in the morning, and then to seize the first opportunity of slipping away. But as time went on he became convinced that he could not endure his situation through the long night. Before morning he would be asphyxiated, or so racked with pain as to have lost the use of his limbs. If he did not escape during the hours of darkness he would be unable to escape at all. And when the heavy breathing and snores above him showed that slumber had sealed the senses of his enemies, he determined to make an attempt to get away. To be caught gamely at night was better than to be taken helpless in the morning.

It was fortunate that the farmer's primitive bed was a flat board, and not a divan with mattresses bulging below. Otherwise he could hardly have moved without causing some pressure beneath the sleepers that would certainly have disturbed them. He lay for a time trying to visualise the room. The board ran along the whole length of the wall opposite the door. There was not space enough for him to creep out at either the head or the foot: to reach the door he must cross the whole width of the room. Dim though the light was, it was sufficient to reveal his form. But there was no other way.

With infinite precaution he sidled his way from beneath the board, then lay still to listen. The three men were snoring in three different tones. He inferred from the sounds that two of the three had their faces towards the door. To rise at once might cause them to open their eyes; his best chance lay in crawling a little way over the floor. Raising himself on hands and knees, he drew himself along inch by inch; then, gaining courage from the uninterrupted regularity of the snores, he rose to his feet and ventured to glance round. The three men were curled up under their rugs; only the tops of their heads showed.

At the same glance he noticed their accoutrements lying on the stone slab from which he had taken the loaves. Prompted by a dare-devil impulse that had also an element of precaution, he stole on tiptoe to the slab, and with slow careful movements, though his hands were trembling a little, he lifted the flaps of the revolver cases over their buttons and abstracted the revolvers one by one. If the men chanced to wake before he was clear of the door, they should at least have no weapons to fire at him. A slight click as he slipped the last revolver into his pocket caused a momentary pause in the *moto continuo* of one of the men's recitative, and Frank clutched his own revolver, ready for emergency; but the officer did not stir, and Frank, facing them, crept backward towards the door.

He could not remember whether the door had been locked or bolted, and felt an inward quaking at the thought of having to turn a possibly rusty key or draw a creaking bolt. It was with immense relief that he perceived that the door was fastened only by a wooden catch. Just, however, as he was raising his hand

to release it he heard a step outside, approaching the door. With instant presence of mind he took two quick silent paces to the shelf on which the lamp stood and pinched out the flame.

There was a knock on the door. The snoring abruptly ceased, but no answer was given; the sleepers had not been fully awakened. The knock was repeated. A sleepy voice from the bed said "Enter." The door opened, and Frank, being unluckily almost behind it, could not slip out. There was a little diffused light from the moon below the horizon, just sufficient to reveal Frank's form, in its long military great-coat, to the newcomer.

"A runner with a despatch from headquarters, effendim," said the man, taking Frank for one of his own officers.

At one and the same moment Frank silently held out his hand for the despatch and a voice from the other side of the room murmured, "Bring it here. Light the lamp first." Frank was conscious of surprise and hesitancy in the attitude of the visitor. The critical moment had come. Taking the despatch and thrusting it into his pocket, he bent suddenly, sprang at the man's knees, lifted him from his feet and hurled him across the room. A threefold shout followed him as he dashed into the open. The sentry hurried towards him.

"Fire!" cried Frank. "Fetch water!"

"Fire! Fire!" repeated the man, turning about and running towards the well in the yard.

Frank had already rushed in the opposite direction to the dark side of the house. The clamour grew in volume; men were rushing hither and thither with the panic of disturbed sleepers; shrill screams from the startled housewife and her children mingled with the deeper shouts of the soldiers. And Frank dashed away into the darkness. At first heedless of his direction, he stopped when the sounds were faint in the distance, and, panting, tried to take his bearings. Somewhat more than an hour later he clambered down the hollow trunk to his sepulchral refuge, and threw himself exhausted on its earthy floor.

CHAPTER XV
OUT OF ACTION

Frank's first proceeding when he awoke next morning was to start munching one of his loaves; his next, to read the despatch which chance had thrust upon

him. It was addressed to the Anatolian captain. A battery of heavy guns was to be emplaced on Sari Bair. The convoy, coming by way of Kumkeni and Boghali, might be expected at Kojadere on the following morning. The captain was to abandon for the time the pursuit of the Englishman and to place himself at the disposition of the officer commanding the battery, to assist in transporting the guns up the hill.

Frank did not know Kojadere by name, but he knew Boghali, and conjectured that Kojadere must be the village at the south-east foot of the hill. It was visible from a spur about half a mile from his hiding-place. A rough path left the main track between Boghali and Kojadere at about the same distance from the latter place, and joined a similar path running direct from Kojadere up the hill. These facts Frank had learnt in the course of his wanderings, and he determined, simply from motives of curiosity, to make his way to a spot where he could see a sight new to him, the placing of a battery of guns. Abdi had gone, no doubt, to Chanak; the others would not for the present concern themselves with their elusive quarry; for he assumed that the contents of the despatch were known to the carrier; so it was with an easy mind that he betook himself to the elevated spot from which he could view the Boghali road.

It was chilly in the morning air. The valleys and the lower ground were blanketed in mist. The heights were clear, and Frank smiled as he saw in his mind's eye the scene of his night's adventure, invisible to his bodily eye, over the brow of the hill.

A light breeze was sweeping up through the hills from the sea, causing the mist to gyrate in swirling eddies, and here and there cutting a path through it. Gradually more and more of the Boghali road was exposed to his view. There was nothing moving upon it. He looked up in the direction of Biyuk Anafarta, towards the quarter in which the Anatolians should presently appear, in pursuance of their instructions. There was no sign of them yet; it was possible that the contents of the despatch were unknown to them after all.

After a time he caught sight of figures beyond Boghali where the road wound round a low hill to the north of that place. Ere long he was able to recognise the artillery train–long teams, whether of horses, oxen, or mules he could not tell even through his field-glasses, dragging heavy guns and ammunition wagons. The escort numbered, at a guess, some three hundred men. The train passed through Boghali, and took the right-hand road towards Sari Bair. A bridge spanned a stream fed by a number of rivulets rising on the eastern slope of the hill. Here the train came to a halt. There was a long delay; probably the bridge was not constructed for heavy traffic. Then one of the guns appeared on the western side; the others slowly followed.

By this time Frank felt pretty sure that the Anatolians were ignorant of

the orders given in the despatch, otherwise they should long ago have reached Boghali by the direct road from Biyuk Anafarta. If they had resumed their hunt for him, it behoved him to be cautious. From the troops below he had little to fear. They were not looking for him, and in all likelihood were unaware of his existence. Keeping a careful look-out above, therefore, he stole down under cover of the scrub, which was very dense on this side of the hill, to take a nearer view of the work of the artillerymen.

Several mounted officers had pushed ahead to survey the ground and choose the easiest route for the guns. Some had taken the first track on the right of the road, others were riding quickly forward to Kojadere to examine the track from there. The two parties met at the junction, and from subsequent operations it appeared that the longer but easier gradient from Kojadere had been decided upon. Up this track, then, the officers despatched strong working parties, to clear away obstacles, and cut down the scrub which here and there encroached at the sides. Two officers, mounted on mules, slowly rode up to the summit, to select an emplacement for their battery.

Frank watched all this from a sheltered spot at some distance from the track. These troops were not looking for him, it was true; but in their course they must work round his position, and he was careful not to expose himself.

The way having been prepared, the men in charge of the first gun whipped up their team, which hauled the heavy weapon about a third of the distance up the track. Then there was a check. The slope was very irregular. For some yards its angle was low; then it would suddenly make a sharp rise. It was at one of these abrupt acclivities that the gun had now arrived. The ascent seemed an impossible one, and the track, with on one side the rocky hill and on the other a steep incline, hazardous in the extreme. The team attached to the second gun was unhitched and brought up to assist the first. Urged by vociferous shouts and much cracking of whips, the united teams, straining and hauling, managed to draw the gun up a few feet at a time, large blocks of wood being placed behind the wheels at each stoppage to prevent it from slipping back.

Frank looked on at all this with interest, and a certain sympathy for man and beast, which was increased when one of the officers, a German, rode down the hill and vented his irritation at the delays in foul abuse and violent threats. "They are working jolly hard," was his inward protest. The gun moved on again, and a turn in the track hid it from his view. He looked around to make sure that he was in no danger of being seen from the rear, then crept up through the scrub to reach a spot where he could again follow the operations.

"I wonder what they are going to all this trouble for?" he thought. "Those guns aren't a match for our naval guns, and in any case they are no good here as a defence of the forts."

A little way further up the hill he came upon a gully scarcely three feet wide, much overgrown with bushes. It appeared to lead down towards the track, on which, to judge by the renewed shouts of the men and the cessation of the rumbling of the wheels, the gun had again been brought to a halt. Frank crept down this gully stealthily foot by foot, and presently discovered the cause of this new check. The gully intersected the track and fell down the slope beyond. Though it was now dry, at some time it had evidently been a watercourse, and the water had scored a deep channel across the track, an effectual obstacle to heavy traffic. At this moment the men were toiling with pick and spade to fill up the channel, a task that would clearly occupy some time.

Frank looked on for a few minutes. Then his eyes strayed down the track. The mules were stationary in a long line, quite unattended. The team hauling the second gun lower down was out of sight. "Pity I can't spike the gun," Frank thought, "though to be sure spiking is impossible in these days. But a slip would send it crashing down the track, or over the slope. I wish—-" And then an idea flashed into his mind. The gun was hauled, not by leather traces, but by heavy chains. Quickly raising his field-glasses, he levelled them at the attachments of the chains to the gun-carriage. Each one ended in a massive iron ring, which was looped over a long hook. Now that the gun was halted, and the wheels stopped by blocks of wood, the chains were hanging slack.

Replacing his glasses, he crept down under cover of the scrub until he came opposite the gun. All the men were still engaged above. He looked up, down, around. No one was in sight, except the men working with their backs towards him a hundred yards up the hill. Inch by inch he stole nearer to the track; paused a moment to collect himself; then darted rapidly from cover, lifted the ring from the hook on the side nearest him, hitched the chain so that it appeared to be in place, and slipped back breathlessly into the scrub. It had taken him no more than a quarter of a minute.

"Will it work?" he asked himself as he lurked in his hiding-place a few yards above the track. All depended on whether the drivers examined the attachments before they moved on again. There seemed no reason why they should do so; hitherto the drivers had walked at the head of their teams; but there was a chance that when they came down to lift the blocks of wood one of them might happen to notice that something was wrong.

He waited in feverish impatience. How slowly the men were working! What a bully that German officer was! If the trick succeeded, these patient long-suffering Turks would have had their labour for nothing: the German would make them pay for it. Well, they must pay for allowing themselves to be fooled by the Germans.

At last came the word of command. The drivers hastened to the heads

of the mules; two men hurried down to lift the blocks of wood when the gun had started. There were loud shouts and cracking of whips; the mules strained at their collars; the heavy gun lurched forward. And then Frank thrilled with delight. Secured only on one side, the gun skewed round with a jerk. For a brief moment it hung over the edge of the slope. The mules slipped backward; the sudden slackening of the chains released the second ring from its hook; and to the sound of startled yells and frantic invocations of Allah the gun hurtled down the slope and crashed into a ravine two or three hundred feet below.

CHAPTER XVI
TWO MEN IN A LAUNCH

In the confusion ensuing upon the fall of the gun Frank crept unseen up the gully. He chuckled as he heard the infuriate curses of the German officer. The cause of the disaster would never be known. Whether it were ascribed to the carelessness of the men or to the accidental slipping of a ring mattered nothing: the gun was lying at a spot whence it would be almost impossible to remove it; very likely it was damaged beyond repair. Frank's satisfaction was only alloyed by regret that to attempt the same feat with the other guns of the battery was out of the question.

"Now what's to be done?" he thought, when, having put a considerable distance between himself and any risk of danger, he stopped to think over his position. One result of the establishment of the battery on the heights must be his abandonment of the sepulchre. Whatever might be the reason for placing the battery just there, if the guns began to play they would draw upon them the shells of the British fleet, and the sepulchre was near enough to be anything but a safe asylum. The troops pursuing him were not far to the north. With no permanent refuge he could not hope to evade them much longer. Sari Bair was becoming too hot to hold him. He must move on.

But in what direction? No part of the peninsula was any longer safe. To go southwards was mere folly: he would only come to the forts, about which there was no doubt a strong concentration of troops. And that way there was no outlet but the sea. Northwards, where the peninsula was wider, there would be more room to move; but after what had happened he would be watched for at every little farm, on all the roads, and if he were not actually captured, lack of

food would ultimately enforce his surrender. "What an ass I was not to make for the harbour at Gallipoli that night," he thought, "and try to smuggle myself on Kopri's vessel!" But repentance had come too late. Here he was, caged; nothing could now alter that; and if he were caught in the end–well, these last few days had given him an amount of joyous excitement which he could never forget. Even the reflection that he had now lost the privileges of a civilian, and would probably be shot at sight, did not much trouble him. "Kismet!" he thought: "I must have breathed in the fatalistic spirit of the country."

"But I'm not done yet," he added to himself. "It's Bulgaria now, I suppose. I'd better get away first to the east, out of the way of those fellows hunting me, and then work round as quickly as I can to the north-west. Lucky I stuffed my pockets pretty full of loaves; but it's quarter rations. I don't know when I'll be able to get more."

The booming of guns to the south reminded him that fellow-countrymen were only a few miles away–a galling remembrance. They could do nothing for him. "Alone, alone, all, all alone!"–where had he read those words, and how little he had understood till now what they meant!–"Oh, chuck it, Frank Forester!" he said to himself. "It's no good grousing. Come on!"

He struck off across the shoulder of the hill, and made his way down the bed of a stream skirting the western side of Kojadere, and flowing almost due south until with a sharp turn to the left it fell into the Dardanelles a mile or so north of Maidos. For the greater part of the distance it was close to a road, and Frank had to keep a careful look-out. But the country was rugged and desolate: there were no villages and to all appearance no houses; only once did he catch sight of anything on the road–a bullock wagon lumbering slowly in the opposite direction.

The ground was for the most part on a low level, and in order to ascertain his distance from the coast he turned off to the left, where there were hills rising nearly two hundred feet. After a long and tiring climb he reached a cliff at the eastern extremity of the Kalkmaz Dagh which, projecting a little into the sea, gave him a direct view downward into Maidos and the strait beyond. A Turkish warship lay just above the Narrows; torpedo boats and vessels which, though he did not know it, were mine-layers, were moored here and there; and crossing the channel from Chanak was the motor launch, with its awning over the fore-deck, which he had noticed once or twice before. "Abdi's on the other side now," he thought.

He watched the launch through his glasses as it threaded its way through the congestion of lighters and small cargo vessels lying off Maidos, to a jetty north of the town. A number of passengers came ashore. The launch was tied up and the crew also landed–all but one man, who sat down in the stern and

appeared to be eating his dinner. Frank almost unconsciously took out one of his loaves. "Didn't know I was so hungry," he muttered. He ate half the loaf, which was little larger than a scone, put the remainder back, then took it out again for a final mouthful. The man on the launch was still eating. Frank watched him enviously, and almost hated him when he saw him wrap up a portion of his meal and stow it away. "He has too much and I too little," he thought. "I daresay he'd sell what's left. Wish I could get at him!"

This started a train of thought, or rather a series of questions. Why not go down to the launch? Why not make use of his military uniform? What chance was there that the man on the launch had heard that an English fugitive was masquerading as a Turkish officer of artillery? Indeed, why not bluff it out, get command of the launch, and run down the strait towards the open sea? British warships were there. Was he prepared to face a twofold risk–run the gauntlet of Turkish vessels and batteries, and also draw fire from a British ship?

It was a ticklish problem, that would not wait long for a solution. At any moment the launch might be ordered off. If the attempt was to be made, it must be made at once. "Too risky," he thought. "I might be spotted before I reached it. It's nearly a mile away: might be gone by the time I could get down. It's absurd."

Sunk in this pessimism he sat with his chin on his hand, looking at the launch, on which the man now lay stretched on his back, gazing down the strait towards Kilid Bahr, where the shore bent round to the west, and beyond which there were British vessels. It was only four or five miles to Kilid Bahr; in the clear air the distance seemed shorter. He thought of the alternative–further hide-and-seek in the hills, long wanderings, semi-starvation, cold. "Hanged if I don't have a shot," he said to himself.

Below him ran the road from Boghali through Maidos, at the edge of the strait. There was no other way of reaching the launch unless he made a long detour round the hills. The afternoon was already far advanced. A detour would take much time, and taking it he would lose sight of the launch. On the road, so far as he could see it, there was no traffic. He rose to his feet, made his way down the hillside, gained the road, and set off quickly southward.

In a few minutes, rounding a corner, he overtook a transport wagon drawn by two oxen. It flashed upon him that he would attract less attention if he got a lift on it. Stepping up to the front of the wagon, he hailed the driver.

"Give me a lift," he said. "I've walked from Sari Bair, where we are placing a battery. It's very tiring, walking over the hills."

"That is true, effendim," said the man. "Your excellency may do as he pleases."

Frank got up beside the driver. The wagon lumbered on. As it neared Maidos it passed people here and there; they saluted the supposed officer without

suspicion. It passed a house ruined by a shell.

"They said the English were our friends," remarked the wagoner.

"Time will show who are our true friends," answered Frank.

They were now entering the northern outskirts of the town. Frank saw many signs of the havoc wrought by indirect fire from the British fleet. In the distance soldiers were moving about. He thought it time to get down. Tipping the driver, he jumped to the ground, and turned off to the left towards the jetty. The launch was still tied up: he could just see its awning.

When he was still some little distance from it he had a shock. From the opposite direction, and nearer to the jetty than himself, a Turkish officer was approaching it. He was bound to get there first. For a moment Frank thought of turning tail; he had not yet been observed; but it occurred to him that the officer might possibly come back in a few minutes: it was worth while waiting to see.

Near at hand was a deep hole in the ground, the work of a shell. Beside it was a broken transport wagon. He sat on this, took a cigarette from the case which, with an automatic lighter, he had found in the pocket of the great-coat, and began smoking like any idler. A shed at the shore end of the jetty partly hid him from view.

The officer went on board the launch. Frank had a second shock. It was the Kurd Abdi. Apparently he had not been to Chanak after all. Perhaps he had deferred his departure for the sake of making one more attempt to capture the fugitive. It was plain that he was intending to cross the strait now, for the man in charge of the launch was making preparations to start.

Frank was as it were paralysed for a few moments. The game was up. But no: while the man was pouring petrol into the tank, Abdi had gone forward and was making himself comfortable under the awning forward. There was just a chance for boldness. Making up his mind instantly, Frank strolled unconcernedly down the jetty. The launch man was bending over his engine; beyond him Abdi was half concealed by the awning.

Frank halted a few yards from the launch, where his face could not be seen by the Kurd, and hailed the engine man in a low tone. The man looked up, and Frank beckoned him ashore. He hesitated a moment; then the officer's uniform was effective: he jumped on to the jetty and came to Frank's side. With a show of mystery Frank led him a few yards and said:

"His excellency is crossing to Chanak."

"The Governor?" asked the man.

"Yes: you are ordered to wait. Not a word to any one. Go at once to headquarters and ask for Major Ahmed Talik. There will be a valise to carry down. You understand?–Major Ahmed Talik. It is not to be talked about. Make haste!"

"But my passenger, effendim?"

"He must wait. I will explain to him."

"My orders! I am not to leave the launch."

"Do you argue with me?" said Frank sternly. "Go at once."

The man hastened to excuse himself, and set off, somewhat bewildered, towards the town.

"Why keep me waiting, dog of a dog-son?" called Abdi from the launch.

The man turned, but Frank signed to him imperatively to go on, then sauntered back along the jetty, one hand holding the cigarette, the other fingering the revolver in his pocket. Abdi had raised himself from his recumbent posture, and in a crouching attitude was peering out from beneath the low awning. The glow of the sun, setting over the hills behind, struck full upon his eyes: Frank's were shadowed. Frank half turned as if watching the retreating launch man, all the time slowly approaching the vessel, thus gaining ground without revealing his face.

Then he suddenly swung round, and jumped on board. The launch rocked.

"Wallahy! Would you upset me?" cried Abdi.

Frank stood in front of him, pointing his revolver, but in such a posture that the weapon could not be seen by chance observers on shore. Half under the awning Abdi was at a disadvantage. He was so much taken aback by Frank's sudden movement, and so much overcome with amazement when he at last recognised the features of the newcomer, that he was incapable of shouting an alarm, and the sight of the revolver within a few feet of his head disposed him to listen to what Frank was saying.

"Salam," said Frank quietly, "we are going for a little trip together. No, no: keep your hands down. Don't move any further from under the awning. You recognise me, I see. I am the Englishman you have been hunting–and this is my revolver. It is loaded.–Do you hear? Keep still.–You have a revolver too, in that belt to which I see your restless hand groping. Well, I collect revolvers. I have two of yours already; the other will be safer with me. No: keep your hands up; if you hurry me I may shoot too soon. On your life don't make a movement!" he ended fiercely.

With his right hand holding his revolver at the Kurd's head, he stooped, and with a quick movement of his left hand wrested the revolver from the other's belt.

"Now get back under the awning to the comfortable place you have arranged for yourself," he said.

The Kurd hesitated and flashed a downward glance at the knives in his belt.

"I will count three," Frank went on. "If you are not comfortable when I come to three ... one ... two—-"

With a snarling curse Abdi crept backward to the cushions at the further end of the awning, and collapsed there.

Transferring the revolver to his left hand, Frank, also moving backward, came to the engine. It was not his first trip in a motor launch, and a rapid examination showed him that the boatman had got everything ready. Nothing remained but to switch on the current, turn the crank and cast off the hawser. These movements he made, his eyes scarcely leaving the discomfited Kurd for a moment. Then he threw the engine into gear and seized the helm, and the little craft sidled from the jetty, and shot away over the dancing wavelets of the Dardanelles.

CHAPTER XVII
THROUGH THE NARROWS

Frank felt himself go pale under the reaction from the strain of the last few minutes. But he had won the advantage in the opening of the game: he must maintain it to the end.

He had so often watched the launch crossing to and fro that he had a pretty good idea of the course. Chanak was a couple of miles down the strait on the opposite shore: it would excite least remark if he steered as for that town. The vessel was too shallow in draught to run much risk from possible mines, and it was so frequently seen that no one on a Turkish ship would pay any attention to it. No doubt an alarm would be raised when the boatman discovered that he had been tricked; but Frank hoped to be several miles on his voyage to safety by that time.

When he drew out from under the lee of the hills he found that the wind was in his favour, blowing directly down the Narrows. This should mean at least a three-knot current. The launch was small, and probably incapable of more than seven or eight knots: his utmost speed, then, might rise to ten or eleven. But it was not wholly a question of speed. If the alarm was given before he reached the narrowest part of the channel at Chanak escape would be unlikely if not impossible. The fast-gathering darkness would be no protection. He would be under searchlights from both sides, and a dozen batteries would have him under fire at ranges ascertained to a yard. His nerves, judgment, quickness of decision, would be taxed to the uttermost in this adventurous voyage of a few miles.

With the fall of night navigation practically ceased on the strait; therefore he was not very likely to be run down by accident. But he must guard against

collision with vessels moored under either shore. Further, there was always a chance that he would be challenged from the deck of one of the stationary vessels, and though he did not doubt his ability to give a reassuring answer, he had always the Kurd to reckon with. It would have been prudent to gag him, but the opportunity for that was past. Shaping his course by the faint twilight, he kept one eye on Abdi, ready to take action instantly if the man showed any disposition to be troublesome.

So, in growing darkness, he ran down the strait until he came opposite Chanak, which was distinguishable by a few dim lights and the sounds of bustle on the quays and jetties. The place had suffered considerably by bombardment from the ships of the allied fleet, which had come up to within a few miles of the Narrows; but it was clear that extensive repairs were already in progress. Observing two or three large vessels moored out of the current in the little bay north of the town, Frank as a measure of precaution cut off the engine, and the launch drifted into the neck between Chanak and Kilid Bahr. His ear caught the faint sound of a windlass working in the channel at some unseen point ahead. Clearly a vessel lay out there. He pitched his voice to a low note, and gave Abdi a quiet warning not to speak a word or make any movement of alarm, on pain of receiving the full contents of his revolver. The most dangerous part of his voyage was evidently at hand.

In a few minutes he saw, some little distance ahead on the starboard side, a large dark shape moving towards him. Putting the helm over, he crept in more closely to the Asiatic shore, in the hope that the launch, being small and low and travelling silently, would escape observation. But next moment he was startled by the sudden beam of a searchlight playing over the middle of the channel from some point behind him. The darkness on either side was intensified, so that the light, while it swept mid-channel, favoured him; but if it should bend its rays to the left, the launch would be vividly illuminated, and could not fail to be observed by the men on the approaching vessel, who would certainly follow with their eyes the path of light. He watched the beam lengthening its giant stride. It passed over the slowly approaching torpedo boat and illuminated the water beyond. Hugging the shore as closely as he dared, Frank drifted on, resolved, if the light fell on him, to start the engine and make a dash at full speed down the strait.

The light took a sudden sweep upwards, swung to the right over the hills and disappeared. Then Frank realised that the current had failed him. The launch was scarcely moving. He steered for the open channel, edging out very gradually. No sooner had the launch come again into the current than the light flashed out, just touching a point of land on his port side, and passing beyond it. It occurred to him that if he could round the point during the interval of darkness before the light again appeared, he would no longer be in its direct path. It was

worth the risk of starting the engine and making a dash over the short distance between him and safety. Guided only by the dark outline of the low wooded cliffs on his left hand, he put the engine at full speed while the light was still sweeping the channel. To maintain an even distance from the shore he soon found it necessary to keep the helm well over. He must be rounding the point. And when, a minute or two later, the beam once more flashed out, it passed almost directly over him, leaving him in shadow. With a sense of profound relief he stopped the engine and floated down with the current, more than satisfied for the moment, but wondering how long his luck would hold.

The launch was now in pitch darkness. Frank knew that there were shoals along the shore, and he was beset by a double anxiety: he must steer so as to avoid at once the path of the searchlight and the unknown shoals. So fully was his attention occupied that he had almost forgotten the Kurd lying forward. The dark patch which favoured him was favourable also to an expedient which Abdi had been grimly meditating. Suddenly, while Frank was peering into the darkness ahead, he was conscious that a black shape had intervened between him and the scarcely perceptible space of water. He knew instantly what it was, but before he could brace himself for the impending shock the steering-wheel shivered under a sword-cut that missed him by a hairsbreadth, and the Kurd flung himself upon him, at the same time shouting vociferously to attract the attention of any watchers who might be on shore, or on some vessel near by. Taking advantage of Frank's preoccupation and the darkness, Abdi had crawled from under the awning and along the deck under the side of the little craft, springing to his feet within a few inches of Frank's seat.

It was the fact of being seated that proved to be Frank's salvation. Abdi lost the advantage of surprise when his sword-cut missed. He fell forward awkwardly. Frank's right hand was pinned beneath the Kurd's body, but his left, with which he had held the wheel, was free. Instantly he gripped Abdi's sword-arm above the wrist, and for a few moments there was a fierce struggle for position between the two men; Frank striving to free his right hand, and when he had done so, to prevent the Kurd from strangling him with his left arm.

Frank was soon aware that in mere power of muscle he was no match for his assailant. But he had the firmer position, Abdi being inclined forward and swaying unsteadily with the rocking of the launch. Suddenly dropping his clutch on the Kurd's upper right arm, he seized him by the throat, braced himself against the seat, and pulled his left arm towards him, exerting all his strength to twist him over. With his free right hand Abdi clutched at the thwart; but Frank's leverage against the seat gave him the mechanical advantage; moreover, the Kurd was expending much energy in trying to free himself from the pressure on his windpipe. Inch by inch he was pressed back against the side of the launch, every moment

struggling more feebly under Frank's choking clutch. At last his shoulders were hanging over the water, and his arms were raised as a drowning man throws up his hands. Then suddenly Frank released the Kurd's throat, caught him beneath the right knee, and, pressing heavily on the seat, tilted him overboard. There was a gurgling gasp as the man struck the water, then a brief silence, broken soon by a long yell. It was a cry for help, but not a cry of despair, and Frank, panting from his recent exertions, was aware that Abdi could swim. His cries must be heard on shore and on any vessels that might lie in the neighbourhood or be patrolling the strait. At first their meaning would not be known, but they would give the alarm and put the enemy on the alert, and as soon as Abdi reached the shore the truth would be flashed from fort to fort.

The launch, left to itself during the struggle, had drifted inshore and was bumping against the rocks. Frank had just switched on the engine and reversed the screw when an agitated movement of the searchlight and shouts from the cliffs above him showed that an alarm of some sort had been given. The white beam was sweeping the whole breadth of the channel except that black band which was shielded by the cliffs and in which the launch was moving. This band widened as the trend of the shore became more south-westerly, and Frank had good hope of running out of danger. His confidence was rudely shaken when a second searchlight began to play from a point slightly ahead of him. For all he knew there might be others at different points down the channel. It was neck or nothing now. He put the engine at full speed ahead, and the launch throbbed and swished through the water.

The coast-line here made a sudden bend inwards. Frank steered accordingly, and was relieved to find that by his change of course he just escaped the searchlight, whose beam flashed almost over his head. The beating of his screw could hardly fail to be heard on shore, no more than a hundred yards away; but the light could evidently not be depressed sufficiently to illuminate this edge of the channel. The launch dashed on; the light was left behind; and steering almost due south Frank once more felt secure.

But next moment he was startled by the sudden flashing of a light from the opposite shore. It swept directly across the channel and moved slowly along, lighting up yard after yard of the white cliffs on his left hand. There was no avoiding it, and he felt a strange tingling as he realised that in a few seconds the light would find him, and he would then become the target for the enemy's guns. So it was. The beam suddenly overtook him, the launch was vividly illuminated from stem to stern, and the light kept pace with it in its rush down the channel. Frank tried by zigzag steering to wriggle out of it, but it followed every movement, and he resigned himself to the inevitable.

There was a roar and flash from the western shore. A shell splashed into

the water close astern, but failed to explode. At that moment Frank felt neither dismay nor fear, but only a strange exhilaration. Shells began to fall fast, now ahead, now astern, and on both sides, some exploding with a terrific noise, others merely splashing into the water. "They haven't had practice on moving targets, like our naval gunners," thought Frank.

Since everything now depended on speed, he steered out into the channel, in order to take full advantage of the current. His change of course seemed to baulk the gunners. The light grew dimmer as he drew farther from its source, and the gunners, slow in shortening their range, sent their shells far beyond him. But now a brilliant beam of light struck the launch from the eastern shore. The searchlight which the cliffs had previously intercepted had free play over the part of the channel on which he was now racing. In a few moments shells began to fall more thickly around him. The noise was deafening. Huge waves dashed over the launch, and Frank wondered whether it was to escape a shot only to be swamped and sunk by the water. But he clung firmly to the wheel.

Then there was a stunning explosion. The launch staggered as if smitten by a mighty hammer; an immense volume of silvery spray showered upon it. Frank saw that a big gap had been made in the starboard side, a foot or two from the stem. But the engine still throbbed steadily, and the little craft still thrashed her way at full speed seaward. For a little the shelling ceased. The spray had hidden the launch from the view of the gunners, who probably supposed that they had sunk her. But they soon discovered their mistake, and after a ranging shot they started their continuous bombardment again. The brief respite had enabled Frank to gain ground. The launch was less brilliantly illuminated. A light mist was gathering on the water. The wind had changed and was blowing in from the mouth of the channel. In a few minutes the shells ceased to fall. The batteries had given him up.

But his satisfaction was short-lived. Above the throbbing of his engine he became aware of a new sound–the deeper-toned throbbing of a much more powerful engine. A new light began to grope through the mist. Frank felt a sinking of heart. Beyond doubt a war vessel of some kind was in pursuit of him. Outmatched in speed, what could he look for now but a sudden end?

The light found him. Instantly the torpedo boat astern opened fire: Frank heard the regular rap-rap of a machine gun. The noise of the engines grew louder: the vessel was bearing down upon him relentlessly like a sleuthhound. Bullets whizzed, whistled, splashed, thudded on the woodwork. He felt a burning pang in his right shoulder. Clenching his teeth he held on his course. Despair seized him when another light, this time ahead, mingled its misty beam with that from behind. Between two fires, what could this be but the end? "I'll die game," he muttered, and steered straight for the torpedo boat which was now visible in the

lifted light of the vessel behind. In a few seconds his light craft would strike that iron bow, and then—-

But the shock against which Frank had thus steeled himself never came. With his hand still upon the steering-wheel he swooned away.

When Frank opened his eyes again, they lighted upon the ruddy clean-shaven face of a man in a peaked cap and navy blue.

"Where am I?" he murmured.

"In a ward of H.M.S.–no, I mustn't tell you the name, bedad: 'tis against the rules, or if it isn't, it might be, so I'll not tell you. But it's a hospital ship, and you've a nice little hole in your shoulder, and here's the bullet that bored it: perhaps you'd like to look at it."

Frank took the bullet and looked at it with an air of detachment. It seemed hardly believable that that cone of lead had been in his flesh and was now out of it.

"But who the deuce are you, in an enemy uniform and all?" the surgeon asked. "No, you haven't it on now, to be sure; but there 'tis, rolled up on the bunk there, and you were in it when they brought you aboard, and you speaking English as well as the rest of us. You can't talk, to be sure; but who are you? Don't try to talk, but tell me that."

Frank smiled at the rubicund Irishman.

"I feel rather groggy," he said faintly.

"Of course, and who wouldn't? But 'tis a clean wound, and you'll be up and skylarking in a day or two, Mr.—-"

"Frank Forester."

"Ah now, that's not a Turk's name, to be sure. Well, don't talk. I can talk enough for both. When Lieutenant-Commander W—-no, I won't name him–of H.M.S.–won't name *her*–saw a Turkish gunboat firing on a Turk in a neat little cockleshell of a launch, 'Boys,' said he–though I did not hear him, to be sure–'Boys, drop one in the engine-room.' And sure enough, one of her fore six-pounders planted a shell amidships, and crippled the Turk's engines, and a couple more sent her to the bottom. Then they hunted for you, and found your launch bumping on the rocks below Erenkeui, and you as pale as your shirt (where it wasn't red) hugging your wheel as if you loved it. They took you aboard and handed you over to me, and I'm to send in a report when I've got from you who you are, and who's your father, and the way you come to be playing the fool in a Turk's uniform. But there's no hurry for that. You'll take a little food, and sleep, and by and by I'll come and see you again, and then you can give an account of

yourself. Now let me have a peep at your shoulder."

CHAPTER XVIII
THE LANDING AT ANZAC

One bright morning in April, a group of young officers sat smoking on the deck of a British destroyer lying amid a crowd of warships and transport vessels in Mudros harbour, on the southern shore of the Grecian island of Lemnos. They were clad in khaki, with sun helmets, which marked them out as military, not naval officers. Seated in a rough half-circle, some on chairs, some on the spotless deck, they appeared to be specially interested in one of their number, at whom they were throwing questions one after another.

"What's the Turkish for 'Give me some beer,' anyhow?" one had just asked.

"*Bana bira ver*," replied the young subaltern. "But you won't easily get it, you know. Moslems don't drink it."

"Do they grow grapes?" asked another.

"Oh yes; *yuzum* 's the word."

"Don't they make 'em into wine, then?"

"They're not supposed to, but I daresay you might get some if you said *Bana sharab ver* very politely."

"You won't want it, Ted," said a third. "We've plenty of our own stuff. Our Australian wine is as good as any."

"Besides," said the man they were questioning, "you won't get many opportunities of making requisitions of that sort. There aren't any inns in Gallipoli, you know."

"What's the Turkish for *inn*?"

"Khan."

"Say 'keep up your pecker' in Turkish: that'll stump you."

"Not at all. If you fancy your Turk is downhearted, say to him '*Gheiret ileh*.'"

A subaltern, who had furtively taken from his pocket a booklet with a buff-coloured paper cover, turned over the pages, replaced the book, and bending forward said:

"Here's a poser for you. What's the Turkish for 'not to be able to be made to love'?"

There was a gust of laughter.

"Tomlinson's thinking of the girl he left behind him," said one of his comrades. "*Gheiret ileh*, Tommy."

"Stumped, Forester?"

"I'm sorry for Tomlinson; he'll have a mouthful to say. *Sevderilehmemek* meets the case, I think."

"By Jove!" gasped the last speaker. "Sounds like a bird twittering."

Tomlinson had taken out his book again.

"Forester's right," he said, examining a page. "What a language! How in the world did you manage to learn it?"

"What have you got there?" some one asked.

"A remarkable production called 'Easy Turkish,'" Tomlinson replied. "If that's easy! ... It's supposed to be a word-book for our chaps in Turkey; but while it gives you the Turkish for 'not to be able to be made to love'–as if any sane person would want to say that!–it doesn't tell you how to say you're hungry or thirsty. Poof!"

He flung the book overboard.

"Bang goes sixpence!" he remarked. "You'd better compile something decent, Forester."

"It's too late now," said Frank, smiling. "Pity; I might have made a few honest pennies if I had started in time."

Frank had been taken in the hospital ship to Malta, where he found his father. As he made a swift recovery from his wound, he grew more and more eager to join the fighting forces, and was on the point of applying for a commission when news came that a military expedition in Gallipoli had been decided on, to retrieve the failure of the naval operations which had been in progress for several months. With his father's approval he hastened to Alexandria and applied for work in connection with the expedition. His knowledge of Turkish and his recent experiences in Gallipoli served him well. Interpreters were much needed. He was attached as interpreter to the Australian contingent with the rank of lieutenant, and accompanied the troops when they sailed for the base in Mudros Bay.

"What sort of a place is this Gallipoli?" asked one of the young Australians, who had heard something of Frank's adventures.

"A very hard nut to crack," Frank replied. "I don't know much about the coast, which is mainly cliffs with very narrow beaches; but the interior is all rocky hills and ravines, covered with scrub and dwarf oaks. You couldn't imagine finer country for defence, and the Turks are best on the defensive. They've had time for preparation, too. A couple of months ago I saw them dragging a battery up the sides of Sari Bair, a hill nearly 1000 feet high, and since then no doubt they've

planted guns all over the place."

"We're in for a hot time, then," remarked Tomlinson. "Well, I was fed up with Egypt. That attack on the canal was a futile bit of stupidity, and I was afraid they'd keep us there on the watch for another attack which not even the Turks would be asses enough to make. If we're in for the real thing now–well, I for one am delighted, I assure you."

At two o'clock on Saturday afternoon, April 24, the flagship took up her position at the head of the line, and the warships passed down among the slowly moving transports amid cheers from the men on the crowded decks. Two hours later the troops were lined up with the ships' companies to hear the captains read Admiral de Robeck's final order of the day, and to join in the last solemn service conducted by the chaplains. Then the vessels steamed slowly northward, towards the scene of what was to be the most heroic enterprise in the long annals of our history.

All night the fleet made its slow way. On Frank's destroyer the naval officers entertained the troops with their traditional hospitality, and then the men–such of them as excitement did not keep awake–slept through the remaining hours of darkness.

At one in the morning of Sunday the ships hove to, five miles from the fatal shore. The men were aroused and served with a hot meal. The stillness of night brooded over the decks, and the young soldiers, browned, stalwart, eager, chatted in subdued tones. Twenty minutes later came the signal from the flagship for lowering the boats, which had been swinging all night from the davits. Silently the men moved to their appointed places; the boats dropped gently to the water, and out of the darkness glided the steam pinnaces that were to take them in tow. Frank and his new acquaintances were to remain on the destroyer, which would go close inshore and land them in boats after those towed by the pinnaces had reached the beach.

It was still dark when the boats, each in charge of a young midshipman, moved slowly and silently shoreward. The group of officers on the deck of the destroyer followed them with their eyes until they were swallowed up in the darkness. Their hearts were beating fast with suppressed excitement. What was to be the fate of this great adventure? Could their approach have been heard? Would the enemy be taken by surprise? Had the shore at this spot been fortified in anticipation of attack? Nothing was known. The dawn would show.

Three battleships had taken up position in line abreast to cover the landing. The boats stole past them. Through the gloom the outline of the cliffs was just faintly discernible. Frank gazed breathlessly ahead. He could barely distinguish the foremost boats creeping in towards the shore. All was silent; the brooding hush seemed ominous. Suddenly a searchlight flashed from a point on the cliffs,

showing up the boats as it moved slowly over the water. Still not a shot was fired. The destroyer, one of seven, began to move. It had barely got under way when there was a long line of flashes at the level of the beach, followed in a few seconds by a sharp crackle. The Turks had opened rifle fire. Then came the faint sounds of a British cheer. The first boats had reached the beach: dark forms could be seen leaping forwards into a blaze of fire. Frank watched them with a quivering impatience. His general instructions were to go ashore when the landing had been made good and to hold himself in readiness to interpret so soon as the first prisoners were brought in. But in his heart he longed to be among the gallant fellows who were braving the perils of the assault; why should he be passive when they were daring so much?

A light mist crept over the sea, almost blotting out the cliffs. Presently the destroyer moved slowly shorewards; it stopped again, and at the moment when rifle fire burst forth with greater intensity the boats were lowered over the side. Frank sprang into the first, throbbing with exultation as it pulled in. The rosy dawn was just creeping over the hill-tops, the mist was dispersing, and he could now clearly see the khaki figures swarming like cats up the shrub-covered almost perpendicular face of the cliffs.

The boat touched shoal water. Frank leapt overboard with its company, and rushed up the beach, strewn with prostrate forms and discarded packs. Just as he reached the first trench, from which the Turks had been hurled at the point of the bayonet, the man beside him reeled, gasped, and fell against him. Frank laid him gently down; then, losing all sense of his non-combatant capacity, he seized the man's rifle and bandolier and sprinted after the others.

For a few moments he ran forward in a blind confusion of the senses. The yellow sandstone crumbled beneath his feet: in front was what appeared to be a green wall streaked with yellow. Bullets whistled around. Here and there men lay huddled in extraordinary attitudes on the slope; now and then he caught sight of a figure clambering up. On he went, through shrubs that grew higher than his head, conscious only of continuous flashes, until suddenly he came face to face with a dark figure that seemed to have sprung up out of the earth. Instinctively he thrust forward his rifle with a fierce lunge, and the next thing he knew was that the Turk had sunk down before him, and that he was leaping into a trench.

Close to his right he heard the murderous rattle of a machine gun. He stumbled along the trench for a few yards, shouting he knew not what, tripped over a man prone in the bottom of the trench, and before he could pick himself up was kicked and trodden by a number of Australians who had followed him. Struggling to his feet, he hurried on, to find himself in a furious mêlée about the emplacement of the machine gun. Two of the Australians were down, a third was at deadly grips with three big bearded Turks. Frank rushed at the nearest

of them, and disposed of him with his bayonet. At the same moment the second fell to the bayonet of the Australian, and the third turned, scrambled out of the trench, and plunging into the scrub disappeared up the hill.

"Got the gun, sir," cried the Australian with a happy grin.

Frank, gasping, trembling, leant against the side of the trench.

"Take it down," he replied.

Another boat's load of men came rushing along the trench. There was no officer among them. Gathering himself together, Frank put himself at their head, and leapt up the hill, in pursuit of the Turks who had been driven from the trench. The ground was broken by ridges, gullies, and sand-pits, and the scrub grew so thickly that they could scarcely see a yard in front of them. To keep a regular alignment was impossible. The men separated, each forcing his own way. None of them had yet so much as charged their magazines. The work had all been done with the cold steel. Here one plunged his bayonet into the back of a fleeing Turk: there another shouted with delight as he discovered that a swaying bush was really a sniper who had tied branches about his body for concealment. As they mounted, friend and foe became hopelessly intermingled. Frank caught sight occasionally of a knot of Turks, then of a group of Australians; next moment nothing was to be seen but scrub and creeper intermingled with bright flowers of varied hue as in a rock garden. Foot by foot he climbed up until presently he found himself at the crest of the hill, and saw the Australians busy with their trenching tools amid a furious rifle fire from the Turks in their main position. His eye marked a steep gully which formed an almost perfect natural trench. Shouting to the men nearest him, he was joined by a score or so, who leapt into the gully beside him. And as the sun rose over the hills on that Sunday morning, Frank, without being aware of it, was within a few hundred yards of his old hiding-place, the sepulchre on Sari Bair.

CHAPTER XIX
A TIGHT CORNER

Meanwhile, on the beach below, the work of disembarking men and guns and stores was proceeding steadily, still under fire, though not so concentrated and so deadly as it was before the first trenches were rushed. Engineers were already cutting paths upward through the scrub on which supplies were being hurried to

the top. Ambulance men were carrying wounded on stretchers down the steep face of the cliff. The guns of the fleet were searching for the Turkish positions on the summit, and seaplanes were circling overhead to discover the positions of the batteries which were enfilading the ridges and the beach with shrapnel.

Now that the excitement of the first rush had subsided, Frank felt himself in a difficulty. He was fortuitously in command of nearly a half platoon of men: what was he to do with them? He knew nothing of his position relative to the rest of the force which had established itself on the hill. The din of rifle and machine-gun fire was increasing; it seemed clear that the Turks were rallying for a counter attack. Snipers' bullets incessantly whistled overhead. After a few minutes he felt sure that the head of the gully above was occupied by a strong force of the enemy, and he anxiously considered whether he ought to try to hold on, or to retire down the gully until he came in touch with some one from whom he could take orders. In the meantime he had instructed the men to charge their magazines, to keep their heads down, and to maintain a careful look-out. Never had he felt so glad of the long field-days he had spent as a sergeant in his school corps.

While he was still in doubt, a second lieutenant came up the gully. In the dirty, dishevelled, tattered figure he hardly recognised the Jack Tomlinson who had tried to pose him in Turkish.

"You headstrong jackass!" cried Tomlinson genially. "Do you know that you've got at least five hundred yards ahead of the rest? Looking for Turks not made to be loved, but to be bayoneted, I suppose."

"No cackle! What are we to do?"

"I came to withdraw you, and have had a narrow squeak half a dozen times on the way. The ground between you and our first line, where we've got two or three thousand men strung out anyhow, is frightfully exposed, and the Turks are in strength above. There are no end of snipers concealed in the scrub on each side, and the bottom of the gully is enfiladed; as I tell you, I had the narrowest squeak in getting here."

"We must hold on then?"

"Or risk being heavily cut up. I think we had better stay, though for the life of me I don't see how we can stick it if the Turks locate us. Anyway, I hope it won't be for long. The fellows have chucked away their packs, I see; that means no grub, and there's no water. I'm frightfully dry, but I don't care to take a pull at my water-bottle yet. Every drop may be needed by and by."

"Well, we couldn't have struck a better place for a stand. This gully's a better trench than we could have made in a hurry, bar sandbags. Our handful ought to be able to hold it against anything but artillery. And we can improve it: we'd better start at once before the Turks spot us: I believe they're in pretty

strong force above there."

"Righto. Let's have a look round."

The sides of the gully were covered with bushes and small trees. Several of the men had retained their entrenching tools, and Frank set them to lop branches, and others to pull up shrubs by the roots, which the remainder began to weave into a sort of abattis extending across the gully. Before they had been engaged on the task more than a quarter of an hour, the whiz of bullets directly down the gully informed them that the Turks had discovered their position. One or two men were hit, and Frank told off a few to post themselves in the bushes and snipe in return. Their flanks were protected against an attack in force, on one side by a stretch of fairly open ground commanded from the position of the Australians below them, and on the other by the tangled vegetation through which to advance seemed impossible. It gave cover for innumerable snipers, it is true; but it served also as a screen to the occupants of the gully on a much lower level. As an additional defence against attack from up the gully Frank ordered some of the men to throw up a rampart behind the abattis, a task which the soft nature of the rock rendered comparatively easy.

But the traverse was only half finished when there came a warning shout from a man above–

"Here they come!"

Round a bend in the gully some distance higher up a compact mass of swarthy Turks surged down towards them. At a word from Frank the men dropped their tools and posted themselves behind the obstruction, taking all the cover its unfinished state afforded, each man looking steadily over his rifle sight.

"Wait for the word," said Frank at one end of the line.

The Turks rushed down impetuously, filling the whole width of the gully and several ranks deep. They did not fire, their intention evidently being to overwhelm the little party in one headlong rush. Frank waited tensely until the first rank was within about a hundred yards; then he called out:

"Now! Rapid!"

A withering volley flashed from the rifles. Then the men, each for himself, fired into the approaching mass as steadily as if practising at the butts. The first rank went down under the pitiless hail of lead, but the rush was scarcely checked. Carried on by their own impetus, the Turks ran, jumped, reeled down the hundred yards of rough slope that intervened between them and the abattis. They could not stop, even if they would, for the close ranks behind pressed relentlessly upon the foremost. Nor indeed did they show any disposition to shirk the issue. They were Turks, and therefore brave; they were many, and the defenders were few; and though the men at the head of the column fell in their tracks, or survived only to reel forward a few yards and then collapse, those behind sprang over the

bodies of their fallen comrades, only to fall themselves a pace or two further on. Their places were taken in turn by others from the throng pressing behind, and the living stream dashed against the abattis like waves upon a breakwater. Shouting the name of Allah, some tried to wrench the branches apart, others dug their feet into the obstacle and began to clamber over. But their courage was of no avail. With a horde of the enemy within five or six feet of them the Australians continued to fire calmly, methodically, relentlessly, plying their bayonets upon those few who came within their reach.

In two or three minutes from the time when the torrent first broke upon the barrier the oncoming Turks had to meet a new and terrible obstacle in the piled bodies of their comrades. And when finally the survivors, stricken with sudden panic, broke and fled back up the gully, it needed all the authority of the two officers to prevent their men from bursting out and chasing the shattered mob. The Australian in action has only one glorious failing: like a thoroughbred courser, when his blood is up he is hard to hold.

Frank mopped his smoking brow. His hand was shaking. His rifle was hot.

"You three men," he said, indicating those nearest him, "get over and bring in the wounded. The rest keep an eye up the gully."

"I've got some iodine ampoules," said Tomlinson.

"Good! We must do what we can for the poor chaps. I'm glad it's over."

"Is it over? Look there."

At the further end of the gully the Turks had already begun to collect material for a breastwork similar to that against which they had just spent themselves. They kept out of sight, but masses of scrub and branches of trees could be seen falling into the gully from the sides.

"We must snipe them," said Tomlinson–"fire into the bushes."

"Better save our ammunition," suggested Frank. "We shall want it if they attack again, and we can't get any more. They've learnt a lesson, and will be warier now, and therefore more formidable. We've all our work cut out yet."

Thus at the one end the Turks went about their task unmolested, and at the other the Australians were allowed to carry the wounded behind their rampart without interference. Such of the men as had field dressings employed them ungrudgingly on their wounded prisoners. But hardly had the last man who could be moved been brought over when the Turks above commenced a steady fire from behind their barricade.

"Keep low, men," cried Frank. "Poke your rifles through the bushes near the bottom, and loose a shot every now and then."

It soon became clear that the sharpshooting from the barricade was intended to distract the Australians while an attempt was made to outflank them through the scrub on the banks of the gully. Though the Turks moved stealthily,

THE FIGHT IN THE GULLY

THE FIGHT IN THE GULLY

and on the left bank had almost perfect cover, a sudden stirring of the bushes caught Tomlinson's eye, and he guessed what it meant. The party was all too small to meet an attack on three fronts; for presently figures were seen darting across the more open ground on the right in twos and threes, risking observation from the larger force of Australians that was entrenched farther down the hill. Fighting was general all over the position, and even if the plight of the small band in the gully had been known to their comrades below, there was little or no chance of their being reinforced. All that the young officers could do was to tell off as many of their men as could be spared from the barricade to line the banks of the gully, and do their best to daunt the enemy by the accuracy of their fire.

It was a position to test the nerve and resolution of a veteran, much more of soldiers making their first essay in warfare. Nothing in the experience of the Great War has been more remarkable than the extraordinary efficiency shown by the younger officers–men who a few months before were boys at school, with no more expectation of serving their country in arms than of undertaking any other unimagined form of activity. They have shown quickness of perception, promptness in decision, the courage and tenacity which every Briton glories in as his birthright, and a cheerfulness in the most adverse and depressing circumstances, which is not improvised, but grows out of health and disciplined freedom. When the full story of this world-struggle comes to be written, it will be found that a large proportion of the honours which history will award will fall to the boys.

Through the heat of the day, and on till the evening mist crept across the hills, Frank and his Australian comrades maintained the unequal fight. In the struggle at the barricade they had received only a few slight wounds; but as the day wore on the effective strength of the little band ebbed away. Parched with thirst, ruefully regretful of the emergency rations in the packs so lightly discarded on the beach below, they had more than the persistent sniping of the enemy to contend with. They rarely caught sight of the Turks, but every now and then one would fall to a bullet from some unseen rifle in the scrub. Exasperated by this furtive mode of attack, the men asked to be allowed to charge the enemy, and growled in the free-spoken manner of Australians when their entreaty was refused. At one time Tomlinson suggested that they should make an attempt to fall back upon the larger forces below, in spite of its risks: but Frank replied quietly:

"We don't know how important every yard may prove to be. I think we had better hold on, Tommy. Perhaps the fellows below will make another rush upward by and by."

But darkness fell: the din of fighting had not diminished; but none had come to their relief. Tomlinson renewed his proposal; but to the other dangers would be added the risk of losing their way in this unknown wilderness, and he

agreed ultimately with Frank that they had better hold their ground.

The men tried to relieve their thirst by sucking the dew from their coats and shirts. The day had been a long torture, but all confessed that the night hours were worse. In the daylight they could see their enemy if they threatened an attack; in the darkness they had to trust to their ears alone. The Turks, knowing how small their numbers were, would probably be tempted to rush them, and the strain of guarding against surprise told very heavily upon their nerves.

About four hours after dark, Frank's suspicion that some such move was intended was aroused, first by the slackening of the sniping fire, then by sounds of movement on all sides. Frank had posted himself at the upper end of his little force, by the barricade: Tomlinson at the lower. From this end Frank suddenly heard murmurs of conversation, in tones which, though low, had a note of excitement. In a few moments a man came to him up the gully.

"I'm Sergeant Jukes, sir," he said–"crept up the gully from below. Some one told the major about you up here, and he sent me to say, hold on as long as you can. They're getting ready to advance down there."

"That's good news! Tell the major we'll stick it to the last."

"I'm to stay with you, sir."

"Good! The major doesn't know who we are, of course."

"No, sir. We heard firing, and he thought perhaps some of our chaps had been cut off and hadn't got an officer with them, so he sent me to take charge in that case, but to stay anyhow."

"We're glad of your help–only wish there were forty of you. Just go down a few paces and keep your ears open. I'm pretty sure the Turks are going to try a rush."

The minutes passed very slowly. It was clear that the enemy, leaving nothing to chance, were making their dispositions with deliberate thoroughness. Officers and men waited in a tenseness that was painful. Would the blow from above fall before the promised movement from below? Frank dared not diminish his force by sending out a listening patrol. He would need every man if the attack came, and it would be so easy to lose one's way in the scrub. But in the darkness every man's hearing seemed preternaturally sharpened, and they fingered their rifles restlessly as they heard more and more sounds of the forces gathering about them.

Suddenly there was a whistle on the right, followed by an answering whistle on the left. Guided by the sounds the defenders opened fire. There was no reply. The enemy were no doubt feeling their way forward, in the hope of getting near enough to sweep the position in one overwhelming rush. From the directions in which the whistles had come, Frank guessed that an attack was to be made simultaneously on two sides. There was another whistle, nearer at hand

and unmistakably at the side; the answer came from below. An idea flashed into his mind which he instantly put into execution.

When, a few moments later, the Turks swarmed down both sides of the gully some distance below the barricade, they intended to force the defenders back upon that useless defence, expecting to have them then at their mercy. But when they met, in the darkness and confusion some of them threw themselves upon their own friends before they discovered that the men they had come to attack had disappeared. In that brief interval before the rush, Frank, divining their purpose, had swiftly withdrawn all his men to the barricade, and at the moment when the Turks poured down the sides of the gully, the defenders were all posted above the barricade, facing towards them. As the Turks, yelling and cursing, surged upwards they were met by a withering fire, which swept down the gully into their confused and closely packed ranks. Trapped, bewildered, they hesitated; then they in turn opened fire.

But at this moment there was a ringing cheer from below, repeated in ever-increasing volume as a full company of Australians charged up the gully. They could not be seen; not a rifle flash revealed their position; they meant to do their work with the cold steel. The Turks, swept by the hail of lead from above, ignorant of the number of the enemy pouring upon their rear, began in terror to scramble up the sides of the gully, and broke away into the scrub on either side.

A hoarse shout rose from the parched throats of the men above the barricade. It warned their comrades of their position. And now came the moment that rewarded the little band for all the stress and labour of the day. Exhausted though they were, they sprang up the banks of the gully, and side by side with the new arrivals, deaf to the commands of Frank and Tomlinson, they plunged into the scrub after the fleeing Turks. A series of peremptory blasts from a whistle brought this impetuous movement to a stop. The men returned, disappointed but happy, to the gully, and the newcomers were ordered to line the banks with a protective parapet.

Then an electric torch was seen moving among the men, and a clear authoritative voice was heard.

"Where is the officer who organized this position?"

Thoroughly worn out, Frank was sitting at the foot of the bank, holding his head in his hands, hardly conscious of what was passing around him. He looked up as the light flashed upon him.

"This is he, eh?" a voice said. "Your name, sir."

He saw two keen eyes fixed upon him, and stood up, mechanically saluting.

"My name?" He appeared to consider for a moment. "Yes, I know: Frank Forester."

"Regiment?"

"I don't know; I don't believe I have one. No, sir, of course; I'm attached as interpreter."

"Indeed! You've a queer way of interpreting your duties. How long have you held this gully?"

"Since early morning, sir."

"With what force?"

"We had something over twenty to start with: there aren't so many now."

"Less than a platoon! By George, Mr. Forester, it's an uncommonly fine performance: are you aware of that? I'll send your name up to the General."

"There's Tomlinson, sir."

"I'll look after Tomlinson."

"The men were splendid."

"I haven't a doubt of it.... Why, bless my soul! water there, some one."

Frank had collapsed in his arms.

CHAPTER XX
FISHING

With the morning light the men were set to consolidate the position. Frank's barricade was strengthened; the gully was parapeted and wired; everything possible was done to improve the defensive capacity of the natural trench which marked the summit of the Australian advance, and which its occupants were to hold for a month without being able to push farther.

On the day after the fight, Frank was sent down to the beach by the major to report himself to the colonel, who at once employed him in his proper duties of interpreting for the Turkish prisoners.

"You'd rather be doing something else, I dare say, after that brilliant little defence of yours," said the colonel; "but interpreters are scarce, and you can't be spared."

During the next few days Frank learnt by degrees many details of the wonderful feat accomplished by the allied army. In the first place he discovered that the landing-place of the Australians, a little north of Gaba Tepe, was almost immediately below his old haunt on Sari Bair, and the guns he had heard firing above during that unforgettable day were evidently the battery which he had seen hauled up the hill. He heard too how at Beach Y, to the south, the King's

Own Scottish Borderers and part of the Naval Division had gained the top of the cliffs with ease, covered by the guns of three cruisers in the bay; and how, still farther southward, the Royal Fusiliers, landing from the *Implacable*, had made good their footing without a single casualty. On the broader sands at Beach W the Lancashire Fusiliers had at first failed against the wire entanglements almost at the water's edge, and the innumerable snipers and machine guns concealed in the hollow between the cliffs. At Beach V, the Dublin Fusiliers, almost annihilated as they attempted to force three lines of wire and a labyrinth of trenches, had taken cover under a high sandbank that stretched along the shore, where they were joined by such of the Munster Fusiliers and the Hampshires as survived the terrible fire which burst on them when they rowed in from the collier in whose side a door had been cut for their exit. At Beach S the South Wales Borderers had scaled the cliffs without much difficulty; and the French had successfully effected their diversion on the opposite shore of the channel at Kum Kale.

These were the doings of the memorable Sunday. On Monday the Australians, supported by the guns of the fleet, withstood a violent counter-attack that lasted two hours, and finally drove off the Turks at the point of the bayonet. Elsewhere along the shore, except at Beach Y, which had been abandoned, the invaders held their own, and during the following days the work of consolidation made rapid progress. The sappers threw out piers on which stores and ammunition were unloaded from lighters under incessant shrapnel fire. Engineers cut roads up the cliffs to facilitate the transport and the passage of the ambulance parties that were continually going up and down. The wounded were conveyed to the ships as rapidly as possible. Day and night the work went on, amid the deafening roar of big guns and the unceasing rain of bullets.

During the month of May little further progress was made. The way was blocked by the hill of Achi Baba, crowned by a strong redoubt, and seamed with trenches extending on all sides in terraces one above another. Against these strong fortifications no general advance was possible.

Meanwhile German submarines had commenced their activity in the Dardanelles and the Ægean Sea. They failed to interfere with the supplies for the army, but they torpedoed three large warships, the *Goliath*, the *Triumph*, and the *Majestic*, and put a temporary check on the close co-operation of the fleet. Their successes were in some measure balanced by the feats of British submarines, which ran the blockade of mines, penetrated as far as Constantinople, and sent several Turkish transports to the bottom.

One evening, just after the *Majestic* had been sunk, Frank was smoking an after-dinner cigarette with his colonel outside the mess-tent. The conversation turning on submarines, Frank mentioned the incident of the broken case on the

quay at Panderma, when he had noticed the periscope of a submarine disclosed by the breach. He did not dwell upon it, and the colonel only remarked that the activity of the German submarines had evidently been long premeditated.

Two mornings later, Frank was summoned to the colonel, with whom he found a naval captain.

"Good morning, Forester," said the colonel. "I have been telling my friend Captain Roberts some of your queer experiences before you settled down as a humdrum interpreter. He is rather interested."

"I am indeed," said the captain. "After what you have gone through, interpreting must be dull work–duller than mine, for it's not very exciting to fire at long range without much chance of getting one back."

"It's not very exhilarating, certainly," replied Frank. "The prisoners haven't much to tell. They don't like their German officers, and haven't an idea what they are fighting for. Fighting is their job, and *Kismet* covers it all.... You haven't been hit from Sari Bair, then?"

"No, though their shells drop pretty close sometimes. Our sea-planes haven't managed to locate that battery. I understand you didn't actually see the guns emplaced."

"No, after I toppled one over I made off. You see, things were getting pretty hot just then."

"Naturally. Well, you seem to have been able to take good care of yourself in very ticklish situations; but perhaps after all your present work is a relief after so much excitement. A man can have his fill of adventures, I suppose."

"I confess things weren't altogether pleasant, sometimes, though they had their bright side."

Frank smiled at his recollections of the major of artillery whose clothes he had commandeered, and of the boastful Abdi gurgling in the sea. At the same time, struck by a peculiar intentness in the captain's manner, he asked himself, "What is he driving at, I wonder?"

"Yes, of course there are two sides to everything," the captain went on. "Sometimes the bright side is eclipsed by the dark–according to the state of one's liver, perhaps. Your liver doesn't trouble you much, I fancy."

Frank looked at the broad, jolly face smiling enigmatically at him.

"Is there anything you wish me to do?" he asked bluntly but respectfully.

The two elder officers exchanged a glance.

"Well, since you put it like that–yes, there is," said the captain. "But it's a matter entirely for yourself. If you feel any hesitation, we shan't think any less of you if you don't entertain the idea. I may as well say at once it's a dangerous job, not at all in the ordinary risk of warfare; but the colonel had told me of your work on the cliff yonder, and for a mere interpreter, you know, you appear rather

to relish risks that are not quite ordinary."

"You don't think much of risks when you've got anything going," said Frank. "Anyhow, if I can be of use–what's the nature of the job?"

"It's just as I expected," interposed the colonel, rising. "I'll leave you two to talk it over. Come and tell me what you arrange, Forester. You'll find me somewhere in the neighbourhood."

Next morning Frank's absence evoked enquiries among the junior officers. The colonel was appealed to.

"Forester? Oh, he's off for a few days on special service."

"Interpreting, sir?" asked one.

"He'll have opportunities of airing his Turkish," said the colonel.

His manner discouraged further questioning. The others saw that he meant to say no more. One of them, however, presently asked whether Forester was likely to be away long.

"I can't say." He tugged his moustache reflectively. "Our little job here is not exactly a soft one, but I wouldn't be in Forester's boots just now for a peerage."

CHAPTER XXI
IN A RING FENCE

A Greek fishing vessel was beating up against a gentle easterly wind into the Gulf of Adramyti. Its course suggested that it had sailed from the island of Mitylene. In the distance, beyond the head of the gulf, Mount Ida glowed in the rays of the setting sun, and the shade was deepening on the wooded hills of the Asiatic shore.

It was a peaceful, beautiful scene. But if the eyes of any on board the vessel were turned westward, they fell upon an image of war. Far off on the horizon a long low shape lay darkly silhouetted against the orange sky. With a glass, perhaps without, it might have been recognised as a destroyer.

The crew of the vessel were busy with their nets. Their catches were not very great, yet they showed no disappointment, such as might have been expected in men whose living depended on their takes. Some of them, indeed, showed an almost boyish interest and curiosity in the contents of the nets when they were hauled up. One might have thought that they were out for a night's fishing for the first time in their lives. And the remarks that fell from their lips

were not those that one would expect to hear in a Greek vessel, or from native-born fishermen.

"That's a plumper," said one.

"My aunt! don't you know a dogfish when you see it?"

"Is that a dogfish? All I know about 'em is that they make you squeamish. Fact! My cousin told me: a chap always running some craze or other. Once it was science: thought he'd like to be a B.Sc. Biology was in it. He bought a microscope and a swagger set of dissecting instruments: they have to cut up all sorts of strange beasts, you know. First came a frog."

"Ugh! Slimy!" muttered one of his companions.

"Well, he liked it: fact! Said it was a beautiful little creature inside. Then came a mussel: he had no end of a job finding its nervous system or whatever it was. Then was the turn of the dogfish. I don't know whether this fish had been too long away from home, or whether it's naturally offensive, like the skunk: but whatever it was, my cousin told me that when he put in the scalpel–well, he ran out of the room and decided to go in for philosophy instead."

The speakers, though clad in nondescript garments that might have been taken, at a distance, for Greek, were obviously Englishmen. Four of their companions in the boat were of the same nationality, and anyone who had ever spent a few days in a British naval port would have declared, with the first glance at their keen bronzed faces, that they were British seamen in disguise. The remaining five men in the vessel were as obviously genuine Greeks; but a trained ear would have recognised their speech as the Greek of Cyprus rather than Mitylene.

The fishing, or shall we say the pretence of fishing, was kept up until it was almost dark.

"Time to be off, old chap," said the man who had recoiled at the mention of a frog.

"Yes, I suppose so," said the other without much enthusiasm. He took off his outer garments, and replaced them by the loose European costume which is affected by the modern Greek merchant–wide trousers, a jacket that looks as though it were never meant to be buttoned, a shapeless soft hat, and the inevitable touch of colour in a blue cummerbund. Finally he stuck upon his upper lip a long, soft, black moustache.

"By George, you look a regular Levantine–not to say levanter," cried his companion. "In that get-up you could persuade any simple Turk that chalk's cheese. The moustache is a master-stroke: wonderful how it transforms a fellow. I'd like to know the reason why army chaps are encouraged to cultivate 'em, whereas they're strictly forbidden in the King's navy."

He continued talking, apparently with the idea of keeping up his own and his companion's spirits. Meanwhile the vessel, which had put about just before

darkness fell, as if to run back to Mitylene, once more beat up the gulf, edging gradually into Turkish waters. In about an hour it had arrived, according to the calculation of the Greek skipper, within about two miles of the coast. Under the starlit sky the hills loomed black in the distance.

The vessel was thrown into the wind. Orders were given in a whisper. A small dinghy towing astern was drawn up alongside. One of the Greeks stepped into it, and tied some bundles of matting to its stern, letting them float on the water at the end of the rope. Then Frank and the naval officer got in, two of the British sailors followed them, and the boat was rowed with well-muffled oars silently shoreward.

When it was within a few cables' length of the shore the rowers ceased pulling, and all the occupants of the boat stretched their ears to catch any sounds that might indicate the presence of persons on the beach. They heard nothing but the slight ripple of the almost tideless Ægean breaking on the sand.

"Pull in," murmured the lieutenant-commander.

A few silent strokes brought the boat to the beach. Trees stretched down almost to the water's brink. All was dark and tranquil. A seaman stepped overboard upon the wet sand and stood with his back towards the boat. Frank rose.

"Good luck, old man," said the naval officer, gripping his hand hard.

Frank mounted the seaman's back, and was carried a few yards to the dry sand. Meanwhile the other seaman had cut the matting loose, and placed it carelessly on the beach just above the waterline, as if it had been cast up there by the sea. Frank waved a farewell, plunged into the forest, and disappeared. After a short interval the boat was pulled out to sea, and its occupants boarded the fishing vessel, anchored where they had left it.

Frank found himself among trees growing thickly together, on ground that sloped steeply from the beach. There was little undergrowth to impede his progress. Consulting a luminous compass, he directed his course almost due northward, expecting in a short time to reach the road that ran parallel with the coast and at a short distance from it, from Alexander Troas to Edremit. The slope soon gave place to more level ground, and the forest belt presently ended abruptly at the edge of cultivated land. Frank crossed the fields, and in about forty minutes after he left the beach he struck into the road.

It was a bright starlit night, without moon. The road was deserted. In accordance with the plan made after close consultation of the map with his friend the lieutenant-commander, he turned to the right, and stole cautiously along the road, stopping at every few yards to listen. Everything was quiet, and there was neither light nor sound from the few farm buildings which he passed at intervals.

After walking about a mile he heard footsteps. At first he thought they were merely echoes of his own, but he took the precaution to step aside into the

shadow of a clump of trees, and soon afterwards saw a figure approaching along the road. Before being discovered himself he wished to learn what kind of person he had to do with. The indistinct figure presently resolved itself into the bent form of an old peasant, whom he thought he might safely question. Stepping out into the road, he went on, and was not seen by the peasant, who was apparently very tired and walked with head downbent, until he had almost reached him.

Giving him the usual salutation, Frank stopped.

"Where is the nearest khan?" he asked.

"About an hour's walk along the road," replied the man, looking curiously at him.

"Who is the khanji?"

"Hussan, the son of Ibrahim."

"Is it a good khan? I shall be glad to get there. I have had a long walk. My horse fell lame: I could not get another: they are all taken for the army."

"It is a good khan. Hussan is a good man. You will rest well."

More salutations were exchanged, and each went on his way.

In less than an hour Frank arrived at a building in which lights were burning. He knocked at the door, and called for Hussan the son of Ibrahim. A voice from within asked who he was and what was his business.

"A merchant of Corinth, O khanji, compelled to go on foot by the loss of his horse. I am weary and desire to rest, and it has been told me along the road how excellent is this khan, and how princely the hospitality of the khanji."

"Great is Truth," said the khanji, opening the door. "Here, if you are a respectable man and can pay, you shall find good food and a couch to yourself, since I have but few guests to-night."

The innkeeper, a middle-aged man of Arab type, stood in the doorway to inspect his guest before admitting him.

"Whither are you bound, stranger?" he asked.

"For Edremit, khanji. I have business with the army: what it is I cannot say: you understand that?"

The khanji looked knowing.

"I am deaf and blind if need be," he said. "You will want a horse. I think I can find one for you–if you can pay."

"Surely I will pay well."

"Enter, then, O honoured guest. I will set before you what is left of a prime chicken, and after, cakes and honey, and whatsoever this khan will afford."

Frank went in. The single guest-chamber, a large apartment, was lit by a couple of saucer-lamps. Three men of the carrier type were eating their supper. The host laid rugs on a sleeping board at one end of the room for Frank, and called to his servant to bring the stranger a bowl of stew.

"What news of the war?" he asked.

"There is little fresh," replied Frank. "The Russians get no further, and the English are beating their heads against the rocks in Gallipoli. Your countrymen the Turks—-"

"Not so: I am an Arab," interrupted the khanji. "My fathers ruled this country before the Turks were heard of."

"True. Perhaps it will be ruled again by men of your race: who can tell? But the Turks are stronger since the Almans have come among them. There are many Almans in Stamboul. You have not seen any on this side of the water?"

"I have not; but it is said that there are Almans along the coast. What they do here I know not, for they are not fighting men. It is told that they are holy men, who keep themselves very strictly apart. The Almans, it is said, are becoming true sons of the faithful."

"I know something of them," said one of the guests. "I have taken goods to them from Edremit–wheaten flour from Tafid the corn factor. Truly the ways of the Franks are past understanding, and the chief of these Almans is the maddest of all. He is a hermit; yet big and fierce, and not lean and weak like our own holy men. With him there are certain others of less degree, who do what he bids them. His dwelling is on the shore of the gulf, and the ground around it is enclosed by a fence of wire with many sharp spikes. In the fence there is but one gate, and none is allowed to enter except those bringing stores. I myself, when I take the flour, have to leave it at an inner fence far from the house, and there it is received by the holy man's servants. That he is a true son of Islam is sure, for the Governor protects him, and posts soldiers at his gate to defend him from harm."

"Mashallah! These Almans are different from us," said another man. "Our holy men eat pulse, and so little that their bodies are but shadows. But these strangers have large bodies, and surely in appetite they are as elephants, for I have carried to them the flesh of oxen and sheep sufficient for fifty men that have no claim to holiness."

"And now, stranger, give me your name, your business, and the number of your years," said the khanji. "I ask pardon for what seems impertinence, but I am bidden to send every day to the Bey at Chatme a list of my guests. It is a grievous task and costs much time and the loss of my servants' labour, but the command of the Bey must be done."

Frank invented the necessary particulars, which the innkeeper laboriously wrote down in Arabic characters.

"You will send that to Chatme to-morrow, khanji?" he asked.

"Truly: it is too late to-night."

"As I am going that way I will save your servant's time. Let me be your messenger."

The khanji looked surprised at this offer: but he was quite ready to accept it and save himself trouble.

Frank was well satisfied with what he had learnt, and went to sleep with an easy mind.

Very early next morning he accompanied the khanji to his stables, where he found an old broken-kneed horse for which he haggled in the oriental manner, ultimately paying for it a good deal more than it was worth. On a shelf he saw a tool of the nature of a trowel, which he slipped into his pocket when the khanji's back was turned. "It may come in handy," he thought, "and the old rascal is more than paid for it by what he has robbed me of over the horse."

Thanking his host for his hospitality, Frank mounted and pushed along the road as fast as his sorry nag could go. At this early hour he met no travellers, and saw nobody but the labourers trudging to their work in the fields. After riding about nine miles, as nearly as he could guess, he turned off into a side track leading towards the coast. The country all around was densely wooded, and from marks on the track he judged that it was used for dragging timber. Now and then he heard the ring of axes in the woods. At places the track drew near to the edge of the cliff overlooking the sea. Here he struck off inland, making his way as best he could among the trees. Once he caught sight of a man far away on the cliff, looking out to sea. It appeared that the coast was watched.

At last, after what seemed to be hours of slow progress, diversified by stumbles and falls of his miserable steed, he came suddenly to the barbed wire fence of which he had heard at the inn. He saw at a glance that it was not designed to keep people out if they were determined to get in. Like the notice, "Trespassers will be prosecuted," in fields and woods at home, it was intended to scare intruders away. Frank dismounted, led his horse into a thicket out of sight from the fence, hitched the bridle to a tree and gave the animal some food. Then he returned to the fence, took the bearings of the thicket, and prepared to get over. This he achieved by climbing on the successive strands of the wire as on the rungs of a ladder, steadying himself by means of one of the posts to which the wire was attached. One of the barbs tore a rent in his baggy trousers, but this was his only mishap. He was within the enclosure of the mysterious hermitage.

He looked about him. There were many trees, though they were not so crowded as in the woods he had just left. No house was in sight. He had gathered from the carrier's talk that the enclosure was of large extent: exactly how large he did not know, and it was necessary to go warily, to avoid coming too suddenly upon the house. He flitted from tree to tree with the caution of a scout who knows that an enemy is in front of him.

Presently he came to a stream too wide to leap: he crossed it by wading, the water coming halfway up to his knees. The current was swift, and a little to

his left he heard a continuous rustle, like the sound of a waterfall. No doubt the stream fell over the cliff into the sea. He went on, and arrived at a rough track parallel with the stream. Carefully scanning the surroundings, he saw, down the track to his right, a second wire fence, with a gate where it crossed the path. He retraced his steps for some little distance, in order to approach the fence at a spot remote from the gate.

When he reached it, he found that it differed from the outer fence. It was constructed, not of barbed wire, but of plain iron wire about as thick as that used for telegraph lines. There would be no difficulty in creeping through. It seemed strange that the inner defences of this hermit's settlement should be so much less formidable even than the paltry obstruction he had recently crossed. He examined it closely, and noticed what appeared to be an insulator on one of the posts. Perhaps the fence was not so harmless as it looked. Wetting a finger, he lightly touched the wire for an instant.

"Lucky I wasn't too impetuous," he thought. "That's a pretty strong charge."

Faced by this unexpected obstacle, he withdrew among the trees to consider what he should do. The trowel which he had brought, with the idea of cutting the wire if necessary, was useless against a wire electrically charged. Possibly, however, search might discover a weak spot. There was no sign of the inhabitants of the settlement. Returning within sight of the fence, but keeping near to the trees so that he might slip under cover in case of alarm, he prowled along, but without reward until he reached the stream he had waded. At this spot it was crossed by the wire, attached to a post on each bank. He saw at once that by scooping away the soft earth at the foot of one of the posts he could make a hole large enough to enable him to wriggle under the bottom strand of wire. The trowel was coming in handy after all.

In a few minutes he was safe on the other side. Following the stream towards the sea, he came presently to a clearing, and what he saw within the clearing assured him in a flash that his journey had not been in vain.

CHAPTER XXII
THE HOLY MEN

As he scanned the scene, Frank smiled at his thought of the wonderment of the khanji and his humble guests could they but see the habitat of the mysterious

"holy men." They, no doubt, had imagined a cave in the cliff, or at best a stone grot, with nothing to suggest modern civilization. What he actually saw had no semblance of luxury, indeed; but it was far from the austerities of the anchorites of old.

On the left of the clearing, as he looked towards the sea, was a small wooden bungalow, with a verandah about three sides of it, pleasantly shaded by trees. Beyond it, at the edge of the wood, was a smaller hut, also of wood. To the right were three more huts, one considerably larger than the others; and by the side of this last was a crane, worked by a donkey engine. Two men were moving about the place, hauling packages from the large hut to the crane. Apparently they were to be let down–to what destination below, Frank could not see.

"I am getting warm," he thought.

It was necessary to discover what lay beneath the crane, and Frank glanced round to find some safe and convenient path by which he might secretly approach it. As he did so, he caught sight of a short pole on the roof of the bungalow, from which a single telegraph wire passed over the clearing to the left and disappeared into the wood. Just below him, skirting the clearing on the right, ran the stream with which he was already acquainted. It was possible, he thought, under cover of the shrubs on the further bank, to gain a point where he might satisfy his curiosity. Cautiously making his way along, completely screened, he came to a spot where the stream fell sheer to the level of the beach between high cliffs, through which it cut a channel to the sea. Immediately beneath the cliff on which the bungalow and the huts stood there was a broad pool, bounded by a similar cliff on the opposite side. And on this pool, just beneath the crane, lay a lighter.

Frank at once realised that the pool, like the buildings, was out of sight from the sea. If a ship were to pass the entrance of the channel, those on board, seeing the waterfall, would at once know that the stream was not navigable, and would probably not think it worth while to enter the channel. No one would suspect that within, indented in the cliffs to the right, there was a small natural harbour, in which a vessel might lie perfectly concealed. Its depth Frank had no means of determining. Immediately beneath him the water was churned into foam by the falling stream. But it was clearly deep enough to float a lighter, and it was equally clear that the depth of the channel must be sufficient for its passage in and out.

From his place of concealment Frank watched. At the foot of the crane there was now a pile of small packages. From one of the huts came a stout bearded man in grimy blue overalls. He sidled into his seat at the donkey engine, jerked the throttle, and addressed one of the labourers. He spoke in Turkish, but in a harsh guttural voice that could proceed from none but a German throat. A moment later Frank heard another voice from the direction of the bungalow, which was

hidden from him by the intervening huts. He could not distinguish the words, but immediately afterwards a German sailor came out of the hut on the seaward side of the bungalow, saluted, and rolled off into the woods crowning the cliff. Before he had quite disappeared, Frank noticed a second sailor climbing down the trunk of a tall tree, and lifting his glass (the excellent article for which he was indebted to the major of artillery with whom he had made certain exchanges in Gallipoli) he made out a rope ladder swinging from a lofty branch. The two sailors met at the foot of the tree. They exchanged a few words; then the newcomer ascended the ladder, and the look-out he had relieved sauntered towards the hut.

Realising that his hiding-place was commanded from the look-out post in the tree, Frank slightly changed his position.

"I am getting warmer," he said to himself. Meanwhile the engine had begun to puff. The crane extended its arm, and the chain rattled as one of the men was let down into the lighter. The packages were then lowered one by one, and stowed on board. When the last of them had been placed, the man below caught hold of the chain, and the engine-man began to lift him. But the man's feet were only a few feet above the vessel, and the arm of the crane had just begun to swing round, when there came an imperative call from the bungalow.

"Adolf!"

"Ja, Herr Major," shouted the engine-man.

He at once stopped the engine, and wiping his hands on a mass of waste, hurried towards the bungalow, leaving the Turk swinging. Frank smiled at this illustration of German discipline, and was still more amused when he noticed that the Turk, instead of dropping into the pool and clambering on board the lighter as he might have done safely, clung on to the hook at the end of the chain and dangled there, apparently too frightened to call out in a tone loud enough to be heard by the martinet in the bungalow.

Frank's attention was withdrawn from the Turk by the same loud voice bidding the engine-man hurry.

"That sounds uncommonly like Wonckhaus," he thought. "Why, of course! That's not surprising. He was with the party at Panderma when I caught sight of that periscope. But perhaps it isn't he. A lot of these Germans have the same sort of voice. I'd like to make sure."

After a careful look round he stole back along the bank of the stream until he came opposite the wood in the rear of the clearing, crossed to the other side, crept through the wood, darted across the road, then turned to the right and in the course of a few minutes reached the trees which had been left standing to shade the bungalow when the ground was cleared. Moving among them cautiously, he came to the rear of the building. It had evidently been run up hurriedly. Piles of timber left over from its construction were stacked close behind it. After a little

hesitation Frank gained the shelter of one of these. There were voices at his right, where the verandah was closed at the end. The planks there, being of unseasoned wood, had started, leaving one or two gaping cracks. Frank looked through one of these into the verandah. Two men were lolling in deck chairs. Between them was a table on which there were tumblers, bottles, and the remains of a meal.

The furthermost man, whose face was towards Frank, was clearly a Turkish officer. He was smoking a cigarette. The nearer figure, broader, more massive, showed only his side face. That belonged either to Wonckhaus or to his double. He was reclining at ease. His right hand held a big cigar. Opposite him stood the engine-man.

"Get everything ready for to-night, then," Wonckhaus was saying.

"Jawohl, Herr Major."

At this moment shouts came from the direction of the pool. Frank smiled again: the suspended Turk had at last mustered the courage of despair.

"What is that horrible noise?" demanded Wonckhaus.

"It is probably the hamal," replied the engine-man.

"Why does he shout? What is the matter with him? Is he drowning?"

"No, Herr Major, he is hanging."

"Lieber Himmel! What do you mean?"

"He is half way up. I left him there when the Herr Major summoned me. He is getting tired. He will drop."

"Dummkopf! Go and haul him up instantly. He is a useful man."

Wonckhaus burst into loud laughter.

"It is amusing, very funny."

He took a long drink and resumed:

"There are occasions, lieutenant, when our admirable German discipline recoils upon us. But one cannot have it all ways. Take a drink."

"Thank you, major, but I will not drink beer. Some Turks take it with a quiet conscience, but not I."

"Please yourself. When we have been with you a little longer your scruples will vanish. There are lemons; help yourself. How you can drink lemonade passes my understanding. Lemons set my teeth on edge. The scent of them makes me shudder."

The Turk was in the act of squeezing a lemon into a tumbler when a telegraph instrument clicked.

"Take it, will you?" said Wonckhaus, indolently.

The Turk sprang up and went through a French window into the adjoining room. The clicking continued for a while. Presently he returned.

"Three torpedo boats, two believed to be British, one French, sighted off Cape Baba," he said.

"Ah! our friends will scarcely get in to-night, then, unless they have already slipped past."

"It will not be easy to see them in the darkness."

"These English have eyes everywhere. They see in the dark like a cat. Yet perhaps with luck and, what is better, German watchfulness, all will be well. Hand me the telephone."

The Turk obeyed silently, but in a manner that suggested resentment at the German's peremptory tone. Wonckhaus spoke into the instrument in German.

"Keep a sharp look-out. Torpedo boats are reported off the coast."

The lieutenant got up and moved towards the door.

"I shall turn in," called Wonckhaus after him. "You had better do the same. We shall be up all night; probably to no purpose. I am tired of this. It would suit one of Von Tirpitz's men better than me."

He lay back in his chair, pulled at his cigar, and finding that it had gone out, threw it away, rose, stretched himself, yawned, and walked slowly into the bungalow.

Frank had heard and seen enough. He knew what the "holy men" were engaged in. It only remained to return on his tracks and report his discoveries to the lieutenant-commander, who would know how to act on them. Slipping back into the wood, he made his leisurely way to his former observation post, where he sat down and ate some food he had brought from the khan, in the slow abstracted manner of one deep in thought. Then he returned by the way he had come, found his horse in the thicket, and rode southward, without hurry, for his friends would not expect him until dark.

On approaching the road, he dismounted, again tied up his horse to a tree, and threw himself on his back. He was very tired, but dared not indulge his longing for a nap, and when he found slumber stealing upon him, he sprang up and strolled about in the woods. The afternoon seemed particularly long. But he was prudent enough not to take to the open road until the fall of night. Then he rode rapidly, passed the khan, turned his horse loose some distance from it, and struck off towards the shore. It was a matter of some ten minutes' walking before he came to the matting, which now lay dry on the beach where it had been left. There he sat, looking over the sea, and listening intently. About an hour later his ears caught the faint sound of muffled oars. He walked down to the brink of the water, waited a few moments until assured that he was not mistaken, then gave a low whistle. The boat pulled in, and Frank, too impatient to await its beaching, waded out towards it and scrambled over the side.

"Well?" whispered the lieutenant-commander.

"O.K. Now it's up to you. I'll tell you all about it when we get clear of the

shore."

CHAPTER XXIII
CAPTURING A SUBMARINE

Nothing more was said until Frank and the naval officer were once more aboard the fishing vessel. Then, as the boat ran down the coast, Frank related his experiences of the past two days.

"Holy men!" chuckled the lieutenant-commander. "It'll be sacrilege, then. After this war I shall cruise about the world in search of a German with a sense of humour. You say you know that fellow?"

"Yes, and I've a bone to pick with him. He nearly did me out of a carpet."

"Oh! How was that?"

Frank told as much as he cared to of the incident in Erzerum. The naval officer laughed.

"It was amusing, certainly, until the ruffian had me locked up," said Frank.

And then, bit by bit, his companion drew from him the details upon which he had kept silence.

"I wish we had a Ruhleben in England," growled the officer. "Our prisoners have too easy a time. But this Wonckhaus shall have an opportunity of cultivating holiness in an English prison, and I hope he won't like it."

Presently he went forward, and sent a few flashes seaward from a lantern carefully screened from the shore. There were answering flashes out at sea. In half an hour a destroyer loomed up out of the darkness. The lieutenant-commander went aboard with Frank and the seamen, and the fishing vessel was made fast to a hawser from the stern. There was a brief conference on deck.

"That's all right then," said the officer. "Now, my dear chap, you must be dead tired. Tumble below. I'll wake you when I want you."

While Frank slept, the destroyer ran slowly up the gulf. He awoke at a touch.

"Sorry to disturb you so soon, but you must come up."

Frank rose sleepily and went on deck. The destroyer was moving dead slow.

"We're on a course parallel with the shore," said the officer. "Just keep your eye lifting over the port quarter, will you?"

Frank did as he was instructed. In a minute or two he saw two dim lights on shore, which vanished almost immediately.

"The question is, are they the lights of a farmhouse, or somewhere in the channel?" said the officer.

"It's late for a farmhouse."

"Exactly. Wait a little. Keep looking out."

The vessel stopped, then moved slowly backward. The lights appeared again.

"Now I'll tell you my inference," the officer went on. "From your description of the place, lights in the bungalow or the huts could not be seen from the sea. But lights placed somewhere on the cliffs at the end of the channel could be seen as we pass across the mouth, and only then; a movement of a few yards forward or astern will shut them off. I take it, then, that the lights are in fact at the inner end of the channel–and we know why."

"I haven't any doubt of it," said Frank.

"Then go below and get into your own toggery. You may then sleep another hour or two."

About two hours after midnight Frank was again awakened. With the lieutenant-commander, a lieutenant, a warrant-officer, and two sturdy seamen in addition to the boat's crew, he got into the fishing vessel, which cast off and stood in towards the shore. The destroyer steamed away out to sea. The officers were armed with revolvers, the men with rifles.

It was about two hours before dawn when the party landed from the dinghy at the spot on the beach where the matting showed up darkly against the sand. Placing himself at the head, Frank led the way up through the trees, the rest following about a yard apart. They marched in perfect silence; not a word was uttered. Every now and then as they penetrated the dark woodland Frank halted. The officer next to him touched him on the shoulder, the next touched him in turn, and so on along the line until all were accounted for. The necessity of caution made their progress slow, and they took more than an hour to cover ground which Frank alone had traversed in twenty minutes. Then they stopped, and lay down in the wood to await the dawn.

According to Frank's calculation it was about seven miles from their landing-place to the bungalow by the road, possibly a little shorter distance along the cliffs. But they would gain nothing in time by taking the shorter way, owing to the denseness of the woodland. To proceed along the road would almost certainly be fatal, for unfrequented though it was, no one could say that some member of the Turko-German party, or some messenger from a distance, might not happen to pass on an errand, and the sight of eight men in British uniform would give the game away. As soon as a glimmer of daylight filtered through

the foliage, therefore, Frank led them on as close to the shore as possible. During their pause they had taken the opportunity to eat some bread and cheese they had brought with them.

"There won't be time for breakfast in the bungalow," murmured Frank with a smile.

The way along the cliffs proved unexpectedly arduous, and it was past midday when they arrived at the outer fence, at a spot not far distant from where Frank had first encountered it. Here the warrant officer went forward, cut the wire in two places, and, when the party had passed through, joined the severed ends in such a way that they could be readily loosened, though only a close examination would discover what had been done. Once more Frank took the lead, following his scarcely distinguishable track of two days before. Leaving the rest of the party among the trees, he went on alone until he reached the live fence, and having enlarged the small excavation through which he had wriggled, he crept to his hiding-place on the bank of the stream to observe what was going on at the bungalow and the pool.

Things were apparently very much as when he left nearly twenty-four hours before. There was one new feature in the scene. A rough country cart stood in front of one of the huts, and two Turks–one of them the victim of German discipline–were unloading it and carrying the stores into the hut. No driver was visible, and Frank remembered that the country people were not allowed to come within the fence. At the gate, then, must be at least one man on guard. A man crossed between the bungalow and the adjacent hut: probably he was cook and servant to the officers. The engine-man sat on an upturned tub, smoking, and exercising his German wit on the labouring Turks. A look-out was perched on his platform in the tree, peering through a telescope. No doubt the officers were in the bungalow, possibly sleeping after a wakeful night. The whole party appeared to consist of eight men–a small force considering the importance of their duties; but Frank reflected that a larger force would have endangered the precious secret they were guarding.

To him, of course, it was a secret no longer. This secluded pool had been chosen, with admirable judgment, as the base of one of the German submarines which had lately been mischievous in the Ægean. It was probably the very submarine whose periscope he had caught a rapid glimpse of at Panderma. Wonckhaus had been put in charge of the base, no doubt because the injury to his leg had temporarily unfitted him for the heavy work required of the German infantry officer. He had expected the vessel to run in on the previous night, until the telegraph wire brought news that enemy torpedo boats were watching in the gulf. That it had not arrived was clear at a glance. The only vessel in the pool was the lighter, and Frank suspected that the packages he had seen lowered into

it contained supplies for the submarine crew, and had been removed from the hut for greater facility in transferring them to the war vessel. The "holy men," to do them justice, did not consume the whole of the immense consignments which had amazed the Turkish carrier.

The object with which the small British party had come to this secret spot was nothing less than the capture of the submarine. As a preliminary to that they must seize the settlement and its inhabitants, a feat for which the seven British seamen who had come under his guidance should be amply competent. They had four Germans, trained men, to deal with; three Turks, of whom one was an officer, the two others menials; and the servant, whose nationality Frank did not know; he might be a Levantine, and of no account. With the advantage of surprise and of British daring and discipline the task of the adventurous eight should be easy enough. The one essential condition of success was that none of the German's party should get away. The escape of a single man might ruin the enterprise.

Frank waited some time at his post of observation, to make sure that his estimate of the number of the enemy was accurate. He saw the last load carried from the cart to the hut; it was a nine-gallon cask of beer; then one of the Turks mounted, and drove off down the road. As soon as he no longer heard the rumbling of the wheels, Frank hastened back to his friends.

"I thought you were never coming," said the lieutenant-commander. "Is she there?"

"No. Evidently she couldn't get through."

"I didn't think she would, but I'm glad to be sure of it, for we couldn't have tackled the whole crew. Why were you so long?"

Frank gave the result of his observations. The officers smiled happily.

"Now then," said the lieutenant-commander, "the first thing is to raid the bungalow, and collar the officers. They control the telegraph and telephone. You know the place, Forester; I'll give you two of the men to assist. They'll take their instructions from you. I'll wait until I get a signal from you that you have done the trick, or until I hear a row in that direction. They are sure to show fight. But I needn't say that if you can manage it quietly, so much the better for our ultimate success."

"I'll do my best," said Frank. "It's a good deal later than when I was here yesterday, and I shouldn't be surprised if they're taking their siesta."

"Very well. Now let me take my bearings. How do I steer?"

"You go straight on until you reach the stream. You'll see the place where I have scooped a passage for you at the foot of one of the posts supporting the wire. The men must be careful, or they'll be electrocuted."

"I'll see to that."

"You cross the stream, turn to the left, cut along the bank–and there you are."

"Perfectly clear sailing directions. But what about the road?"

"Cross that: you can slip along among the trees. Better keep a look-out for the Turk who went down with the cart. He'll be coming back presently, with the German seaman who I suspect was on guard at the gate."

"You'll be a staff-officer some day, my friend. Well, it's all clear. We'll arrange our plans: you had better cut off. Here, Moggs and Parker, you're under Mr. Forester's orders."

Two strapping seamen jumped up and saluted. One of them hitched up his breeches and spat on his hands.

"Good luck, then," said the lieutenant-commander.

Frank nodded, smiled, and led the men along the route he had followed the previous day to the timber stack at the rear of the bungalow. On the way he halted for a few minutes to explain in general terms what his purpose was, and to impress on them the need of absolute silence. When he reached the trees, he left them there under cover, to await his signal. Then he stole forward alone.

There was no sound except the servant moving about in the kitchen part of the building. He peeped through a chink in the wall of the verandah. No one was in view, but he now heard a succession of snores and grunts from somewhere in the interior. Turning, he beckoned to the seamen to join him. They came swiftly on tiptoe, screened from the look-out in the tree-top, not far away to their left, by the row of trees that almost overhung the bungalow.

Frank signed to them to stoop and follow him. Bending low, he crept along below the verandah, stopped for a moment to peep into a room, and finding that it was a bedroom and empty, led them on towards the kitchen. This, too, a glance showed to be unoccupied. But the servant must be near at hand, for Frank heard the splashing of water and the clatter of crockery. He must be washing up.

Moving still more cautiously, Frank came to the corner of the building. He looked round. Just outside the door a young sallow-hued oriental was washing up in a trough. Frank stole back to his men.

"Parker, you'll come with me," he whispered. "I'll leave you here, Moggs, to watch that fellow. If you hear a row inside the building, collar him and keep him quiet. But don't move otherwise unless I call you."

"Ay, ay, sir."

Followed by Parker, he went to the French window of the empty bedroom, gently forced the catch with his clasp knife, and entered. Tiptoeing across it, he passed out of the open door, into a short passage. From the left he heard the faint sounds of the cook's movements: the kitchen was in that direction. On the right, a few steps along, light fell across the passage from an open door. Frank stole up

to this and peeped in. It was another bedroom, like the first unoccupied. Almost opposite this was a closed door; there was no other door on either side or at the end. This must be the sitting-room, parlour or sanctum of the holy men. Muffled by the timber, there came through the door the sound of snoring he had heard outside. He listened for a moment. The snores were all in one tone: it appeared likely that he had only one man to deal with. Was it Wonckhaus or the Turk? Or perhaps Wonckhaus was sleeping, and the other man admiring him.

He drew his revolver, very gently turned the handle of the door, and looked in when the crack was wide enough. The room had only one occupant. Wonckhaus, big, ungainly, lay stretched in a long cane chair, his head lolling sideways, his mouth wide open, one arm hanging limp, a long German pipe held loosely in the other hand. On a small round table beside him were a tobacco-jar, a black bottle, and a glass. Beyond this was another long chair, beside which stood a stool, bearing a glass, a carafe of water, and a few small pale lemons. And the room rang with German snores.

Frank's eye, swiftly ranging the room, passed from the lemons to the open mouth. It was a happy chance. He turned to Parker at his elbow and whispered a few words. The man nodded. Then Frank opened the door, and stole on his toes round the back of Wonckhaus's chair to the stool. From this he took up a lemon about the size of a hen's egg, and with the quickness of a conjurer slipped it into the gaping mouth. The German awoke with a convulsive start and shudder– and his eyes, bleared with sleep, fell on a revolver pointed within six inches of his temple, and above it the face, a little grimmer than it had ever appeared in a photograph, of the man whom he had not seen for many weeks, even in his dreams.

Before he could collect his wits, Parker stepped up to him on the other side and with some ends of thin rope which he had taken from his capacious blouse tied the German's hands and feet, with a British seaman's quickness and thoroughness.

"Now for the cook," said Frank.

They went back into the passage. The cook was still washing up. Entering the kitchen noiselessly, they crept to the door. Frank made a sign, Parker rushed out, caught the unsuspicious servant by the throat, and in two minutes had laid him, gagged and trussed, just inside the kitchen door. It was a credit to the discipline of the British navy that Moggs, watching these proceedings with amazement round the corner, neither moved nor uttered a sound.

It was now time to bring up the rest of the party, who, he guessed, had by this time reached a point from which he could be seen if he moved a few yards from the bungalow towards the hut opposite. But in making this movement he would be seen also from the tree-top. The look-out must be prevented from

giving the alarm. Frank showed the seamen how they might approach the tree from the rear unperceived, and ordered them to make the man their prisoner. When that was done he would give the expected signal to the others.

The seamen had only just disappeared among the trees when Frank was startled by the sound of a horse cantering up the road towards the bungalow. Running to the window of the room facing the road, he saw that the horseman was the Turkish officer who had been with Wonckhaus two days before. It seemed that the naval party had not yet arrived, or they would certainly have intercepted the Turk.

Frank weighed the chances of tackling this opponent alone, and quickly made up his mind. With two of the enemy already accounted for, and a third, the look-out, soon to be helpless, the noise of a struggle would bring up the rest of his party before the remaining four men could interfere to his harm. He waited within the room. The Turk reined up and dismounted at the door, and walked in unsuspiciously. At this moment there was a shout from the direction of the look-out tree, and the officer turned quickly and ran out into the open. Frank sprang after him. The Turk heard his footsteps and faced round, not rapidly enough to brace himself for the shock of Frank's sudden onset. He was hurled to the ground, shouting an alarmed call for Wonckhaus.

Though taken by surprise, the Turk proved to be a more formidable antagonist than Frank had expected. His frame was well-knit and sinewy, and he held Frank in a fierce grapple. They heaved and rolled on the ground, each struggling desperately to throw off the grip of the other. In less than a minute Frank was aware that the contest, if fought out, must be a long one. By a sudden convulsive twist, indeed, the Turk had managed to reverse the positions and get above him. There were shouts near at hand, and the sound of running feet. Frank feared that the Germans were coming to the officer's help, and wrestled vigorously to regain the upper hand. Just as he felt that his opponent was weakening, the Turk suddenly relaxed his grip wholly and fell over. Springing up, Frank found that one of the seamen from the lieutenant-commander's party had run ahead of the rest, and finished the struggle with the butt of his rifle.

Meanwhile the officers and the rest of the men had been busy at the huts. The few inmates, alarmed at the shouts, had started to run towards the bungalow, but came to a sudden stop when, on the other side of the buildings, they saw five British naval men charging in the same direction. They hesitated, paralysed by surprise; and when the lieutenant-commander rushed up with drawn revolver and called on them to surrender, they yielded without a show of resistance, and were soon prisoners in their own huts.

"Where's Wonckhaus?" were the lieutenant-commander's first words as he joined Frank at the bungalow.

A CRITICAL MOMENT

A CRITICAL MOMENT

"Come and see."

He led him into the room where Wonckhaus lay bound in his chair, the lemon still wedged between his teeth. The naval officer concealed a smile.

"Perhaps the gentleman would prefer some beer," he said. "Remove that plug, Simpson," he added to the warrant officer, indicating the lemon. "Give the major some beer, and then lock him in his bedroom. We shall want this room."

Wonckhaus glared at Frank with unspeakable hate, but uttered no word. When he had been removed, the warrant officer went to see what had become of Moggs and Parker, and met them returning in high feather with their prisoner. The look-out had caught sight of them just as they reached the tree, and given the shout which had alarmed the Turkish officer. But seeing himself immediately covered by the sailor's rifles he had surrendered at once. The place was won, and all its personnel disposed of.

Having ordered his men to prepare dinner from the bungalow's abundant stores, the lieutenant-commander with his second and Frank sat down to discuss the more difficult problem–the capture of the submarine.

"Our only chance is if it comes in to-night," said the lieutenant-commander. "As it was expected last night, it is pretty certain to come to-night, and our ships have ostentatiously cleared off. If it doesn't come, we are done, for we can't remain here undiscovered for another day."

"Why not?" asked the lieutenant.

"Well, apart from possible visits from Germans or Turks, there's the telegraph. A message is sure to come through, and it will be in Turkish probably. It was the Turk who took the message when you were here before, Forester?"

"Yes."

"Very well. You can work the telegraph, Bickford, but you don't know Turkish. Forester knows Turkish, but—-"

"I can't work the telegraph," said Frank.

"Then if we are called up we must simply ignore the call. That will lead to investigation and discovery. There's my proposition proved. We must help the submarine to come in to-night. Where are those lights worked?"

"Let's go and see," said Frank.

After no long search two electric lamps, fed from the dynamo that charged the fence wire, were discovered in the cliff opposite the centre of the channel. They were so placed as to give a straight course to any vessel coming up from the sea. Another lamp, invisible from the sea, marked the entrance to the pool. It was decided to switch on the current at dusk.

To guard against trouble on the landward side, two seamen were stationed in hiding near the gate of the inner fence, which was left open. If anyone should approach, he was to be allowed to pass in; but the gate was then to be closed,

cutting off his retreat. For safety's sake, the electric current was switched off from the fence.

It was now about four o'clock. The lights would not need to be shown till nearly seven. There were three hours for rest and for recruiting their strength from Wonckhaus's larder. The officers hastened back to see what sort of a meal had been provided for them. It beggared their most hopeful expectation. There were pork cutlets–"the place is all pig, sir," remarked the extempore cook–several kinds of sausage, many varieties of pickle and relish, pots of caviare and pâté de foie gras, smoked salmon, a mellow gruyère cheese, as well as a very strong German cheese which the lieutenant-commander ordered to be removed immediately, tinned fruits, good white bread–"none of your potato flour for Wonckhaus"–and oceans of beer. Neither officers nor men had had such a meal for months.

"Please, sir," said Moggs, coming to the bungalow after the men had finished their dinner in the hut opposite.

"Well, what is it?"

"Can we strafe some more beer?"

"No, you've had enough. We've got work to do to-night."

Moggs looked disappointed.

"Then it won't be done, sir," he said.

"What won't be done?"

"Why, sir, Parker said if we was allowed to strafe another barrel he'd be screwed up to concert pitch, and would be very happy to sing the Hymn of Hate to the German gentleman abaft yonder. He must want cheering up, says he."

"Get out with you! Parker can sing what he likes when we get back aboard. Tell him he's to take first watch on the cliff to-night."

At dusk the men went to their appointed stations. Parker was posted on the cliff near the entrance to the channel. The warrant officer took charge of the donkey-engine, Moggs was entrusted with the crane; the other men hauled from the storehouse several cases of ammunition, weighing in all three or four tons, piled them near the crane, chained them together, and covered them with a thick blanket taken from the bungalow. The lieutenant's task was to do what was necessary in the powerhouse. Frank sat with the lieutenant-commander in one of the huts.

It was about ten o'clock when Parker came in hurriedly from his post on the cliff.

"Submarine coming in, sir," he reported. "I heard her purring under water first; then the engines stopped, and I saw her come awash just outside the channel. She'll be nearly here, sir."

The officers went to the door of the hut, and listened anxiously. No sound

was audible above the dash of the waterfall. Had the commander of the submarine become suspicious and run out to sea again? In a few minutes, however, the sound of the engines came faintly on the breeze. Looking through the darkness to the gap in the cliffs where the pool and the channel met, they at last saw the dark shape glide in. The engines were stopped, but the vessel's steerage way carried her into the pool, and she was brought up deftly alongside the lighter.

From below came a hail in Turkish. Frank, now standing beside the crane, replied.

"Why didn't you answer our signals?" demanded the voice, huffily.

Frank, who was unaware of any signals, answered at a venture:

"There is something wrong with our lamps."

"Who are you? Where is Talik?"

"He is invalided. I am taking his place. Are you coming up?"

"Yes. Why isn't Major Wonckhaus here?"

"He'll be here directly."

"Well, switch on the light: what are you waiting for?"

"The switch is broken." Frank referred to the switch of an electric lamp at the top of the crane. "You must come up in the dark. Look out! The chain is running out."

The engine had started, and the chain was swinging down over the arm of the crane. The commander of the submarine caught it, set his foot in the loop provided, and was hauled slowly up, and swung inward towards the huts. Meanwhile the men in waiting had removed the blanket from the pile of cases, and the moment the commander's feet touched the ground he was muffled closely in the blanket, and carried struggling into a hut, where his captors had materials ready for securing him.

"Good man!" murmured the lieutenant-commander, clapping Frank on the back. "With him out of the way all's well, I think. Now, I'll take up the running.– Look alive with those cases," he added, still in a low tone, addressing the seamen who were attaching the massed cases to the end of the chain. The crane swung out, and the weighty mass dangled directly over the submarine, on whose deck the crew could be dimly seen, gazing up in surprise: surely they were not to take in ammunition at this hour of the night. How much greater was their astonishment when they heard from above a ringing voice in English.

"Below there! Any of you speak English?"

After a short interval a man replied in the affirmative.

"Thank you," called the lieutenant-commander. "I am in command of an English landing-party. Your commander is a prisoner. If your vessel attempts to move, I'll cut away the weight you see above you, and sink you. I give you three minutes to surrender."

The terse sentences, the peremptory tone, left no room for doubt. Before the three minutes were up, the crew had come to a unanimous decision. They would surrender.

"Thank you. Now every one of you go aboard the lighter and leave your arms behind."

The men went silently from one vessel to the other. Then the crane switch was suddenly found to be in order, and a light flashed from the top. From the lighter the men were hauled up by ropes, one by one.

"How many are there of you?" asked the lieutenant-commander of the first.

"Twenty."

The same question put to one or two more received the same reply. As the men passed him, the officer counted them.

"Eighteen! Nineteen! No more?" He turned to two British sailors. "Down you go!"

They slid down the rope, boarded the submarine, and dived below. In a few moments they returned, hauling a man between them. They made him fast to the chain, and by the time he was hoisted they had swarmed up the rope.

"Just going to fire the magazine, sir," said one.

"Tie him up."

Half an hour later the submarine was heading out to sea, running on the surface. On the deck, uncomfortably crowded, lay a number of well-trussed figures–the commander and crew, and Wonckhaus: his subordinates at the station were left behind. Beyond Mitylene, as morning dawned, the lieutenant-commander exchanged signals with a destroyer out at sea. The vessel stood in, and in due time the submarine came alongside her. Cheers broke from the men on her deck. Willing hands hoisted the prisoners on board and loosed them from their bonds at the bidding of the commander.

"I much regret it was necessary to bind you, gentlemen," he said to the officers. "The necessity was clear."

They heard him in glum silence–all but Wonckhaus.

"Necessity!" he blustered. "Is necessity to override the laws of civilised warfare? What sort of treatment is it to choke a German officer with lemons, tie him up, and sling him from a crane? It is unfair; it is barbarous."

The commander glanced at Frank, standing in the background.

"Is it wise to talk of civilised warfare, Herr Wonckhaus?" he said quietly, stepping forward. "Shall I refresh your memory of what happened at Erzerum?"

"You were in my power," snarled the German, not a whit abashed, and sublimely unconscious of inconsistency. The humour of the situation tickled the British officers: they laughed aloud.

"That is unanswerable, sir," said the commander, with ironical courtesy.

"You will no doubt do me the favour to go below. Mr. Watson, please show Major Wonckhaus the way."

The smallest midshipman on the ship came forward, gravely saluted, and repressing a smile with obvious effort, said:

"This way, sir."

Wonckhaus looked from the midshipman to the commander. Something in the expression of the latter helped him to make up his mind. And a broad grin enwrapped the whole ship's company as the big German stalked away under convoy of the boy.

CHAPTER XXIV

V.C.

Two months later a little party were lunching together in a hotel on one of the Ægean islands. Mr. Forester was there; Isaac Copri and his son; Tomlinson, promoted lieutenant, and enjoying a week's leave; and Frank. The last had his right arm in a sling.

"Yes," the elder Kopri was saying, "Mirza Aga's carpet is now on its way to London. I contrived to get it shipped at Athens, and it is on the bill of lading of the steamship *Eirene*, that left the Peiraeus a week ago."

"Splendid!" said Frank. "I must find out where Wonckhaus is imprisoned, and let him know. His fury will be my revenge.... I hope you didn't wait long for me at Gallipoli."

"I waited until I gave up all hope of seeing you again. We searched the ruins of Benidin's house, Joseph and I, for traces of you, and stayed in the port two or three days in case you should appear. Then we heard that the massacres had broken out, and we escaped to Dedeagatch, just in time."

"How did you get your wounds, sir?" asked Joseph.

"Oh! I was just potted in a gully."

Tomlinson laughed.

"Strictly true, but hopelessly inadequate," he said. "It was like this."

"Dry up, Tommy; it's an old story now."

"All the better, like this port."

"Well, bottle it up, then."

"I should like to hear the full story, Mr. Tomlinson," said Mr. Forester.

"Frank has told me little more than the bare fact."

"There you are, Frank. You want uncorking. Well, when Frank came back to the peninsula I didn't see him for a while. He was interpreting; a soft job, by all accounts, for the Turkish prisoners are very reticent. But the battery on Sari Bair began to be very troublesome, and our fliers couldn't locate it. Frank offered to have a shot, and crept up the gully one night, in rags borrowed from a prisoner; you wouldn't have known him. He spotted the guns overlaid with scrub near that sepulchre of his, reported next morning, and offered to go up again and set light to the hollow tree, as a beacon for our gunners. If that didn't deserve the D.S.O.–well, I know what Anzac thinks."

"Cut it short, man. I knew the place, and if the Turks had seen me they'd have taken me for a ghost and skedaddled."

"The fellow who potted you didn't take you for a ghost, anyway. He went up, sir, with a lot of pills in his pocket–small incendiary bombs, you know; fired the tree and the brushwood round, and made a fine old blaze, by the light of which somebody gave him two bullets in the arm as he was running down the gully. Our guns got the range in a few minutes–and we've had no more trouble from that particular battery. I tell you, all Anzac was mad with delight, and carried Frank round the camp cheering like—-"

"Have you seen this?" interrupted an officer at the next table. "I couldn't help overhearing."

He handed Frank a copy of the *Times*, pointing to a paragraph half-way down a column headed "New V.C.'s." Frank looked, flushed, and passed the paper silently to his father.

"Read it out, sir," cried Tomlinson.

Mr. Forester rubbed his glasses, and had some trouble in clearing his throat. He mumbled a word or two, then, more distinctly, read:

"For signal bravery in volunteering twice to locate an enemy battery, and enabling our naval guns to destroy it ... had already shown conspicuous proofs of courage and resource."

"And that's all they say about it!" Tomlinson exclaimed. "Is it D.S.O., sir?"

"It appears to be V.C.," said Mr. Forester.

"Hurray!" cried Tomlinson, flinging up his cap. "That's news to carry back to Anzac."

At this moment, from somewhere outside came the strains of a band.

"Ah! It couldn't have come in more pat," added Tomlinson.

The officers stood at the salute as the band played "God save the King."

THE END

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