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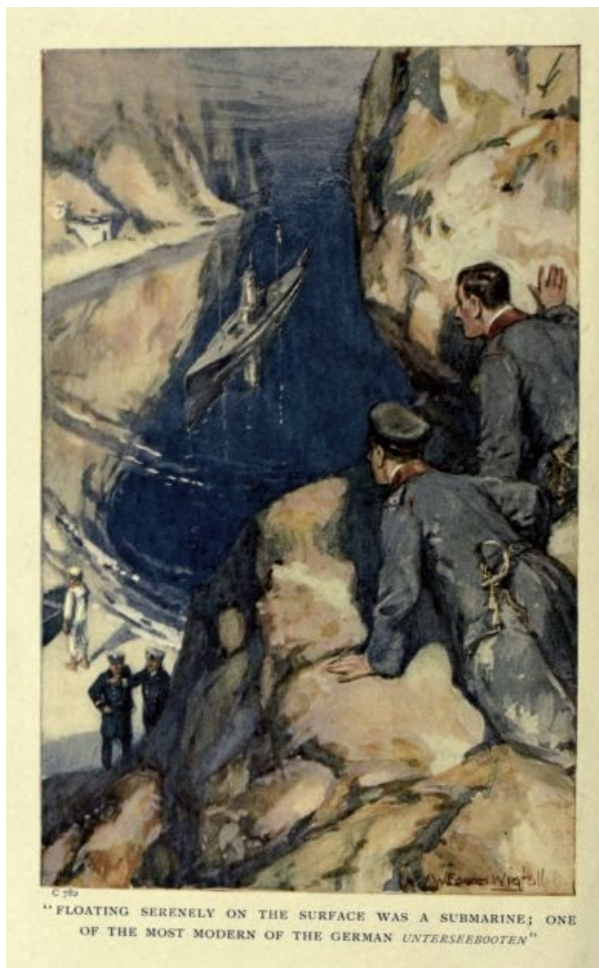
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STORY OF THE GALLIPOLI PENINSULA ***





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"FLOATING SERENELY ON THE SURFACE WAS A SUBMARINE; ONE OF THE MOST MODERN OF THE GERMAN *UNTERSEEBOOTEN*"

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The Fight for Constantinople

A Story of the Gallipoli Peninsula

BY

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Author of "The Dispatch-Riders" "The Sea-girt Fortress"
"When East Meets West" "Captured at Tripoli" &c. &c.

Illustrated by W. E. Wigfull

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Contents

- CHAP.
- I. [Under Sealed Orders](#)
 - II. [Cleared for Action](#)
 - III. [The Demolition Party](#)
 - IV. [Trapped in The Magazine](#)
 - V. [A Dash up The Narrows](#)
 - VI. [To The Rescue](#)
 - VII. [The "Hammerer's" Whaler](#)
 - VIII. [A Prisoner of War](#)
 - IX. [In Captivity](#)
 - X. [A Bid for Freedom](#)
 - XI. [A Modern Odyssey](#)
 - XII. [The German Submarine](#)
 - XIII. [Torpedoed](#)
 - XIV. [Through Unseen Perils](#)
 - XV. [Disabled](#)
 - XVI. [A Daring Stroke](#)
 - XVII. [Within Sight of Constantinople](#)
 - XVIII. [A Midnight Encounter](#)
 - XIX. [The Sub to the Rescue](#)
 - XX. [Saving the Old "Hammerer"](#)

Illustrations

"Floating serenely on the surface was a submarine; one of the most modern of the German *Unterseebooten* . . . *Frontispiece*"

"The '*Calder*' held grimly and swiftly on her way"

"With a well-directed blow Dick planted his clenched fist squarely upon the point of the Major's chin"

"Before the Turkish irregulars could penetrate the deception the two British officers were through"

"The two seamen hauled him into safety"

THE FIGHT FOR CONSTANTINOPLE

Under Sealed Orders

"Dick, my boy, here are your marching orders," announced Colonel Crosthwaite, holding up a telegram for his son's inspection.

"Marching orders, eh?" queried Sub-lieutenant Richard Crosthwaite with a breezy laugh. "Hope it's something good."

"Can't get out of the old routine, Dick. I suppose I ought to call it your appointment. It's to the *Hammerer*. Why, my boy, you don't look very happy about it: what's up?"

"Nothing much, pater," replied the Sub, as he strove to conceal the shade of disappointment that flitted over his features. "I must take whatever is given me without demur—"

"Of course," promptly interposed his parent. "That's duty all the world over."

"But at the same time I had hoped to get something, well—something not altogether approaching the scrap-iron stage."

"Yes, the *Hammerer* is a fairly old craft, I'll admit," said Colonel Crosthwaite. "I've just looked her up in Brassey's—"

"Launched in 1895, completed during the following year; of 14,900 tons; has a principal armament of four 12-inch guns, and a secondary battery of twelve 6-inch," added Dick, who had the details of most vessels of H.M. Navy and many foreign Powers at his fingers' ends. "She's a weatherly old craft, but it isn't likely she'll take part in an action with the German High Seas Fleet, when it does come out of the Kiel Canal. Things are fairly quiet in the North Sea, except for a few isolated destroyer actions, and, of course, the *Blücher* business. Aboard the *Hammerer*—one of the last line of defence—the chance of smelling powder will be a rotten one."

"In the opinion of those in authority, Dick, these ships are wanted, and officers and men must be found to man them. Everyone cannot be in the firing-line."

"I'm not grumbling exactly," explained Dick. "Only—"

"Grumbling just a little," added his father. "Well, my boy, you may get your chance yet. War was ever a strange thing for placing unknowns in the limelight, and this war in particular. Now buck up and get your kit together. It will mean an all-night railway journey, since you've to join your ship at Portsmouth at 9 a.m. to-morrow."

Dick Crosthwaite was on ten days' leave, after "paying off" the old *Seasprite*. The outbreak of war had been responsible for his fairly rapid promotion, and having put in seven months as a midshipman on board the light cruiser *Seasprite*—which had been engaged in patrol work in the North Sea—he found himself promoted to Acting Sub-lieutenant.

His work on the cruiser was, in spite of the dreary and bleak climatic conditions, interesting and not devoid of incident. He had not taken part in any action; his ship had escaped the attentions of hostile submarines and drifting mines. There was a spice of risk about the business that appealed to him—a possibility that before long the *Seasprite* would have a chance of using her guns in real earnest.

Then came orders for the light cruiser to proceed to Greenock and "pay off". Her ship's company were given leave, which after months of strenuous watch and ward they thoroughly deserved, and Sub-lieutenant Crosthwaite found himself once more in his home in a secluded part of Shropshire.

Although he fully appreciated the brief spell of leisure, his active mind was dwelling upon the prospects in store for him. With the certificates he had gained he considered, with all due respect for My Lords' discretion, that nothing short of an appointment on one of the super-Dreadnoughts or battle-cruisers would be a fitting reward for his zeal and activity. Hence it came as a decided set-back when he found himself appointed to the old *Hammerer*.

He knew the obsolescent battleship both by observation and repute. He had seen her lying in one of the basins of the dockyard extensions at Portsmouth, looking the picture of neglect in her garb of grey mottled with the stains of rusty iron.

He had also seen a painting of her when she was in her prime. That painting was an object of value to his uncle, Captain John Crosthwaite, R.N., for he had hoisted his pennant on the *Hammerer* when she was the pride of the then Channel Fleet. With her black hull, white upper works, and buff-coloured masts and funnels, she looked a totally different vessel from the grey monster that was on the point of being sent to the scrap-heap. For twenty years she had existed without having fired a shot in anger; now on the eve of her career she was to be given a chance—a very faint chance, Dick thought—of doing her part against the enemies of King and country.

That same evening Sub-lieutenant Crosthwaite bade his mother and sisters good-bye, and, accompanied by the Colonel and Dick's two young brothers, drove to the station.

"Au revoir, Dick!" exclaimed his brother George, with all the dignity of a public-school boy of fourteen.

"And don't forget to bring us home some war trophies," added twelve-year-old Peter.

Dick laughingly assented, then grasped his father's hand.

"Good-bye, Dad," he said.

"Good-bye, my lad; and don't forget to do your level best and keep our end up. It's no use mincing matters: we've a tough, uphill job. Good-bye, my lad; and may God bless you!"

Conscious that several pairs of eyes were upon them, father and son drew themselves up and saluted. Dick entered the train and was whirled away, while Colonel Crosthwaite returned home for a brief twelve hours before he, too, would be on his way to his regiment—a promising unit of Kitchener's Army.

At half-past eight on the following morning Dick passed through the main gate of Portsmouth Dockyard. Seamen and dockyard "maties" were everywhere, working with the utmost activity—for here at least there was no slacking.

Wagon-loads of stores came bounding along over the hard granite setts, drawn by stalwart bluejackets in working kit; no longer, as in the old piping times of peace, did the dockyard workmen amble quietly with their work. Everything was done at the double. It was a sign of the times, when the stress and strain of naval warfare requires promptness and activity.

Under the ruined buildings that formerly were surmounted by the semaphore tower—ruins that suggested the scene of a German raid—the Sub made his way to the South Railway Jetty, alongside of which was moored H.M.S. *Hammerer*, almost ready to proceed to sea.

In her new garb of neutral-grey the old ship looked smart and business-like. In each of her two barbets a pair of re-lined 12-inch guns grinned menacingly. Her brasswork no longer glittered in the sunlight: it had been daubed over with the same hue of neutral paint. The only dashes of colour about her were the blue-and-gold uniforms of the officers, for she showed no flag. It was yet too soon for the time-honoured custom of hoisting the white ensign with full naval honours.

Having duly reported himself, Dick was informed that he was to be in charge of the gun-room—the cradle of budding Nelsons, for the *Hammerer* carried twelve midshipmen in addition to a clerk and two assistant clerks.

For the next three days the Sub had hardly a minute to call his own. It was a hasty, yet complete, commissioning, nothing being overlooked in the matter of detail; and during those three days the ship's company did a normal week's work. Meals had to be hurriedly snatched. Even the usual formal dinner had to be scrambled through, with grave danger to the digestions of the youthful officers. What with coaling, shipping ammunition and stores, and generally "shaking down", Dick was glad to tumble into his bunk and sleep the sleep of healthy exhaustion, until aroused by his servant announcing that it was time to begin another day's arduous duty.

At length the *Hammerer* was ready to sail to her unknown destination; for it was an understood thing that she was to proceed under sealed orders.

The Captain and most of the officers on duty were on the fore-bridge. Aft mustered the marine guard and the band, while the stanchion rails and gun-ports were packed with seamen in their white working-rig.

On the jetty were the dockyard Staff-captain's men, ready at the word of command to slip "springs" and hawsers; but the usual setting of the picture of a departing man-of-war was absent. No throng of relatives and friends of the crew gathered on the farewell jetty. The time of departure was a secret. In war-time the great silent navy is shown to perfection; and no crowd of civilians is permitted to see what may prove to be the last of a leviathan going forth to do her duty in the North Sea.

A signalman, holding the halyard in his hand, awaited a glance from the Captain. It came at last. Up fluttered a hoist of bunting—the formal asking for permission to proceed.

"Permission, sir!" reported the signalman, as an answering string of colour announced that the Commander-in-Chief of the port had graciously condescended to order the *Hammerer* to do what had been previously ordered.

"Stand clear!"

To the accompaniment of the shrill trill of the bos'n's mates' pipes, the working parties surged hither and thither in apparently utter confusion; then almost imperceptibly, as the powerful tug in attendance began to pull the ship's bows clear of the jetty, the *Hammerer* started on her voyage into the great unknown.

A bugle-call—and every officer and man stood to attention, the marines presenting arms as

the battleship glided past the old *Victory*. Another call, and the men relaxed their attitude of rigidity. The last compliment had been paid to the authorities of the home port—the *Hammerer* was outward bound.

"Any idea of the rendezvous?" asked Jack Sefton, one of the midshipmen, as the lads forgathered in the gun-room to "stand easy", almost for the first time since commissioning.

"Rather," announced another, Trevor Maynebrace, who, having an uncle an admiral, professed somewhat loftily to be "in the know". "Rather—Rosyth: that's where we are bound, my dear Sefton; there to swing at moorings till the ship's bottom is smothered in barnacles. They'll keep us in reserve to fill up gaps caused by casualties, and, judging by recent events, we'll have to cool our heels a thundering long time."

"You're quite sure, Maynebrace?" asked the Sub.

"Quite—well, nearly so," admitted the midshipman.

"Then what do you make of that?" continued Dick, pointing through the open scuttle.

Broad on the starboard beam rose the frowning cliffs of Dunnose. The land was that of the Isle of Wight, so that the *Hammerer's* course was approximately south-west.

She was not alone. On either side, at ten cables' distance, were two long, lean destroyers of the River class, their mission being to safeguard the ship from the attack of a lurking German submarine.

"H'm!" muttered the discomfited middy. "P'r'aps there's been an alteration of plans. Looks as if we're bound for Plymouth."

"Or the Mediterranean, perhaps," remarked Jolly, the clerk, who looked anything but his name.

He was a weedy-limbed youth, narrow-chested and knock-kneed. He was as short-sighted as a bat, and wore spectacles with lenses of terrific power. To those not in the know, it seemed astonishing how he managed to pass the doctor; but Jolly's father was a post-captain, and that made all the difference. Unable owing to physical disabilities to enter the executive branch and follow in his father's footsteps, the lad had taken the only alternative career open to him that the Admiralty provides for short-sighted youths, and had entered the service as an assistant clerk.

Maynebrace gave the representative of the accountant branch a look of scorn.

"I don't think!" he said with a sneer. "Our Mediterranean Fleet is quite large enough for all emergencies. We'd be of no use for the Egyptian business. Our draught of water is too much for the Canal; besides, the *Swiftsure* and *Triumph* will attend to that little affair. No; I reckon it's Plymouth, and then the North Sea via Cape Wrath."

Just then the muffled sound of a tremendous roar of cheering, issuing from four hundred lusty throats, was faintly borne to the ears of the members of the gun-room. Again and again it was repeated.

"Scoot," ordered Crosthwaite, addressing Farnworth, one of the junior midshipmen. "Scoot as hard as you can, and see what the rumpus is about."

In two minutes the youngster, his face glowing with excitement, dashed into the gun-room.

"Glorious news!" he exclaimed. "The owner's opened the sealed orders. We're off to the Dardanelles. We'll have the time of our lives."

CHAPTER II

Cleared for Action

With admirable and well-kept secrecy the Admiralty had made all preparations for a strong attack to be delivered at the supposedly impregnable Dardanelles. In addition to the ships of the Mediterranean Fleet, battleships and cruisers were ordered to proceed to the Near East, until a fleet deemed sufficiently strong for the work in hand had collected in the Ægean Sea.

The *Hammerer* was one of the first to leave England for that purpose, while it was hinted amongst the officers that there was a big surprise up the sleeve of the Admiralty when the final depositions of the attacking fleet were completed.

Sub-lieutenant Dick Crosthwaite hailed the news with as much enthusiasm as the rest of the gun-room, which is saying much; for the youngsters let off a cheer that, if it did not equal the volume of sound emitted by the men, had the dire effect of arousing the chaplain and naval instructor from their afternoon nap.

It was a chance of a lifetime. Little Tommy Farnworth's announcement was a true one. While the Grand Fleet waited and watched in tireless energy for the German High Seas Fleet, this powerful squadron, detached without risk of disturbing the superiority of power in home waters, was silently and rapidly concentrating to match its strength against the vaunted Ottoman batteries on both sides of the Dardanelles. For this purpose the older type of war-ships with their 12-inch guns could be usefully and profitably employed, since speed—one of the greatest factors of modern naval warfare—was not so imperative when dealing with immobile batteries the position of which is already known.

When Ushant was astern and the *Hammerer* well into the Bay, the battleship's escort of destroyers turned and parted company. They had seen the ship through the waters within the radius of action of the German submarines. They were now free to return and take another battleship clear of the Channel. No doubt several huge grey-painted war-ships had been observed through the periscopes of these hostile under-water craft, but the presence of the swift, alert destroyers was sufficient to cause even the most reckless German lieutenant-commander to hesitate to attack. But for the destroyers more than one of the Mediterranean-bound war-ships would have fallen an easy prey to the lurking peril of the deep.

From the Atlantic, the Pacific, and the Indian Oceans came ships proudly displaying the white ensign. Under cover of complete secrecy, battleships and battle-cruisers gained the rendezvous without an inkling of their presence to the outside world.

The *Canopus*, which had been expected to join Admiral Cradock's ill-starred squadron in the Pacific, and had last been heard of in the Falkland Islands fight, suddenly turned up in the *Ægean*. The battle-cruisers that enabled Admiral Sturdee to avenge the *Monmouth* and *Good Hope* swiftly covered the 6500 miles between the Falkland Islands and the Piræus; the *Triumph*, after doing yeoman service at Kiao-Chau, and stopping in the Suez Canal to help put the fear of the British Empire into the Turkish invaders of Egypt, steamed into the Archipelago, ready to continue the good work she had so worthily begun.

Not only was the white ensign displayed at the southern gate of the Sea of Marmora; for a powerful French squadron, without weakening the force that held the Austrians under the guns at Pola and Trieste, had arrived to join hands with the former traditional enemy and now close ally of France; while in the Black Sea the Russians were making their presence felt upon the Turkish littoral of that inland sea.

The Ottoman Empire, tottering after the last disastrous Balkan War, was on the point of committing national suicide under the patronage of its bombastic German tutors.

On the ninth day after leaving Portsmouth the *Hammerer* was in the vicinity of Cape Matapan. She was bowling along at a modest sixteen knots, a rate that, considering the condition of her engines, reflected great credit upon the "black squad" and the engine-room staff.

It was two bells in the first dog watch. Dick Crosthwaite, who was on duty on the fore-bridge, was talking with the officer of the watch when a sail was reported astern.

Bringing the glasses to bear upon the vessel, both officers found that only her masts and funnels showed above the horizon. There was something unfamiliar about the appearance of the masts, for one was a tripod, the other one of the ordinary pre-Dreadnought type. The only battleships that sported this combination were the *Lord Nelson* and *Agamemnon*—and their position was known to an almost absolute certainty—and the newly-completed *Queen Elizabeth*.

"Strange," remarked Bourne, the officer of the watch. "I'd almost bet my bottom dollar that's the *Queen Bess* but for two reasons: first, she's not ready for sea; secondly, she's too powerful a ship to send out here while there's an impending job for her in the North Sea."

"She's coming on at a tremendous rate," observed Dick.

For several minutes the identity of the overtaking craft remained unknown; for, acting upon definite instructions, owing to the "tapping" of important messages by the enemy, the use of wireless had been almost entirely dispensed with during the voyage.

"Telephone to the fire-control platform, Mr. Crosthwaite," ordered Bourne. "Ask them what they make of yonder craft. Stay! Send one of the midshipmen—Maynebrace; he looks as if a little exercise would do him good."

Midshipman Maynebrace needed no spur. In a very few moments he had made his way to the foremast and was climbing the dizzy height by means of the iron rungs that, riveted to the lofty steel cylinder, formed the only means of personal communication with the fire-control platform. The interior of the *Hammerer's* hollow masts, which were originally fitted with lifts to convey the ammunition to the now discarded quick-firing guns in the fighting-tops, were now utilized for the numerous wires and voice-tubes communicating with the various parts of the ship.

Up through the lower top and upwards again the midshipman climbed with the dexterity acquired by long practice, never halting till he disappeared from view inside the elongated steel-plated box known as the fire-control platform.

Down again, seemingly at the imminent risk of breaking his neck, young Maynebrace made his way; then, cool and collected in spite of his exercise, he saluted the officer of the watch.

"It's the *Lizzie*, sir," he reported, using the abbreviated name by which the British seamen already knew the wonder ship of the year—the super-Dreadnought, *Queen Elizabeth*.

"By all the powers!" ejaculated Bourne. "This takes the proverbial biscuit. That's a nasty slight upon poor old Tirpitz: sending our last word in battleships to the Dardanelles."

"I pity the Turks, sir, when the *Lizzie* begins to tickle them up with her fifteen-inchers," said Maynebrace. "There'll be a few people surprised, not only out here but at home."

So well had the Admiralty plans been kept a secret that, until the *Hammerer's* ship's company saw the super-Dreadnought almost within the limits of the Ægean Sea, the *Queen Elizabeth's* presence was totally unexpected. The mere fact of her being sent out to the Near East indicated the gigantic task before the Allies: the forcing at all costs the hitherto supposedly impregnable defences of the Dardanelles.

Majestic in her business-like garb of grey, and with her eight monster 15-inch guns showing conspicuously against the skyline, the *Queen Elizabeth* overhauled and passed her older consort as easily as an express overtakes a suburban train.

For five minutes the "bunting tossers" on both ships were busily engaged; then, amid the outspoken and admiring criticism of the *Hammerer's* crew, the super-Dreadnought slipped easily ahead and was soon hull down.

Twelve hours later the *Hammerer* dropped anchor at the rendezvous off Tenedos. She was but one among many, for the Anglo-French fleet numbered nearly a hundred of various sizes—from the *Queen Elizabeth* of 27,500 tons down to the long, lean destroyers. In addition there were numerous trawlers—vessels that a few weeks previously had been at work off the coasts of Great Britain. Now, under conditions of absolute secrecy, these small but weatherly craft had risked the danger of a passage across the Bay in the early spring, had braved the "levanters" of the Mediterranean, and had assembled to do their important but frequently underrated work of clearing the mines to allow the advance of the battleships to within effective range of the hostile batteries.

Next morning, according to time-honoured custom, the *Hammerer's* crew assembled on the quarter-deck for prayers. It was a fitting prelude to the work in hand, for orders had been issued from the flagship for the fleet to go into action.

A bell tolled. To the signal yard-arm rose the "Church pennant": red, white, and blue, with a St. George's Cross on the "fly" or outer half. As the crew trooped aft, each man decorously saluted the quarter-deck and fell in; seamen, stokers, and marines forming three sides of a square, with the officers in the centre, while the "defaulters", few in number, were mustered separately under the eagle eye of the ship's police.

In ten minutes the solemn function was over. The Chaplain disappeared down the companion; the Captain gave the stereotyped order "Carry on"; the Commander, taking his cue, gave the word "pipe down", and the scene of devotion gave place to the grim preparation for "Action".

Stanchions, rails, ventilators, anchor-davits disappeared as if by magic. Hatches and skylights were battened down and secured by steel coverings, and everything liable to interfere with the training of the guns was either ruthlessly thrown overboard or stowed out of sight. Hoses were coupled up, ready to combat the dreaded result of any shell that might "get home" and cause fire on board. All superfluous gear aloft was sent below; shrouds were frapped to resist shell-fire, and the fore-top-mast was housed. The main-topmast, since it supported the wireless aerials, had perforce to remain. In less than an hour the crew, each man working with a set purpose, had transformed the *Hammerer* into a gaunt [Transcriber's note: giant?] floating battery.

Dick Crosthwaite's action station was in the for'ard port 6-inch casemate, an armoured box containing one of the secondary battery guns, capable of being trained nearly right ahead, and through an arc of 135 degrees to a point well abaft the beam.

The major portion of the casemate was taken up by the gun and its mountings, while a little to the rear of the weapon, and protected by a canvas screen, was the ammunition hoist, by which projectiles weighing 100 pounds each were sent up from the fore magazine. Around the walls were the voice tubes communicating with the conning-tower, the magazine, and other portions of the ship, while in addition was a bewildering array of switches and cased wires in connection with the lighting of the casemate and the firing mechanism of the gun. Buckets of water, for use in case of a conflagration, stood on the floor in close company with a tub full of barley water, at which the parched men could slake their thirst. What little space remained was fully occupied by the gun's crew, who, stripped to their singlets, were coolly speculating as to the chances of "losing the number of their mess".

Strangely enough, no one imagined that he was to be one of the unlucky ones; it is always his pal or some of his shipmates. It is an optimism that is shared equally alike by the Tommies in the trenches and the Jack Tars at their battle-stations.

Craning his neck, the Sub looked through the gun-port. It was an operation that required no small amount of manoeuvring, for the aperture was barely sufficient to allow the chase of the gun to protrude, while the armoured mounting left very little space between its face and the curved wall of the casemate.

The *Hammerer* was third ship of the port column, for the older battleships were steering in double column, line ahead. Preceding the squadron were the mine-sweepers, covered on either flank by strong patrols of destroyers.

Ten or twelve miles to the north could be discerned a mountainous and rocky coast terminating abruptly to the westward. Part of the highland was in Europe, part in Asia, but where the line of demarcation existed the Sub was unable to determine. Somewhere in that wall of rock lay the entrance to the Dardanelles, but distance rendered the position of the hostile straits invisible.

Away on the port hand lay the island of Imbros. Under its lee could be seen the misty outlines of the *Queen Elisabeth*, *Agamemnon*, *Irresistible*, and the French battleship *Gaulois*, ready to open a long-range bombardment of the Turkish batteries.

"Think the beggars will fight when they see this little lot?" asked Midshipman Sefton.

"Why not?" asked the Sub.

"I hope they will," continued the midshipman. "Especially after all this trouble. The Turk is a funny chap. See how he crumpled up against the rest of the Balkan States in 1912."

"On the other hand, the Turkish infantryman in '78 was reckoned one of the best 'stickers' in Europe," said Dick. "Under European officers these fellows will fight pretty gamely, and from all accounts there's a good leavening of German officers and artillerymen in these forts. Anyhow, we've got to get through. We've done it before, you know."

"Yes," admitted Sefton; "in the early nineteenth century, with a fleet of wooden walls. Duckworth did a grand thing then. In '78, when Hornby went through, the case was different. The Turks didn't open fire. Perhaps they funked it, and that's what makes me think they'll hesitate at the last moment."

Even as the midshipman spoke there came a peculiar screech that sounded almost above the armoured roof of the casemate.

The two young officers exchanged glances.

It was the first shell from the battery of Sedd-ul-Bahr.

CHAPTER III

The Demolition Party

A double crash announced that the leading battleship of the British squadron had opened fire with her foremost 12-inch guns. In two minutes the action had become general, the whole of the British and French pre-Dreadnoughts engaging with their principal armament, for as yet the range was too great for the 6-inch guns and smaller weapons to be trained upon the distant defences.

Ahead, the mine-sweepers, "straddled" by the hail of projectiles from Sedd-ul-Bahr and Kum Kale, as well as from mobile batteries cunningly concealed in difficult ground, proceeded with slow and grim determination. All across them the sea was churned by the ricocheting shells, while ever and anon a terrific waterspout accompanied by a dull roar showed that they were making good work in clearing away the hostile mines.

The Turks, in spite of the huge 12-inch projectiles that hailed incessantly upon the forts, stood to their guns with fanatical bravery. Tons of brickwork and masonry would be hurled high in the air, after taking with them the mangled remains of the Ottoman gunners and up-ending the Turkish weapon as easily as if it were a mere drain-pipe. Yet a few minutes later the defenders would bring up a field-piece and blaze away across the ruins at the nearest of the British mine-sweepers.

"Port 6-inch battery to fire," came the order.

Almost simultaneously the six secondary armament guns added their quota of death and destruction to the slower crash of the heavier weapons in the barbettes.

The *Hammerer* and her consorts were rapidly closing the shore, taking advantage of the already seriously damaged forts.

It was by no means a one-sided engagement. Shells from the Turkish defences were ricocheting all around the British warships or expending themselves harmlessly against the armoured plating. Other projectiles tore through the unprotected sides and upper works. Well it was that orders had been given out not to man the 12-pounder quick-firers on the upper deck. Had these weapons been used the casualties here must have been very heavy, for the light battery resembled a scrap-iron store.

Suddenly the men serving the gun in the casemate stopped their rapid yet deliberate work. A hostile shell had penetrated the 6-inch side armour almost under the casemate and had burst close to the lower part of the foremast. The shock well-nigh capsized the Sub, and almost caused the man at the ammunition hoist to drop the hundred-pound shell that he was in the act of transferring to the breech of the weapon. Suffocating fumes eddied through the ammunition hoist into the confined space. In the dim light men were gasping for breath, expecting every moment to find the magazine beneath their feet blown up.

"Hoist out of action, sir," reported one of the men, as he threw the contents of a bucket of water down the choked tube. Although everything of a supposedly inflammable nature had been got rid of, the heat generated by the explosion had been sufficient to start a fire, and the seat of the conflagration was between the armoured floor of the casemate and the magazine below the water-line.

"That's done it," ejaculated Dick dejectedly. It was not on account of the danger, for the men remained calmly within the casemate, trusting to the fire-party to extinguish the flames that were perilously close to the magazine. He was deploring the fact that the jamming of the ammunition hoist had deprived his gun of its supply of shells. The weapon was as much out of action as if the entire gun's crew had been annihilated. It seemed so humiliating to be inactive.

"Number one 6-inch, why are you not firing?" inquired an officer in the conning-tower through one of the voice tubes. There was a tinge of anxiety in his voice. He had noticed the sudden cessation of fire from that particular weapon, and it looked ominous.

"Ammunition hoist damaged, sir," replied the Sub.

"Any casualties?"

"No, sir."

"Then stand by."

Dick heard the whistle replaced in the tube as the officer completed his enquiries. Then hard-a-port the *Hammerer* described a semicircle, in order to bring her as yet unengaged starboard battery into action.

By this time the Turkish reply was but a feeble one. Pounded by the direct fire from the pre-Dreadnoughts; shattered by the long-range high-angle fire of the *Queen Elizabeth* and the *Invincible*, the forts were little better than mounds of rubbish.

Already the British warships had penetrated more than two miles up the formidable Straits, the mine-sweepers performing their difficult task with the utmost coolness and bravery. Night was coming on. All that could be done was to make sure of the complete reduction of the southernmost forts, and continue the sweeping operations as a prelude to a farther advance on the morrow.

Two British seaplanes, hovering at a height of nearly a thousand feet above the hostile positions, reported by wireless that the Turks were abandoning their shattered forts. The opportunity had arrived to consummate the day's work. A signal was made from the flagship to land armed parties. Joyfully the order was received, for the British seaman is not content with doing a lot of damage from afar; he must needs see for himself the result of his efforts.

Still maintaining a steady fire with their secondary batteries, the ships proceeded to hoist out their boats. Into these dropped seamen and marines, armed with rifles and bayonets, Maxims were passed into the boats, and charges of gun-cotton carefully stowed away for future use in completing the destruction of the Turkish guns.

"At this rate we'll be through in less than a week," remarked Midshipman Sefton to Dick, as they sat in the stern-sheets of a launch packed with armed seamen. The launch was in tow of a steam pinnace, while astern of her were two more boats, equally crowded.

"Seems like it," answered Crosthwaite, as he looked towards the rapidly nearing shore—a wild, precipitous line of rocks, surmounted by a pile of masonry that a few hours before was one of the strongest points of defence of the Dardanelles. "The Commander told me that the mine-

sweepers ought to clear away all the mines as far as the Narrows within the next twenty-four hours. It's in the Narrows we're going to have a tough job."

Without a shot being fired—for the *moral* of the Turks seemed crushed—the boats grounded on the shore, and rapidly but in perfect order the demolition party landed, formed up, and began the difficult climb to the already sorely battered fort.

"What are you doing here, Sefton?" asked the Sub, observing that the midshipman was following him. "Your place is in your boat, you know."

"I asked the Commander's permission," replied Sefton. "It's not every day that I get a chance of examining a demolished position."

If the truth be told, Sefton was somewhat disappointed. He expected a "bit of a scrap" and a chance to use the heavy Service revolver that he wore in a large, buff-leather holster. At present it was of no use; it was an encumbrance.

"Steady, men," cautioned Crosthwaite, as those of the section under his orders were pressing forward somewhat recklessly. "There may be an ambush."

The warning was justifiable, for the strange silence which brooded over the hillside was somewhat ominous. The *Hammerer's* men had landed in three parties, two being each under the command of a lieutenant, while Crosthwaite had the third. Between these bodies of men there a keen rivalry as to who should first reach the demolished fort; and as each was advancing by a separate route and was almost entirely hidden from the others, the Sub's party had no means of judging the pace of their friendly competitors.

"Ware barbed wire."

The men brought up suddenly. They were approaching the nearest limit of the shell-torn ground. Deep cavities had been made in the rocky soil by the explosions of the heavy projectiles, yet the outer line of barbed wire was almost intact. The posts supporting the obstruction had been blown to atoms, but the wires were twisted and fused into a long, single, and almost inflexible coil impervious to the attacks of the seamen provided with wire-cutters.

A ripping sound, followed by a yell, announced the failure of a burly bluejacket to wriggle under the obstruction. Pinned down by the barbed wire, he was unable to move until his comrades, with a roar of laughter at his hapless plight, succeeded in extricating him.

"We'll prise it up, sir," exclaimed a petty officer. "The men can then wriggle underneath."

"Won't do," objected the Sub firmly. "It will have to be removed."

Two men advanced with slabs of gun-cotton, but again Dick demurred.

"No explosives to be used in the demolition of obstructions," he ordered. "They must be kept for the enemy's guns. We don't want to alarm the rest of the landing-party. Bend a rope there, and half a dozen of you clap on for all you're worth."

A rope was speedily forthcoming. The stalwart bluejackets, digging their heels into the sloping ground, tugged heroically. The stout wire sagged, quivered, and resisted their efforts.

The Sub realized that the obstruction must be removed. Although it was possible to crawl underneath, as the petty officer had suggested, it would never do to leave a trap like that between the fort and the shore. In the event of an ambush and a retirement to the boats, delay in negotiating the entanglements might spell disaster.

Another half a dozen men assisted their comrades. Still the wire, now at a terrific tension, showed no signs of being wrenched from its hold.

"All together—heave!"

With a burly "Heave-ho" the dozen bluejackets made a fresh effort. Balked, they gave a tremendous jerk. Something had to go, but it was not the wire. The rope parted with a crack, and twelve seamen were struggling in a confused heap on the steep hillside, while little Sefton, caught by the human avalanche, found himself head over heels in a particularly aggressive thorn-bush.

"Work round to the right there, and see what the infernal wire is made fast to!" ordered the Sub impatiently. "Look alive there, or the others will be at the top before us."

Four or five men hastened to carry out his commands. The work was of a difficult nature, for on either side of the rugged path by which the party had ascended thus far the ground was precipitous and thickly dotted with bushes.

Figuratively hanging on by their eyebrows the seamen worked along, following the course of the aggressive wire, till they were lost to sight beyond a fantastically shaped boulder.

Suddenly one of the men reappeared.

"Here's a blessed 12-pounder, sir," he announced. "What are we to do with it?"

Followed by Midshipman Sefton, who in the excitement caused by this latest discovery had lost all interest in the painful operation of extracting thorns from various remote portions of his anatomy, Crosthwaite hastened to the spot with as much haste as the nature of the ground would permit. The rest of the men, with the exception of those detailed to carry the explosives, also scrambled over the intervening ground.

A ghastly sight met their gaze. Beyond the boulder, and screened from seaward by a partly-burnt cluster of brushwood, was a field-piece. One wheel of the carriage had been smashed. The other was held only by a few spokes, while the muzzle of the weapon was buried deep in the ground. Coiled round the chase and jammed between the trunnion and the carriage was the end of the barbed wire. The gun was splattered with the yellow deposit from the explosion of a British lyddite shell, while all around lay the mangled bodies of the Turkish artillerymen. Five yards to the rear of the damaged weapon were the scanty remains of a limber. The same shell that had wrought the destruction of the gun and the men who served it, had completely exploded the ammunition.

"Smash the breech mechanism!" ordered Dick.

Two of the armourer's crew sprang to the gun for the purpose of breaking the interrupted screw-thread that locks the breech-block in the gun. Their efforts were in vain, for the explosion of the shell had rendered the breech-block incapable of being moved.

A fresh rope was speedily forthcoming. Its bight was placed under the heel of the 12-pounder, and by the united efforts of the seamen the heavy weapon was up-ended and toppled over the slope. Crashing through the brushwood, it rolled and bounded for quite a hundred feet, then with a resounding splash disappeared underneath the waters of the Dardanelles. The remains of the carriage were then hurled over, but, held up by the barbed wire that had caused so much fruitless effort, the mass of shattered steel effected a twofold purpose in its fall. It swept the cliff path clear of brushwood and brought the barbed wire into a position that it no longer formed an obstruction.

"This way up, men!" exclaimed Dick, pointing to a fairly broad and easy path in the rear of the gun emplacement. The Turks had conducted their defence with considerable cunning, for midway between the fort and the shore they had, by great exertion and ingenuity, placed several field-guns in well-sheltered spots, hoping that while the fire of the Allies was directed upon the visible batteries, their light pieces could with comparative impunity deliver a galling fire upon the mine-sweepers and the covering torpedo-boat destroyers. Unfortunately for the enemy the far-reaching effect of the heavy shells had resulted in the silencing of the concealed weapons, the men serving them being for the most part slain at their posts. A few had attempted to escape, but before they got beyond the danger zone they too were wiped out by the death-dealing lyddite.

The path Dick had indicated was the one by which the field-pieces had been lowered from the higher ground. It was obstructed in several places by craters torn by the explosion of the British shells, but these afforded no difficulty to the bluejackets.

Wellnigh breathless with their exertions, they reached the fort only to find, to their chagrin, that they had been forestalled by their friendly rivals, for the British flag floated proudly on the captured position.

So devastating had been the fire from the ships that the fort was little better than a shattered heap of brickwork and masonry. Armour-plated shields had been rent like paper, guns of immense size been dismantled and hurled aside like straws. Bodies of the devoted Ottoman garrison lay in heaps. Everything was smothered with a yellowish hue from the deadly lyddite and melanite. Yet several of the huge 80-ton guns were seemingly serviceable. These had to be rendered totally useless by means of slabs of gun-cotton placed well within the muzzle and fired electrically.

Sub-lieutenant Crosthwaite was studiously engaged in making a rough plan of the fort when Sefton, his soot-grimed face red with excitement, approached him.

"I believe I've found a magazine or something, sir," he exclaimed. "It's a funny sort of shop—like a tunnel. There are half a dozen Turks there—"

"Eh?" ejaculated Dick incredulously.

"Dead as door-nails," Sefton hastened to explain. "They look as if they had been suffocated. But the air's pure enough down there now."

Placing his notebook in his pocket, the Sub walked with Sefton across the littered open space in the centre of the fort till they came to a salient angle that faced the northern or landward side. Here the rubble rose to a height of about twenty feet. In places the wall, composed of armour-plate and concrete, had been riven from top to bottom, huge slabs of masonry being held up only by mutual support. On the top of the debris were half a dozen bluejackets, taking advantage of

the daylight that still remained in flag-wagging a message to one of the destroyers.

"Here's the show," announced Sefton, pointing to a narrow passage between two immense artificial boulders.

At one time the opening had been much wider, and had been provided with stone steps, but the irresistible shock had contracted the passage, and had buried most of the steps under a heap of rubble.

"We want a lantern for the job," observed Dick. "How did you manage to see? You ought not to have gone on an exploring expedition without someone accompanying you."

"I've brought my electric torch," said the midshipman, studiously ignoring the latter portion of the Sub's remarks.

Unnoticed by the signalling party, the two young officers descended. For twenty yards they had to exercise considerable effort in order to negotiate the bulging sides, but beyond this the passage opened to a width of nearly six feet.

"Mind where you tread," cautioned Sefton, flashing his lamp on the ground. "They are not dangerous, but it isn't pleasant."

Either lying on the stone floor or propped up in a sitting position against the wall were the bodies of several Turkish infantrymen. Most of them were tunicless, while half a dozen 100-pounder shells lying on the ground showed that these men were engaged in bringing ammunition from the magazine when death in the form of lyddite fumes overtook them. There were no visible marks of wounds, so it was fairly safe to conclude that no shell had burst within the tunnel. Further, it showed that somewhere underneath the ruined fort was a still intact store of projectiles which would have to be rendered useless to the Turks before the demolition party returned to their ship.

"Didn't those fellows give you a turn?" enquired Dick.

"A bit at first," admitted the midshipman. "Then when I realized that if they had meant mischief they would have plugged me long before I saw them, I began to think something was wrong with them—and there was."

For nearly a hundred feet the passage zigzagged. With the exception of the dip near the main entrance the floor was almost level. At intervals were niches covered with steel slabs. The place had been electrically lighted, but owing to the destruction of the power-house the lamps were extinguished. Sefton's surmise was correct. It was a magazine, for the peculiar pattern of the electric bulbs in their double glass coverings told Dick the reason for the precaution.

"This is as far as I have been," announced Sefton, pointing to a heavy canvas screen.

"Then we had better both go carefully," added Dick, drawing his revolver, an example that the midshipman eagerly hastened to follow. "Don't go letting rip, mind, without you want to blow the whole crowd of us to pieces. Use your revolver as a moral persuader if there should be any of the enemy skulking here."

Telling the midshipman to keep close to the wall, and to hold the torch at arm's-length with the rays directed into the unexplored part of the tunnel, Dick pulled aside the curtain, half-expecting to find himself confronted by a dozen more or less intimidated ammunition-bearers.

The place was deserted.

"We'll carry on," said the Sub. "By Jove, what a big show! Absolutely shell-proof, I should imagine."

"I can only just hear the row outside," added the midshipman, as the muffled reports of the guncotton explosions showed that the demolition party were doing their work thoroughly.

The magazine was a vault hewn out of the solid rock. It had evidently been in existence for some years, certainly before the modernizing of the fortifications. The ammunition stowed here consisted of shells for the smaller quick-firers, as the absence of tram-lines for conveying the projectiles that were too heavy to man-handle proved.

"Krupp ammunition," reported Sefton, flashing his torch upon the base of one of the brass cylinders. "My word, when our fellows bust that lot up, won't the Turks feel a bit sick!"

"We'll get the men to bring the firing-charges as soon as possible," said Dick. "If we had known of this before, it would have saved no end of work. There would have been no need to have destroyed every gun singly."

"Can't say I envy the fellow who has to fire the stuff," added Sefton. "Hello, what's that?"

The noise of the detonating charges had ceased. Instead came the unmistakable crackle of rifle-firing.

"Look alive!" ordered the Sub. "Our fellows are being attacked."

Brushing aside the canvas screen the two officers made their way along the tunnel as swiftly as the dancing beams of the midshipman's torch permitted.

Before they reached the rise leading to the open air there was a terrific concussion. A waft of hot, pungent fumes bore down upon Dick and his companion. They were compelled to stop, almost choking in the stifling atmosphere. The rays from the torch failed to penetrate the dense brownish cloud of smoke and dust.

"Carry on," spluttered Dick; then noticing that the midshipman seemed on the point of asphyxiation, he seized the torch and, dragging his companion, made for the open air.

Suddenly he came to an abrupt halt. The gap between the crumbling walls no longer existed. They were trapped.

CHAPTER IV

Trapped in the Magazine

For some moments Crosthwaite stood stock-still. His senses were temporarily disorganized by the appalling discovery and by the acrid fumes. It was not until he felt Sefton's shoulder sink under his grasp that he realized the lad had collapsed.

Holding the torch in his left hand, Dick seized the midshipman by the strap of his field-glasses. Luckily the leather stood the strain well.

Keeping his lips tightly compressed, the Sub, bending as he made his way through the fumes, dragged his companion back along the passage. He felt like a man who has dived too deeply. He wanted to fill his lungs with air, yet he knew that to attempt to do so might certainly end in disaster. The midshipman's inert body, which at first seemed hardly any weight to drag, now began to feel as heavy as lead. Once or twice the Sub stumbled, the effort causing his lungs to strain almost to bursting-point. It required all his self-control to prevent himself relinquishing his burden and jumping to refill his lungs with air which was so heavily charged with noxious fumes.

At length he reached the canvas screen, that, having been soaked in water by the Turkish ammunition party, was still moist. With a final effort he thrust the curtain aside and took in a deep draught of air. It was comparatively fresh. The poisonous gases had failed to penetrate the close-grained fabric. Then, overcome by the reaction, Dick stumbled and fell across the body of his companion.

How long he lay unconscious he knew not, but at length he was aroused by Sefton vigorously working away at the exercises for restoring to life those apparently drowned. Half-stupefied, the Sub resented. He was under the vague impression that he was in the gun-room of the *Hammerer* and that the midshipmen were playing some practical joke. Then he began to realize his surroundings.

The torch was still alight, but already the charge showed signs of "running down". The air, although close, was not heavily impregnated with fumes. No sound penetrated the rock-hewn vault.

"Buck up, sir!" exclaimed Sefton with a familiarity engendered by the sense of danger. "We'll have to get out of this hole as soon as we can. Are you feeling fit to make a move?"

Dick sat up. His head was swimming. His limbs felt numbed. He wondered why he had been in an unconscious state longer than his companion, until he remembered that throughout that terrible journey along the gas-charged passage Sefton had been dragged with his head close to the ground. Consequently, owing to the fumes being lighter than the air, he was not so badly affected. For another reason: when Dick collapsed, his weight falling across Sefton's body had acted very efficiently in expelling the bad air from the midshipman's lungs, and as the Sub rolled over the subsequent release of pressure had allowed a reflux of comparatively pure air to take the place of that pumped out of Sefton's chest.

"Can't hear any firing," remarked Sefton. "I suppose our fellows have beaten them off."

Dick did not reply. He did not want to raise false hopes. He remembered the strict orders issued to the officers of the demolition party, that in the event of a counter-attack by the Turks they were to fall back immediately upon the boats, and allow the guns of the fleet to deal with the enemy. Yet it seemed strange that there were no sounds of firing, unless some time had elapsed and during that interval the *Hammerer* and her consorts had completely dispersed the Turkish infantry.

"Light won't last much longer," declared Sefton laconically. "What's the move, sir?"

Dick moved aside the curtain. The air in the passage was now almost normal. There was no longer any danger of asphyxiation.

Retracing their way along the passage, the two young officers made the disconcerting discovery that the tunnel was completely blocked for the last twenty feet towards the entrance. They stood in silence, till Dick flashed the light upon his companion's face. The midshipman's features were perfectly calm.

"A pretty mess up!" he exclaimed, and the two laughed; not that there was cause for mirth, but merely to show each other that they were not going to accept their misfortunes in fear and trembling. "Let's try shouting."

They shouted, but beyond the mocking echo of the voices no reassuring call came to them in return.

"Our fellows have been over-zealous with the gun-cotton," observed Sefton. "They'll miss us presently, and then they'll have a job to dig us out."

But Crosthwaite had other views on the situation, and these were much nearer the mark.

The rifle-firing he had heard that of the demolition party, who in the course of their operations had been attacked by overwhelming numbers of Ottoman troops.

Acting upon instructions the Lieutenant-Commander in charge ordered a retirement. Leaving a section in reserve to cover the retrograde movement, the bluejackets with very little loss descended the steep side of the hill and re-embarked. Then, covered by the guns of the fleet, the rear-guard successfully retired, in spite of a galling fire from a battery of field-pieces that the Turks, under German officers, had brought up.

One of the shells from these guns had resulted in the subsidence of the already tottering masonry, and had effectively imprisoned Sub-lieutenant Crosthwaite and Midshipman Sefton in the magazine.

It not until the *Hammerer's* men fell in on the beach that the two officers were missed. Someone suggested that they might be with the rearguard, now descending from the demolition fort, but inquiries proved that this was not so.

As one man the landing-party of the *Hammerer's* crew volunteered to return and search for their missing officers. Reluctantly the Lieutenant in charge had to refuse their request. Orders had to be carried out to the letter. Grave consequences might ensue if the devoted bluejackets returned to the scene of action. Not only would they risk their lives in an attempt that might be futile, but the fire of the fleet might be seriously interfered with.

So the boats returned to their respective ships, and Sub-lieutenant Richard Crosthwaite and Mr. Midshipman Sefton were duly reported as missing.

"Let's explore," suggested Dick. "It's no use sitting down and killing time. Let's make ourselves useful and explore while the torch lasts. I suppose you haven't another refill?"

"Half a dozen in my chest, but that's not here," replied the midshipman. "By Jove, I do feel stiff! Why, my jacket's torn, and I've grazed my knee."

"I'm afraid I must plead guilty to that, Sefton," replied Dick. "I had to get you along somehow, and there wasn't time for gentle usage."

"I wondered how I got there," declared the midshipman. "Everything seemed a blank. By Jove, sir, you saved my life!"

"I may have had a hand in it," admitted Dick modestly. "Now, suppose we bear away to the left?"

They had regained the central portion of the subterranean works, and were confronted by two small passages, one leading to the left and the other to the right, both diverging slightly. The one the officers followed was not zigzagged, showing that it did not communicate with the open air. Dick proposed that they should abandon their efforts in this direction and explore the right-hand passage.

"I'm game," assented Sefton. "Yes, this looks promising; it twists and turns as if it were intended to stop the splinter of any shell that happened to burst at its mouth."

"No go here!" exclaimed the Sub after traversing about twenty yards. "This has been bashed in. We must thank our 12-inch guns for that. The magazine evidently served the quickfirers both of the north and south bastions. The question is, what is the third passage for?"

"We'll see," replied the midshipman, regarding the rapidly failing light with considerable apprehension.

The tunnel ran in an almost horizontal direction for fifty paces, then gradually descended in a long, stepless incline.

"Steady!" whispered Crosthwaite, laying his hand on Sefton's shoulder and at the same time switching off the torch. "I hear voices."

The officers listened intently. At some considerable distance away men were talking volubly in an unknown tongue. More, there was a cool current of refreshing air wafting slowly up the incline.

"Stand by to scoot," continued Dick. "Gently now; we'll get a little closer. It's quite evident those chaps are Turks."

"Why?" asked Sefton.

"By a process of elimination. They're not speaking English; they're not French. The lingo is too soft for German, so only Turkish remains. Got your revolver ready?"

"Yes," said the midshipman, his nerves a-tingle.

"Then don't use it unless I give the word. Slip the safety-catch and be on the safe side. We don't want an accidental discharge."

Softly the Sub groped his way, Sefton following at arm's-length behind him. After traversing another fifty paces Dick stopped. Ahead he could see a mound of rubble reaching almost to the roof of the tunnel. It was night: not a star was to be seen. A driving rain was falling, while across the murky patch formed by the partly obstructed mouth of the tunnel the search-lights of the British fleet travelled slowly to and fro as they aided the mine-sweepers in their long, arduous task. Not a shot was being fired. The Turkish batteries silenced, at least temporarily, required no attention at present from the deadly British guns.

The sound of the voices still continued. The speakers were chattering volubly, yet there was no sign of them.

Gaining confidence, Crosthwaite advanced till farther progress was arrested by the barrier of rubble.

Feeling for a foothold, and cautiously making sure that the projecting stones would bear his weight, the Sub climbed to the summit of the barrier, then, lying at full length, peered over the edge.

A heavy shell had accounted for the damage done to this exit from the magazine, for a huge crater, twenty feet in diameter, yawned ten feet beneath him. Not only had the pit been torn up, but masses of rock had been wrenched from the of the cliff, as well as from the top and sides of the tunnel.

On the irregular platform thus formed were nearly a score of Turkish troops—artillerymen in greatcoats and helmets somewhat similar to those worn by the British during the last Sudan campaign. With them were two officers in long grey cloaks and fezes. All seemed to be talking at the same time, irrespective of disparity in rank. Some of the men were piling sand-bags on the seaward front of the crater, others were looking upwards as if expecting something from above.

Presently the expected object appeared, lowered by a powerful tackle. It was the carriage of a large field-piece.

"Those fellows show pluck, anyhow," thought Dick. "After the gruelling they've had, and seeing their forts knocked about their ears, they set about to place fresh guns in position. These field-pieces, well concealed, will take a lot of finding, unless we can stop the little game."

Meanwhile Sefton had climbed the barrier and lay by the side of his companion. Silently the two watched the development of the Turks' operations. They had not long to wait.

A pair of wheels followed the carriage, and then after a brief interval the huge gun, "parbuckled" from the edge of the cliff, was lowered into position. In less than half an hour the piece was reassembled; ammunition was brought down, and finally brushwood placed in front on the sand-bags and over the gun; while to show how complete had been the Germanizing of Turkey, a field-telephone had been laid between the emplacement and those on either side, which, of course, was invisible to the two British officers.

For some time the Turkish officers kept the trawlers and attendant destroyers under observation with the field-glasses. The men were obviously impatient to open fire, yet for some inexplicable reason they were restrained. Possibly it was to lure the mine-sweepers into a sense of security, or else the Turks thought fit to ignore the small craft and await the chance of a surprise attack upon the covering British battleships and cruisers.

Being well within the mouth of the tunnel, Dick and the midshipman were not exposed to the driving rain. But on the other hand the Turkish artillerymen were without any means of protection from the downpour, and, since they could not show their zeal by opening fire, they did not hesitate to show their resentment at being kept out in the open.

At length one of the Turkish officers gave an order. The men formed up with a certain show of smartness, broke into a quick march, and disappeared beyond a projection of the cliff. Only one man was left as sentry, and he hastened to get to leeward of a friendly rock. From where the two Englishmen lay, the point of his bayonet could just be discerned above the top of the boulder.

Then Dick directed his attention seaward. He mentally gauging the distance between the shore and the nearest of the mine-sweepers. These vessels were steaming slowly ahead, with sufficient way to stem the ever-running current from the Sea of Marmora to the Ægean. Certainly for the whole time Dick and his companion had been on the lookout there had been no explosion of a caught mine. Apparently the sweepers had almost completed their work up this particular area, and were making a final test to make certain that no hidden peril had escaped them.

The Sub nudged his companion, and the pair retraced their steps until they had put a safe distance between them and the sentry.

"Look here," said Crosthwaite. "We've two things to do. First, to warn our people of the formation of a new Turkish battery, and secondly, to rejoin our ship. The question is: how are we to set about it?"

"Flash a message with the torch," suggested Sefton.

"I thought of that, but dismissed it," remarked the Sub. "For one thing the light's pretty feeble, and our people mayn't spot it. If they did they might think it was a false message sent by the enemy. And another thing: the Turks might notice the glare in the mouth of the tunnel."

"And we would get collared," added the midshipman.

"That's hardly the point. Our liberty is a small matter, but being made prisoners we should have no chance of letting our trawlers know that there is a masked battery being placed in position. No; I think the best thing we can do is to swim for it."

"I'm game," declared Sefton.

"It's quite possible that we'll pull it off all right," continued Dick. "You see there's a steady current always setting down the Dardanelles. That means that if we miss the nearest destroyer or trawler, we'll get swept across the bows of one farther down. Take off your gaiters and see that your bootlaces are ready to be undone easily. We won't discard any more of our gear till we're ready to plunge into the water. That's right; now follow me."

Returning to the barrier at the entrance of the tunnel, the Sub wriggled cautiously over the obstruction until he could command a fairly extensive view of the gun emplacement and its surroundings. The rest of the artillerymen had not returned, while apparently the sentry, having been left to his own devices, had sought shelter from the rain and was enjoying a cigarette.

Softly Dick dropped down, alighting on a pile of cut brushwood. He waited till Sefton had rejoined him, and the pair crept slowly and deliberately towards a gap left between the rock and the end of the semicircular rampart of sand-bags.

Suddenly the Sub came to a dead stop almost within a handbreadth of the levelled bayonet of the Turkish sentry.

CHAPTER V

A Dash up The Narrows

The Turk challenged. In the dim light he was not able to discern the uniform of the young officer. Perhaps he took him for one of the German taskmasters. At all events he merely held his rifle at the ready and made no attempt to fire.

The slight delay gave Dick his chance. Dropping on one knee he gripped the sentry by his ankle, at the same time delivering a terrific left-hander that caught the fellow fairly in that portion of his body commonly known as "the wind".

The Turk fell like a log. His rifle dropped from his nerveless grasp, fortunately without exploding. The back of his head came in violent contact with a lump of rock and rendered him insensible.

"You've killed him," whispered Sefton.

"Not much," replied Crosthwaite coolly. "He's got a skull as thick as a log of wood. At any rate we'll be spared the trouble of having to gag and truss him up. You might remove the bolt from his rifle and throw it away. It may save us a lot of bother if the fellow does pull himself together sooner than I expect."

It was hazardous work descending the almost sheer cliff, for the spot where the officers had emerged was midway between the fort and the beach, and, being in a totally different part to the place where they had landed, they were unfamiliar with the locality.

Once Sefton slipped, and rolled twenty feet through the brushwood, finally landing in a cavity caused by the explosion of a shell. On two occasions the Sub almost came to grief through the rock giving way beneath his feet, but by dint of hanging on like grim death he succeeded in regaining a firm foothold. The drizzling rain, too, made the ground slippery, and added to the difficulties; but after ten minutes' arduous exertions they found themselves on the stone-strewn beach.

"Now stop," ordered Dick. "Sling your revolver and ammunition into the sea. We want to travel light on the job. Ready? I'll set the course if you'll keep as close as you can. Thank goodness we're not in the Tropics, and that there are no sharks about!"

He might have added that amongst those rocks cuttle-fish were frequently to be found; but fearing there might be a limit to his young companion's pluck, he refrained from cautioning him on that point. It was a case of "ignorance is bliss" as far as Sefton was concerned.

The water was cold—much colder than that of the adjacent Mediterranean—yet it would be possible for the active swimmers to endure half an hour's swimming without risk of exhaustion. Long before that, they fervently hoped they would be safe on board a British vessel.

"Breast stroke—and don't splash," cautioned Dick, as the midshipman started off with powerful overhand stroke. Any suspicious movement in the water might bring a heavy rifle-fire upon the two swimmers from the numerous Turkish infantry who had reoccupied the position after the retirement of the demolition party. The Sub could hear them distinctly as they vigorously plied mattock and shovel in throwing up entrenchments on either side of the demolished fort.

Ahead, and less than half a mile from the shore, was a destroyer, moving slowly against the current and sweeping the shore with her search-lights. At first the Sub imagined she was stationary, but before the swimmers had covered fifty yards they were caught by the current, and swept southwards so rapidly that Dick realized that there was no chance of making for her. Their best plan was to swim at right angles to the shore, and let the drift help them to shape an oblique course that would bring them in the track of the mine-sweepers.

"How goes it?" enquired Crosthwaite laconically, after ten minutes of silence.

"All correct, sir," replied the midshipman confidently.

"We'll make that chap all right," continued Dick, pointing to a black shape "broad on his starboard bow" as he expressed its position.

Two minutes later he was not so certain. The vessel seemed to be changing course. Just then a search-light played full upon the heads of the swimmers. There it hung with irritating persistency.

"Hope they don't think we're a couple of drifting mines, sir," remarked Sefton. "Perhaps they'll give us a few rounds."

That possibility had entered Dick's mind. Raising his arm out of the water he waved it frantically. In so doing he completely forgot the other side of the question, and a crackle of musketry from the shore announced the disconcerting fact that the alert Turks had noticed the commotion in the water.

The bullets ricocheted all around the swimmers. The Sub turned and gave a swift glance at his companion. He was still "going strong", unperturbed by the leaden missiles that sung like angry bees.

A lurid flash burst from the fo'c'sle gun of the destroyer.

For a brief instant the Sub was in a state of suspense; then he gave a gasp of relief, for the projectile was not aimed at the two dark objects in the ray of the search-light. With a crash it landed on the hillside, and the rifle-firing ceased with commendable promptness.

The destroyer turned and, still maintaining a high speed, made straight for the two swimmers.

"Way enough!" exclaimed Dick cheerfully. "They're going to pick us up."

Suddenly, as the vessel's engines were reversed, the destroyer lost way. The creaking of tackle announced that her crew were lowering one of the Berthon boats—and within four hundred yards of the Turkish batteries.

Yet for some reason the field-pieces did not open fire until Dick and the midshipman were picked up and were in the act of being transferred from the boat to the destroyer *Calder*. Then, with a vivid and a sharp detonation, a shell burst a couple of hundred feet short of the British craft, quickly followed by another that missed by similar distance beyond.

Having revealed their identity, Dick and his companion were taken below and furnished with dry clothing. Quickly the Sub returned on deck and approached the Lieutenant-Commander on the bridge.

"Field-pieces lowered over the cliff, eh?" ejaculated that officer. "Jolly plucky of those fellows. We're engaged in trying to draw their fire. Sorry I can't put you on board the *Hammerer*. The battleships and cruisers have withdrawn until the mine-field is cleared a little higher up. They're going to tackle Chanak and Kilid Bahr to-morrow. We're just off to reconnoitre. The *Calder's* taking the European and the *Irwell* is trying her luck on the Asiatic side."

"Can I be of any service, sir?"

"I'm afraid not—as far as I can see at present. We'll find room for you in the conning-tower."

The *Calder's* search-lights had now been switched off. She was steaming slowly in a northerly direction, and had already passed the innermost of the mine-sweepers and their attendant destroyers.

Dick entered the limited expanse of the conning-tower, in which was a Naval Reserve sub-lieutenant and two seamen. The Lieutenant-Commander, called by courtesy the Captain, stood without on the bridge, in company with the mate and a yeoman of signals.

Presently the Lieutenant-Commander glanced at the luminous dial of his watch.

"Time!" he exclaimed decisively, in the tone of a referee at a boxing tournament. "Full speed ahead."

The engine-room telegraph-bell clanged. Black smoke tinged with lurid red flames belched from the four squat funnels, and, like a hound released from leash, the *Calder* raced on her perilous mission, her whole fabric quivering under the rapid pulsations of her engines.

The *Calder* was not one of the latest type of destroyers. Her tonnage was a little over 550, her speed supposed to be 24 knots, but by dint of terrific exertion on the part of her "black squad" that rate was considerably exceeded.

Almost everything depended on her pace. She had to draw the fire from the hostile batteries. If she were hit and sunk the British navy would be the poorer by the loss of a useful destroyer and a crew of seventy gallant men—and nothing would be gained except the glory of having died for their country. If on the other hand the *Calder* returned in safety, the British Admiral would be in possession of important information with reference to the position of new batteries that the Turks had thrown up to supplement those which were already known to be in existence. Moreover, there had been a report that The Narrows had been obstructed by a boom in addition to rows of mines, and a verification of the information or otherwise was urgently required before further extensive operations could be conducted.

On and on the *Calder* tore. Now she was abreast of the powerful batteries of Tekeh and Escali. Almost ahead, owing to the sinuosity of The Narrows, lay the huge fortress of Chanak. Each of these positions mounted guns heavy enough to blow the frail destroyer clean out of the water, while there was known to be rows of deadly mines which might be anchored sufficiently far beneath the surface to allow a craft of the *Calder's* draught to pass unscathed—but they might not. It was facing death at every revolution of the propellers.

Yet for some unknown reason the Turks made no attempt to open fire. It might be that they relied upon their mines, and were loath to disclose their positions by opening fire upon an insignificant destroyer. If such were the case, it showed that the Ottoman had learned a new virtue— forbearance under provocation.

It was useless to suppose that the enemy had not spotted the swiftly-moving destroyer. The flame-tinged smoke was enough. Besides, she had already crossed the path of three powerful fixed search-lights that swept the entire width of the Dardanelles.

"The beggars are going to spoof us," remarked the Naval Reserve officer to Dick. "We'll have our run for nothing. I wish they'd do something."

Before Crosthwaite could reply, the whole of the European shore between Tekeh and Kilid Bahr seemed to be one blaze of vivid flashes. Then, to the accompaniment of a continuous roar that would outvoice the clap of thunder, a hundred projectiles sped towards the daring British destroyer, some falling short, others bursting ahead and astern, while many flew harmlessly

overhead. Yet in all that tornado of shell the *Calder* survived. Although her funnels were riddled with fragments of the bursting missiles and a shell penetrated her wardroom, she sustained no vital damage.

Zigzagging like an eel, in order to baffle the Turkish gun-layers, she held grimly on her way, her skipper, standing coolly on the bridge, sweeping the shore with powerful night-glasses.

Fragments of metal rattled against the thin armour of the conning-tower. Wafts of cordite drifted aft as the crew of the 4-inch on the foc'sle blazed away against the powerful shore batteries. A dozen streams of smoke from the perforated funnels eddied aft in the strong breeze caused by the destroyer's speed, and rendered it impossible for the after 4-inch gun to be worked.

Making a complete circle the *Calder* entered the belt of dense smoke previously thrown out by the funnels. A lot depended upon this manoeuvre, for she was lost sight of by the Turkish gunners. While they were congratulating themselves upon having sunk another of the Giaour's ships, the destroyer emerged from the bank of vapour, and in a position that necessitated an alteration in the sighting of the hostile guns.

It was grimly exciting, this game of dodging the fire of a hundred guns. Without giving a thought to the fact that the conning-tower afforded little or no protection, Dick revelled in the situation, now that the first salvo had been fired. Possibly the sight of the Lieutenant-Commander scorning to take shelter helped to steady Dick's nerves. He felt as much at home on that frail craft, the plating of which was a little thicker than cardboard, as he did behind a heavy-armoured casemate of the *Hammerer*.

From both sides of the Dardanelles shells, large and small, hurtled through the air. It seemed as if nothing could prevent the projectiles from Kilid Bahr and the adjacent batteries ricocheting into Chanak and the forts on the Asiatic shore. Yet, hit many times, the *Calder* held grimly and swiftly on her course till she came abreast of Nagara.



"THE *CALDER* HELD GRIMLY AND SWIFTLY ON HER WAY"

She had traversed the whole extent of The Narrows. Mines she missed, possibly by a few feet. More than once torpedoes, launched from the tubes mounted on the shore, tore past her, the trail of foam looming with a peculiar phosphorescence, showing how near they had been to getting home; while the shells that struck her, although inflicting considerable damage, failed to strike in any vital part.

Satisfied that no boom existed at Nagara, and that the Turkish cruisers and destroyers which were thought to have left the Sea of Marmora and had taken shelter beyond Nagara were not in their expected anchorage, the Lieutenant-Commander of the *Calder* ordered the helm to be put hard over.

Listing outwardly as she turned till her normal water-line showed three feet above the water, the destroyer began her return journey. Before she recovered her normal trim a 4-inch shell penetrated her thin plating, and, fortunately without exploding, missed one of the boilers by a fraction of an inch and disappeared out of the starboard side.

Then, as the destroyer steadied on her helm, the aperture a few seconds previously clear of the water was now eighteen inches beneath the surface. It poured a regular cascade that threatened to flood the engine-room.

In an instant one of the artificers saw the danger and acted promptly. Seizing a bundle of oily waste he thrust it into the irregular-shaped hole, and coolly sat with his broad shoulders hard against the impromptu plug and kept it in position.

"There's the *Irwell*," suddenly exclaimed the Royal Naval Reserve officer, who was looking through one of the slits in the conning-tower on the port side.

Dick also looked. At two cables' length from them was their consort, which, having circled to starboard, had closed in upon the *Calder*. Both were now running on parallel courses and at approximately the same speed.

The *Calder's* skipper also saw the other destroyer. He realized the danger of the formation, for both craft were in a direct line of fire from the forts.

"Hard-a-port!" he shouted.

The quartermaster heard in spite of the terrific din. Round spun the wheel of the steam steering-gear, and with a lurch that gave those below the impression that she was turning turtle, the destroyer made a complete circle. By the time she had steadied on her helm the *Irwell* was nearly a mile ahead.

A repetition of the terrible fire from Kum Kale greeted the *Calder* as she tore past the southern-most of the forts, badly mauled but still in fighting trim. Her exploit had been successfully accomplished.

"Can anyone oblige me with a cigarette?" asked the Lieutenant-Commander, as he was rejoined by the officers from the conning-tower.

The Royal Naval Reserve officer hastened to comply.

"Good heavens, sir!" he exclaimed. "You've been hit."

"Yes," assented the skipper coolly. "A piece of shell. It's spoilt my greatcoat, I'm afraid, but what's worse, took my cigarette-case to blazes—and it was a presentation one, worse luck. That's why I had to ask for something to smoke. No, it isn't a case for the medico; a Maltese jeweller will do a bit of business over this affair, I think."

Handing over the charge of the bridge to the second in command, the skipper went below to receive the reports of the surgeon, the chief artificer-engineer, and the gunner as to the damage to personnel and hull and fittings. This done he retired to his cabin—which was considerably draughty, owing to the attentions of a couple of Turkish shells which had passed completely through it without exploding—and proceeded to draft his report to the Admiral.

Presently Dick remembered that he had not seen anything of young Sefton during the dash up The Narrows. Going in search of him, he found the midshipman busily engaged in helping the doctor, a surgeon probationer of the Royal Naval Reserve entered for service during the war. There was plenty to be done, for the casualties amounted to four men seriously wounded and about a dozen others suffering from slight injuries.

"Can't say I liked the job at first, sir," remarked the midshipman confidently, "but the skipper told me to go below. It felt absolutely rotten being boxed up without knowing what's going on. One thing is certain: I'll take jolly good care not to specialize in engineering if I can help it. I mean to go for the executive branch for all I'm worth."

"You've made yourself pretty useful, I hear," said Crosthwaite, who had been told by the surgeon how the midshipman worked like a nigger.

"I suppose so," admitted Sefton modestly. "When you're helping to patch up a man who has been horribly knocked about, you forget what's going on on deck. Where are we now, sir?"

"Making for the fleet off Tenedos," replied the Sub. "We'll be put on board the old *Hammerer* before another hour's up, unless something unforeseen occurs. My word, the wind is piping up! We're in for a good hard blow, I believe."

Without further incident the *Calder* rejoined the rest of the squadron. In answer to a signal a picket boat put off from the *Hammerer* to take off the two missing officers, who parted from their rescuers with thanks and promises to restore their borrowed garments at the first available opportunity.

Next day it blew half a gale. Under these climatic conditions operations were hopeless, and the fleet remained in the open roadstead, rolling heavily in the terrific seas. In such weather even the steadiest ship would be unable to use her guns with any degree of accuracy, while it was equally certain that none of the Turkish mine-laying vessels could come out to drop fresh mines in the place of those already removed by the British trawlers.

But, on the other hand, the Ottoman land forces were not handicapped by the climatic conditions. They were doubtless hard at work throwing up new trenches and batteries, and installing fresh guns from the apparently inexhaustible supply from the arsenals of their Teutonic taskmasters.

For three days it blew heavily, accompanied by a continuous deluge of rain. The delay was galling, and increased the desire of the officers and men of the fleet to complete the good work that up to the present had progressed with every prospect of ultimate and speedy success.

"What do you think of that for confounded cheek, Crosthwaite?" asked Bourne, handing the Sub a typewritten document which contained news of the war that had been received by wireless and distributed amongst the fleet. "A Turkish bulletin with German editing requires a lot of swallowing."

Dick took the proffered paper and read:

"The Dardanelles Operations.—Berlin reports that on Monday the Anglo-French fleet made a desperate attack upon the southern forts of the Gallipoli Peninsula. In spite of a terrific artillery fire little damage was done to the forts. A strong English landing-party was repulsed with heavy losses."

"If they call our demolition party a strong force, I pity them when we do land a few army corps!" remarked Bourne. "However, the more people are fooled the more bitter the grim realization. Carry on."

"The same evening a number of enemy light cruisers and destroyers attempted to ascend The Narrows," read Dick aloud, for the benefit of some of the midshipmen. "Three cruisers and at least six destroyers were observed to sink under the accurate fire of our Turkish allies. The Anglo-French fleet, apparently realizing the hopelessness of the operations, has dispersed."

"To Tenedos, to pay another visit in a day or two," added Maynebrace. "We'll be through in a fortnight. And I believe the wind's dropping. The glass has been rising steadily for the last three hours."

The midshipman's prognostics were correct, for on the following morning the wind and sea had subsided considerably.

From the flagship a general signal was made. Its meaning was greeted with an outburst of acclamation, for it was brief and to the point:

"The fleet will weigh and engage at close range."

CHAPTER VI

To the Rescue

"Another picnic!" exclaimed Sefton joyfully, as the bugles sounded for "Action Stations". "Look—there's the French squadron piling it on. They are every bit as keen as we are to have a sniff in."

If anything, the opening phases of the bombardment were tamer than on the occasion of the last operations. The combined fleets delivered a tremendous fire at gradually decreasing ranges, while the Turks gradually diminished the rapidity of their reply. It was for the most part a gigantic waste of Krupp's ammunition, for very few of the British and French ships were hit.

Against the fortifications at the entrance to the Straits the battleships directed their fire, and at half-past one all the forts had ceased to reply to the salvos of the Allied ships.

Meanwhile the *Hammerer* and her consorts had penetrated a considerable distance up the Dardanelles. Here they gave and received hard knocks, for the range averaged only two thousand yards. Several gaping holes appeared in the unarmoured portions of the *Hammerer's* hull, her funnels were torn through and through, her after-bridge had been swept away, and almost every boat she carried was splintered.

Yet her crew, well protected by the armoured barbets and casemates, and the broad nine-

inch belt extending two-thirds of her length, suffered little loss; and when at half-past two the *Vengeance*, *Irresistible*, *Albion*, *Swiftsure*, *Ocean*, and *Majestic* steamed up to assist in the bombardment, the forts quickly ceased firing.

During the lull in the firing Dick Crosthwaite had to go on deck to superintend the clearing away of some of the remains of the after-bridge, which interfered with the training of the starboard 6-inch gun.

As he did so he saw the *Irresistible* listing heavily. Whether mortally injured by gun-fire, torpedo, or mine, he knew not at the time, but it was certain that she was done for. An attempt was being made to take her in tow, but already the stanch old craft was heeling too much.

Seeing the plight of the battleship, the Turks again opened fire, sending a hail of projectiles at the stricken ship. Her consorts attempted to intervene and screen her from the harassing storm of shell, for her devoted crew, working hard in a vain effort to check the inrush of water by means of collision mats, were fully exposed to the fire of the Turkish guns.

Reluctantly the order was given to abandon ship, and in response to signals for assistance British destroyers dashed up, and, manoeuvring with the utmost skill and coolness under the galling fire, actually ran alongside the fast-sinking vessel.

Most of the *Irresistible's* crew succeeded in leaping upon the decks of the destroyers; a few had to take to the water, and were promptly hauled out by ready helpers. The rescuers were only just in time, for, amid a cloud of smoke and steam, the ship sank in deep water.

The catastrophe was not the only one, for within a very few minutes after the sinking of the *Irresistible*, the *Ocean*, a slightly larger battleship, having struck a mine, sank, with very little loss of life.

It was a black day for the Allies, for the French had not come off without serious losses. The *Bouvet*, fouling a mine, the detonation of which caused her principal magazine to explode, sank with appalling suddenness, taking with her practically the whole of the crew. The *Gaulois*, badly mauled by gun-fire, was obliged to haul out of line, and it was rumoured that she had to be beached on the island of Imbros.

A new and hitherto unexpected danger had threatened the British and French battleships—a danger against which ordinary mine-sweeping was impracticable.

Owing to the continual current down the Dardanelles, it occurred to the minds of the German officers serving with the Turkish forces to set adrift numbers of floating mines. These formidable engines of destruction were launched from the southern outlet of the Sea of Marmora, while to make the chances of their fouling a ship doubly certain they were released in pairs, each couple being connected by fifty or a hundred feet of wire. The bight of the wire getting caught across the bows of a ship would result in the mines swinging inwards and exploding upon contact with the vessel's sides.

Wisely the British Admiral ordered a retirement, until steps could be taken to cope with this latest scheme of defence on the part of the enemy, and as night fell the fleet steamed towards its anchorage.

The weather was now beginning to change back to a spell of hard winds and rain, which in itself would cause a temporary suspension of operations, and the officers and men of the fleet had to face the dismal prospect of "standing by" instead of returning to the attack with renewed zest and animated by a desire to revenge their losses.

Dick was just about to sit down to a hasty meal—it was his first opportunity of doing so since the *Hammerer* went into action that morning—when the "Officers' Call" was sounded.

"Now what's in the wind?" he mentally enquired as he dashed on deck.

The Sub was not kept long in doubt. A message had been received from the flagship stating that one of the mine-sweepers, the *St. Rollo*, had gone ashore at Yenikeui on the Asiatic shore, and about six miles SW. by S. of Kum Kale. The *Hammerer* and the *Tremendous* were asked for volunteers to attempt the rescue of the crew. It was expressly stated that, owing to the shoaling nature of the coast at the point, gigs or whalers must be employed, but a destroyer would be cruising in the vicinity to pick up the rescue parties on their return.

It was taken for granted that the business was a dangerous one, otherwise the boats would be ordered to proceed to the spot. The mere fact that volunteers were asked was in itself significant. Not only was there grave risk of being fired upon by the Turkish troops, who doubtless would muster in force at the spot where the mine-sweeper grounded, but it was now a pitch-dark night with a falling glass and a rising sea.

"What boats have we fit for service, Mr. Box?" the Captain, addressing the carpenter.

The warrant-officer had the information at his fingers' ends, for, as soon as the *Hammerer* had drawn out of range, one of the first of many tasks of the carpenter's crew was to set to work

and patch up the boats that were most capable of being made seaworthy again.

"Now, gentlemen," continued the owner. "You know what is required and the condition of the boats. Who will volunteer?"

Almost all the executive officers and every one of the midshipmen signified their willingness to answer the call for aid.

"Thank you, gentlemen," exclaimed the skipper, with ill-disguised appreciation of the result of his question. "Your answer is exactly what I expected. Mr. Bourne will take charge of the gig, and Mr. Crosthwaite will take the whaler. They will each have a midshipman with them."

The Captain had not made his choice without due consideration. Bourne, he knew, was a capable officer in a boat, while Dick Crosthwaite had had a great amount of experience in that sort of work, both at Dartmouth and during his commission on the *Seasprite*. In fact the Sub had been specially reported to the Admiralty for the smart way in which on several occasions he had taken away a boat to board merchant ships during the light cruiser's patrol work in the North Sea. In these days of steam propulsion, small-boat work in the British Navy rarely gets the attention it deserves, and comparatively few officers can handle a sailing boat with any great degree of smartness. Dick's qualification, therefore, was the exception rather than the rule.

Saluting, the Sub hastened to make his preparations. His first act was to choose a midshipman. He would have selected Sefton but for the fact that that young gentleman had received a slight wound in the hand from a flying fragment of shell. Maynebrace he dismissed from his mind; the youngster was too impetuous, and apt to lose his head in a tight corner. Eventually the Sub decided to ask Farnworth to accompany him, and the lad literally jumped at the chance.

Dick had no difficulty in getting together a crew, for the men belonging to Farnworth's boat simply clamoured to be taken. This was a decided advantage, since all the party were used to the whaler.

While Farnworth was busily engaged in seeing that the boat was ready, comparing the articles placed in her with the list in his "Watch Bill", the Sub made his way to the chart-room and obtained a copy of the largest-scale chart of Yenikeui and neighbouring coast. Rolling up the plan he placed it in a cylindrical watertight case and hurried to the quarter-deck, where the whaler's crew had already fallen in, and all hands for lowering were waiting at the falls.

The whaler seemed a frail craft to take away on a dark and boisterous night. Being only of moderate beam in proportion to her length of twenty-seven feet, she was fairly swift under oars or sail in calm or moderate weather, but was a "wet boat" whenever she had to encounter any crested waves.

Nevertheless her pointed stern enabled her to manoeuvre in broken water, such as had to be expected in Yenikeui Bay, where it would be almost a matter of impossibility to approach the stranded trawler in a steam cutter or pinnace.

"All correct, sir," reported Midshipman Farnworth.

The Sub thoroughly examined the boat, not that he doubted his subordinate. It was a case of "two heads being better than one", for in the excitement it was quite possible for necessary articles to be overlooked.

"Boathooks, balers, spare oars, anchor and cable, signal flags and rockets, flashing lamp, compass, lead-line—where's the lead-line?"

That important article was missing. It was speedily forthcoming, and the Sub proceeded to take stock of the rest of the inventory.

"You have the telescope and signal-book, Mr. Farnworth?"

"Here, sir," reported the midshipman.

The men's rifles were already in the boat, secured by light lashings, termed "beckets", under the thwarts. Spare ammunition in a box was stowed under the stern-sheets.

Satisfied that they were all in order, Dick awaited Lieutenant Bourne's appearance. Already that officer's boat, the gig, was ready for lowering.

"Keep half a dozen boats' lengths astern of me, Mr. Crosthwaite," ordered the Lieutenant, as senior officer of the expedition. "When the trawler is sighted we'll confer as to the best means of approaching her. Judging by the direction of the wind, we ought to find a certain amount of shelter under Bender Dagh Point—you know where that is?"

Dick assented. It was a precipitous crag fringed by a partly submerged reef that extended obliquely with the shore for nearly half a mile.

"Very good; carry on!" continued Bourne.

The boats' crews climbed into their respective crafts. Amid the good wishes of the rest of the officers Bourne took his place in the stern-sheets of the gig, and Crosthwaite in the whaler.

"Lower away!"

Smartly the falls of the whaler were paid out, and as the boat became waterborne the bowman and the coxswain promptly released the disengaging gear.

"Give way!"

As one the blades of the supple ash oars dipped as the rowers bent to their task, and the boat shot forward on her dangerous errand.

It was a long pull of five miles dead to leeward, and in all probability a doubly hard row back in the teeth of the wind and sea. To avoid undue chances of discovery by the Turkish batteries the boats were unable to be towed, but it was understood that on the return journey they might be "given a pluck" by a destroyer as soon as the rescuer party drew out of effective rifle range from the shore.

Hardly a word was exchanged between the Sub and the junior officer from the time of leaving the ship to the arrival of the four boats at the rendezvous. Farnworth had all his work cut out to keep in touch with the gig, for the night was thick with rain. That in a sense was fortunate, for it beat down the crested waves considerably. The midshipman had not to steer a compass course, since Bourne was responsible for the navigation, and as long as the two boats of the *Hammerer* kept together all was well.

Dick, muffled in oilskins and sou'wester, kept a bright look-out for the flashing signals from the ship, since it might be possible that orders for recall might be made, in the event of the crew of the stranded vessel getting away in their own boats.

Suddenly, and before the Sub realized that the boats were so near land, the precipitous outlines of Bender Dagh Point loomed through the darkness, a few points on the whaler's starboard bow. Not a light appeared on shore, for which the officers were devoutly thankful; but above the moaning of the wind and the hiss of the rain could be heard the ominous sound of surf lashing the rocky beach.

A cast of the lead-line gave eight fathoms. At present there was no fear of getting into shoal water, for the reef rose from a submerged bank having only half that depth. As long as the soundings gave not less than five fathoms the Sub knew that there was enough sea room to clear the saw-like ridge of rocks.

"By Jove! What a death-trap!" ejaculated Farnworth, as the whaler followed the gig round the extremity of the reef.

Dick nodded acquiescence. As a sailor he had a wholesome respect for a lee shore. He feared the perils of the coast far more than the chance of falling into a hostile ambush.

"Lay on your oars!" he ordered.

The boats of the *Tremendous* were already at the rendezvous. Here it was comparatively calm water, only a long oily roll setting in over the reef. The four small craft lay at a boathook's length apart while the officers discussed the plan of operation.

"I propose that the two whalers make their way alongside the wreck," said Bourne. "The gigs can lay off and cover them should they be fired upon. If anything befall either, and the crew cannot be rescued without endangering the others, the men must make their way ashore as best they can. We cannot afford to lose two boats."

"And what then?" asked the lieutenant of the *Tremendous*.

"They'll have to make an attempt to skirt the shore of the bay," continued Bourne. "The chart shows that there is a beach extending almost as far as Bender Dagh Point. We would then stand a chance of picking them up, as it would be practicable to run a boat ashore under the lee of the reef. You quite understand?"

The rest of the officers signified assent.

"Very well: the sooner we get to work the better. Nor'west by west a quarter west ought to bring us in sight of the wreck. Now carry on."

The two whalers pulled almost neck and neck at half a dozen boats' lengths apart, while at a good cable's length astern, and quite invisible to the rest, followed the gigs.

At a quarter of the distance across the bay the boats began to feel the effect of the seas. Half-way the crested waves, broad on the port quarter, began to break over the gunwales. Two men were detailed to keep baling, but in spite of their efforts the *Hammerer's* whaler was in danger of being swamped. To keep on the course was to court destruction. It was only by watching the waves, and meeting the more menacing ones nearly bows on, that the frail craft was able to live

in the turmoil of angry water.

"Lumme! won't we have a job to clean our bloomin' rifles when we get back," muttered the "stroke" in tones loud enough for the Sub to hear.

Dick smiled grimly. It was a typical grumble of a British seaman. He paid no heed to the present danger; the possibility of not returning to the ship never occurred to him. He was anticipating the irksome task of removing the effects of salt water from his rifle and bayonet.

"See anything, Jones?" asked Dick of the bow-man, raising his voice to enable the man to hear above the roar of the elements.

The Bowman faced about and, shading his eyes, peered through the mirk. For a few moments he gazed steadily.

"Something on our starboard bow, sir," he reported, "but it may be a rock. Luff, sir, luff—there's a brute a-coming."

Farnworth tugged at the yoke-line, at the same time ordering the men to "back water, port—pull starboard!"

"Give way, all."

Forward dashed the whaler to meet the wall of water as near as possible. It seemed as if nothing could prevent the frail craft from being overwhelmed by the avalanche of foam. The oarsmen, "keeping their eyes in the boat", saw nothing of the danger. The midshipman gripped the tiller-lines tightly and set his teeth. Dick realized the peril, but with great self-control moved hardly a muscle of his face, although he fully expected to find himself and his boat's crew struggling for dear life in the water within the next few seconds.

Like a feather the boat's bows rose in the air as she began to climb the wall of water. It seemed as if the strenuous efforts of the rowers would be totally insufficient to enable her to mount the towering barrier. The Bowman, missing the resistance to his blade, collapsed in a heap on the thwart. Even in this moment of peril the Sub felt inclined to smile at the grotesque attitude of the unfortunate man.

Then, with less than half a dozen bucketfuls of water in her, the whaler hung irresolute on the crest of the wave, and commenced her rapid plunge down the other side.

Two more waves of less height followed in quick succession. Then in the ensuing "smooth", Farnworth steadied the boat on her course.

"That's her, sir!" sung out the Bowman, who had extricated himself from his undignified position. "Well on the starboard bow now, sir."

The man was right. It was the unfortunate trawler. She lay with a considerable list to port, with the waves breaking right over her. Her mast and funnel had gone by the board. It was too dark to see whether any of her crew remained.

But in the meanwhile what had happened to the *Tremendous's* whaler, for there was no sign of her? Had she, Dick wondered, been overwhelmed by the heavy breakers which had all but swamped his boat?

CHAPTER VII

The "Hammerer's" Whaler

Sub-lieutenant Crosthwaite was on the horns of a dilemma. His orders were to attempt the rescue of the crew of the mine-sweeper; he was also told to act in concert with the whaler of the *Tremendous*. The latter was nowhere in sight. Which ought he to do? Proceed to the wreck, or go in search of the missing boat?

He made up his mind quickly. The trawler, although badly damaged, did not appear to be breaking up. If any of her crew were on board, having survived the breakers thus far, they ought to be able to hold on a little longer. He would search for the other whaler, or at least communicate the news of her being missing to Lieutenant Bourne and leave the two gigs to take up the search.

"If she's capsized she'll drop dead to leeward," declared Midshipman Farnworth, referring to the lost boat. "We'll back in, sir; I think that will be the best way."

"Certainly," agreed Dick cordially. He realized that the midshipman knew what he was about. Under the circumstances it was the safest way.

Watching for an opportunity when a "smooth" occurred between the heavy crested seas, the midshipman contrived to get his boat's bows on to the general direction of the waves, which, owing to the shoaling of the depth, were almost on the point of breaking. A cauldron of foaming water stretched dead to leeward, and towards it the *Hammerer's* whaler was slowly backed, the men ready at the hurried word of command to pull ahead directly a particularly vicious breaker bore down.

Although a smart look-out was kept, no sign of the *Tremendous's* boat was to be seen. It was like looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack, for, although the outlines of the encircling cliffs could be discerned against the rain-laden sky, objects on the water would be most difficult to distinguish even at a comparatively short distance.

"This is as far as we dare go," remarked the Sub. "We'll be fairly in broken water if we drift in any farther. There's no sign of the boat and her crew."

Bidding the men "give way", Dick awaited developments with certain misgivings. His expectations were presently to be realized, for the rowers, already exhausted by their efforts, were powerless to make the boat gain a foot. For twenty minutes they stuck gamely to their oars, driving the long, narrow craft through the crested waves, yet, owing to the force of the wind and the send of the sea, it seemed impossible to gain an offing.

Meanwhile, all unbeknown to the *Hammerer's* whaler, the boat of which they were in search had accomplished her errand. The heavy waves that had accounted for the two whalers becoming separated had smashed three oars of the *Tremendous's* whaler. Before the spare ones could be substituted and the water baled out, the light craft had drifted many yards to leeward.

The Sub-lieutenant in charge, actuated by a sense of rivalry, took unnecessary risks in keeping his boat almost broadside on to the waves, merely turning her nose into the worst of the breakers.

Unseen and unheard, the boat under Crosthwaite's orders backed within fifty yards astern of her, and while the *Hammerer's* whaler was going to leeward in a vain attempt to find her consort, the object of her search came in sight of the wreck.

Boarding on the lee side, the Sub in charge of the *Tremendous's* whaler succeeded in getting the whole of the mine-sweeper's crew into his boat, and, dangerously overladen, the whaler began her bid for safety. More by good luck than by good management the party crossed the dangerous bay, and having fallen in with the two gigs, the rescued men were distributed between the boats.

"Seen anything of the *Hammerer's* whaler?" asked Lieutenant Bourne anxiously, for, until the transshipment of the major portion of the trawler's people was being effected, he was under the impression that Dick and his crew were following in the wake of the other boat.

The Sub-lieutenant had to reply that he had not.

Bourne did not give way to recriminations. It not a time for reproaches. Ordering a rocket to be fired, he led his little flotilla from under the lee of the reef and awaited a recognition of his signal.

"There's the gig signalling, sir!" exclaimed one of the seamen to Dick. "They'll be coming to look for us."

"Pity them if they did," thought the Sub grimly, as he groped for the flashing-lamp under the stern-sheets.

Holding the lamp well above his head, for owing to the erratic motion of the boat he was unable to stand up, Dick made the preparation signal—a series of short flashes. This was promptly answered, but from the fact that the light was frequently interrupted, the Sub knew that the intervening waves made the chances of an intelligible signal very remote.

"Close on a lee shore," he morsed. "Do not proceed to our assistance. Propose to beach boat and proceed to rendezvous by the beach."

Back came the reply:

"Am proceeding to your assistance."

"Hang it!" ejaculated Dick. "They've missed the 'Do not'. I'll try again."

Before he could get the lamp in position a ripple of flashes burst through the darkness, followed by the sharp crackle of musketry. Bullets began to fall perilously near to the boat.

"That's done it," continued Crosthwaite. "The light's drawn the enemy's fire."

"Do not proceed to our assistance; no assistance required," signalled the Sub, deliberately making a redundancy in order that there would be less possibility of a further misreading.

"I understand," came the reply in Morse; then the light vanished. Already it had shared the attention of the fire of the Turkish troops.

The Sub looked at the jaded expressions on the faces of his men. They were almost "done up". Clearly they could not row much longer.

"My lads!" he exclaimed. "We're in a tight corner, but we won't go under tamely. Back her in, and we'll see if we can't send those fellows to the right-about."

At the prospect of a scrap the boat's crew forgot their fatigue. Promptly they began to back the whaler towards the shore.

"Unship the rudder," ordered the Sub. "Two oars will be sufficient to give her way. The rest of you look to your small-arms. Keep the sight-protectors on your rifles until you're ashore."

One thing—a most important business—Dick did not forget to do. He hurled the signal-book over the side. Heavily weighted, it sank like a stone. Happen what may, the enemy would not gain possession of that highly important and confidential manual.

Carried at a great rate by wind and waves, the doomed whaler was not long in striking bottom. Her heel hit a rock with tremendous force, while her bows, lifted by a heavy wave, shot up clear of the water, throwing several of the crew off their thwarts. Then, surging broadside on, the boat was filled with the next wave and hurled on her side upon the beach.

Agilely, and without sustaining any injuries, the officers and men leapt clear of the boat, and struggling through the "undertow" as the wave receded from the beach, succeeded in gaining the shore. Instinctively they took cover and waited for orders.

The men found themselves on a broad, gently shelving beach interspersed by clusters of weather- and sea-worn rocks. Between the fringe of the breakers and the base of the cliffs was a distance of nearly fifty yards. The sea being practically tideless, there was no danger of being cut off by the water.

Two hundred feet or more above, the Turkish soldiers on the summit of the cliff were still blazing away in the supposed direction of the boats, which had now rowed well clear of the bullet-flecked patch of angry water. The landing of the *Hammerer's* whaler had been unnoticed by them in the darkness and confusion, while fortunately Dick did not precipitate matters by giving orders to his men to open fire.

For quite five minutes the whaler's crew kept under cover; till, finding that they were not the mark of the Ottoman fire, the Sub gave the word for the men to advance until they reached the base of the cliff.

"All present?" asked Dick. "Any man injured?"

"All correct, sir," replied the coxswain. "Two rifles are missing, but Job Trayner and Bill Symes brought the ammunition chest ashore."

"Well done!" exclaimed Crosthwaite.

It was indeed fortunate that, even in the midst of peril when the boat struck, the two seamen had had the courage and forethought to bring ashore the small teak case containing the small-arms ammunition; equally so that most of the men had secured their pouches, which, during their arduous efforts to gain headway, had been laid aside.

"Follow me, my lads!" said the Sub. "All being well, another half an hour will see us safely in the boats."

It was not easy going, for at every five or six yards a projecting ridge of rock had either to be skirted or surmounted—a task rendered doubly difficult by the darkness and the slippery state of the ground caused by the heavy downpour of rain.

Presently Dick came to an abrupt halt and held up his hand. The single line of men stopped, some gripping their rifles in anticipation of an attack.

The young officer found his progress barred by a small creek or gully that extended into a ravine, and evidently received a river or stream, for there was a considerable amount of water running towards the sea.

It was imperative that this inlet should be crossed, but the Sub hesitated: not that he was loath to attempt to swim the stretch of intervening water, for already he was soaking owing to the dash through the surf. The nature of the opposite bank was the difficulty, for as far as he could make out in the darkness, the stream had worked the rocks smooth, and a ledge of stone quite five feet above the surface offered a wellnigh impassable barrier to a swimmer to draw himself clear of the water and surmount.

"I'll see what it is like, sir," volunteered Trayner. "Maybe it's not so bad as it looks."

The man lowered himself into the water and struck out. By dint of swimming obliquely upstream he contrived to gain the other side almost opposite the place where the others waited. Both up and down stream he swam for a considerable distance, till the Sub cautiously ordered him to return.

"Felt like a mouse in half a bucket of water, sir," explained Trayner. "Sides are as smooth as a ship's sides—p'r'aps worse. I'll have another shot a little way up the creek."

"You've done enough for the present, Trayner," said Dick, noticing the strained look about the man's eyes. "Two of you work away to the left and two to the right. Return as smartly as you can, and report."

The men went off, leaving Dick and the main party literally to cool their heels by the side of the baffling gully. Presently the pair who had gone towards the opening of the creek returned with the information that there was a shallow bar where the stream joined the sea, and that it was easy to ford.

Before they had finished their report the other two reappeared.

"There's a way over about a couple of hundred yards up, sir," announced one. "There's a path on either side of this gully, and, what's more, the one on this side goes up towards the top of the cliff. Looks as if it's used a goodish bit, sir. If I might make so bold as to suggest, sir——"

"Carry on, Webb."

"There's a wholesome type o' craft lying alongside—wholesome as boats along these parts, sir. She's felucca-rigged. P'r'aps if we could cut her out——"

"It's dead to windward, and as there's a bar at the entrance we couldn't get her across in heavy weather," objected Crosthwaite. "We'll push on, or we'll find the boats gone when we arrive at the rendezvous."

Traversing the fifty yards of rocky beach, the men reached the spot where the bar crossed the entrance. Here the danger arose of being spotted by the Turks on the cliff, for even in the darkness the milk-white foam showed up distinctly and made a bad background to the moving seamen. Yet one thing was in their favour. The attention of the troops seemed to be wholly directed upon a supposed target in the centre of the bay.

"One at a time, men; don't——"

Dick broke off as the giant beam of a powerful search-light flung its long arm athwart the bay. The Turks, well supplied by modern accessories of war, had brought up a portable search-light mounted on a motor-lorry, the wheels of which were specially adapted to traversing difficult ground.

The Sub realized that it was neck or nothing. If his party did not cross at once while the beam trying to pick up the object at which the riflemen had been firing so long, the search-light would be trained upon the beach, so that in the event of a landing being effected, the Turks could make their dispositions accordingly. On the other hand, the search-light would reveal the presence of the three boats at the rendezvous, with the result that Lieutenant Bourne would have to push off without waiting for the crew of the *Hammerer's* whaler.

Undiscovered, the boat's crew succeeded in wading along the bar, frequently waist-deep in foam. From this point the remaining portion of the beach presented but little difficulty. There were obstructions in the shape of rocks and little streams making their way to the sea, but nothing of a serious nature. After three-quarters of an hour's smart marching the men arrived at the rendezvous on the under the lee of Bender Dagh Point.

The boats had left. Dick and his party were stranded upon a hostile shore.

CHAPTER VIII

A Prisoner of War

The men took their misfortune with the utmost composure. Some of them exchanged witticisms, regarding the business in the light of having gone ashore on leave and having missed the "liberty boat". One thing they regretted was not being able to smoke, since the glimmer of a match might draw the enemy's fire; so they "stood easy" under the shelter of an overhanging rock and chewed "Navy Plug", while the Sub and the midshipman discussed the situation.

"Bourne has evidently come to the conclusion that the boat's crew have lost the number of their mess," remarked Dick. "When one comes to consider matters, it is not surprising." And he pointed to the turmoil of broken water in Yenikeui Bay. "It is just possible that the Admiral will send a destroyer to investigate as soon as it gets daylight; but the question is, how are they going to pick us up under fire?"

"We can only hang on, sir," replied Farnworth. "Perhaps the Turks will clear out at sunrise, and we will be able to see if the boat's capable of floating. Should the sea moderate, it ought to be easy."

"I don't believe in hanging on," said Dick. "I think the wind's veering. It was almost due south, now it's sou'-east. Unless I'm much mistaken it will settle down to east'ard, and the sea on the other side of the bay will go down considerably."

"And then, sir?"

"We'll collar that craft our fellows discovered in the creek. From their accounts I should imagine it to be a felucca. They're fine, weatherly craft, and with the wind abeam she ought to skip over the bar like greased lightning. I'll get the men on the move."

Under the circumstances Sub-lieutenant Crosthwaite did not believe in giving orders without explaining to the boat's crew his intentions. Calling the men to attention, he briefly outlined his plan of operation. Were it not for the necessity for silence, the seamen would have cheered; instead, they showed by the grim expression on their faces that they would willingly follow their young officer, and trust implicitly to his good judgment.

"That's a blessing!" ejaculated Farnworth as the hostile search-light was switched off. "Those fellows evidently have come to the conclusion that they've been had."

Dick was not so sanguine. It might be possible that the projector required adjustment, and the beam had to be shut off in consequence. But after an interval of five minutes, during which time there were no signs of activity on the part of the Turks—for their rifle-fire had died away shortly after the arrival of the boat's crew at the rendezvous—he concluded that it would be fairly safe to order the party to retrace their steps.

The Sub's prognostics concerning the change of wind had become verified. It now blew directly into the faces of the party, the stinging rain adding to their discomforts. Already the small streams through which they had previously waded with the water a little above their ankles were now more than knee-deep, and momentarily increasing in volume and impetuosity.

Suddenly, while climbing over an exceptionally slippery ledge of rock, Dick's feet slipped from under him. Making a vain and frantic attempt to obtain a grip, he fell a distance of six or seven feet, his boots clattering on the stones. Before he could rise he was astounded to hear a challenge.

Twenty paces from him could be distinguished the figures of about a score of Turkish troops.

The British seamen acted promptly. They realized that now there was no going back. Over the ledge they dropped, and, as Dick regained his feet, the men waited only to fix bayonets, then with their officers charged the foe.

They were greeted by a ragged volley that did no damage, most of the bullets ringing overhead. Not caring to wait for cold steel that glittered ominously in the dim light, the Ottomans broke and fled.

As they did so they were greeted by a fusillade from others of their countrymen on the beach and from the summit of the cliff. In the succession of lurid flashes Dick's eye caught sight of a field-piece partly concealed by a breastwork of stones.

Calling for his men to empty their magazines in rapid volleys that completely deceived the enemy as to the number that opposed them, the Sub led the boat's crew to the attack.

With a rousing British cheer that outvoiced the rattle of musketry the impetuous seamen obeyed. A tough tussle, an interchange of bayonet thrusts, and the Turks momentarily melted away, leaving the field-piece in the hands of the meagre boat's crew.

"What shall we do with this 'ere gun, sir?" a stalwart bluejacket. "Slew 'er round and give 'em a dose?"

Before the Sub could reply, the search-light flooded the scene with its dazzling rays. Almost simultaneously came the tap-tap-tap of a Maxim, and a sheaf of bullets whizzing overhead and splitting the rocks behind with fragments of nickel.

"Disable the gun!" shouted Dick. "Take the trail lever, one of you."

With a quick movement the Sub opened the breech-block. A sailor seized the lever with which the Turkish Krupps are trained in a horizontal plane. Poising the steel bar above his head, the man brought it down with tremendous force upon the out-swung piece of mechanism. The

interrupted thread, deeply dented by the blow, was rendered useless, while the breech-block itself, partly wrenched from its massive hinges, was for the time being incapable of service.

Already three of the small party were shot down. To retire was to court annihilation in the form of a scythe-like hail of Maxim bullets that swept the ridge behind: a barrier that had to be surmounted if escape were contemplated in that direction. To remain where they were meant being under a galling fire from the cliffs, and with very little natural protection from the surrounding ground. A third solution remained: to advance and sell their lives dearly.

Thrusting his revolver into his holster, Dick picked up the rifle and bayonet of one of the fallen men and shouted to the party to advance.

Taking full advantage of every little bit of natural cover the men pressed forward, firing as rapidly as they could recharge and empty their magazines.

Still uncertain of the number that opposed them, and thinking that the attack was part of a landing in force, the Turks gave way until their retrograde movement was checked by fresh bodies of troops hastening to repel the threatened assault.

Into the midst of the scene of confusion—for Turk was fighting Turk in the opposing movement of the disorganized throng—Dick and his handful of men hurled themselves.

Partly dazzled by the search-light which was playing obliquely upon the mêlée from the high ground, the Sub set about him like a young Berserk. A blow from the butt-end of a Turkish rifle shattered his bayonet close to the hilt. Gripping his rifle by the muzzle end of the barrel, Dick swung it right and left, clearing a gap in the dense ranks of his assailants.

Out of the corner of his eye he caught sight of young Farnworth putting up a stiff fight with three tall and muscular Turks, while a few feet away from the midshipman was a German officer in the act of levelling his revolver, and awaiting an opportunity of firing at the plucky British lad.

Down swung Dick's rifle, purposely missing his antagonist's guard. Shortening the weapon, the Sub dashed it into the Turk's face, then drawing his revolver, fired three shots in rapid succession at the fez-bedecked Teuton.

"That's settled your little game, you brute," thought Dick savagely, as the German pitched forward on his face. Hitherto the Sub had fought for fighting's sake. He bore no particular animosity against any of his Moslem antagonists, but the sight of the German standing out of immediate danger and awaiting an opportunity to coolly pick off the midshipman, directly he was not masked by his immediate foes, had aroused Dick's deepest ire.

When he looked again young Farnworth was no longer standing. The lad had been overcome by the numerical superiority of his attackers.

Again and again Dick fired, till the hammer of his revolver falling with a dull click told him that the weapon was empty. Hurling it at the near-most of his foes, the Sub stooped to regain his rifle. As he did so a stalwart Bashi Bazouk struck him a heavy blow on the head with the butt-end of his gun, and without a groan Dick fell within a yard of the body of his brother officer.

It was broad daylight when the Sub recovered his senses. He found himself lying in a large, whitewashed room, the walls of which were of immense thickness and pierced on one side by four narrow pointed windows, through which the sun was pouring fiercely.

He was stretched upon a low bed. Close beside him was Midshipman Farnworth, his head almost enveloped in bandages.

The only other occupant of the room a tall, sinewy man dressed in the uniform of a Turkish seaman—jumper and trousers very similar to those worn by the British tar, and a dark-red fez. He had discarded his boots and wore a pair of scarlet soft-leather slippers.

"How can do?" he asked, seeing that Dick bestirring himself.

"Where am I?" demanded the Sub.

"Plis'ner of war. You in Fort Medjidieh. Me good man. Help Englis officer. How can do?"

"Get me something to drink then," said Dick, for his throat was burning like a limekiln.

"No beer, no have got," declared the Turk imperturbably.

"Confound the fellow! He evidently imagines that British subjects drink nothing but beer," thought the Sub. "No, I don't want beer," he aloud; "bring me something cool—cold—not hot, savvy?"

"Me—Ahmed Djezzar—go. Me your fliend," announced the man; and placing his hand over his heart and bowing subserviently, he noiselessly glided out of the room, locking the door as soon as he was outside.

"Rummy proceedings, 'pon my soul," soliloquized Dick. "The fellow says I'm a prisoner of war. I suppose he's right; but there's one thing to be said: up to the present they have treated me pretty decently. The Turks are streets above the Germans in the way they handle their prisoners. I wonder what the game is?"

Taking into consideration the dirty and untidy habits of the Turks, the room was fairly clean and presentable. If his informant was right, Dick Crosthwaite was now in a portion of one of the fortresses actually on The Narrows, and roughly twenty-one miles from Yenikeui. During the interval between the times of his having been rendered unconscious in the affray on the beach and of recovering his senses, he had been carried over hilly roads running practically parallel to the Asiatic shores of the Dardanelles.

Why his captors should have gone to this trouble he knew not. He could only come to the conclusion that, fearing a landing in force to the south of Kum Kale, they had removed their prisoners to quarters where for the time being they were not likely to be recaptured.

Propping himself up by his elbow Dick listened intently. To his intense disappointment he heard no sounds of guns—not even a distant rumble. Did it mean the operations had been abandoned?

He began wondering what had happened to the rest of the boat's crew; why his captors should have detailed a Turkish bluejacket to attend the two wounded officers; and why Ahmed Djezzar had so vehemently expressed himself as being a friend. These and a hundred other thoughts flashed through his mind, until his reveries were interrupted by the reappearance of the Turk bearing a metal tray on which was a brass cup and a jug filled with sherbet water.

Dick drank eagerly. As he did so a faint suspicion that the liquid might be poisoned entered his brain, only to be quickly dismissed, since he recognized that if his captors had wished to dispose of him they had already had ample opportunities. Nevertheless the sherbet water was drugged, and it had the result of sending the Sub to sleep for several hours.

He awoke, feeling considerably refreshed, to find that young Farnworth was sitting up in bed and regarding him with eagerness.

"Thought you'd never wake up, sir," he remarked. "You've been sleeping heavily for at least twelve hours."

"How are you feeling?" asked Dick.

"Pretty rotten," admitted the midshipman. "Head feels like a block of wood. But it isn't that: it's the beastly knowledge that we are off the fun for the time being."

"You put up a jolly stiff fight, anyhow."

"I did my best," replied Farnworth modestly; "but it's beastly humiliating being collared like this, and not knowing how things are going. There's a Turkish bluejacket hanging about——"

"I know," said Dick. "A fellow who made a point of stating that he was our friend. Why I can't make out."

"He tells me we've had a proper set-back," continued the midshipman wearily. "Of course I don't know whether he's telling the truth or not, but he swears that the Turks have captured one of our submarines."

"Rot!" ejaculated Crosthwaite derisively. "Captured? Not a bit of it. It's a lie."

"Anyway there was a lot of heavy firing about five hours ago. It only lasted twenty minutes. The fellow swears that the submarine was stranded, and that they've captured officers and crew. The Turks hope to get the vessel off and take her to Constantinople."

Dick looked serious. He had seen enough of war to know that often the improbable does happen, yet he could not understand how a British submarine could have been taken. Why should it have got into shoal water at all? he wondered.

Just then Ahmed entered, accompanied by a "hakim" or native doctor. The latter, although unable to speak English, could converse fluently in French, a language with which both the Sub and the midshipman were well acquainted.

Deftly the doctor unbound Dick's head and examined the contused scalp-wound. Then he did a like office to Farnworth, chatting affably the while on all kinds of subjects, the war excepted. Try as he would, without going straight to the point, Dick could not bring the doctor to say a word relating to the hostilities.

"You are both progressing nicely," he declared. "By the day after to-morrow you will be fit to go out and take the air."

No sooner had the medical man left than Ahmed took up his parable:

"Me want to help Englis officers," he said. "Me good Ottoman and no like the Germans. We fight. Why? Because they make us. All fault of Young Turks. German officers, they bad mans. Some time I shoot one in de back."

He paused to watch the result of his pro-British declaration. Finding that his listeners showed no signs of enthusiasm over his plans for ridding the world of at least one German officer, Ahmed continued:

"Me know plenty Englis officers, when dey was in the Ottoman Navy. All gone now—hard cheese. Why you laugh?"

"I was only smiling at your wonderful knowledge of the English language," replied Farnworth.

"Yaas—wonerful, dat is so. Now I tell you dis; de German General, von Sanders, ordered you plis'ners to be sent to Skutari. Telim Pasha, he say 'no'. Telim Pasha friend of Englis and of Ahmed Djezzar. When Englis army come: how many soldiers?"

Ahmed raised his eyebrows inquiringly. The Sub shook his head.

"I don't know," he replied shortly.

"P'laps twenty tousand?"

"I haven't the faintest idea."

For a brief instant Ahmed showed signs of disappointment.

"Dey come soon?" he asked.

"I cannot tell," replied Dick, beginning to feel nettled by the fellow's inquisitiveness. "Now, clear out; we want to have a rest."

The man obeyed. As before he locked the door after him. Directly the door clicked Dick sprang swiftly and noiselessly out of bed, crossed the room, and placed his ear to the keyhole. Hearing nothing, he peered through the narrow slit; then with a grim smile on his face he returned to his bed, at the same time holding up a warning finger to check the mystified midshipman's enquiry.

"Hello! There's a sea-plane!" exclaimed Dick about a quarter of an hour later. He hastened to one of the windows, while Farnworth, walking unsteadily from the effects of his injuries, took up his stand at an adjoining one.

The whirr of the aerial propellers grew louder and louder. The Turkish soldiers, lolling about in the courtyard within the fort, overcame their lethargy sufficiently to raise their heads and follow the course of the aeroplane.

Presently it passed almost overhead, proceeding in a south-westerly direction. It was flying low—at about two hundred feet. On the under side of the main plane were two red crescents—the distinguishing marks of the Turkish air-craft.

Hearing the whirr of the blades, other soldiers hurried from the buildings. Amongst them were two German officers.

The latter waited until the sea-plane was out of sight; then, allowing their swords to clank noisily over the stones, they walked towards the opposite side of the quadrangle, the Turkish soldiers standing stiffly at attention as they did so.

At that moment someone hailed them.

Turning on their heels the officers retraced their steps. Curiosity prompted Dick to crane his head to follow their movements. Not altogether to his surprise he discovered that the owner of the peremptory voice was the self-styled Ahmed Djezzar. In spite of being in the uniform of a Turkish bluejacket the two Germans saluted.

"No luck," he reported, speaking in German—a language that, after many mentally and bodily painful hours at school and a subsequent "roasting" at Osborne and Dartmouth, Dick could follow, with comparative ease. "No luck. The English swine do not seem communicative. I'll try them again; then, if that fails, we'll take other measures."

CHAPTER IX

In Captivity

"You were wondering what I was doing just now," Dick.

"When you tiptoed to the door?" asked Farnworth.

"Yes. I couldn't explain at the time, because friend Ahmed had his ear glued to the keyhole. He's not listening now. He's just had two German officers kow-towing to him."

"Eh?" ejaculated the midshipman incredulously.

"Fact! I had my suspicions, and now they are fully confirmed. The fellow's name is no more Ahmed Djeddar than mine is. He's a German. You noticed he was very persistent in asking questions about the British Expeditionary Force in the Dardanelles?"

"Yes, sir; and you jolly well boomed him off. He didn't appear to like it."

"He's got some infernal scheme under way. He's just told the other fellows, who are evidently inferior in rank to him in spite of his rig as a Turkish bluejacket, that he hasn't been at all successful at pumping us, up to the present, but that he means to have another shot at it. Failing this, he hints at strong measures, so we must be prepared to undergo a little discomfort."

"What do you propose to do, sir?"

"Let him have it hot if he starts his 'Me friend of English officers'. This room would be all right for half a dozen rounds. I think I could alter the shape of his figurehead. Hello, there's that seaplane returning, and, by Jove, they're firing!"

The officers rushed to the windows once more. Although they could not see immediately overhead, they had a fairly comprehensive view of the sky from west through north to north-east.

The courtyard was now filled with Turkish soldiers and sailors, all roused at the noise of the approaching air-craft. Most of them had their rifles and were preparing to open fire, while upon the broad rampart on the far side men were making ready with a couple of anti-aircraft guns.

"One of our sea-planes in pursuit, I think," observed Farnworth excitedly.

"I think you're right. Hello—here's the Turkish aeroplane."

The monoplane was travelling fast in a northerly direction. The pilot was not visible, but the observer had faced about and was firing with a rifle at the pursuer, which had not yet come within the British officers' range of vision.

Even as Dick and his companion watched, a bullet cut through a pair of tension wires to the right-hand main plane. The sea-plane started to bank, slipped, and fell sideways like a wounded bird. More and more it tilted till both pilot and observer were flung from their seats.

Frantically grasping the thin air they dropped with ever-increasing velocity, till their line of descent was hidden by the intervening buildings; but the officers distinctly heard two separate thuds as the bodies struck the earth.

With its propeller still revolving rapidly, the disabled monoplane described erratic curves. Suddenly the Turkish soldiers bolted for dear life, as the uncontrollable air-craft plunged almost vertically downwards into the courtyard. With a fearful crash it landed twenty yards from the window at which the Sub and his companion had taken stand. The litter of framework and canvas trailed on the ground like the gear of a dismayed racing yacht; then, as the petrol took fire, a column of flame rose fifty feet in the air.

"There she is!" almost shouted the midshipman.

Less than two hundred feet above Fort Medjidieh glided a large biplane. The motor had been switched off, for the crew had vol-planed down from a far greater height in order to make sure of their work.

"A Frenchman!" ejaculated Crosthwaite, for the tricolours on the under side of the main planes were clearly visible. "Hope he'll drop a couple of heavy bombs upon these ragamuffins. I'd be quite willing to the risk of any pieces hitting me."

The courtyard was now deserted, but from the doors and windows abutting on the open space, red-fezzed Turks peeped timorously, some of them plucking up courage to fire at the daring sea-plane. As for the crews of the anti-aircraft guns, they scurried off without letting fly a single round. The two German officers who had been conversing with the so-called Ahmed tried to restrain them, but in vain. One of the officers then began to train the nearest gun, but he, too, thought better of it, for holding his sword to prevent himself being tripped up, he ignominiously ran for shelter.

By this time the biplane had restarted its motor and was banking steeply. None of the shots fired at it had taken effect, nor did the aeroplane attempt to drop any bombs. Apparently its mission had been to chase the inquisitive Turkish monoplane, and to observe the nature of the defences of Fort Medjidieh. Having thrice circled over the hostile position with contemptuous

indifference to the desultory fusillade, it returned towards its base.

Directly it turned tail the Turkish infantrymen and artillerymen issued from their shelters in swarms, and for five minutes—long after the French air-craft was out of range—a terrific waste of ammunition testified to the tardy zeal of the Ottoman soldiery.

During this time Dick saw nothing of Ahmed. The Teuton—for such he was—had made himself scarce. Nor did he put in an appearance during the rest of the day, the evening meal being brought in by a Nubian.

After breakfast on the following day the British officers were taken out for exercise under the escort of a file of soldiers. Their walk was limited to the extent of the courtyard, so that the Sub had no opportunity of taking mental notes of the details of the interior of the fort, for the heavy guns commanding The Narrows were hidden from sight by the barrack quarters.

Twenty minutes were allowed them. The Sub was able to smoke, some excellent cigarettes being given him by the corporal in charge of the party. At the expiration of the time the prisoners were marched back to their quarters, where they found Ahmed, unruffled and obsequious, awaiting them.

"Well, Ahmed," said Dick, with well-assumed jocularly, "we didn't see much of you yesterday. I thought perhaps you had been sent to take the captured British submarine to Constantinople."

The man looked completely taken aback. He suppressed an exclamation the commencement of which sounded remarkably like a German oath.

"You have been told by dese odder Ottomans then? What dey tell you, eh?"

Something in the fellow's tone gave Crosthwaite his cue.

"So you didn't get the submarine after all?" he asked.

Ahmed shrugged his shoulders.

"You know too much," he said. "I must find out de soldier what tell you about de Englis sailors who broke de wreck to bits, so no good to Ottoman."

"Look here, Ahmed," continued the Sub. "You asked me a question the other day. Now I want to ask you one. What happened to the rest of my men when we were taken prisoners?"

The man looked suspiciously at his questioner.

"Me no tell," he said slowly, "No can do. P'lap I tell if you say how many Englistmans come to fight us on land. P'laps if dey too many we Ottomans no fight. Me no want more fight, an' plenty odders no fight."

Dick was sitting on the of his during the conversation. Now he stood up, erect and determined.

"Look here, Herr Major," he said sternly, hazarding the German's rank since the two captains had saluted the pseudo-Turkish seaman. "Don't try to bamboozle us. It can't be done. You haven't the pluck to sail under your own colours: you must needs pretend you're a Turk—and a precious rotten pretence it is. You told your pals you were going to have one more attempt. You've done so, and made a horrible mess of it. Now try your other plan; but take it from me, you've a couple of Englishmen to deal with. Clear out!"

Too astounded for words, the German could only look sheepishly at the man who had given him a "dressing-down". His mouth worked as if he were trying to utter some malediction. Then, cowed by the Sub's bearing and obviously frightened at Dick's clenched fists, he backed towards the door.

On the threshold he paused, with his hand on the key.

"Swine, English swine!" he shouted. "You'll be sorry for this."

Amid the scornful laughter of Dick and the midshipman the German slammed the door and locked it.

"That's done it," remarked Dick. "Now for reprisals, I suppose."

"He was in a tear!" said Farnworth, with a laugh at the thought of the fellow's discomfiture. "But, by Jove, sir, how you kidded him over that submarine business!"

"It was quite a fluke," explained Dick. "I had my doubts about the capture of one of our submarines, but evidently one has been lost. Naturally our fellows wouldn't let a thing like that remain in the hands of the enemy, and by that Teuton's admission it is pretty certain that we've destroyed the craft to prevent her being made use of by the Turks. Hello, the fun's going to commence!"

This remark was caused by the sounds of the tramp of feet in the corridor. The door was unlocked, and a party of Turkish soldiers, headed by a German in the uniform of a captain in the Ottoman service, burst unceremoniously into the room.

Not a word was spoken. The German pointed to various articles and to the door. Acting upon this mute order the soldiers removed the British officers' beds, chairs, and other pieces of furniture.

A couple of lithe Turks seized each of the prisoners and stripped them of their uniforms. In five minutes Dick and his companion were left standing in nondescript garments in the midst of a bare room.

"Part of the programme, I suppose," commented the Sub. "Meagre rations and a Spartan existence. I hope they won't chuck in the bastinado as an extra."

That night the prisoners slept on straw, their supper consisting of rice and cold water. It was part of the policy of the German officer, who, under the mistaken impression that an Englishman exists simply for the sake of eating roast beef, thought to compel the Sub and his companion to betray the nature of the operations against the Dardanelles.

Five long weeks passed in this tedious waiting. During this time the prisoners had ample opportunities of watching the Turkish soldiers drilling under their German officers and non-coms. The latter drove the Ottomans almost beyond the limits of endurance. Blows and kicks were showered upon the Kismet-imbued Turks, who, possibly regarding such treatment as necessary for efficiency, betrayed no signs of resentment.

Another thing the Sub noticed was the supremely contemptuous indifference the German officers paid to marks of respect. They would swagger across the courtyard, the Turkish troops saluting with an alertness that vied with the smartness of Prussian troops on the parade-ground at Potsdam, yet the officers hardly ever condescended to return the compliment.

During the whole of that time the prisoners once caught sight of the pseudo Ahmed. On that occasion he had discarded his Turkish bluejacket's clothes and was rigged out in the uniform of a German major of artillery. A number of field-guns had just arrived at the fort, and the major was in charge of the battery. It seemed as if the German instructors, knowing the terrific damage done by the British naval guns against permanent forts, and also with the lessons of Liège and Namur fresh in their minds, intended to rely not upon guns of position, but upon powerful mobile weapons, for the defence of the historic waterway.

The captives were no longer allowed to take exercise in the open air. Instead, they regularly practised simple Swedish drill in order to keep their muscles in good condition, for, as Farnworth observed, "one never knew what might turn up". In spite of their meagre fare they contrived to keep fairly fit and active.

"Guns!" exclaimed Farnworth one morning.

"Target practice," added Dick; but after waiting a minute he added; "No; by Jove, it's the real thing! We're having another go at hammering at Turkey's gate."

For three hours the firing continued with unabated violence. Fort Medjidieh, being out of the scope of the operations, made no attempt to use its guns, but the field-battery went off in mad haste.

At length the interchange of gunnery ceased. Towards evening the battery returned, minus one gun, while several of the artillerymen bore traces of being badly knocked about. From six to sunset wounded Turkish troops began to pour into the fort, some hardly able to walk. Yet no attempt was made to alleviate their pain. They were simply ordered to their barrack-rooms, and had to rely upon their own efforts and those of their comrades to attend to their wounds.

As soon as it grew dark, Dick and his companion in misfortune threw themselves upon their straw beds. Being unprovided with lights, they generally turned in at sunset and talked until overtaken by sleep.

They had not been lying down for more than ten minutes when the door opened, and the German Major, accompanied by a subaltern, entered. They had evidently come straight from the scene of action, for they wore long grey coats bespattered with mud and the yellow stains of lyddite, their faces were grimed with smoke and dust. Each wore a sword under his coat, with the hilt projecting through a vertical slit. The Major also carried a revolver in a holster slung across his left shoulder, and counterbalanced by a sling to which was attached a case containing a pair of binoculars. They were accompanied by a soldier bearing a lamp. This he set down on the floor, and, having saluted, left the room. The subaltern locked the door after him.

"Good evening, gentlemen," began the Major in good English which contrasted with the jargon which he had used in his rôle of a Turkish seaman. "We have occasion to do business."

"But not with us," added Dick readily.

"I think so," corrected the Major. "And you will be glad of it when you hear our proposal. Perhaps you are unaware that to-day the French landed at Kum Kale. We quickly sent them to the right-about, and they had to re-embark in disorder. Unfortunately for us, during the operations two Turkish officers of high rank were taken prisoners and conveyed on board a man-of-war that was covering the re-embarkation of the French troops. I trust I have made myself clear?"

"Proceed, then," said Dick.

"The loss of these two officers was duly reported to Turkish head-quarters, and Enver Bey immediately telegraphed that we should offer two British in exchange. Would you be willing to sign an undertaking, in the event of your being released, not to take up arms against the Allies?"

"That we would not," declared the Sub emphatically.

"I thought you would not. A true soldier—whether he be in the Navy or Army—would never do so. Still, the idea occurred to me: a thousand pardons. Now here is a statement for the British Admiral. All you have to do is for both of you to sign your names and add your rank in the space provided, and the exchange will be carried out promptly."

The Major produced a folded paper from the breast pocket of his greatcoat, while the subaltern held out a fountain pen.

"Why don't you sign?" asked the German.

"One minute," said Dick. "The writing is in Turkish characters."

"That is quite evident," remarked the Major suavely; "but that does not alter the text of the communication."

"You ought to know that all correspondence between belligerents is in French, Herr Major," said the Sub. "Under the circumstances I decline to have any truck with it."

"Truck?" asked the German in a puzzled tone. "What does that mean?"

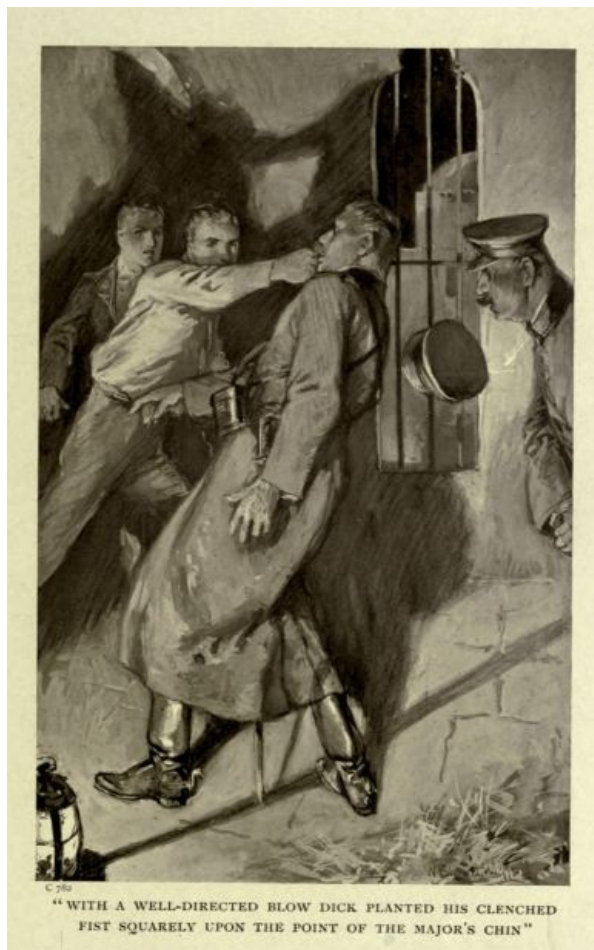
"That I won't sign."

"Then there are other English officers who would be only too pleased to do so," suggested the Major tentatively.

"It's my opinion you're trying another of your dirty tricks," continued Dick. "No, don't get excited," he added, as the German's hand flew to his sword-hilt. "That proves what I say. I think we may as well come to an understanding."

The German backed and said a few words to his companion. It was enough to confirm Dick's suspicions, for the subaltern also laid his hand upon his sword.

With a well-directed blow the Sub planted his clenched fist squarely upon the point of the Major's chin. With hardly a sound he fell senseless upon the pile of straw.



**"WITH A WELL-DIRECTED BLOW DICK PLANTED HIS CLENCHED
FIST SQUARELY UPON THE POINT OF THE MAJOR'S CHIN"**

Out flashed the other German's sword. Rashly he raised the blade to deliver a cut. Had he used the point the result might have been different, for before the blow could fall the stalwart British officer gripped him round the waist, then with a sudden heave threw him headlong upon the floor. The back of his head came in contact with the stone paving, and with a groan he lost consciousness.

"Buck up, Farnworth!" exclaimed Dick. "Pull that fellow's coat off and see how it fits you. We'll borrow these gentlemen's uniforms and see what happens."

CHAPTER X

A Bid for Freedom

"By Jove, Farnworth, I little thought that I should have to undergo the humiliation of wearing this shameful uniform!" exclaimed Dick, as, attired in the tunic, greatcoat, trousers, and long boots of the German Major, he disdainfully shook himself. Circumstances compelled him to buckle on the sword, but the binoculars he, somewhat rashly, discarded as an encumbrance. "Nearly ready? Farnworth, I'm not paying you a compliment when I say you look a proper swaggering Prussian officer of the von Forstner type with that insipid little moustache of yours. It's my beard that worries me. Hello! Good business! Here's a pair of pocket scissors in this rascal's tunic. You might clip off my ragged whiskers as close as you possibly can—leave the moustache. Hurry for all you're worth, for time's precious!"

The midshipman set to work with a will to remove the six weeks' growth of beard from his superior officer's face, for during the period of incarceration they had been unable to shave.

Farnworth stood back a pace and surveyed his handiwork in the upslanting rays of the lamp set upon the floor.

"Oh, my maiden aunt, sir!" ejaculated Farnworth. "You look absolutely 'It'—von Kluck and von Hindenburg rolled into one."

The Sub smiled at the way in which the midshipman had "got his own back".

"Let's hope so for the next few hours," he remarked. "Now, to prevent mistakes, we'll gag and lash up these two minions of the Kaiser. Take their handkerchiefs and tear them in halves. That's right; now set our old friend Ahmed up, while I prop the fat subaltern against him. When our resources are limited we must needs go to work methodically and sparingly."

The two unconscious men were propped up back to back. The right arm of the Major was lashed to the left arm of the subaltern just above the elbows, and the former's left to the right arm of the junior officer. The halves of the second handkerchief were used to gag the senseless men.

"How about their legs, sir?" asked Farnworth.

"We'll pass a strip round them. That old belt which for the last six weeks has been an inferior substitute for my braces will do. That's done it."

The two Germans were now lying full length on the ground back to back. To all appearances they were securely trussed up, but even then the midshipman was not satisfied.

"I've my old belt," he announced. "Couldn't we trice their feet up and make them to that window-bar? It would puzzle the world's champion contortionist to wriggle free then, I fancy."

"Very good," assented Dick. "We'll heave together. My word, they are a weight!"

The sill of the long, narrow window was within eighteen inches of the ground, while the whole length of the aperture was furnished with three vertical iron bars, additionally secured at mid-length by a short cross-bar.

Passing the second belt between the turns round the ankles of the two Germans, Farnworth tied the other end to the lowermost part of the middle bar by means of a clove-hitch. It was thus impossible for the bound and gagged men to regain their feet without assistance.

"Now we'll chance our luck," said Dick. "When we cross the courtyard I'll jabber to you in German, and you'll reply 'Ja, ja!' to everything I say. Ten to one the Turks won't twig my rotten rendering of this tongue-twisting jargon, but that won't matter. If we spoke English they might smell a rat, for a good many Turks have a smattering of it. By the by, I'll take charge of that document which our old friend asked us to sign. I'm curious to know what it all means."

Unlocking the door, Dick and the midshipman unhesitatingly stepped out into the corridor. The passage was deserted. Relocking the door and thrusting the key into the pocket of his greatcoat, the Sub, accompanied by his companion, walked noisily along the corridor, allowing his sword to clank loudly upon the stones. This style of "sabre-rattling" he knew from observation to be one of the chief characteristics of the German officer in the Ottoman service.

After traversing about twenty yards the two officers came to a broader passage running at right angles to the former. The turning to the right, Dick knew, led to the courtyard. It was dimly lighted. Nearly a score of Turkish soldiers were squatting Oriental fashion on the stones, some smoking, most of them engaged in mending clothes, and all were talking rapidly.

Through the crush Crosthwaite and Farnworth made their way, the Turks backing against the wall in obvious fear of their supposed taskmasters. At the entrance stood a soldier on guard. Upon hearing the officers approach, he drew himself up and saluted. Not for one moment did he show any signs of suspicion, a circumstance that gave Dick additional confidence. His one dread was that they might meet with some of the German officers, and be held up by some trivial question in an attempt at conversation.

Fortunately the square was practically deserted. Half a dozen artillerymen bent double under loads of blankets and accoutrements were proceeding in single file from one store to another, while on the flat roof of one side of the barrack buildings stood a sentry in charge of the pair of anti-aircraft guns. Away to the right a search-light was slowly playing upon the waters of the Dardanelles, while the sky was illuminated by the reflected glare of dozens of other search-lights upon the sides of The Narrows.

Dick led the way to a large stone arch, which, he knew, communicated with the open country, for through it the battery of field-artillery had departed and returned. The wall on either side was protected by a thick wall of sand-bags, evidently placed there as the result of bitter experience, when the British and French 12-inch shells came falling obliquely from the sky.

The archway was nearly twenty paces in length. About midway, and on opposite sides, were small doors. They were open, and disclosed long galleries lighted by lanterns of a similar type to those used in magazines on board ship in pre-electricity days. Along the side passage ran a pair of narrow-gauge rails, while just within one of the doors stood a couple of trucks, each carrying a large locomotive torpedo fitted with a war-head.

Dick came to an abrupt halt. Even in the midst of his bid for freedom his professional instinct would not let the opportunity pass. These sinister weapons, he knew, could not be for use on board a ship, since there was no accommodation for vessels alongside the water-front of Fort Medjidieh. Besides, warships taking torpedoes on board would most certainly do so in places

remote from the range of British guns—most probably at Constantinople or Skutari.

They were powerful weapons, longer and of greater diameter than the British Whiteheads, while from the German characters engraved on parts of the mechanism the Sub concluded that they must be the formidable Schwartz-Kopff torpedoes. Moreover, they were intended to be fired from shore stations. Carefully screened from observation, torpedo-tubes had been placed in position, so that a direct hit at any hostile warship attempting to force The Narrows was almost a certainty.

The Sub would dearly have liked to follow the narrow-gauge line of rails, but the risk was too great. No doubt he would be able to discover the exact locality of the firing-station, but realizing it would serve no useful purpose if he did so and was caught in the act, he resumed his way through the main archway.

The doors were closed and barred by massive beams, but a wicket attracted his attention. Somewhat dubious as to what would be awaiting him on the other side, Dick cautiously shot the bolt and pushed open the means of exit.

It was not perhaps in keeping with his role as a Prussian officer to open a door cautiously, but well it was that he did so. Ten feet from the door was a grey-painted sentry-box, in which stood a ferocious-looking Bashi Bazouk, his shawl simply bristling with weapons. Fortunately his face was turned away from the wicket-gate, and the noise it made was not sufficient to attract his attention.

But it was not the Turkish irregular that caused Dick's heart to give a violent thump in spite of his usually cast-iron nerves. A little farther away a regiment of infantry was drawn up in quarter-column, while in front, and almost at the angle nearest the British officers, were seven or eight Germans, both of the line and of the artillery, all engaged in studying by the aid of a lantern a map which had been spread upon the ground.

"Where's von Eitelheimer?" demanded one in the uniform of a colonel. "He ought to be here."

"He and Lieutenant Schwalbe went to see the two cursed Englishmen, Herr Colonel," replied a German sergeant-major. "The Major said it was most important to get the prisoners' signatures before the regiment marches."

"Quite right," assented the Colonel. "Nevertheless he ought to be here before this. Hurry, Schneider, and tell Major von Eitelheimer that——"

Dick waited to hear no more. Softly closing the door, he gripped Farnworth by the arm and hurried him back under the archway until they reached the transverse passage.

"We've precious little time," he explained hurriedly, at the same time lowering his voice to a whisper. "They're sending a fellow to look for our pal Ahmed and the fat subaltern. We'll risk it and try this way."

The subsidiary passage ran parallel to the eastern face of the fortress. At intervals there were large recesses converted into armoured casemates, each containing a 9-inch Krupp gun of a pattern of the early 'nineties. Since the ordnance on this side was intended solely for defence against a land attack, the guns were not so formidable as those enfilading the Dardanelles, yet the Sub realized that Fort Medjidieh would be a hard nut to crack if invested by an expeditionary force unprovided with the heaviest siege artillery.

At each casemate a line branched off from the main narrow-gauge track, showing that the tramway was originally intended to supply the heavy guns with ammunition. Making use of the rails for transporting torpedoes was the result of recent considerations.

Save for a few Turkish artillerymen who were lolling about, and who promptly made themselves scarce when they saw the German uniforms approaching, the gallery was deserted. Without actually meeting anyone, Dick and his companion reached the bend of the passage immediately under the south-eastern angle of the fortress.

Overhead the sounds of bustle and activity could be faintly heard through the massive steel armour-plate, additionally protected by a thick bank of earth faced with sand-bags. The purr of electric dynamos betokened the fact that the seaward search-lights were in full operation. Here the tramway dipped abruptly, egress being prevented by a heavy steel sliding-door.

"Rotten luck!" exclaimed Dick in a whisper. "Let's try that port-hole and see how the land lies."

The two officers made their way between the sliding carriage of the huge Krupp gun and the armoured wall of the casemate. There was just room enough between the chase of the weapon and the side of the embrasure for the Sub to wriggle. The walls here were not less than fifteen feet in thickness, and since the gun was "run in" there was enough space between the muzzle and the sill of the embrasure for both officers to observe the scene that lay before them.

Away on their right front was exposed a broad sweep of the Dardanelles, the swiftly-flowing

water gleaming like burnished silver in the complex rays of the search-light. Almost immediately opposite were the outlines of Fort Kilid Bahr, backed by rugged hills towering to a height of nearly seven hundred feet.

Southward Fort Chanak reared its grim pile, from which search-lights innumerable swept sea, land, and sky, while fifteen or twenty miles to the southwest the sky was agleam with the flashes of heavy guns, showing that Sedd-ul-Bahr and Kum Kale were exchanging a vigorous cannonade with the ships of the Allied fleets.

Here it was that Dick made an important discovery. Fort Medjidieh was apparently not to be held in the event of a bombardment. It was to be used as a decoy to attract the British and French fire, while at a distance of not less than four hundred yards from the deep moat, rows and rows of deep, narrow, and zigzagged trenches were completed or in the act of being constructed.

Hundreds of Turks were busy, working by lantern-light, in digging themselves in, while the whole system of earthworks literally bristled with machine-guns. At the back of each trench, Dick noticed, were light canvas screens stretched upon wooden frames, and painted a similar colour to that of the surrounding soil. These screens were ready to be drawn across the trenches on the approach of hostile air-craft, in order that the observers would be unable to locate the position of the defences.

At frequent intervals between the trenches, concrete emplacements for heavy field-guns had been constructed, their fronts and sides being well protected by sand-bags hidden by coarse grass and thorn-bushes. Already a dozen huge guns were in position, while others were being hauled up by traction-engines to within a few feet of the site, whence they were dragged on to the platforms by dint of abundance of manual labour.

These, apparently, were the reserve line of defence, for farther afield a myriad of men were working like ants on a disturbed ant-heap; but the darkness and the increased distance prevented Dick from coming to any definite conclusion as to the nature of their toil. Dearly would he have liked to have had his binoculars, and he regretted the hasty decision that led to the discarding of those belonging to Major von Eitelheimer.

Almost beneath the place where he crouched, and between the moat and the sea-front, was a stretch of rocky ground averaging a hundred yards in width. Here the narrow-gauge line reappeared. With methodical craftiness the Turks had refrained from carrying the line across the moat, where it would be exposed to shell-fire. Instead, they had gone to the extreme pains of driving a tunnel underneath the deep ditch, so that the means of transporting the torpedoes to their firing-station were entirely concealed and protected.

Almost at the water's edge were two torpedo-tubes, around which a party of officers and men in German naval uniforms were busily engaged in making some adjustment to the intricate mechanism.

"Men from the *Goeben* and *Breslau*, by Jove!" muttered Dick. "Wouldn't I like to send a shot through the war-head of that 'tin-fish'! It would tickle those fellows a bit. I've half a mind to try."

"What's the move, sir?" whispered the midshipman, seeing his superior officer place his hand on his revolver holster.

Fortunately the Sub's calmer councils prevailed. He realized upon second thoughts that with a weapon to which he was not accustomed there was a good chance of a miss. It would be of more service to the British naval and military authorities to be informed of all the preparations for defence that the officers had observed, rather than attempting to destroy at long odds a couple of torpedo-tubes and the torpedo gunners.

It was fairly safe to assume that these tubes had only recently been placed in position. For one reason, the concrete platforms looked fairly new; for another, Dick was certain that the torpedoes that had been fired at the *Calder* during her observation-dash up The Narrows had not been discharged from that position. It showed that, however gallant the dash had been, it was useless unless contingent measures were immediately forthcoming before the Turks could erect new guns and torpedo-firing stations.

All these observations Dick and his companion made with great rapidity. A naval training teaches a man to observe and act promptly. Every minute was precious, for by this time the German sergeant-major might have made the discovery of his two unconscious officers.

As a matter of fact, the fellow had gone straight to the room in which "the cursed Englishmen" were supposed to be detained, but finding the door locked, he concluded that Major von Eitelheimer and Second-lieutenant Schwalbe had finished their business with the prisoners, and had gone to their quarters before proceeding on parade.

"We'll have to get clear of this, Farnworth," declared Dick. "Are you game for a twenty-foot drop? It'll mean neck or nothing."

"Or perhaps a broken ankle, sir," added the midshipman. "I saw a pole with a hook at one end a little way along the gallery. I'll get it."

Farnworth backed through the embrasure and hurried off. Without arousing any suspicion, for the Turkish artillerymen still kept out of sight of the supposed German officers, he removed the pole from its slings. It was about fifteen or eighteen feet in length, and, as the midshipman had stated, was provided with a large steel hook.

With very little difficulty he passed it, hook end inwards, to the Sub, who recognized it as being part of the equipment of Turkish fire-brigades. He had seen men using this device on a previous visit to the Near East, when a disastrous fire broke out in the Galata district of the capital of the Ottoman Empire. Whenever a fire showed signs of getting beyond the control of the firemen with their primitive appliances, these poles were employed to pull down adjacent houses and thus limit the conflagration to a certain area.

"Spiffing!" declared Dick. "Now down you shin, while I keep the hook from slipping."

Extreme caution was necessary, since, twenty feet above them, a pair of search-lights were in full operation. These were a blessing in disguise, for the contrast threw the outer face of the wall and the bottom of the ditch, into deep shadow, although occasionally the projectors were trained so low that the beams played upon the steep slope of the opposite side of the moat.

Allowing Farnworth sufficient time to descend, the Sub agilely followed, notwithstanding the fact that he was encumbered with the heavy German overcoat.

"What shall we do with this, sir?" whispered the midshipman, giving the pole a slight shake.

"We'll have to use it to get out of the moat," replied Dick. "Bear away a little to the right. We stand a better chance of dodging that infernal search-light. I fancy even our borrowed uniforms would not allay suspicion if the Turks spotted us shinning up the wall. Steady! 'Ware barbed wire."

The two officers pulled up only just in time to escape the sharp points of a triple row of entanglements, that in the darkness had escaped their notice. Well it was that they had not attempted to leap from the embrasure, otherwise the momentum would have carried them headlong into the veritable trap.

By mutual aid the two comrades succeeded in crawling through the wire. The presence of the entanglements was a warning, and they proceeded with even greater caution.

A couple of yards beyond this barrier Dick's ankle came in contact with another wire. It was barbless.

"What luck!" muttered the Sub. "If the current had been switched on it would have been all up," for the copper tape was intended to conduct an electric current of sufficient voltage to destroy any living thing that came in contact with it.

Nevertheless they took precautions. It would never do to risk contact with another wire in case it might be charged; so unbuckling his scabbard, which being painted a dull grey did not reflect the light, he wrapped around it several folds of a silk handkerchief which had formerly belonged to Major von Eitelheimer. Holding the insulated scabbard in front of him, Dick proceeded towards the remote face of the ditch, Farnworth treading in his footsteps.

"Lie down," whispered the Sub hoarsely.

Both officers did so, as a giant beam swinging overhead gradually descended till the lower arc struck half-way down the wall against which the fugitives were lying. Had the fugitives attempted to climb a minute earlier, they would have been "picked up" by the dazzling rays.

Suddenly the sharp rattle of musketry, punctuated by the deeper bark-bark of quick-firers, came from the eastern part of Fort Medjidieh. Up swung the troublesome beam until it pointed within ten degrees of the vertical. Other search-lights were likewise trained skywards.

A thousand feet or more in the air glided seven water-planes, looking no bigger than swallows. Detected by the alert Turks, they were subjected to a heavy fire. Shells seemed to burst perilously close, yet serenely they pursued their course at regular intervals like a flight of wood-pigeons.

An appalling crash, against which the noise of the fusillade paled into insignificance, told that a bomb dropped from the leading sea-plane had landed almost in the centre of the fort. Although, from where they lay, the British officers could form no accurate idea of where it fell, they knew that the powerful missile had pitched not far from the quarters they had involuntarily occupied only a short while ago.

"Blest if I want to be sky-highed by our own sea-planes!" declared Dick. "Let's make a bolt for it."

Profiting by the confusion caused by the fall of the bomb, and by the fact that the attention of the Turkish search-light was directed skywards, the two fugitives set the pole in position, engaging the hook in the coping-stone of the wall.

Hand over hand Farnworth climbed to the top, where he threw himself on the sandy soil until the Sub rejoined him. As he did so the second and third bombs dropped almost simultaneously, exploded—one close to a search-light in the wall, the other in the moat; the blast of the detonation sending a shower of stones and dust over the two prostrate figures.

The troops engaged in throwing up earthworks and digging trenches had promptly vanished on hearing the explosion of the first bomb. A few had delayed bolting to their burrows sufficiently long to draw the canvas screens over the deep narrow trenches. Here and there a shot rang out from the earthworks, but for the most part the Turks in that locality were restrained from firing lest the flashes should indicate the position of the trenches.

Dick led the way, purposely choosing a direction that would take the fugitives towards the mountainous interior. He knew that on their flight being discovered a strict search would be made along the shore; while on the other hand the Turks would not be likely to look for them in the interior. His idea was to make a circuitous detour, and regain the Allies' position in the vicinity of the French troops operating near Kum Kale. Already his eyes had marked a gap between the triple rows of trenches where it seemed possible to pass through the hostile lines.

Suddenly the ground gave way beneath the feet of the two officers. With futile efforts they grasped at the earth to save themselves, then, encompassed by a cloud of dust, they dropped headlong into a deep pit.

CHAPTER XI

A Modern Odyssey

Farnworth regained his feet with great agility and assisted Dick to rise. Feeling considerably shaken by his unexpected tumble, the Sub was temporarily winded. For the moment he imagined that his ankle had been sprained, and on placing his hand upon that part of his leg he made the discovery that it was bleeding freely.

"By Jove, sir!" whispered the midshipman, "we've had a narrow squeak. Look!"

The reflection from the search-light made it possible to discern their immediate surroundings. The pit had vertical sides and measured roughly thirty feet by ten, and was about eight feet in depth. It had been covered by a thin layer of rushes supported by slender poles, but the fall of the two officers had resulted in the collapse of the greater part of the covering of the booby-trap. But what had occasioned Farnworth's exclamation was that the floor was plentifully studded with sharp wooden spikes, and it was only owing to the fact that Dick and his companion had stumbled over from the innermost side that they had escaped being impaled. Had they been members of an attacking force and had fallen into the trap while advancing against the fort, they would almost to a certainty have been transfixed by the wicked-looking spikes.

"We have," assented Crosthwaite dryly, "judging by the state of von Eitelheimer's trousers. One of the spikes has ripped them pretty badly, and, what is more, has given my ankle a little gash. Hope to goodness the beggars haven't poisoned the spikes!"

"I'll give you a leg up, sir," suggested the midshipman. "We'll have to go jolly slow till we get outside the earthworks. The whole place is a honeycomb of death-traps."

"No, I'll give you a hoist—I'm heavier than you," said Dick. "Wait till I've knocked a bit of thatch off at the end of the pole. It will serve as a guide."

Having done so, the Sub bent down while his companion clambered on his back. Farnworth was then able to raise himself on to the brink of the booby-trap and gain the upper ground. Then, lying at full length, he attempted to help his comrade up, but without success. The sides of the pit afforded no foothold.

"Can you dig out a niche with your sword, sir?" he asked.

"I'll try; but the stuff's so infernally soft," declared Dick. "Hallo, what's up now?"

"Turks!" announced Farnworth.

At that moment a search-light, that for the last ten minutes had been directed skywards, flung its rays athwart the ground, and the midshipman's grey uniform was shown up as if made of silver. To escape detection was impossible, for about a dozen Turkish infantrymen were at that moment hurrying towards the outlying trenches. With the outcome of local knowledge they were shaping a course to clear the edge of the pitfall.

Quickly Farnworth made up his mind and acted promptly. With a commanding gesture he

stopped the men and ordered them to approach. This they did smartly and without suspicion. A corporal in charge of the party saluted, and, shouting an order to his men, brought them up with some semblance of order.

Imperiously the midshipman signed to them to assist his companion out of the pitfall. This they did with extreme alacrity, prompted by fear of their supposed German officers. Having regained his temporary freedom, Dick, without any attempt at thanks, ordered them in German to replace the dislodged cover to the pit. One of the Turks understood sufficient German to know what was required; the squad set to work, while Dick and his companion unconcernedly walked off.

"We must trust to luck not to find a German in this section of the advanced trenches," said Dick as they drew well clear of the scene of their late misadventure. "We'll have to risk it, for there's no other way."

Cautiously picking their path between numerous rifle-pits and concealed machine-guns, the two fugitives made for a part of the defences where a gap appeared to exist between the trenches. Here men were hard at work under the direction of Turkish officers. The latter saluted as the supposed German officers approached, but made no attempt to converse with them. Instead they urged their men to greater efforts, as if everything depended upon satisfying their Teutonic masters in the art of war.

By this time the Allied air squadron had disappeared. Without sustaining injury, and having done considerable damage to Fort Medjidieh, the sea-planes returned to their parent ship, the *Ark Royal*. Once more the Turkish search-lights directed part of their activities to sweeping the surrounding country.

Arriving at the farthest line of trenches, Dick coolly mounted the parapet and took a careful survey of their general direction and character. He noticed that they were extraordinarily deep and narrow, so that unless a shell actually pitched into a trench the danger to the Turkish defenders was comparatively small. Another matter which attracted his attention was the number of machine-guns. Not only were there dozens concealed a hundred yards or so to the rear of the foremost trenches, but the parapets of the trenches fairly bristled with these deadly weapons. Roughly, there was one to every five yards, each gun being protected by a heavy V-shaped shield. The Turks had thoroughly mastered the principles of modern warfare under European conditions, and the task of the Allied Expeditionary Force was to be a very stiff one.

The Sub and his companion quite realized the extreme risk they were running. To be captured in the disguise of German officers meant an ignominious death as spies, but their audacity completely disarmed suspicion. To all appearances they were zealously visiting the Turkish troops engaged in perfecting the landward defences.

After a lengthy survey Dick leisurely descended the low parapet, and, accompanied by the midshipman, strolled towards the soldiers engaged in erecting barbed-wire entanglements in front of the trenches and clearing away the brushwood that might afford cover to an attacking force.

Then, watching their opportunity, the twain walked steadily past the workers and gained the comparatively open country.

Since an attack was not for the present expected, no outlying pickets had been posted. On descending a slight irregularity in the terrain Dick and the midshipman found themselves out of the direct glare of the search-light, while every step took them farther and farther away from the scene of their captivity during the last six weeks.

"Which way now, sir?" asked Farnworth.

"Due east until it gets light. Then we'll have to lie low during the day, and shape a course for the neighbourhood of Kum Kale as soon as it becomes dark again."

"I'm beginning to feel jolly hungry, sir."

"And so am I," admitted Dick. "The problem of how we are to attend to the victualling department must not be lost sight of. But for the present we must put as great a distance as possible between us and our pursuers—and I hope they won't look for us in this direction."

On and on they plodded steadily, maintaining silence and straining their ears for sounds of human beings. Being night the peasantry took good care not to be about, for the civilian population, consisting almost entirely of old men, women, and children, had been warned of the danger of being in the vicinity of the defences after sunset.

"Something moving," reported the midshipman, "and precious close, too."

The two officers halted and listened intently.

Not so very far away on their right front came a succession of soft thuds, as if caused by someone dropping a number of sand-bags with considerable regularity.

"Camels," whispered the Sub.

He was right. A convoy bearing supplies was on its way from the interior towards the Dardanelles forts. They passed along a rough track within fifty feet of the spot where the officers lay hidden—a hundred or more patient beasts heavily laden, and in charge of a number of natives. About a dozen Bashi Bazouks, fierce-looking fellows whose weapons gleamed in the dull light, served as an escort.

The fugitives waited until the sounds of the passing convoy had died away.

"Bear more to the left," whispered Dick. "We're converging too much upon a hill road. We'll have to foot it pretty briskly, for it must be sunrise within an hour."

"Isn't it about time we discarded our rotten togs?" asked Farnworth, whose whole being felt repugnance at the idea of having to don the dishonourable uniform of Germany.

"They'll come in useful again before very long, unless I am much mistaken," declared Dick. "Now, steady. We're beginning the ascent of Biyuk Dagh. We'll be fairly beyond pursuit now, I fancy."

"I feel as if I'd like to burst into song out of sheer delight, after being cooped up for nearly six weeks," declared Farnworth.

"No, don't," said Dick hurriedly and with well-feigned anxiety. "It would be hard luck to pile the whole of the agony upon me: wait till you're back in the gun-room."

The midshipman smiled grimly. He had a most atrocious voice when it came to singing, and he knew it. Far from being sensitive on the point, he took the Sub's banter in good part.

Up and up the fugitives toiled, until from sheer breathlessness they were compelled to throw themselves upon the ground. The sight that met their was superb.

The whole of The Narrows and a large portion of the rest of the Dardanelles was plainly visible: a narrow silvery streak under the beams of innumerable search-lights. Beyond, also marked by the sources of dozens of slowly-swaying beams of light, were the forts on the European side, backed by the lofty hills of the narrow Gallipoli peninsula. Twenty miles away a regular galaxy of light marked the position of the Allied fleets, the search-lights of which kept ceaseless watch and ward against any possible, nay probable, attempt on the part of the Turks to assail them by means of their destroyers and torpedo-boats.

"Reminds me of Spithead on review nights as seen from the top of Portsdown Hill," declared Farnworth. "I wish I were there now! No, I don't. I'd rather be over there."

And he pointed in the direction of the British fleet, amongst which lay, as far as he knew, the old *Hammerer*.

"Better be moving," suggested Dick.

Although he said nothing about the matter to his companion, he was beginning to become painfully aware of the injury to his ankle. So long as he kept in motion the injury troubled him but little; during his enforced rest it began to burn and throb. The pangs of hunger were also making themselves felt. With the rising of the sun he knew that another discomfort—thirst—would be added to their lot.

Long before the fugitives reached the summit of the steep mountain, dawn was upon them. With a rapidity that almost equalled the shortness of the tropical break of day, it grew light; then above the crest of a yet unsurmounted hill rose the sun.

"Phew! It is hot," ejaculated Farnworth, opening his greatcoat. Then he stopped and burst out into laughter.

"We are a proper pair, sir," he exclaimed.

Their faces were grimed with dirt and dust; their grey uniforms were discoloured with mud and rent in several places, owing to their encounter with the prickly bushes. Dick's rough-and-ready "shave" with the scissors had left enough bristles to give him a truly ferocious appearance, while Farnworth's face was streaked with dried blood from several scratches he had received during the hazardous journey from Fort Medjidieh.

Acting upon their previous plans the two officers "laid low" during the greater part of the day. Fortunately they were able to assuage their thirst at a rivulet that trickled down the mountainside, but the pangs of hunger had become most acute.

Although there was plenty of activity in and around the forts, there were no signs of life in the vicinity of the fugitives; so at about four in the afternoon—according to Crosthwaite's estimate from the position of the sun—they resolved to run the risk of detection and push on in search of food.

An hour's steady walk brought them to a rough mountain track. This they followed by a parallel course, not daring to keep to the path, and after twenty minutes they came in sight of a village.

It was a miserable collection of hovels, situated in a narrow valley, yet it boasted of a small mosque with a slender minaret. There were no signs of any men, but, in the rough pasture close to the hamlet, veiled women were tending flocks of sheep and goats.

"We'll tackle the business openly," declared Dick. "If we tried to sneak up to the nearest hut and collar some grub there might be a rumpus. If, on the other hand, they think we are German officers they'll be only too glad to provide us with food in order to get rid of our presence."

Pulling themselves together the two pseudo-German officers swaggered boldly into the village. From barred lattices, yashmaked women peeped timorously. A few ragged children scampered off, crying loudly at the sight of the Franks. Half a dozen lean dogs quarrelling over a heap of garbage directed their attention with savage growls to the strangers, until Dick drove them off by planting a well-aimed stone in the leader's ribs.

Hearing the commotion, a dignified old man came from one of the larger of the houses close to the mosque. He was the imaum or priest. With a courteous salutation he invited the supposed German officers to enter, but before crossing the threshold he signified that they would have to remove their boots.

Nothing loath, Dick and the midshipman complied. A youth brought a basin of water, a towel, and two pairs of soft-leather slippers. The needful Eastern ceremony of washing the feet of distinguished travellers was fully appreciated by the tired wayfarers.

Entering the house, the officers were regaled with a repast of roasted goat's flesh and cakes made of flour and millet, with unsweetened coffee and curdled milk. The men attacked the meal ravenously, while the imaum, seated tailorwise on a low divan, watched them with studious gravity.

"Medjidieh?" asked Dick after they had satisfied their hunger.

The old man pointed in a westerly direction, and said something to the youth. The latter immediately picked up his sandals and made for the door.

Gravely saluting the hospitable Mahomedan priest, Dick and the midshipman took their departure. Peremptorily dismissing the lad who had been sent to act as a guide, the officers retraced their steps until a ridge of intervening ground hid them from the village.

"Decent old sort," commented Farnworth. "I wonder if he would have been so awfully keen in giving us grub if he knew who we really were?"

"Can't say," replied Dick. "One thing: hanged if I could bring myself to a display of Prussian arrogance, but by not doing so I might be giving the show away. Now we'll work our way round the village and resume our former direction. I made out we were on the way to Medjidieh. That ought to throw any possible pursuers off the track."

Skirting the village necessitated a wide detour, but before sunset the fugitives calculated that they had put twenty miles between them and their prison-fortress. It ought to be fairly safe to attempt a dash for the coast in the neighbourhood of Kum Kale.

The heat was now terrific in spite of the altitude, so Dick suggested that they should have "watch below" until the sun had sunk considerably in the heavens. A thicket afforded a complete shelter from the pitiless rays, and with a blissful disregard of the danger from scorpions and other reptiles the two officers crept into the shade and were soon sound asleep.

Suddenly they were awakened by the dull buzz of an aerial propeller. Crawling from their place of repose, Dick and the midshipman saw a French monoplane flying barely two hundred feet above the ground.

"We'll try and attract that fellow's attention," exclaimed Dick. "I don't suppose he can give us a lift, but he may be able to——"

There was no time to complete the sentence. Dashing out in the open, the Sub waved his arms, shouting at the top of his voice:

"A nous, camarade. Nous sommes Anglais."

Overhead swept the aeroplane. The observer leant over the chassis and critically surveyed the two figures in German uniforms. He shouted something, but the words were unintelligible, although he could distinctly hear the Sub's call for aid.

"Nous sommes prisonniers Anglais—prisonniers échappés!" bawled Dick frantically.

The Frenchman again waved his hand. The monoplane calmly continued its course, then, majestically circling, it began to descend.

"Hurrah!" shouted the midshipman. "Who says the age of miracles has passed?"

Even as he spoke an irregular volley burst from a slight depression in the ground about five hundred yards from where the officers stood. Sharply banking, the aeroplane rose to a safe distance, dropping a bomb as she did so, then began to retrace its course.

"Look out!" exclaimed Dick warningly, as the monoplane passed nearly overhead.

Almost at the first report of the rifles the fugitives withdrew from their exposed position. They were now in danger from another direction, as Dick had foreseen.

A small black object dropped from underneath the chassis of the aeroplane. Rapidly gathering speed it fell within twenty yards of the Sub and his companion. It was a bomb; but owing either to faulty mechanism or to the fact that it alighted on soft sand, it failed to explode, otherwise the officers would have been blown to pieces.

"What luck!" muttered Farnworth. "I suppose those fellows took us for a pair of treacherous German skunks. It wasn't their fault."

"Anyhow, I'm not going to wait till those chaps come up to investigate," added Dick, referring to the still invisible riflemen. "So here's off! Keep to the dip in the ground and avoid the sand. We don't want to leave our tracks."

Breaking into a steady run the fugitives hurried away from the direction of the interrupters of their peace of mind. Already the monoplane was a mere speck in the distance.

"Take cover!" hissed Dick breathlessly. "They're on our track."

Once again the two comrades sought shelter in a thicket. They were not a minute too soon, for amid a cloud of dust about fifty Turkish irregulars galloped madly down the path. They were armed with Mauser and Mannlicher rifles and carbines, and in addition a regular armoury of revolvers and knives, while several wore long curved swords. Some of them had been wounded by the explosion of the bomb, and rode with the blood streaming down their faces. Yet each man urged his steed to its utmost capacity as if with a set purpose, and hardly looking to the right or left they passed by, leaving only a cloud of suffocating dust that hung listlessly in the still, hot air.

"I thought they were after us," said Dick, after a safe interval had elapsed, "but I think I'm mistaken. They've some other little game on."

"Perhaps they didn't see us at all," suggested Farnworth.

"Pretty well certain they didn't, for by this time all the Turkish troops in the district must have heard of our escape and of our disguises. Well, let's carry on."

For several hours they plodded wearily along the steep mountain path, their senses keenly on the alert, since they now knew that cavalry were in the vicinity. It was somewhat disconcerting to know that a body of irregulars lay between them and the coast, but both Dick and the midshipman were curious to know why these horsemen had hurried in the direction of Kum Kale, since they were not sufficiently numerous to constitute a danger to any considerable force.

Happening to look over his shoulder, the Sub saw that another body of men was overtaking them.

It was a mixed column of horse and foot, accompanied by wagons—in fact a small convoy.

"If we strike away to the right we'll miss them easily, sir," suggested the midshipman.

Dick shook his head.

"We'll only get 'bushed' at night, that is if the stars are hidden," he said. "Besides, we're pretty well done up; so we'll lie low and let these fellows pass. I'm rather anxious to see what they are up to."

The convoy was still a long way off, the advance-guard being quite three miles from where the officers stood. It was slowly making its way up the mountain side, the moving line resembling a huge snake as it wound along the intricate path.

"We're safe enough here," announced Dick, when they had taken up their position between two fantastically-shaped rocks about fifty yards from the road.

The overhanging mass afforded complete shelter from the sun, while the broken ground in the rear would afford excellent cover in case they had to put a greater distance between them and the approaching convoy.

"Bluejackets!" exclaimed Farnworth.

"You're right," agreed Dick quietly. "Some of them are, at all events. This looks interesting."

It took more than an hour for the convoy to get abreast of the place where the fugitives lay concealed. The column was headed by a dozen Turkish irregular cavalry, similar in appearance to those who had passed earlier in the day. Following them came a company of infantry, escorting a number of open wagons drawn by small, hardy-looking ponies. The wagons were heavily laden with tins of petrol. Following them were about fifty bluejackets, not of the Ottoman navy, but in the rig of the Imperial German navy. They were accompanied by five or six German officers in white-duck uniforms, all of them mounted. At some distance in the rear came six trucks each containing four large torpedoes, while the convoy terminated in another troop of Turkish horsemen.

"Fishy, very fishy!" declared Crosthwaite after the column had passed. "Petrol and torpedoes."

"Suggestive of submarines, sir," remarked Farnworth.

"Exactly. Now the question is, where are those fellows taking that gear to? Even supposing the French had evacuated the district around Kum Kale, there would be no particular object in taking them there. A submarine could take in her stock of torpedoes at Constantinople, and be piloted through the mine-fields in The Narrows. They might be en route for Smyrna, but, since there is a railway available, it doesn't seem at all likely. Evidently a hostile submarine is operating outside."

"A German?" hazarded Farnworth.

"I hope not; but there is no saying what these fellows will be up to. Everything seems in their favour in that direction. They can torpedo our ships, and we have nothing afloat to go for in return. Still, in sinking their submarines we haven't done so badly, and I guess while we've been cooped up here our fellows have nabbed a few more. Anyway, it would be interesting to find out where those torpedoes are going. I vote we follow at a respectable distance until dusk, and then close on them a bit."

"I'm game, sir," consented the midshipman.

While daylight lasted they had no difficulty in following the trail. They were in luck's way, for they found a haversack containing some dates and half a loaf. The food, washed down by a little spring water, revived them considerably, the midshipman declaring that he felt "absolutely bucked".

Towards sunset Dick gave the word for an increased speed, and before darkness set in they were within two hundred yards of the slowly-moving rear-guard. By dint of taking cover and advancing with the utmost caution they managed to keep in touch with the object of their investigations.

At about midnight the Turco-German force halted. It was evident that they feared no surprise, for fires were lighted at a safe distance from the explosives, and the men were permitted to smoke and talk freely. The irregulars dismounted and, having hobbled their horses, joined the others around the fires.

It was now bitterly cold, and the glow of the burning wood was tantalizing to the worn and tired Sub and his companion. Well it was that they had not discarded the German greatcoats, otherwise their limbs would have been numbed by the fall in the temperature.

They welcomed the order to resume the march with far more eagerness than did the men to whom it applied, for Dick could hear the German officers rating both their own countrymen and the unfortunate Turks.

Judging by the position of the Pole Star, Dick knew that the convoy was proceeding in a south-easterly direction. The course would bring them to the sea-coast some distance to the east of Kum Kale and not far from the Bay of Yenikeui, where the Sub's whaler had met with misfortune.

"We may be able to get in touch with one of our patrol boats," he remarked. "If so, we'll be taken off; but first, by Jove, I want to find out the meaning of this nocturnal jaunt!"

Twice the British officers had to fall behind and make a detour round isolated villages, since it was obviously too risky to follow the convoy direct; but so slow was its progress that they were able to re-establish the same relative distance.

"The sea," whispered Dick, "I can hear it."

"And I can smell it," declared Farnworth as he sniffed at the unmistakably salt-laden atmosphere.

"We're up a tremendous height. Quite a thousand feet, I should imagine. We'll have to make sure those fellows don't halt their rear-guard."

For the next two miles the path was steeply on the down grade. Rough as it had been before,

it now almost impassable. The Sub wondered how the Turks contrived to transport the heavy load of petrol and the torpedoes without risk of upsetting the former and damaging the intricate mechanism of the latter. He could hear the grinding of the wheels over the loose stones and the groaning of the axles of the burdened vehicles, interspersed with the jabbering of the Turkish drivers and the guttural of the German officers.

"That's done it!" whispered Dick, laying a restraining hand upon the midshipman's arm. "They've posted a picket. Let's get back a bit and discuss matters."

"Couldn't we scale the side of the ravine?" asked Farnworth. "If so, we can work our way round and still keep the fellows under observation."

"Must, I suppose," replied Dick. "It's literally neck or nothing if we miss our footing. Thank goodness, it's a starlit night."

Up and up they climbed, frequently having to make their way in a horizontal direction to avoid an unsurmountable barrier. The cliff was composed of a series of terraces, the ledges being thickly covered with bushes and coarse grass.

"Way enough!" exclaimed the Sub in a low voice. "Keep to this ledge as far as it goes."

Forcing their way through the brambles, with a reckless disregard for the uniforms of von Eitelheitner and his fat satellite, Dick and the midshipman found themselves on the brink of a precipice. Two hundred feet below them the stars were reflected in a placid sheet of land-locked water. Beyond the barrier of lofty rocks could be heard the sullen murmur of the open sea.

"No signs of the convoy, sir," said Farnworth.

"No, they've kept wonderfully quiet the half-hour. I hope we haven't arrived at the wrong rendezvous."

As he spoke a light blinked solemnly from some floating object in the centre of the lake or creek, whichever it happened to be, for no signs of any communication with the sea was to be seen in the darkness.

"Ha!"

The Sub's short, sharp ejaculation was the only indication of his satisfaction. He knew now that his efforts had not been in vain. He was on the eve of an important discovery.

"What do you make of it, sir?" whispered Farnworth.

"Submarine!" replied Dick briefly.

He was right. It was a submarine signalling with a flashing lamp. He wished for dawn, for it was impossible to distinguish her in the darkness.

Thrice she called—and called in vain. No answering signal came from the spot where the mountain path debouched into the narrow sandy beach.

"Hope she won't clear out," soliloquized the Sub. "I'd like to have a good look at her. By Jove, it's getting light!"

The reflection of the stars no longer scintillated in the water. Wreaths of vapour—the mists of morning—were slowly eddying from the surface. Away to the east the stars were paling under the influence of the dawn.

Soon the details of the land-locked estuary became visible. There was a narrow gap in the high ground that communicated with the Ægean Sea. On the opposite side of the creek were a couple of deserted huts and a ruined building, that was formerly a mosque, standing in an isolated position on the summit of a rounded hill. Owing to the mists, the waters of the creek were hidden from sight.

"Look, sir!" whispered Farnworth, who, lying at full length, was examining the beach.

Standing at the water's edge were two German naval officers. A few feet away from them a collapsible boat of the type used in the German navy was drawn up on the beach, with three bluejackets standing rigidly at attention by its side.

Just then a gentle zephyr rent the veil of mist.

Dick gasped in astonishment. Well he might, for floating serenely on the surface was a submarine: not one of the Turkish navy, but one of the most modern of the German *unterseebooten*.

CHAPTER XII

The German Submarine

It was indeed a most unpleasant discovery. The submarine was one of the active "U" boats possessing an enormous radius of action. Her size rendered her incapable of being carried even in sections from one of the German North Sea across Austria to Pola or Trieste; she must, in naval parlance, have made the voyage "on her own bottom". It was indeed a daring piece of work running the gauntlet of the British patrol ships in home waters, passing through the well-guarded Straits of Gibraltar and entering the Mediterranean Sea, which was held almost entirely by British and French war-ships. Unseen, save when receiving supplies of oil and provisions from well-subsidized tenders sailing under a neutral flag, she had reached a secret rendezvous in Asia Minor, and was now within easy distance of the unsuspecting Allied fleets.

If one German submarine could perform this unparalleled feat others could do the same, and a fresh danger menaced the ships that were so persistently hammering at Turkey's gate.

Presently one of the German officers gave vent to an exclamation of satisfaction, at the same time pointing along the mountain path which ended close to where he was standing. The others bestirred themselves, like men who after long waiting have their expectations realized.

The head of the convoy was approaching.

"Well met, von Birmitz!" exclaimed the captain of the convoy to the senior officer of the submarine, who wore the uniform of a lieutenant-commander. "We had your message, but why did you not send a wireless? It would have saved hours."

"It would have been unsafe, my dear von Elbing," replied the German naval officer. "Those cursed Englishmen would intercept the message, and the cat would be out of the bag. But I am right glad to see you, and more especially the stuff you bring."

The military officer laughed uproariously.

"Nothing like being candid," he remarked. "Did you have a good voyage?"

"Excellent. And what is more, we passed within two hundred metres of a British battleship, and she never had the faintest notion that one of our most formidable *unterseebooten* was anywhere in the Mediterranean."

"You bagged her, of course?"

"Unfortunately, no. There were too many English destroyers about, and we had not enough petrol to risk being driven miles out of our course. There was sufficient only to bring us here, and here we have been the last three days with the English fleet within easy striking distance, yet we were helpless."

"You will not be for long," rejoined von Elbing, "so the sooner we get to work the better."

"Meanwhile, do me the honour of broaching a bottle of the best Rhine wine," said von Birmitz. "Our boat is but a small one for a man of your build, but with caution you will be safer than in Fort—"

"Nagara," added the other. "You are right. When those English shells begin to fall it is a bit of a tight corner, but fortunately von Biltz and I have a snug and safe retreat."

The officers embarked in the canvas boat and were rowed off to the submarine. Before going below, von Birmitz spoke to a seaman, who instantly semaphored to a German sentry stationed on the high ground at the entrance to the inlet.

Crosthwaite had not noticed the fellow before. He now realized that he had run a great risk of detection, for, in his curiosity to overhear the conversation, he had approached so closely to the edge of the cliff as to be clearly visible from the place where the sentry from the submarine was posted.

The seaman semaphored a reply, which was evidently satisfactory, for, rubbing his hands gleefully, the Lieutenant-Commander followed his guests down the narrow hatchway.

A little later the submarine, the deck of which was previously only just awash, began to rise till she showed a freeboard of nearly six feet.

Dick estimated that she was about three hundred feet in length, and considerably longer than the latest type of British submersible. Her conning-tower was of an acute oval section and apparently spacious. There were two periscopes, while abaft the conning-tower was a light signalling-mast supporting the wireless aerials. Fore and aft were short quick-firing guns mounted on water-tight disappearing platforms, while, owing to freeboard she exposed, the Sub

could see the ends of a couple of broadside torpedo-tubes, both within ten feet of the 'midship section.

"She carries six tubes at least," whispered Dick; "two on each side abeam and two in the bows. It's just likely she has a pair of stern tubes also. No wonder she wants a good supply of torpedoes; yet what has she done with those she brought with her? That fellow made no mention of having used any. Hello, she's getting under way."

As he spoke, men hurried up from below. The propeller began to churn and the submarine gathered way. Describing a semicircle she slowed down, while a couple of seamen in the Berthon boat began to run a line ashore. To this was bent a stout hawser, which, as soon as it was made fast to the stump of a tree, was carried to a motor-capstan on deck. Slowly and with extreme caution the *unterseeboot* was warped close inshore until it was possible for a man to leap from her deck on to dry ground.

It was the only place in the creek where deep water existed close to the shore, for elsewhere the depth shoaled gradually.

The work of replenishing the submarine's stock of petrol proceeded with the utmost dispatch, each large steel drum being carried to the beach by Turks, whence it was whipped on board by means of a light steel crane. The drums were quickly emptied into the vessel's tanks, and the empties taken ashore again and reloaded on the wagons.

Nearly the whole morning was spent in taking on board the supply of petrol. According to Dick's estimate, the quantity was sufficient for a surface run of at least four thousand miles.

After that part of the business was completed, the additional torpedoes were cautiously slung inboard and passed down a long, narrow hatchway. In this operation the Turkish troop took no part. The handling and stowage was performed entirely by the submarine's crew.

In the midst of these operations the seaman sentry began signalling frantically. Summoned from below, von Birmitz hastily appeared, followed by his guest and the other officers of the submarine who were not engaged in superintending the work.

Somewhat ungracefully von Elbing leapt ashore, landing on his hands and knees. He shouted an order to the men of the convoy, hurried up the path, and was soon lost to sight.

Meanwhile the crew of the submarine were hurriedly securing hatches, and lowering the disappearing guns and the wireless mast. In their haste they were unable to pass below four torpedoes lying on deck. These they fastened to ring-bolts by means of stout ropes, then at the Lieutenant-Commander's orders the crew cast off the hawsers and scurried below.

Twenty seconds later the submarine sank in twelve fathoms of water, till from their elevated position the two British officers could just discern her outlines as she glided towards the centre of the creek.

"They've smelt a rat," declared Dick.

"One of our destroyers, by Jove!" added Farnworth, as a four-black-funnelled, black-hulled craft proudly displaying the white ensign could be seen beyond the barrier of rock that almost closed the narrow entrance.

"We must attract their attention, regardless of the consequences," declared Dick, and springing to his feet he waved the silk handkerchief that had previously rendered good service as an insulator to von Eitelheimer's scabbard.

"Let's fire our revolvers, sir," suggested the midshipman.

"Can but try," replied Dick recklessly. "Only I'm afraid they won't hear; the wind's the wrong way."

Both men emptied their revolvers in the air, but to their intense disappointment the destroyer held on her course without attempting to reply, and presently she was lost to sight behind the rising ground.

"Think that rotten submarine will have a go at her, sir?" asked Farnworth.

"Hardly likely. She'll want to try her luck at bigger game," replied Dick. "But the point is this: we must do our level best to warn our people—and as soon as we possibly can. It will take the German submarine another five hours at least to prepare for sea, and those fellows won't reappear in a hurry until the coast is perfectly clear. The question is, did the troops belonging to the convoy hear our shots? If so, we must look out for ourselves."

"What do you propose, sir?"

"Wait till the submarine resumes loading up, then we'll cut back and see if we can't collar a couple of horses. You'll remember the Turks left their horses hobbled, and there was no one left on guard. Then we'll go all out and make for Kum Kale. If we find the French there, well and

good; if not, we must make a raft or sneak a boat, and trust to luck to be picked up by one of our patrol ships."

Cautiously the two fugitives made their way backward along the terrace running parallel to and above the mountain path. After traversing nearly a quarter of a mile they halted abruptly, for seated on a rock by the side of the ridge were two German military officers, who, to pass away the tedious wait, had climbed the hillside and were now enjoying cigars.

"Luckily, we were not making a dash for it," remarked Dick. "But at the same time we did right to make a reconnaissance by daylight. I'm afraid these terraces terminate abruptly, but we'll see."

Accordingly Crosthwaite and his companion climbed to the next ridge. Still not satisfied they ascended to the next, which was about two hundred feet above the one where the two German officers had unwittingly cut off their retreat.

"There's only the road for us," announced Dick after a while. "See, all these terraces end abruptly. There's a precipitous gorge right through the mountain."

"A good thing we didn't try it in the dark, sir," said the midshipman. "A fellow wouldn't be worth much if he pitched over there."

"Well, let's get back to our former hiding-place," suggested the Sub. "It's about time the submarine appeared."

Dick was right in his surmise, for the boat had just emerged from its hiding-place and was being warped in towards the shore.

"Where's von Elbing and his men?" demanded the Lieutenant-Commander of his subordinate. "One would think that the English destroyer was searching for him!"

"He's coming," announced the German sub-lieutenant.

"About time," grumbled von Birmitz. "It will be quite another twenty-four hours before they go to Chanak and back, and we can't move until they do."

The interrupted work was continued, while the German officers chatted on the beach. Presently the seaman stationed on the cliffs as a look-out began signalling, his message being taken down by another seaman on the deck of the submarine.

"Gott in Himmel, what is this?" exclaimed von Birmitz dumbfoundedly, when the message was handed him. "Von Elbing, listen. Our man reports that as soon as we were submerged two German officers began signalling to that cursed English destroyer, and that they even fired shots to attract her attention."

"Impossible," declared von Elbing. "Unless——"

"Unless what?"

"Two English prisoners escaped from Fort Medjidieh. They took the uniforms of Major von Eitelheimer and of one of our second lieutenants."

The Lieutenant-Commander swore loudly.

"It must be they," he declared. "Warn your men, von Elbing. I'll turn out a dozen of my crew, and we'll have a hunt for these troublesome pests. Mark my word, there'll be trouble if we don't settle with them."

"They cannot get far," added von Elbing complaisantly. "If we surround this hill there is no escape except by the road, and that is well guarded. Let us hasten, for it is already late in the afternoon."

Dick nudged his companion.

"Now we're on our mettle," he said grimly. "The fun is about to commence."

CHAPTER XIII

Torpedoed

"Like hare and hounds, sir," said Farnworth with a forced laugh. "A quarter of an hour's start, and then look out."

"Less than that, I'm afraid," rejoined Dick. "Those fellows won't be long in arming and turning out. We'll take the lowermost terrace. They won't expect to find us there, for naturally they'll think we've scurried towards the higher ground. All we've got to do for the present is to evade those two chaps we saw perched up on the ledge—unless they've been warned."

The fugitives hurried without exchanging further words, keeping close to the cliff so as to escape the attention of the German officers whom they had seen smoking cigars and leisurely surveying the scenery.

Presently Dick pointed upwards. The midshipman nodded. They were immediately underneath the unsuspecting Teutons. Just at that moment half a dozen German seamen from the submarine appeared, advancing in extended order.

Crouching, the fugitives continued their way, but before they had traversed another twenty yards an irregular volley rang out.

"They've spotted us," gasped Farnworth.

The next instant the Sub saw two grey-coated forms hurtling through the air. With a sickening crash they fell almost at the feet of the British officers. The Germans had brought down their luckless fellow-countrymen, who, ignorant of what had happened, had been taken to be the escaped prisoners in their disguise as Teutonic officers in the Ottoman service.

"Cut for it," whispered Dick. "They can't see us from the road. We've another chance."

Both men, bending low, doubled along the terrace till a projecting crag separated them from the scene of the blunder. On and on they ran till they reached the defile that cut through the series of ledges. Fifty feet beneath them was cover in plenty, but every inch of that distance seemed as smooth as a brick wall. It was equally impossible to ascend to the next terrace, for the whole of the last quarter of a mile the cliff assumed an almost perpendicular aspect and was absolutely unclimbable.

"Look, sir!" exclaimed Farnworth, pointing to the road.

Almost abreast of where they stood were three magnificent horses, held by a ferocious-looking Turkish cavalryman. At this point the ground shelved gradually. It would be a comparatively easy matter to gain the road, but the difficulty was that farther along the track was the Ottoman cavalry escort.

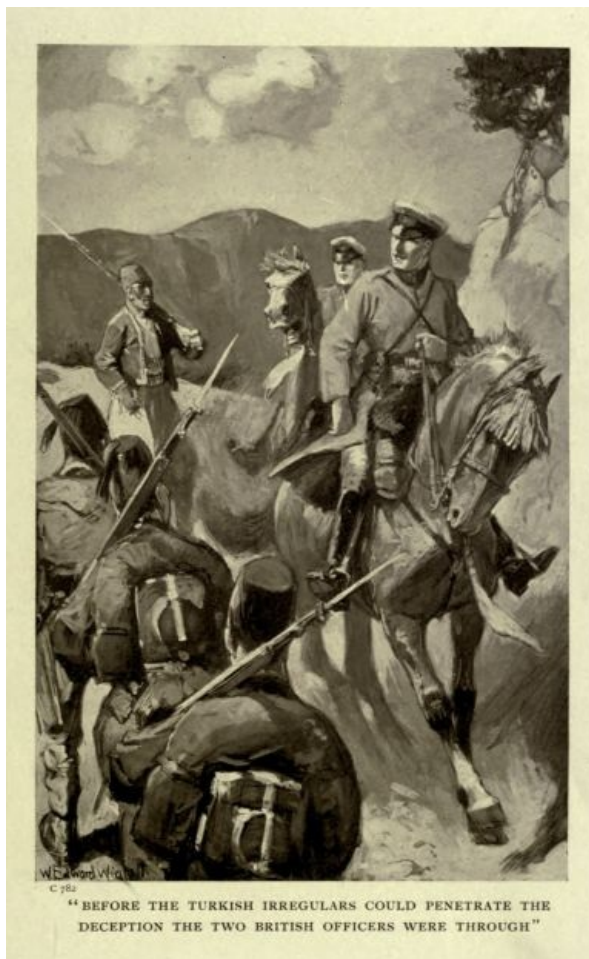
"We must risk it," declared the Sub. "It's touch and go."

Boldly leaving their place of concealment and descending the slope, the two fugitives approached the Turkish soldier. The man, knowing nothing of what was taking place at the seaward end of the valley, stiffly saluted the supposed German officers, and when they clambered awkwardly into the saddles he offered no objection, although his face showed unbounded surprise as he was left with only one horse in his charge.

Obediently the captured steeds broke into a canter. Perhaps it was well that they did not gallop, for both officers were indifferent horsemen. Like most seamen they could hold on to practically anything, so they stuck to the saddles and resisted the involuntary inclination to be pitched off into the dusty road.

"Now for it," muttered Dick, as a sharp bend in the mountain path brought them in sight of the mounted rear-guard.

It was an anxious thirty seconds, but before the Turkish irregulars could penetrate the deception the two British officers were through and heading towards the open country.



"BEFORE THE TURKISH IRREGULARS COULD PENETRATE THE DECEPTION THE TWO BRITISH OFFICERS WERE THROUGH"

"Enough!" gasped Dick after cantering another two miles. "We'll abandon the gee-gees and trust to our legs. We wouldn't stand a ghost of a chance when those fellows are ordered in pursuit."

Almost pulling their steeds upon their haunches they dismounted, and reluctantly administering a sharp cut with the flat of their scabbards upon the animals that had served them so well, sent them galloping madly in the opposite direction to that of the convoy.

Then, taking a course almost at right angles to the road, the fugitives were soon deep in a scrub-covered expanse of undulating ground.

"A good start," ejaculated Dick breathlessly. "By the time they've discovered their mistake over those two German officers and have explained matters to the Turks, we ought to be well on our way to Kum Kale."

"Twenty-four hours, they said, before the submarine puts to sea, sir," remarked Farnworth. "We ought to do it well before that time."

"I hope so," added the Sub. "By Jove! It will be a serious matter if we don't."

Once more night was drawing on apace, yet, in their ardour to warn their comrades of an unexpected peril, they gave no thought to fatigue. Guided by the stars, the Sub shaped a course which he reckoned would bring them within the district supposed to be held by the French Expeditionary Force. By daylight they should be well within sight of Kum Kale.

"Steady!" cautioned Dick, as they commenced to descend a steep declivity. "I fancy we're close to the sea again."

"I certainly can hear surf," declared the midshipman.

"So much the better unless the coast is very much indented," added the Sub. "We can't be so very far from Yenikeui."

"Hope the Turks aren't there in force, like they were last time, sir."

"Not much fear of that. More than likely we'll stumble across a French outpost."

Down and down they went, till Dick felt certain they had descended nearly five hundred feet. At some distance in front of them rose another line of hills—the last natural barrier before they reached the historic Plains of Troy.

Suddenly the midshipman's foot caught in the exposed root of a gnarled and dwarfed tree, and with a stifled exclamation he pitched upon his hands and knees.

"Halt! Who goes there?" demanded a voice in unmistakable English, so close that the Sub nearly ran upon the point of a bayonet that glittered in the starlight.

"Friends," replied the Sub promptly.

"Maybe," retorted the sentry. "All the same, blessed if I likes the cut of your rig. So hands up, and no blessed fuss or I'll fire."

Obediently Dick raised his grey-sleeved arms, while the midshipman, regaining his feet, followed his example. Then a second figure joined the first, and a torch flashed upon the faces of the two officers.

"Germans, by smoke!" exclaimed the first sentry. "Bloomin' officers, too. I'll take good care these fellows don't give me the slip."

"Bluejackets!" ejaculated the Sub.

"Stow your bloomin' lip," ordered the sentry menacingly.

Dick complied, mentally picturing the seaman's confusion when the identity of the supposed prisoners was established.

In a few seconds half a dozen bluejackets, headed by a sub-lieutenant, appeared on the scene.

"What have we here, Jenkins?" asked the officer.

"Germans, sir. Strolled right on top of me bayonet."

"Good! March them in. I'll question them when we get them on board."

"One minute," expostulated Dick.

"Eh—what's that? You speak English," exclaimed the officer.

"Rather—I am a British officer, and so is my companion."

"Keep off it—bloomin' cheek," interposed the man who had held up the supposed Germans.

"Silence, there!" rapped out the Sub-lieutenant sternly.

Dick gave his name and rank, and that of his brother officer.

"But be sharp and take us on board," he added. "You'll have to send an urgent message to the Admiral. It's a matter of extreme importance."

The sense of caution was deep within the mind of the Sub in charge of the landing-party; and although he complied with Dick's request to hasten, he took good care to have the two grey-uniformed men surrounded by armed seamen until he reached the shore of a creek.

Here, lying about a cable's length off, was a submarine of the "E" type. She was almost awash, her hatches being open, while a skeleton-like framework extended over her contour from bow to stern.

Five minutes later the rescued officers found themselves within the hull of the vessel, where they were quickly able to establish their identity, and the Lieutenant-Commander's face grew grave as he listened to their narrative.

"A 'U' boat in these waters!" he remarked. "Well, I'm not altogether surprised. Luckily, I'm in an independent command, so we'll see if 'dog won't eat dog'. I'll go for her, by Jove! I suppose you could recognize the creek?"

"It's less than twenty miles sou'-east by south, I should think," replied Dick. "Of course I haven't seen the place from seaward, but I think I could spot it."

"Strange!" exclaimed the Lieutenant-Commander when he had introduced himself as Aubrey Huxtable. "I cannot see any opening shown on this chart."

"It would be about there," said Dick, pointing to a position where the coast-line presented an unbroken front. "The mountains on either side are shown, so I feel fairly certain about it."

"Very good; we'll proceed at once," declared Huxtable. "I'd send a wireless to the *Hammerer* announcing your safety, only it would be too risky."

"Exactly what the commander of the 'U' boat said," added the Sub. "Well, after six weeks of it, a few hours more won't hurt."

"Say thirty-six," corrected Huxtable; "that is, unless you have strong reasons for not accompanying us. We were just about to start for a jaunt up the Dardanelles; that is the reason for this gadget," and he indicated the curved latticed girder above his head.

"An idea of mine," continued the Lieutenant-Commander. "It may work all right. The armourer's crew of the *Tremendous* rigged it up. You can see the overhead girder. There are others—one on each side, and at present seven feet below the water-line, and at a minimum distance of eighteen feet from the hull. All three meet at a point bow and stern."

"A kind of rigid crinoline," suggested Dick.

"Precisely. The idea is that if we encounter mines these steel rods will push the cables attached to the sinkers clear of us. Also, if the Turks had laid mines in pairs connected by a horizontal bridle, as I fancy they have, these guides will lift the obstruction clear of the housed periscope or any projection on deck."

"And if the mine explodes?"

The Lieutenant-Commander shrugged his brawny shoulders.

"That remains to be seen. For my part, I fancy that a cushion of water eighteen feet between the point of explosion and the side of our craft will considerably neutralize its effect. My governor was on the staff on the *Vernon* when they experimented with the old *Resistance* in Portchester Creek. He told me most emphatically that a torpedo exploded electrically alongside her extended torpedo-nets did no material damage to the hull. In fact, all the damage caused by the explosion was the unshipping of one bracket of the booms and a rent in the mesh of the nets. So I've pinned my faith on my device, and we are going to test it. Of course, if you wish to be put aboard——"

"Not at all," protested Dick. "I'm perfectly game."

"And young Farnworth?"

"Better ask him, sir," replied Crosthwaite.

Calling the midshipman to him, the skipper briefly outlined his plans and made him a similar offer.

"Only too glad of the opportunity, sir," declared Farnworth, his eyes glistening at the prospect of a daring piece of work.

"I'm glad of it," rejoined the Lieutenant-Commander. "Having completed our fit-up, I was not keen on displaying it to the eyes of the fleet. I'd rather wait until it has proved its merits. Well, we are ready to start. We'll submerge to ten feet, and if you'll stand by, Mr. Crosthwaite, and help me to con her into this secret lair, I'll be everlastingly grateful."

"How do you propose to attack—by gunfire or torpedo?" enquired Dick.

"Oh, torpedo, by all means. Let the Germans know that we can use the 'tinfoil' whenever we get something worth going for."

The crew were now at their diving-stations.

Calmly and distinctly the Lieutenant-Commander gave his orders, and with a barely perceptible tilt the submarine dived till the gauge registered the required distance.

It was still dark. Through the periscope, only the rugged outlines of the shore were visible. Distance has to be estimated by the apparent height of the land; while steering a compass course the submerged vessel simply groped along, with her extended periscope rising clear of the turtle-back girder and showing less than two feet above the surface.

"We ought not to be far from the spot now," remarked the skipper after an hour had elapsed. "Do you make anything of it?"

Dick, who had borrowed a razor from an obliging officer and had removed his moustache and stubbly beard, was carefully examining the image in the object-bowl of the periscope. It revealed a seemingly unbroken coast, backed by two lofty mountains, one of which was serrated on its western side.

"That's the place," declared the Sub. "Those ridges are the terraces where we played a novel game of hide-and-seek. That hummock is where the Germans posted a sentry. The entrance is about a cable's length to the left of it."

"Very good; we'll close the shore a bit," said the Lieutenant-Commander; and signing to the quartermaster to starboard the helm till the vessel was eight points off her former course, he ordered speed to be reduced to five knots.

"It's a lucky job there are no currents in this part," commented the skipper. "By Jove, what a hole! and I thought I knew every yard of the coast between Kum Kale and Smyrna."

As the British submarine approached the shore the narrow entrance began to show itself in the form of a gap in the cliffs, backed by the high ground surrounding the inlet. Owing to the submarine's slow speed her periscope hardly made a ripple on the placid surface, yet officers and men were on thorns lest the German look-out would detect the phosphorescent swirl as the vertical metal tube forged gently through the water.

"Let's hope there isn't a bar here," muttered the skipper.

The words were hardly out of his mouth when a dull, rasping sound announced the unpleasant fact that the submarine was scraping over the shingly bottom. To reverse the motors to back off the ledge would mean instant detection.

Ten seconds of breathless suspense followed. During that time the submerged craft was still forging ahead, till without losing way she slid into deep water. She was safely within the secret haven.

"By Jove, I've got her! There she is!" exclaimed the Lieutenant-Commander.

It was now dawn, with sufficient light to discern the outlines of the *unterseeboot*. She had warped out from her inshore berth, and was now lying at anchor in about the same position as when Dick had first discovered her. Her deck was showing about two feet above the surface. Alongside was the Berthon boat with two men on board. On the submarine the only signs of life were a couple of seamen patrolling the limited extent of deck.

"Stand by—both tubes," ordered the Lieutenant-Commander. He was determined to take no risks of a miss.

The twenty-one-inch gleaming steel cylinders, set to the minimum depth, were already in the tubes. The torpedo gunner and his mate were grimly alert, grasping the ball-ended levers that were to liberate the charge of compressed air.

Slowly, ever so slowly, the British submarine swung to starboard, until her skipper knew that the fixed tubes were pointed straight towards their quarry.

"Ready—fire starboard!"

With a hiss as the air, hitherto compressed to two hundred pounds to the square inch, rushed from its compression chamber, the deadly missile sped on its way. Beyond the swish of the inrushing water that was automatically admitted to compensate the loss of weight caused by the speeding torpedo, not a sound broke the deadly stillness pervaded the interior of the submarine.

Four seconds later a dull roar betokened the fact that one torpedo was sufficient for the work of destruction.

"Blow main ballast tank," ordered the skipper.

No need for caution now. The victor could appear on the surface with impunity. She rose almost vertically, for she had almost lost way. With the water pouring in cascades from her steel deck she flung herself free from the encircling embrace of the sea, and curtsied to the morning air.

Hatches were quickly opened, and officers and men rushed on deck to see with their own eyes the result of their successful work.

Already the *unterseeboot* had vanished for the last time. An ever-widening circle of sullen water heavily tinged with oil, and surmounted by a cloud of pungent smoke that was slowly dispersing in the calm air, marked the spot where the luckless submarine had plunged to the bottom.

The canvas boat was still afloat. Some distance from the point of impact of the torpedo she had withstood the suction of the sinking vessel, and was now bobbing sluggishly to the undulations caused by the rebound of the disturbed water from the sides of the creek. The two German seamen, staring with wide-open eyes as if terrified by the appalling nature of the catastrophe, were crouching in the Berthon, while through the oil-spread water a third man was laboriously swimming towards her.

"We'll let them go," decided the skipper. "They can tell their pals of the convoy that their second journey is for nothing. Besides, under forthcoming conditions, we have no room for prisoners of war."

"There's another bloke, sir," sung out one of the crew. "He's pretty nigh done for, I'll allow."

The Lieutenant-Commander looked in the direction indicated. A fourth member of the complement of the ill-starred *unterseeboot* swimming listlessly and aimlessly. He was apparently in the last stages of exhaustion, and although his plight was observed by the men in the canvas boat, either they were too callous or too stunned by the after-effects of the catastrophe to attempt to row to his assistance.

"Is there plenty of water, Mr. Crosthwaite?" asked the skipper.

"Plenty, sir."

"Easy ahead," ordered Huxtable. "Stand by with a line, men."

Slowly the submarine approached the drowning man. Too much way would not only be a detriment to his rescue, but would hazard the safety of the vessel.

Two coils of rope were hurled at the luckless German, but although both fell almost within arm's length of him he made no effort to grasp them.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Farnworth, "he's blind."

"He's going!" shouted a man. "If he gets his head under the oil he'll never come up again."

"Bravo!" exclaimed the skipper as a brawny bluejacket kicked off his sea-boots and, without attempting to rid himself of his fearnought coat and sweater, plunged overboard.

A dozen strokes brought him to the wellnigh unconscious Teuton. Seizing the fellow by the collar, his rescuer towed him alongside the submarine, where willing hands hauled both on deck, the German muttering and gibbering incoherently, not knowing whether he was in the hands of friend or foe.

"Lay on your oars!" shouted the Lieutenant-Commander in German to the men in the Berthon, who were now beginning to pull for the shore.

They only redoubled their efforts; and it was not until the submarine overhauled the boat, and ranged up so close that there was not room to swing an oar, that the Germans sullenly obeyed the summons to surrender.

Their astonishment was great when their disabled comrade was carefully lowered into the boat and they were told to push off. Promptly they obeyed, but as soon as they gained the beach the unwounded men leapt out and hastened up the mountain path. Before a projecting rock hid them from sight they stopped and made derisive gestures at their humane foes, then they vanished from sight.

The skipper shrugged his shoulders.

"Kultur," he remarked. "Those are the fellows who, had we been struggling for dear life, would have jeered at our despairing efforts."

"But what can you expect from a navy that has no honourable traditions, sir?" asked Dick.

CHAPTER XIV

Through Unseen Perils

The submarine's Lieutenant-Commander sent one wireless message prior to starting on his dash for the Sea of Marmora. Under the circumstances it was desirable, in spite of the chance of its being intercepted by the enemy.

The message was to the Admiral, to the effect that, acting upon information supplied by Sub-Lieutenant Richard Crosthwaite, of H.M.S. *Hammerer*, who with Midshipman Farnworth succeeded in effecting his escape from the enemy, the officer commanding H.M. Submarine "E—" succeeded in torpedoing and destroying a German *unterseeboot* in the neighbourhood of Smyrna; and that he was in possession of information that suggested the anticipated arrival of other German submarines from their North Sea bases.

Back came the reply:

"Admiral heartily congratulates officer commanding 'E—' on his brilliant exploit, and Sub-lieutenant Crosthwaite and Midshipman Farnworth on their escape."

"Good!" ejaculated Lieutenant-Commander Huxtable. "Unship the wireless mast. We won't need that again until we've done something to shake the Turks up."

Running awash, the submarine skirted the shore till the outlines of Kum Kale appeared in sight. Then diving to a depth of eight fathoms, in order to be well clear of the keels of any British battleships cruising in the vicinity, she headed for The Narrows.

With a suddenness peculiar to the Mediterranean a strong wind had sprung up, causing a

heavy sea to run at the entrance to the Dardanelles, and as a result the submarine jumped violently in a vertical direction as each wave passed forty to sixty feet above her.

"Thank goodness it won't be for long," remarked the skipper. "It's the current against the wind that makes such a beast of a jump. I wouldn't like to tackle the anchored mines with this tumble on; but you'll find we'll pick up smooth water as soon as we leave Eski Hissarlik on our port quarter."

For three hours the submarine literally groped her way, running at seven knots against a current the velocity of which is rarely less than five. At the end of that interval she showed her periscope with the utmost diffidence. An observation revealed Kephez Point broad on the starboard beam, and the battered fort of Kilid Bahr a couple of points on the port bow.

"We've fouled something, sir," reported the Acting Sub-lieutenant of the submarine, a youngster but recently promoted from midshipman.

"By Jove, we have!" agreed his superior officer, as he glanced through the small observation-scuttle in the side of the conning-tower. "Awkward—confoundedly awkward!"

He was seriously annoyed; not at the immediate danger, but at the failure of his device to ward off obstructions; for in ascending the submarine had risen immediately underneath the anchor-chamber of a mine that had broken adrift, but still retained the metal box containing the depth-regulating mechanism. The anchor-chamber had engaged on the inside of the starboard girder, and what was more, a length of loose rope had trailed aft and was almost within the sweep of one of the twin propellers. In another few seconds the rope would be wound round and round the boss as tightly as a steel hawser.

Promptly the electric motors were switched off. For the time being one danger was averted. It remained to shake the submarine clear of the powerful charge of explosive that was hitched up within seven feet of the conning-tower. One slight tap on one of the many sensitive "feelers" of the mine would result in the total destruction of the submarine and her daring crew.

"Flood auxiliary ballast-tanks," ordered the Lieutenant-Commander.

Slowly, as the water hissed into the strong steel compartments, the submarine sank in a vertical direction. For the nonce her diving-rudders were useless. She was stationary as far as movement in a horizontal direction was concerned.

The officers anxiously watched the hand of the steel indicating the depth. At twelve fathoms the downward movement ceased. The Lieutenant-Commander had hoped that the buoyancy of the mine would release the anchor-chamber from the steel girder that in this instance had proved to be a source of danger rather than a protection; but no—the submerged vessel had drawn both anchor-chamber and mine beneath the surface.

"Prepare to anchor—let go!"

With a sullen roar, intensified by the confined space, the stockless anchor was released from its "housing" at the forward end of the keel. Suddenly the studded-linked cable "snubbed" as the flukes obtained a hold; then, anchored at fifteen fathoms beneath the surface, the submarine fretted easily at her cable in the five-knot current.

Again the Lieutenant-Commander peered through the scuttle. At that depth the light that filtered through the water was just and only just sufficient to enable him to discern the deadly object still clinging tenaciously to the submerged craft. Under the action of the current it tilted ominously, though fortunately not sufficiently for any of the projecting "feelers" to come in contact with the metal plating of the anchored submarine.

"We'll stand easy," remarked the skipper to his augmented group of officers. "We're safe enough for the present, only it's a wicked waste of valuable time. As soon as it gets dark we'll ascend and cut the blessed thing adrift."

Half an hour later the officers were sitting down to a hot meal cooked on an electric grill. The repast over, Lieutenant-Commander Huxtable turned to his companion and coolly suggested a hand at bridge.

Dick took a hand with the three executive officers of the submarine, but his luck was out. He could not concentrate his mind upon the game. His eyes were constantly wandering. Almost every minute he glanced at the clock, the hands of which appeared to move with exasperating slowness.

"Come, come!" exclaimed the Lieutenant-Commander. "You'll be cleared out if we go on playing for another hour. Pull yourself together, man."

But the encouragement was thrown away, for although the three submarine officers played with the greatest enthusiasm, Dick made a sorry show.

"Hanged if I can play, sir!" he declared. "I wonder how you can, with that mine alongside."

"You'd soon get used to it," replied the Lieutenant-Commander. "I don't mind admitting that we all feel a bit jumpy at first, but it passes off. But it's after sunset. We'll see what we can do directly we've finished this round—your deal, partner."

The game over, the Lieutenant-Commander returned to his post in the conning-tower. He was hoping against hope that during the interval the buoyancy of the mine might have been sufficient to break the already rotten rope, but on flashing a powerful electric torch through the glass of the scuttle the formidable cylinder could still be discerned.

The order was given to weigh, and under the action of an electric winch the cable came home fathom by fathom until the anchor was once more housed in the recess provided. No longer held, the submarine was drifting backwards in the steady current.

"Blow auxiliary tanks."

Quickly the water ballast was dispelled from the supplementary tanks, and relieved of this weight the vessel slowly rose until her conning-tower and deck were awash.

Opening the hatch, the Lieutenant-Commander, accompanied by a petty officer and a leading seaman, gained the open air, and at once proceeded to remove the deadly mine.

There was a certain amount of reflected glow from the search-light that, once their eyes grew accustomed to the comparative darkness, enabled them to see fairly distinctly.

Clambering cautiously along the horizontal strut that strengthened the curved girder, the men made a careful survey of the metal cylinder before attempting to handle it. Apparently it had been in the water for some weeks, for barnacles and slimy weeds were adhering to its surface. The "horns" or "feelers" were, fortunately, pointing away from the hull of the submarine; nevertheless the task of disengaging the mine without allowing it to scrape or jam against any form of solid resistance was fraught with danger. A slight tap upon one of those numerous spike-like projections would result in death to every man on board.

Examination proved that not only was the mine with its attendant anchor-chamber entangled by means of a hempen rope, but a length of wire had stubbornly intertwined itself round a portion of the girder, so that the mine, swinging towards the metal hull, was practically midway between it and the curved side of the vessel.

"A hack-saw there," ordered the Lieutenant-Commander. "Oil it well, or the rasping will give the show away."

The required tool was quickly forthcoming, and the two men tackled their dangerous task. For twenty minutes they worked desperately, momentarily expecting to be "picked up" by the search-lights that were playing ominously close to the dark-grey hull of the submarine.

"Through, sir," announced one of the men breathlessly. "Shall we topple it over?"

"No, no," replied the skipper hurriedly. "Are you quite sure that everything's clear?"

"Aye, aye, sir."

The mine was now held in position only by the triangle formed by the girder, its horizontal brace, and a two-inch teak plank placed diagonally across the metal work. Fortunately the sea was now calm and the submarine's motion barely perceptible.

"Diving-stations," ordered Huxtable. "It's neck or nothing."

The water-tight hatches were closed and secured, and water admitted into the ballast tanks, both main and auxiliary, for it was her commander's intention to submerge the submarine in a vertical position without having recourse to the use of the propeller and diving-planes. In sinking, the submarine, he hoped, would be automatically freed of its dangerous encumbrance, since the buoyancy of the mine would float it clear when the craft was completely submerged.

Instinctively Dick shut his jaw tightly as he heard the hiss of the water pouring into the tanks. He fully realized the delicate operation, for a list of any magnitude would result in the mine toppling over from its insecure perch as it did so. It was not pleasant to realize that he was in a hermetically sealed steel box with a dangerous neighbour in the shape of seventy-six pounds of gun-cotton.

He glanced at the Lieutenant-Commander, who was peering anxiously through the slit in the conning-tower, and although he moved not a muscle the perspiration was standing out in beads on his temples.

Presently he turned his head.

"At that!" he ordered, addressing the men standing by the valve of the ballast chamber. "Turn horizontal rudders to ten degrees down. Half speed ahead."

A gasp of relief echoed through the confined space. The men gave a cheer. They understood:

one danger had been successfully combated.

The steady thud of the throttled-down motors alone imparted the sense of motion as the submarine, fifty feet beneath the surface, resumed her blind grope up The Narrows.

Twice only during the negotiation of that intricate passage did the Lieutenant-Commander show the top of the periscope above water. The first observation revealed the feet that Nagara was well on the starboard hand, and that an alteration of helm was necessary to avoid piling the submerged craft upon shoals that, owing to the irregularity of coast-line, were directly ahead.

The second convinced Huxtable that the course was now practically a straight one for the Sea of Marmora as far as direction went; but he knew that in that stretch of water which lay between him and the inland sea were at least six rows of anchored electro-contact mines.

"A vessel on our port bow, sir," declared Dick, who before the submarine could submerge her periscope had glanced into the object-bowl. It was a picture of darkness which met his eye, but across that expanse of dull leaden colour, that indicated a blend of sea and sky on a rainy night, he had detected a still darker object travelling slowly across the "field" of the periscope, the "iris" of which was opened to its fullest extent in order to admit the maximum amount of light, which was very small.

"A torpedo-boat," decided the Lieutenant-Commander after a brief survey. "She would make an easy target, but we'll let her go. It would mean betraying our presence, and that would never do. One thing she's taught us, that is that the passage through the next mine-field is hard against the Asiatic side. We'll let her pass, and then pick up her wake."

The Turkish torpedo-boat was evidently bound from the neighbourhood of Nagara for the Bosphorus. She was steaming at fifteen knots and, judging by the clouds of black smoke tinged with dark-red and orange flames, was under forced draught.

Unsuspectingly the boat held on her course, little thinking that within two cables' length of her a British submarine was following the phosphorescent swirl that marked her track. Either the men of her watch on deck were lax in their duties or else they devoted their attention to keeping a look-out ahead and abeam, for the cascade of foam that marked the swiftly-moving periscope passed unnoticed.

Ready at the first alarm to tilt the horizontal diving-rudders, Huxtable conned the submarine. He was in high spirits, for the thought that an enemy torpedo-boat was acting as a pilot amused and elated him. Although prepared to take the risk of diving under the mine-field, he fully admitted his preference to be conducted in safety through the danger-zone.

Once the torpedo-boat sharply ported her helm. For the moment it seemed as if the submarine had been spotted, but since no shell was fired from the Turkish craft the Lieutenant-Commander surmised that the change of course had been rendered necessary by the intricacies of the secret passage through the mine-field.

Allowing sufficient distance the submarine followed suit, until the torpedo-boat swung round on her former course. She had cleared the danger-zone, and her imitator had done likewise.

Slowly but surely the Turkish craft was out-distancing the invisible submarine, whose utmost limit when submerged was not equal to that of the torpedo-boat. Half an hour later all traces of her had disappeared. Even the churned wake had blended utterly with the surrounding waves.

The submarine was now about to enter the Sea of Marmora. The search-lights of Gallipoli were broad on the port beam. On the port bow a row of flickering lights marked the camp-fires in the Bulair lines. A triple row of anchored mines had to be avoided before the British craft was clear of the upper reaches of the Dardanelles.

Down she went till the gauge indicated a depth of fifty-five feet, then regaining an even keel she forged slowly ahead, deliberately feeling her way through the black water.

A peculiar rasping, muffled sound attracted Dick's attention. The Lieutenant-Commander heard it too. The two men exchanged glances.

"One line passed," announced Huxtable when the noise ceased. "That was the mooring wire of one of the mines scraping along our protective girders."

Ten seconds later came a similar sound, this time overhead. The submarine was passing under a horizontal bridle connecting two mines.

The arched girder saved her, for had the obstruction caught in the for'ard end of the conning-tower or the housed periscope, the "way" of the vessel would have swung the two mines together with annihilating effects. As it was, the Lieutenant-Commander merely depressed the boat's bows, and without any trouble the submerged craft glided underneath the cable of death.

"Two!" ejaculated the skipper laconically.

Dick's spirits rose rapidly. After all, he reasoned, diving under mines was an exciting form of

sport, with very little danger. The operation seemed far less hazardous than running the gauntlet of The Narrows in the *Calder*.

Suddenly came the dull roar of an explosion. The submarine heeled dangerously, and quivered till it seemed that her plating was on the point of buckling.

Instinctively Crosthwaite grasped the hand-rail of the steel ladder leading to the conning-tower hatch-way. In any case it was a futile action, since there was no possible escape that way. He momentarily expected to hear the rush of water, driven under tremendous pressure into the shattered hull.

The submarine had come in contact with a mine.

CHAPTER XV

Disabled

Not a sound came from the lips of the crew. Holding on to what came nearest to hand, they steadied themselves until the submerged craft ceased her violent motion. To add to the horror of the situation, the concussion had broken most of the electric lamps, and practically the whole of the interior of the submarine was plunged into darkness, save for the fitful sparking of the electric motors.

Yet there was no irresistible inrush of the sea. Somewhere aft could be distinguished the hiss of water as a thin stream forced its way through a strained seam.

"She's stood it, lads!" exclaimed the Lieutenant-Commander cheerily.

Producing an electric torch from his pocket the skipper flashed it on the depth gauge. The indicator registered seventy feet, and the vessel was still descending.

"Stop both engines!" he ordered. "Blow auxiliary tanks!"

Slowly the downward movement ceased, and upon regaining a depth of sixty feet the order was given to "stand by".

"Starboard horizontal rudder has jibbed, sir," announced one of the crew.

"Bow diving-planes all right?" asked Huxtable.

"I think so, sir."

"Very good. Hello! There's the fun about to commence."

The remark was caused by the muffled sounds of bursting shell. The Turks, alarmed by the explosion, had opened a frantic fire upon the spot where the column of water, hurled high in the air by the detonation, had subsided.

"Let them waste their precious ammunition!" remarked the Lieutenant-Commander grimly. "We're as safe as houses here."

"Except that we haven't a back door," thought Dick, whose views upon the subject of mine-dodging had undergone a sudden and complete change.

Meanwhile one of the engine-room artificers had been busily engaged in fitting new lamps. Fortunately, none of the electric wiring had been damaged, and in a short space of time the interior of the submarine was once more flooded with light.

Already the leak had been stopped, while examination showed that no serious damage had been done to the plating or framework.

"Can't understand how a mine was submerged to that depth," remarked Devereux, the Acting Sub-lieutenant of the submarine, to Dick, "unless it had become partially water-logged. We must have hit it fair and square. The skipper's patent gadget saved us."

"It won't do so again—at least, on the port side," said Dick. "I guess it's blown to blazes."

"Well, we'll see presently," rejoined Devereux. "When the Turks have finished this rumpus and we're a little farther on our weary way, we're going to ascend for a breather. It may be the last chance for a couple of days or so."

An hour later, having penetrated well into the Sea of Marmora, the skipper gave orders for

the vessel to be brought awash. It wanted one hour and forty-five minutes to sunrise, so that in order to take advantage of the dark, the breathing-space had to be limited to three-quarters of an hour—unless suddenly curtailed by the approach of any hostile craft.

The crew assembled on deck in watches, every man drinking in the pure night air—not that the atmosphere 'tween decks was impure, for, thanks to the chemical processes to safeguard the crew, the air was wholesome and capable of being endured without discomfort for days, should occasion arise. Nevertheless the gallant and daring men lost no chance of getting into the open air: for one reason, it economized the oxygen purifiers; for another, the men never knew when a similar chance might occur again.

While the submarine was running on the surface, thereby saving the dynamos, since she was being propelled by the petrol engines, opportunity was taken to examine the damage caused by the explosion of the mine.

It was found that one of the fore-and-aft girders had been shattered for a length of nearly fifteen feet, and some of the connecting braces and struts had been twisted and buckled. In addition, one of the horizontal rudders had been bent almost to a semicircle, a fact that accounted for the submarine's failure to maintain a given depth without use of the auxiliary ballast.

"Your device saved us, sir," remarked Crosthwaite. "Close contact with that mine would have pulverized the plating."

"Yes, it has," assented Huxtable. "But unfortunately it wouldn't serve its purpose a second time if we found a mine in the same spot. More than that, the shattered girder is an encumbrance. Instead of warding off the mooring wire of an anchored mine, that jagged projection would foul it, for a moral cert. It will have to come off while we've a chance. We must also unship the damaged rudder and do our best to bend it straight again. If we cannot, it would be better to do without it, and rely upon the port horizontal rudder and the two bow diving-planes."

"Will it interfere with the manoeuvring of the vessel?" asked Dick.

"Certainly, but only to a certain extent. We won't be able to dive so promptly, but that is all. Needless to say I would rather get the thing ship-shape, if it can be done."

While the artificers were busily engaged in cutting away the after portion of the damaged girder, and rounding off the broken part that terminated nearly abaft the after quick-firing gun, others of the crew rigged up a pair of sheerlegs and proceeded to unship the injured rudder, the engines being stopped and the submarine trimmed by its head to enable this to be done.

It was soon evident that the men at their disposal were not sufficient to straighten out the buckled plate. It was a job which would have to be undertaken at Malta Dockyard, should the submarine have the good fortune to return from her hazardous mission.

"Hard lines!" muttered Huxtable. Then aloud he exclaimed: "Pass the thing below, lads; what can't be cured must be endured."

The useless rudder was lowered through the torpedo hatch, all lights below being switched off during the operation, lest a stray beam should reveal the presence of the British craft to an alert hostile ship or battery.

Presently one of the artificers appeared and saluted the Lieutenant-Commander.

"Is that you, Parsons?" asked the latter, for in the gloom he was unable to distinguish the petty officer's features.

"Yes, sir," replied the artificer. "I'd like to make a suggestion, sir, about that damaged rudder."

"Carry on, then."

"We've a piece of steel plating in the engine-room—a part of the floor over the lubricating-oil tanks. It's just about the size of the rudder—a question of a few inches either way at the very outside. I thought we might perhaps drill it, and use the braces that came off the old rudder."

"How long will it take you?" asked the skipper.

"A matter of twenty minutes to drill the holes, sir, and say another twenty to ship the thing and connect up the rods."

"Good—carry on!" said Huxtable encouragingly.

The artificer hurried below, and, assisted by willing hands, proceeded with the self-imposed task. The work had to be done as silently as possible, lest the noise, travelling far on the quiet night air, should betray their presence.

"Capital man that!" remarked the Lieutenant-Commander to Dick. "I wouldn't mind betting a month's pay that he'll turn out the complete job before the elapse of the time he mentioned. Otherwise I wouldn't care to let him tackle it, for it will be dawn very soon. Fortunately, it looks a bit misty. I shouldn't be surprised if we have a thick haze when the sun rises, in which case we can afford to keep on the surface a little longer."

His prognostics were correct, for with the first blush of dawn a low-lying layer of vapour began to roll across the surface of the sea. The submarine, rendered invisible even at a short distance, was fairly safe from surprise, since the sound-conducting properties of moisture-laden atmosphere would enable her crew to detect the approach of another vessel by the thud of her engines long before she came within observation.

"May as well enjoy a smoke, Crosthwaite," remarked Huxtable, producing a cigarette-case. "It's a good chance, since it's too light for the glimmer of a cigarette to be detected, even if there were no mists hanging about. Mr. Devereux, you might pass the word for the hands on deck to smoke."

Gladly the thoughtful concession on the part of the skipper was acted upon. The men, producing pipes and cigarettes, fully appreciated the order, since smoking and the use of matches were rigidly forbidden down below, owing to the danger of petrol fumes.

Presently the sun rose above the hills on the Asiatic shore, shedding streaks of crimson across the eastern sky. Athwart the rays wisps of ragged clouds and "wind-galls" betokened rough weather at no distant date.

"I hear we're having a shot at Constantinople, sir," remarked Farnworth to Dick. "Mr. Devereux has been telling me that we're also going to have a look at Scutari. Won't the Turks have a surprise!"

"Naturally," replied Dick. "And we've a lot in our favour. They'll take it for granted that a Russian submarine has been operating from the Black Sea, and consequently they will devote all their energies to preventing her return through the Bosphorus. That will give us a rattling good chance to get back without being detected. By the by, how are you feeling—fit?"

"Spiffing!" replied the midshipman. "I really must have a shot for the submarine branch after this. The only thing I feel I want to do is to stretch my legs."

"I should have thought you had enough of that when we tramped over the hills from Medjidieh," remarked the Sub.

"That's just it—too much at one time and not enough the next. The result is that I'm as stiff as blazes for want of homeopathic treatment."

The midshipman, who, like his brother officer, had taken an early opportunity to discard his captured German uniform, was arrayed in a pair of trousers belonging to Devereux—which fitted only where they touched—and a sweater. Yet, strangely enough, the cap lent him by the Acting Sub of the submarine was much too small for him, owing to the fact that his head had not regained its normal size after the blow he had received on the occasion of the "little scrap" in Yenikeui Bay.

With some minutes to the good, Parsons re-appeared on deck and reported that the rudder was ready to be shipped. With the aid of half a dozen seamen, the metal plate was whipped on deck and taken aft. Here, by dint of working up to their knees in water, the artificers succeeded in bolting it in position, and the preliminary trial of the actuating rods gave promise of success.

"Excellent, Parsons!" declared the Lieutenant-Commander warmly. "I'll take advantage of the first opportunity and report to the Admiral upon your zeal and ingenuity."

Ordering the hands to their stations, Huxtable brought the craft awash and had the motors re-started. At a modest five knots, since speed was no object, the submarine resumed her course. Huxtable's plan was to submerge as soon as Prince's Island—one of a group about ten or twelve miles to the south-east of the Ottoman capital—came in sight, and remain on the bed of the sea until daybreak on the following day. Then, taking advantage of the early light, he would approach, with the periscope frequently showing, until he "spotted" his prey—which he hoped would be the recreant German battle-cruiser *Goeben*, or, failing that, the *Breslau*.

About mid-day Prince's Island hove in sight. The submarine, having taken her bearings, dived to avoid a fleet of feluccas evidently engaged in fishing; for only upon the supposedly impregnable Sea of Marmora did the Turkish fishermen—all of them too old to be called upon to serve in the Ottoman navy—dare to ply their business. The fear of Russian destroyers had long before swept the Black Sea clear of all Turkish merchantmen and small craft.

"May as well have a look round before we dive," declared Huxtable, as the submarine reached her desired temporary resting-place. "The sun's right behind us, and the glare will effectually prevent anyone on shore from spotting our periscope. I'm rather curious to know what that square tower is, and whether it is armed."

Two hundred yards only from the lurking submarine the shore rose with comparative steepness from the sea. According to the chart there was a depth of eight fathoms up to within twenty yards of the south side of the island, and owing to a faint southerly current, caused by the discharge of the pent-up waters of the Bosphorus into the wide expanse of the Sea of Marmora, the water in the vicinity of the group of islands was thick, and tinged with a sandy deposit, rendering it well adapted for purposes of submarine concealment.

Dead ahead was a small creek, on the eastern side of which was an old stone tower, about thirty feet in height and capped by a loopholed parapet. On this flew the Ottoman Crescent, while the sun glinted upon the bayonet of a befezzed sentry as he leisurely paced the ground in front of the low gateway. At the water's edge below the tower was a rough wooden pier of less than twenty yards in length. It was in a very decrepit condition, for several of the piles were raking at alarming angles, while the single handrail in several places had broken away from its supports.

Even as the officers of the submarine kept the tower and its vicinity under observation the sentry began to show signs of alacrity. He shouted something—although no sound reached the confined space of the submerged vessel—and pointed sea-wards. Instantly Huxtable grasped the wheel of the diving gear, at the same time ordering the men to "stand by".

But it was not on account of the submarine that the Turkish sentry gave the alarm, for other soldiers, to the number of about a dozen, appeared and pointed seawards, but not in the direction of the lurking craft. One of them entered the tower, and presently hoisted a signal from the stumpy flagstaff.

Training the periscope astern, the Lieutenant-Commander discovered the reason for the excitement ashore. A small paddle-steamer was approaching from the direction of the Bosphorus.

"A representative of the Ottoman navy," said Huxtable with a laugh. "Etiquette demands that we should not intrude, so we'll make ourselves scarce."

Quickly, yet with hardly a swirl to denote her position, the submarine sank to the bed of the Sea of Marmora. Ten minutes later the dull thud of the steamer's paddles announced the fact that she was passing almost over her unsuspected enemy.

"We'll have another squint at her," decided the skipper. "It will be fairly safe to do so, since the Turks will be fully occupied with the visit of the vessel."

As soon as the periscope showed a foot above the water the Lieutenant-Commander took a lengthy survey. Then he turned to Crosthwaite, who was the only other officer standing by the bowl of the periscope.

"What do you make of that?" he asked.

Dick looked. The steamer was now berthed at the head of the pier, on which stood a Turkish lieutenant and the file of sun-helmeted soldiers, all with rifles and fixed bayonets. Passing up the gangway were several men dressed in naval uniforms, while at their heels came more Ottoman soldiers.

"Our men!" exclaimed Dick.

"I think so, too," replied Huxtable, "but I am not absolutely certain. They are prisoners, that is quite evident."

The distance was too great to enable either of the two officers to distinguish details, but the captives were not Frenchmen: the absence of the red tuft on their caps told that. They might be Russians, but it was impossible to see whether they wore the blue-and-white jerseys that would in that case take the place of the flannel "pneumonia catchers" worn by the British bluejacket. All the men wore beards, but, as Dick knew by personal experience, that might be owing to being held in captivity for several weeks without facilities for shaving.

As soon as the prisoners were ashore a Turkish officer came off the steamer and engaged in conversation with the lieutenant in charge of the little garrison. A document, apparently a list of the prisoners, changed hands, and the two officers parted, the former returning on board, while the lieutenant leisurely followed the men who were escorting the prisoners towards the tower.

The steamer showed no signs of casting off. She strongly resembled the old Thames paddle-wheelers of thirty years or more ago; but a couple of Krupp quick-firers were mounted behind light steel shields—one for'ard, the other aft. As she rolled sluggishly in the slight swell it could be seen that the vessel's hull below the water-line was thickly covered with weeds.

"A study in contrasts, sir," observed Dick. "Quick-firers and wireless installation on board a ramshackle paddle-wheeler."

"M'yes," admitted Huxtable automatically, for his attention was centred upon the progress of the little band of captives.

Closely guarded, they were marched into the tower. Only five soldiers went with them; the

rest, having piled arms, either strolled back to the pier or else made for a long, low building that served as a barracks.

Once more the submarine descended, for the steamer began to show signs of activity. The rhythmic beats of her paddles as she passed overhead gave Huxtable an inspiration.

"I'll follow her, by Jove!" he exclaimed. "Ten to one she's going back to Constantinople. It's too good a chance to lose!"

CHAPTER XVI

A Daring Stroke

The Lieutenant-Commander's decision was a sound one. By following the slowly-moving Turkish steamer, maintaining her distance solely by the noise of the latter's paddles, the submarine could keep entirely submerged and yet be led towards a recognized anchorage in the Ottoman navy. It only remained to be seen whether the steamer was making for Constantinople or not. In any case the submarine would be miles nearer her destination by nightfall; but, if the Turkish vessel were bound for the Golden Horn, Huxtable meant to attack at the first opportunity, without waiting for dawn, and trust to the ensuing confusion following the complete surprise to effect his escape.

Twenty minutes elapsed. Huxtable's face began to grow long, for the compass course showed that the submarine was being led in a direction S.S.E. Was it possible, he asked himself, that the wretched little paddle-boat was making for Nagara or some of the other Dardanelles forts?

"I'll hang on for another ten minutes," he declared. "Then, if the steamer still persists in going in the opposite direction to the one I wish, I'll decline to have any more truck with her."

"She's turning," exclaimed Dick. "She's ported her helm."

"Good!" ejaculated the Lieutenant-Commander, as the submarine swung round till her bow pointed due north. "Now that is much more reasonable."

During the next hour the steamer zigzagged considerably. It was safe to conclude that she was threading her way through the intricate minefield that guarded the southern outlet of the Bosphorus.

A long-drawn-out wail upon the syren of the Turkish vessel, followed by four shrill blasts, announced that she was approaching her anchorage. Dearly would Huxtable have liked to bring the periscope of his craft to the surface, but he resolutely resisted the temptation.

The unwitting pilot was slowing down; it was time for the submarine to "part company", for the water was shoaling considerably. To follow the steamer farther would result in the British craft being exposed to the danger of being rammed by passing vessels, since the needle of the depth-indicator was already hovering around thirty-five feet.

"I might have guessed that she would not be likely to bring up in deep water," remarked the Lieutenant-Commander to Dick, referring to the steamer, the paddle-beats of which were growing fainter and fainter. "It was a chance, of course, but it didn't exactly come off."

"At any rate she piloted us in very nicely," said Crosthwaite.

"If we are in the Golden Horn, yes," admitted Huxtable. "But are we? All we can do is to wait until just after sunset, and then take a quick look round. The place seems too jolly quiet for Constantinople. I haven't heard the thud of an engine since we dropped the steamer, or the steamer dropped us—whichever way you like to take it."

In order to make doubly certain that there was no maritime traffic in the vicinity, the Lieutenant-Commander enjoined silence for the space of five minutes. With his ear against the concave side of the submarine's hull he waited and listened intently. Not a sound was to be heard, for already the British craft's motors had been switched off, and she was now lying motionless in ten fathoms on the bed of the sea.

Slowly the hours passed until the time of sunset drew near, then once more the crew were called to their stations. As coolly as if engaged in evolutions in the piping times of peace the Lieutenant-Commander gave his orders.

"Charge firing-tank; flood torpedo-tubes; stand by."

The men at the torpedo-tubes obeyed with alacrity, yet wonderingly, for the sanguineness of

their young skipper in ordering the torpedoes to be placed in the tubes before he was even certain that an enemy was in sight puzzled them.

Moving very slowly ahead, the submarine rose till her periscope just showed above the surface. Even Huxtable in his most optimistic mood did not expect the sight which met his gaze as he looked at the dazzling object-bowl of the periscope. There, clearly depicted, was a large cruiser flying the Turkish flag. She was within two hundred yards of the submarine, and at about a like distance from the northern shore of a broad creek. The cruiser was not in a position of defence. Her sun awnings were still rigged, her torpedo-nets not out; even her fo'c'sle and quarter-deck guns were trained fore and aft, and still had their tompions in the muzzles. Nor were there any signs that she had steam up.

"All clear, sir!" reported Sub-lieutenant Devereux, who, stationed at the supplementary periscope, had swept the limited horizon to certain that no hostile destroyer or patrol-boat in the vicinity.

"Both tubes—fire!" ordered the Lieutenant-Commander.

He made no attempt to dive as the two missiles left their tubes. He had sufficient reason to believe that the Turks would be too panic-stricken to attempt to fire at their assailant.

To his satisfaction he noted, as he watched the diverging white line of foam that marked the of the torpedoes, that both weapons were heading straight for the mark with a velocity almost approaching that of an express train.

A Turkish seaman on the fo'c'sle, gazing idly at the water, was the first of the crew of the warship to notice the impending danger. Even then he did not realize the situation, for the possibility of a torpedo fired from a submarine in strongly-guarded waters never occurred to him until the missiles were almost home.

He gave the alarm. The apathetic officers and seamen did nothing, for it would have been useless to attempt to ward off the blow; but in sheer panic they rushed to the side farthest from the approach of danger.

Both torpedoes struck almost simultaneously and within thirty feet of each other. The cruiser reeled as a double column of water was hurled into the air to a height of nearly two hundred feet. Almost before the artificial waterspout had subsided the ship was settling rapidly by the stern.

Even then Huxtable made no attempt to dive. He was content to keep the periscope above the level of the sea and to watch the disappearance of the stricken vessel.

Not a shot was fired from the cruiser. The whole energies of officers and crew were diverted towards their own safety. Panic prevailed, for in their mad rush to launch the remaining boats men fought each other, their shouts of anger and shrieks of despair outvying the hiss of the escaping air from the confined spaces of the sinking ship. Others, without being given orders, leapt overboard and swam for the shore, till the intervening stretch of water was dotted with the heads of the terrified swimmers.

"What a contrast to the sinking of the *Ocean*!" thought Dick. "Here they are in fairly shallow water and within easy distance from land, and yet they must fight each other like brutes."

"Destroyers and patrol-boats approaching, sir," reported Devereux, who was still sweeping the limited expanse of view through the after-periscope.

"Very good," replied the Lieutenant-Commander. Then turning to Dick he added: "I'm jolly glad. We'll have a run for our money, for, hang it! though war is war, one cannot help feeling just a little sorry to have to sneak up and torpedo an unsuspecting craft."

"She would have sent us to the bottom without the faintest compunction if she had had the ghost of a chance, sir," replied Dick. "I don't think we need have anything upon our consciences."

"Well, we'll have to be moving," remarked Huxtable, who was taking a leisurely survey of his surroundings.

The cruiser had now sunk. Only the tops of her funnels and her masts were visible. She had been lying at anchor in a fairly broad and widening channel, the shores of which on both sides were dotted with picturesque kiosks, half hidden in clusters of cypress and olive trees. Beyond the visible relics of the torpedoed ship and the still distant Turkish patrol-craft, there was nothing to denote the presence of war conditions.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Huxtable. "We're miles up the Golden Horn. Those are the houses of Pera we can see in the distance. That paddle-steamer must have piloted us through the bridge of boats between the capital and Galata. Crosthwaite, my boy, we've beaten all records—and we've got to get back."

He gave the order to dive. Before the periscope had time to disappear a column of spray dashed up within twenty yards, as a shell from the nearest destroyer ricocheted and plunged

with disastrous results into an elegant summer resort on the bank of the Golden Horn.

Gently feeling her way, lest any large disturbance of the water should betray her position, the submarine made for the Bosphorus; but before she had covered a quarter of a mile she grounded on a bed of slimy mud.

Promptly the Lieutenant-Commander ordered the motors to be switched off. Any attempt to forge ahead would only succeed in churning up vast quantities of mud by the propellers. All that could be done for the time being was to lie low.

The thud of machinery announced to the crew that the Ottoman destroyers were cruising over their hiding-place, while muffled detonations at frequent intervals told them that the Turks were making use of explosive grapnels in the hope of locating and shattering the hull of the British submarine.

"That's a close one!" muttered Dick, as a sharp detonation resulted in nothing worse than making the submarine roll sluggishly on the mud. It was too close to be pleasant, for, although the water was thick with sediment and effectually precluded daylight from filtering through the observation scuttles, the explosion threw a short blinding flash into the interior of the conning-tower.

It was a time of acute peril and mental strain. At any moment one of the submerged charges of gun-cotton might be exploded actually in contact with the steel hull, the crew of which were helpless to raise even a finger in self-defence. But the expected did not happen. Apparently satisfied with the result of their operations, the Turkish destroyers and patrol-boats steamed off, and quietude reigned once more on and under the waters of the Golden Horn.

Huxtable was too wily a strategist to move prematurely. It was practically impossible to creep out of the tortuous channel while the submarine was completely submerged. The suspicions of the Turks being aroused, it was equally hazardous to show even a momentary glimpse of the periscope during the hours of daylight. He resolved to lie *perdu* until nightfall, and then to follow the first steamer that was making for the Bosphorus.

"Let's hope that a deep-draughted craft won't be coming down," he remarked. "There's less than twenty-four feet between the protection girder and the surface. This is one of the occasions when my device has obvious drawbacks."

"It won't hurt us if the steelwork is hit by a vessel's keel, sir," said Devereux.

"I don't know so much about that," objected the Lieutenant-Commander. "The sudden wrench might start some of our plates. In any case the ramming craft would stop to investigate."

"Unless she fancied that she'd fouled some of the wreckage of the cruiser we sank," said Dick.

"Let's hope the Turks will have no necessity to exercise their powers of discernment," said Huxtable. "In any case I want to do a little more damage before we're out of action. But," he added cheerfully, "I have a presentiment that we'll fetch back in safety."

Several hours passed in tedious suspense. Numerous steam vessels sped overhead or within hearing distance, for the thud, thud of their engines and the noise of the revolutions of their propellers could be distinctly heard.

"You'd better turn in," suggested Huxtable to Dick. "There's nothing doing, and you must be awfully tired."

"I feel a bit sleepy," admitted Crosthwaite; "but don't you think you ought to have forty winks, sir?"

"I suppose I'd feel all the better if I did," admitted the Lieutenant-Commander. "Devereux can take charge. He's had his watch below."

Enjoining the Sub-lieutenant of the submarine to call him at the first suspicion of danger, Huxtable pulled off his boots and rolled, just as he was, into his bunk, while Dick was soon fast asleep in the bed recently occupied by young Devereux.

It seemed as if he had not dozed for more than ten minutes when Dick was awakened by the purr of the submarine's electric motors. He started up. The officer's cabin was ablaze with light. Devereux, with a bundle of charts under his arm, was making his way along the narrow gangway between the double rows of bunks.

"Hello, old man!" he exclaimed. "Awake, eh?"

"What's the time?" asked Dick drowsily.

Devereux consulted his watch.

"Twenty-three minutes past two," he announced.

"Never!" ejaculated Crosthwaite incredulously. "Surely I haven't—"

"Yes, you have," interrupted Devereux with a laugh. "Seven and three-quarter hours of solid sleep! Sorry I disturbed you."

"You didn't," declared Dick. "It was the engines."

"We're on the move again," explained his companion. "We're following a small paddle-boat. Huxtable fancies it's the one that piloted us here. He may be right—he generally is. If so, it's a rare slice of luck. Look at young Farnworth. Submarine life apparently suits him, for he's doing his level best to sleep the clock round."

Just then a bell clanged. The Lieutenant-Commander's voice could be heard ordering the ballast tanks to be blown.

"I must be off," exclaimed Devereux. "It's action stations. Something's up."

Dick was out of his bunk in a trice, but before he gained the door he heard the order being given to charge both tubes.

The submarine was about to attack yet another victim.

CHAPTER XVII

Within Sight of Constantinople

Instinctively Dick Crosthwaite made his way to the conning-tower, where Lieutenant-Commander Huxtable was standing by the bowl of the periscope. The latter took no notice of his involuntary guest; his whole attention was centred upon the ill-defined patch of light that, momentarily growing brighter, showed that the submarine was on the point of rising to launch her fatal missiles.

The meaningless blurr upon the periscope bowl merged into detail, for the eye-piece was now above water. The period of exposure was but a few brief seconds, but it was sufficient to show a large Turkish transport moored alongside the Galata Quay, and in the act of shipping troops as fast as the men could pass along the gangways.

Huxtable rapped out an expression of annoyance. He had made the discovery that the submarine was in the clutches of a strong current. The chance, then, of "getting home" with a torpedo was doubly difficult, for already the British craft was well on the transport's quarter.

"Down to thirty-four; charge firing-tank; flood both torpedo-tubes; stand by!" he ordered, with hardly a break between the terse commands.

"All ready, sir," replied the leading torpedoman smartly.

For three minutes the submarine forged ahead diagonally against the current. The Lieutenant-Commander intended the range to be a short one.

"At fifteen feet. Fire!"

Barely had the torpedoes left the tubes when the submarine dived again. Swept by the current, in addition to the "easy ahead" movement of the motors, she rapidly left the scene of her latest activities, to the accompaniment of a hot fusillade. The Turkish gunners on the shore batteries were madly blazing away at every visible object of wreckage from the stricken troop-ship, while the British craft glided serenely out of the danger area.

Yet, in spite of the risk of being plugged by a shell, Huxtable felt compelled to have a look at the work of destruction. The transport was already on the bottom, with a pronounced list to starboard and away from the quayside. Hundreds of panic-stricken troops were lining her shoreward side or leaping frantically to land.

"At all events the survivors won't show up at the Dardanelles in a hurry," remarked Huxtable. "Now to save ourselves."

Down went the submarine to sixty feet, a course being shaped for the Bosphorus; but before the vessel had covered a distance of half a mile, a dull grating sound announced that she had run heavily upon a shingle bank.

Caught by the current her stern swung round, till, pinned broadside on by the rush of water, she lay rocking sluggishly on the bed of the sea. To obtain her bearings by means of the

periscope would mean destruction by the powerful shore batteries. To attempt to rise to clear the bank would result in the submarine being swept into shoal water before she could answer her helm. All that could be done was to deprive her of all her available controllable buoyancy, in order to resist the pressure of the surging stream, and await the horrors of darkness.

For defensive work in her proper role the submarine was now useless. She had fired her last pair of torpedoes. On the surface she might be able to put up a fight by means of her two quick-firers, but against destroyers and shore-batteries these weapons were quite inadequate.

Night drew on. With the setting of the sun powerful search-lights swept the Golden Horn to the Bosphorus, while the now alert Turkish gunners stood by their guns, ready at the first sight of a periscope to send the Giaours to Eblis, for there was a strong suspicion that the daring British craft would still be lurking in the vicinity in order to attempt another act of destruction.

"Time, I fancy," declared Huxtable, as the hands of the clock on the wall of the conning-tower pointed to the hour of midnight. Officers and men heaved a sigh of relief. Anything seemed better than lying motionless on the bed of the channel.

It was inexpedient to start the motors. The submarine must be raised under the influence of her reserve of buoyancy until there was no chance of her propeller blades being snapped off by contact with the shoal.

The periscope showed nothing beyond a confusing display of search-lights. Huxtable took the craft up still more until her conning-tower was awash. To his surprise he found that the submarine was drifting almost across the bows of a large coal-hulk, which was moored about two hundred yards from shore. A similar type of vessel lay fifty yards from, and abreast of, the hulk. Both craft, owing to their being practically denuded of coal—a commodity of which the Turks were greatly in need—towered high out of the water. There were no signs of ship-keepers. Darkness and solitude seemed to be in sole possession.

In a flash Huxtable realized that, if he could make fast alongside one of the hulks, the submarine would be in comparative shelter from the piercing rays of the search-lights, since the second hulk would screen his craft from the direct play of their beams.

It was a desperate move, but like most desperate operations its audacity almost promised success. With a slight, almost imperceptible shock, one of the protective girders encircling the submarine engaged the mooring chain of the hulk. Round swung the submarine, and before she could slip from the embrace of the heavy chain two of her crew, emerging through the fore-hatch, deftly bent a wire hawser to one of the links, and, cautiously checking the boat's way, succeeded in bringing her alongside the coaling craft.

No hail came from this vessel. The hulk was seemingly deserted. Having no supplies on board, the Turkish authorities did not see the necessity of keeping watchmen there, or else the ship-keepers had taken a chance of going ashore.

Huxtable's command was not a second too soon in bringing up alongside, for a search-light playing full upon the hulk silhouetted her outlines and threw a deep shadow athwart the submarine.

Lying at full length upon the wet deck, the two seamen awaited the order to cast off should necessity arise, while the Lieutenant-Commander, thrusting his head and shoulders through the conning-tower hatchway, made a deliberate survey of the limited expanse that met his gaze.

"Dashed if I know where we are," he exclaimed, for owing to the extinguishing of the recognized navigation lights, the almost total absence of lamps ashore, and above all the disconcerting glare of the search-lights, the skipper was unable to fix his position.

"May I have a look round, sir?" asked Dick. "I've put in part of a commission in these waters."

"Do so, by all means," replied Huxtable warmly. "Only take care you don't get spotted. If you are, make a blind rush for the conning-tower. Every second would be precious."

Clambering through the hatchway the Sub gained the limited space formed by the navigation platform. He, too, found that the hulls of the two hulks obstructed his view.

"I'll get on board this craft," said Dick, indicating the hulk alongside of which the submarine was lying. "It seems quite deserted."

"Carry on, then!" assented the Lieutenant-Commander; "but, mind you, we don't want to have to leave you behind."

"And I'm sure I don't want to be left," said Crosthwaite with a laugh. "I'll exercise caution."

The hulk was fitted with parallel rows of horizontal wooden ledges to serve as fenders. At whatever depth she drew—for her draught varied considerably according to the quantity of coal stowed on board—one of these fenders would always be in contact with any craft that happened to be lying alongside. Between the ledges were wooden ladders, to enable the ship-keepers to

board from a boat.

Carefully making his way along one of the struts that held the anti-mine-girder to the side of the submarine, Dick swung himself upon the nearest fender. Then, swarming up a ladder until his head was on a level with the hulk's upper deck, he took a careful survey.

The craft looked a picture of desolation. Unshipped derricks, tackle, and a confused heap of ropes littered the limited deck space, for the greater portion was taken up by uncovered hatches. Under the break of the poop hung a large drum, which in Ottoman vessels takes the place of a ship's bell. Close to it were a long-necked earthenware vessel and a platter. These were the only signs of human occupation. The watch-keepers, if they were still on board, must be either deaf or sound asleep.

With his boots crunching the thick deposit of coal-dust Dick crept aft, and, satisfying himself that the cabin under the poop was deserted, ascended the rickety ladder.

Here he was comparatively safe from detection by the search-lights, for the poop was enclosed by tow bulwarks.

"Ah, I know where we are," thought the Sub, as from his elevated position he caught sight of the dome of the Mosque of Omar and a cluster of minarets that, marking the position of Constantinople, stood out distinctly against the loom of the distant search-lights of the forts on the northern shores of the Sea of Marmora. "That's good enough."

He proceeded to retrace his footsteps. As Huxtable had said, every second was of importance. At any moment an inquisitive patrol-boat might put in an appearance under the stern of the hulk, and although the surprise might be mutual, the submarine would run a serious risk of being rammed unless the Turkish officer in charge lost his head completely.

Just as Dick was about to descend the poop-ladder, a giant beam of light was flung athwart the deck. It was a search-light from Kadi Kohr, one of the forts on the Scutari side of the Bosphorus. Instantly the Sub flung himself upon the coal-dusty deck. As he did so he became aware that in the waist of the hulk a Turk was intently peering over the side at the British submarine.

Apparently he was puzzled as to her nationality. It was quite possible that he had not heard anything concerning the sinking of the Ottoman cruiser and the transport. On the other hand, German submarines were hourly expected at Constantinople, yet there was no valid reason why one should stealthily make fast alongside a coaling-hulk. Coal was of no use to her.

Suddenly something aroused his suspicions. Running aft, the Turk snatched up a drumstick and began to belabour the drum with all the energy at his command.

Realizing that the "game was up" and that he must regain the submarine with all dispatch, Dick left his place of concealment and scurried down the poop-ladder. As he did so the watch-keeper sought to intercept him, brandishing an iron crowbar above his head. Down swept the formidable weapon, but by leaping nimbly aside the Sub avoided the blow. The next instant his fist struck the Turk a heavy blow on the point of the chin, stretching him senseless on the deck.

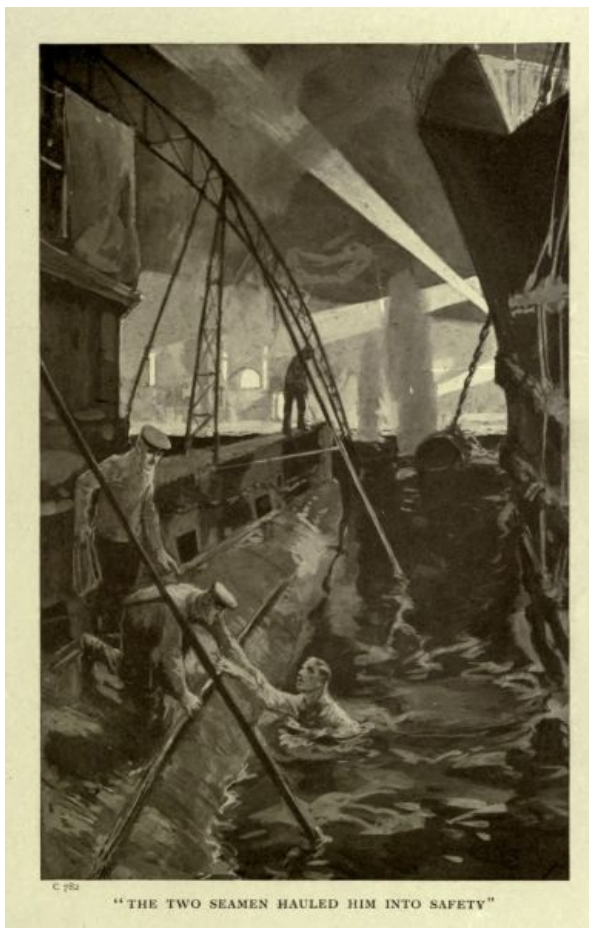
Then, for no apparent reason, Dick tore the drum from its support and hurled it over the side. It was a sort of satisfaction to get rid of the instrument that had raised the alarm.

By this time a dozen search-lights were concentrated on the coal-hulk, with the result that the submarine lying on the lee side was in even greater darkness.

Fumbling for the topmost rung of the ladder over the hulk's side, Dick sought to find a means of descending to the British craft. It was impossible to see where he was going. He had to rely solely upon his sense of touch.

"Hurry up there!" sang out the Lieutenant-Commander impatiently, for he could see Crosthwaite's form silhouetted against the blaze of electric light.

There was no time to be lost. Patrol-boats were already hastening to the scene. Judging his distance Dick leapt, falling into the sea between the submarine and the hulk, and fortunately missing any of the struts that supported the horizontal girders. As he rose to the surface the two seamen who had remained on deck to cast off the hawser grabbed him by the shoulders and hauled him into safety.



"THE TWO SEAMEN HAULED HIM INTO SAFETY"

Just then a furious burst of quick-firing guns shook the air. With complete indifference to the fact that half a dozen of their own patrol-boats were hastening towards the hulk, the nearest batteries had opened fire.

Fortunately the patrol-boats flung about and steamed off from the danger-zone as hard as their engines could go.

"What are those fools firing at?" asked Huxtable, making way for the dripping form of the Sub as he descended the conning-tower hatchway. The Lieutenant-Commander knew that the batteries were not firing at the British craft, for she was quite invisible to the gunners. The shells were churning the water all around a dark object drifting with the current.

It was the drum which Dick had thrown overboard. Picked up by the united glare of a dozen search-lights, ineffectually shelled by twenty or thirty quick-firers, the drum floated serenely towards the Bosphorus.

Huxtable saw his chance and took it. So intent were the Turkish gun-layers upon blowing to pieces what they imagined to be the conning-tower of the hostile submarine, that neither they nor the men working the search-lights thought of anything else. Save for the shell-torn water in the immediate vicinity of the drifting drum, the sea was shrouded in intense darkness.

"Cast off there!" ordered the Lieutenant-Commander; "diving stations."

As soon as the two seamen had regained the interior of the vessel, hatches were closed and secured, and the submarine, with her conning-tower just awash, forged gently ahead against the stream. Then under the action of her horizontal rudders she quickly slipped beneath the surface and dived to sixty feet.

"Here we are, sir," reported Dick, indicating on a chart the position of the submarine. "A course due east will take us towards the centre of the Bosphorus, and in the direction of Scutari."

"Good!" ejaculated Huxtable. "Crosthwaite, you're a rattling good fellow. It was a smart idea of yours, slinging the drum overboard. It drew their fire splendidly. I don't suppose the rotten gun-layers have settled it yet."

Dick said nothing in reply. Already he realized that his action had been done on the spur of the moment. The good result was simply a fluke. It seemed an absurd thing to have to confess that he had jettisoned the drum merely as an act of pique. Huxtable took his silence as a sign of modesty, and was still further impressed by the Sub's forethought.

The submarine came to rest on the bed of the sea. To plough blindly through the darkness was to court disaster. Her commander's plan was to await the first blush of dawn, ascend and

take a rapid bearing, and then shape a course for the broad expanse of the Sea of Marmora. As he had expected, the Turks imagined that their daring assailant was one of the Russian flotilla of submarines, and their chief attentions were centred upon preventing its return to the Black Sea by means of the twenty-four miles of narrow, intricate waterway between the two inland seas.

At daybreak the submarine made a cautious ascent. Almost as soon as the periscope showed above the surface, Huxtable gave vent to an exclamation of mingled surprise and annoyance, for depicted upon the object-bowl was a large cruiser, lying at anchor within easy torpedo range.

It was the recreant *Goeben*. The Turco-German battle-cruiser bore distinct traces of the rough handling she had undergone. Her lofty, grey-painted sides were holed in several places, both of her funnels were perforated, while two of her big guns had been removed, either because the turret had been put out of action, or else because the huge weapons were badly wanted for shore defence. In addition she was badly trimmed, and showed a decided list to starboard.

"Just our luck!" grunted Huxtable as he promptly caused the submarine to dive once more. "I would give anything for a torpedo; we couldn't possibly miss her at this range."

Ten minutes later another view was obtained through the periscope. Ahead lay the Sea of Marmora: the hazardous return voyage had begun in earnest.

CHAPTER XVIII

A Midnight Encounter

At noon the submarine rose to the surface. All around the sea was unbroken; not a craft of any description was in sight. Eagerly the officers and men welcomed the chance of being able to inhale the pure air after being cooped up for hours within the narrow limits of the steel hull.

Advantage was also taken of the respite to rig the wireless mast. Since the Turks were already acquainted with the fact that a hostile submarine had appeared at the very threshold of the Ottoman capital, there was no further need to abstain from the use of "wireless". Accordingly a message in code was sent to the British flagship, announcing the good work performed by "E—".

Promptly came the reply, also in code:

"Flag to 'E—'. Do not attempt the Dardanelles until after the night of the 11th instant. Situation developing, and movements of our submarine craft are in consequence undesirable."

"Plain as a pikestaff," commented Huxtable when the message had been decoded. "More German submarines, and our destroyers and minesweepers are operating in the hope of netting them."

"Then we are best off where we are, sir," said Dick,

"M'yes," admitted the Lieutenant-Commander grudgingly. "But here we are without being able to let rip at even the most tempting target. If there had been time to slip down to Tenedos and get a fresh supply of torpedoes from our parentship I wouldn't mind in the least. As it is, we've to mark time for the next three days."

"Might I make a suggestion, sir?" asked Dick.

"By all means," replied Huxtable.

The two officers were alone on the after platform of the little craft. The rest of the officers, having been on deck for some time, were down below. Most of the crew were "standing easy" on the limited expanse of fore deck—the narrow platform extending from the base of the conning-tower to within ten feet of the snub bows.

"If we make for Prince's Island again," suggested Dick, "we could keep that tower under observation. There are some of our men imprisoned in it, and the place appears to be slenderly guarded."

"Dash it all, man!" ejaculated Huxtable; "surely you don't suggest that a submarine should bombard a fort? That, apparently, is the crux of your proposition."

"Not necessarily," replied the Sub. "If it came to the point, our guns would make small beer of the Turkish garrison. But if you would let me have half a dozen men, sir, I'd take Farnworth with me, and make a night attack upon the place. We ought to be able to rescue the prisoners and back on board within half an hour, with very little risk."

"What would happen if, during that half-hour, a couple of Turkish destroyers put in an appearance?" asked Huxtable. "I am inclined to let you tackle the job; but one must weigh the matter carefully. I don't want to lose half a dozen hands, nor do I want to leave Farnworth and you marooned on Prince's Island. That's what it would mean, you know."

Dick did not reply. His mind was set upon the sight of that forlorn party of bluejackets being haled into captivity. Perhaps they might be—but no, the possibility was too remote.

"We'll do what we can," declared Huxtable, who rapidly warming to the plan. "At any rate, it will be occupying our time. Let's go below and have a look at the chart. Mr. Devereux," he called out, "pass the word for all hands to bathe, and then a quarter of an hour's 'stand easy' for the men to smoke."

Eagerly the crew took advantage of the permission, and the immediate vicinity of the submarine soon dotted with the heads of the swimmers as they revelled in the clear waters of the Sea of Marmora. Bedding and blankets were also brought on deck to air while the diminutive "ship's company" were enjoying their pipes and cigarettes.

At two bells in the second dog-watch the submarine cleared for running on the surface. Devereux was in charge, the Lieutenant-Commander having taken the opportunity of snatching a few hours' sleep. At eleven knots she steamed leisurely towards the yet invisible island, for as the sun sank low in the west a slight mist obscured the horizon.

Directly land was sighted the craft was submerged, until only the top of the periscope was visible. Speed was reduced to five knots, to minimize as much as possible her tell-tale wake and the feather of spray as the periscope cleaved the water.

An hour of daylight yet remained as the "E—" arrived within two hundred yards of the ramshackle pier, taking up a position so that the slanting rays of the sun tended to render the slender, pole-like periscope invisible against the background of deep crimson sky and sea.

Beyond the desultory movements of a couple of Turkish sentries there was little sign of activity. Above the tower the Crescent flag of the Ottoman Empire drooped idly in the still air. From the row of huts that served as a barracks for the troops came the sound of stringed instruments, mingled with the melodious voices of the men.

At sunset every man of the garrison, to the number of twenty-two, appeared carrying his praying-carpet. From a minaret arose the voice of the *muezzin* calling the Faithful to prayer, and with one accord the soldiers prostrated themselves upon the ground with their faces turned in the direction of the Mohammedan holy city of Mecca.

Darkness fell upon the scene. Beyond the shouts of the sentries at regular intervals no sound came from the island. Evidently it was not considered to be a place of strategic importance, for no search-lights were flashed from the shore; but away to the north-west and north the sheen of the distant search-lights of Constantinople and Scutari was plainly visible through the faint haze.

Volunteers had already been invited from the submarine. Every man had signified his willingness to engage upon the undertaking, and Dick had considerable difficulty in picking his force, so acute was the disappointment of those he had to reject.

At midnight the submarine was awash, and her frail canvas boat was unfolded and launched. At the most it would hold but five.

Giving a final glance to seaward, Huxtable gripped Dick's hand. Silently two seamen entered the frail boat and waited till the Sub had taken his place. Then, with greased rowlocks and muffled oars, the Berthon made cautiously towards the pier.

Straining eyes and ears, Dick grasped the yoke-lines. Steadily the intervening distance decreased, yet no stern challenge came from the shadowy shore. Unseen and unheard, the canvas boat ran alongside the pier, at the head of which was moored a large caique or Turkish craft peculiar to the Bosphorus and its adjacent waters. At a pinch it would carry twenty or twenty-five people, especially as the sea was calm.

It was the work of a moment to cast off the stout cord that was made fast to the stern to prevent the boat from swaying in upon the piles. Then, as cautiously as they had approached, the crew of the Berthon rowed back to the submarine, towing the captured craft astern.

It was a task of considerable difficulty to locate "E—". In the intense darkness—for not the faintest glimpse of a light could be shown—her position was completely invisible; and it was not until he was within twenty yards of the submarine that Dick detected the periscope and arched girder showing faintly against the subdued glare of the distant search-lights.

"All right?" enquired Huxtable anxiously.

"Yes, sir," replied Crosthwaite in a whisper.

At a sign from the Lieutenant-Commander the rest of the landing-party took their places in

the caique. Two of the seamen manned the long, weighted oars, each of which worked on a single thole-pin; then in utter silence the two boats headed towards the shore.

Every man carried a rifle and bayonet and sixty rounds of ammunition. The safety catches of the rifles were set, to guard against an accidental discharge of any of the weapons; while orders had been given not to fix bayonets, lest the steel, shining dully in the faint starlight, should betray the presence of the British seamen to the Turkish sentries.

Unchallenged, the boats rubbed alongside the pier. Dick stealthily ascended the perpendicular ladder till his head showed above the planking of the gangway. He could hear the muffled tread of the sentry pacing his beat in front of the tower. He could not hope to escape detection much longer; but provided a couple of men were at his back, he felt certain that they would be sufficient to commence the attack until the rest of the boarding-party could fall in and double for their objective.

One by one the seamen ascended, until only one man was left in each boat to act as boat-keeper. Crouching and holding their rifles at the trail, the bluejackets followed Crosthwaite and the midshipman.

Half-way along the pier they crept; then came the strident hail of the Ottoman sentry.

Without a pause Dick advanced. The challenge was repeated, then a bullet whizzed high above the heads of the landing-party.

"Double!" shouted the Sub.

The planks trembled under the rush of many feet as the men raced down the pier. The sentry was running for dear life, yelling at the top of his voice, to the accompaniment of a rousing British cheer which was quickly taken up by the prisoners within the tower.

Releasing the safety catches of their rifles, all but two of the submarine's men threw themselves on the ground in anticipation of an attack from the troops in the barracks. The two, headed by Farnworth, made their way to the door of the tower.

"Stand clear, there!" said the midshipman in a loud voice, as a warning to any of the prisoners who might be on the other side of the door; then holding the muzzle of his revolver a few inches from the lock, he fired twice in quick succession.

The stout oaken door and its antiquated iron lock were not proof against the heavy Webley bullets, and with a crash the woodwork gave way. Farnworth pushed aside the remains of the door and entered. Within was a square room, absolutely deserted.

"Where are you, men?" he shouted.

"Up here, sir," replied someone; then another voice exclaimed: "Lumme, Bill! if 'tain't Mister Farnworth."

The midshipman had been sent to rescue his own boat's party—the survivors of the ill-starred whaler that had been cast ashore in Yenikeui Bay.

Farnworth looked up. He imagined that he saw an opening in the vaulted ceiling, but there were no signs of a ladder.

"Can't you men get down?" he asked.

"We're locked in," was the lugubrious response. "They planks a ladder up here in daytime, but we don't know what they does with it at night."

One of the two men of the submarine's crew bent down, while the second clambered on his shoulders. Even then, when both stood erect, the uppermost could not reach the side of the aperture.

By this time the crackle of musketry told the midshipman that the rest of his comrades were engaged with the scanty Turkish garrison. It was not Crosthwaite's intention to take the offensive, having once gained possession of the tower. All he meant to do was to hold the Turks in check until the prisoners were liberated, and then to return to the boats.

Farnworth was for the moment at a loss how to act. Without a ladder it seemed impossible to reach the opening in the vaulted roof. Time was of extreme importance, for the noise of the musketry might bring hostile patrol-boats upon the scene. It was even likely that the island was in telegraphic communication with Scutari and Constantinople, in which case a swift destroyer might put in an appearance before the landing-party returned to the submarine.

"Shall I fetch the hand lead-line, sir?" asked one of the seamen who had accompanied him. "There's one in the boat. We can sling it right over the tower."

"And then?" asked the midshipman.

"One of us'll swarm up. The line will hold, I'll allow."

"Carry on!" said Farnworth.

The man took to his heels and ran towards the pier. A long-drawn couple of minutes ensued, but he did not return. The firing seemed to increase. Evidently the numbers of the Turkish garrison were considerably in excess of what the landing-party had estimated. Instead of bolting precipitately, the soldiers were putting up a stiff fight.

The midshipman went to the door. On the threshold he nearly stumbled over the body of the messenger.

"Here's the lead-line, sir," announced the seaman faintly. "They've plugged me right enough."

"Where?" asked Farnworth anxiously.

"Through both thighs, sir," was the reply. "There isn't much pain, but I had to crawl the last twenty yards. Don't worry about me, sir."

A bullet splaying against the stonework within a couple of feet of his face reminded the midshipman that he was exposed to the enemy's fire. Grasping the wounded man by the arms, he dragged him into temporary shelter.

Without a word the second sailor took the lead-line and hurried into the open. Swinging the sinker until it obtained considerable velocity, he released the leaden weight. Flying upwards at a tangent, it sped fairly over the parapet of the tower, falling to the ground on the other side. Then, deftly securing the end of the line to an iron ring in the masonry, the dauntless seaman made his way to the farther face of the building and, gripping the thin yet strong rope, began to swarm up.

It was a hazardous performance. At any moment the line might part, and bullets were mushrooming against the stonework all around the brave climber. Yet, unscathed, he gained the summit of the tower and drew himself over the low parapet.

"No go, sir!" he shouted. "There's a blessed hatchway, but it's locked."

"If I send my revolver up to you, can you blow it off its hinges?" enquired Farnworth anxiously.

"Steady a bit, sir!" replied the man. "Stand clear a moment. All clear, sir?"

"All clear," repeated the midshipman, wondering what the seaman was about to do, yet feeling sure that the reliant fellow had hit upon a feasible plan.

The man had noticed the flagstaff on which during the day the Ottoman flag had been flying. At sunset the Crescent flag had been struck, but instead of untoggling it from the halyards the indolent Turk to whom the duty was entrusted had merely rolled the bunting and secured it to the pole by a bight of the cords.

The sailor deftly detached the flag from the halyards, then, unshipping the twenty-foot pole from its sockets, lowered it to the ground. Half a minute later, with the captured Ottoman ensign rolled round his waist, he rejoined the midshipman.

"Here we are, sir!" he exclaimed. "All we've to do is to push one end of this bloomin' pole up the trap-door and I'll soon swarm up."

Not without considerable difficulty, the midshipman and the seaman succeeded in getting the stout "stick" into the lowermost room of the tower. When set on end it projected from beyond the opening in the vaulted roof.

"I won't be long, sir," declared the man confidently, as he moistened his horny palms prior to climbing the pole. "If you'd let me have your pistol, sir, as you suggested——"

Just then another seaman burst into the room.

"Mr. Crosthwaite's compliments, sir," he exclaimed, saluting the midshipman, "and he would like to know if you've liberated the prisoners yet. We've got a hard job to keep the enemy back. They've made two attempts to rush us."

"Ask him to give me five minutes more," replied Farnworth.

By this time the climber had disappeared through the opening. The deafening report of the midshipman's revolver told that its borrower had blown off the lock of one of the doors, and before the second shot rang out five of the prisoners were sliding down the sole means of communication with the ground.

One of them, possessing himself of the wounded man's rifle and ammunition, dashed out to assist in holding back the Turkish troops. The others, under the midshipman's orders, hastened to the pier-head to obtain the rifles of the two boat-keepers, for every available armed man was

needed to fight a rear-guard action.

"All present?" demanded Farnworth, as the last of the rescued crew of the *Hammerer's* whaler slid to the ground, followed by the indomitable bluejacket who had played such an important part in the rescue.

"All correct, sir," replied Coxswain Webb. "Leastwise, what's left of us."

"Then fall in," ordered the midshipman. "Coxswain, march these men to the pier-head. You'll find two boats there. Embark, and await further instructions."

He could tell the position of Crosthwaite's party by the flashes of their rifles as they replied to the heavy yet almost ineffectual fire of superior numbers. But before he could cover the intervening stretch of rising ground the whole scene was suddenly flooded with brilliant light.

A Turkish patrol-boat had arrived to investigate the cause of the firing. The retreat of the slender British force was cut off.

CHAPTER XIX

The Sub to the Rescue

While Midshipman Farnworth was directing his energies toward the release of his boat's crew, Sub-lieutenant Crosthwaite and his small party were hotly engaged with the Turkish troops.

At the first onset, by dint of rapid magazine-firing, Dick's men succeeded in "bluffing" their foes into the belief that they were attacked by a strong landing-force. So much so that had the Sub given orders to fix bayonets and charge, the enemy would have bolted. Unfortunately his instructions from Lieutenant-Commander Huxtable prevented him from so doing. His orders were to hold the shore until the prisoners were released, and then to retire to the boats. On no account was he to penetrate the enemy's defences, lest, in the event of a strong counter-attack, his retreat would be imperilled and even cut off.

It was soon apparent that, under the prodigality of magazine-firing, the men's supply of ammunition would not hold out much longer; but, by the diminution of the rate of fire, the Turks were not slow to realize that they had been deceived by the numbers of their attackers.

Taking advantage of every bit of natural and artificial cover, the bluejackets held grimly to their position, firing deliberately at the spurts of flame that denoted the presence of the Ottoman riflemen, whose numbers were constantly being augmented by other troops from different parts of the island.

Gradually the enemy began to work round to the British right, till the thin line of bluejackets was in danger of being enfiladed. Then, with a succession of fierce yells, the Turks sprang to their feet and with fixed bayonets bore down upon the handful of determined seamen.

A rapid magazine fire swept aside the threatened danger before any of the foemen came within reach of the British bayonets, but at the cost of two men wounded and a severe drain upon the remaining ammunition.

Dick looked grave when he heard Farnworth's report. It was quite evident that the midshipman's task could not be carried out with the ease that he had expected. But having once set his hand to the plough, the Sub realized that there was to be no turning back until the work in hand accomplished. He must hold the position at all costs until the rescued seamen were safely in the boats.

Presently a man slithered past him in the darkness, and, flinging himself prone, began to blaze away at the flashes of light a hundred yards or so on his front. Dick recognized him as the bowman of the *Hammerer's* whaler. Then he knew that Farnworth's mission was approaching completion.

Again the Turks charged, this time well on the right flank; and before the British line could be re-formed, a score of helmeted Moslems were pouring over the low stone wall protected that portion of the seamen's position. Bayonet crossed bayonet, rifle butts swung in the air. The fierce shouts of the Turks were met with dogged silence, as the stalwart bluejackets lunged and fired at their fanatical foes.

Dick's revolver turned the scale. The Turks fled, leaving a dozen of their number dead on the field, and several others more or less seriously injured.

During the brief respite that followed Dick looked anxiously in the direction of the tower. He could just discern the dark forms of the liberated bluejackets as, under the charge of the coxswain of the whaler, they made for the boats.

Even as he looked a search-light flashed from the hitherto black expanse of sea. Irresolutely playing upon the shore for a few moments, it settled upon the extended line of bluejackets and upon the bullet-splintered barracks whence came the main Turkish fire.

"Lie down, men!" ordered Dick, for with the blaze of light several of the men knelt up and looked in the direction of the disagreeable interruption.

His warning came just in time, for a three-pounder shell from the hostile craft, and, screeching shrilly over the heads of the small British force, exploded with a terrific crash in the Turkish barracks. Evidently there was a quantity of highly-inflammable oil stored within the building, for with extreme violence lurid flames shot skywards, their brilliancy outclassing the glare of the search-light.

The surviving soldiers ran for dear life, and for the time being all opposition from that quarter was at an end. But a peril of even greater magnitude now threatened the force under Crosthwaite's command. Their retreat was cut off.

With the peak of his cap just showing above a low mound of earth, Dick directed his attention seawards. So dazzling were the rays of the search-light that he could discern nothing in the vicinity of the source of the beam. Whether the Turkish vessel was a destroyer or only an armed patrol-boat he could not decide. Nor could he detect any signs of the British submarine. Doubtless Huxtable, at the first warning of the enemy's approach, had dived. Without torpedoes at his disposal, it seemed as if he were helpless in the matter. All he could do was to save his command by resting on the bottom, leaving Crosthwaite and his men to their fate.

Another and yet another shell came from the Turkish craft, each missile bursting harmlessly beyond the sheltered British seamen. It seemed fairly conclusive that the Ottoman craft mounted only one quick-firer, and that, ignorant of the true position of affairs, she was directing the fire against the buildings lately held by the Turkish troops.

Meanwhile the rescued prisoners, who, before the first shell had been fired, had taken their places in the caique, acted with admirable presence of mind. Instead of bolting precipitately along the pier for the more substantial cover that they knew was obtainable ashore, they lay down quietly on the bottom of the boat.

"A bit of a tight corner, sir," exclaimed a voice which Dick recognized as Farnworth's. The midshipman, taking advantage of a sweep of the search-light, had cautiously made his way from the tower to the place where Dick was taking cover.

"We've been in a worse one," replied the Sub coolly. "Our men are as steady as anything. If we can escape the shelling—and they haven't spotted us yet, or else they are rotten shots—we can sit tight. If that craft—I fancy she's only a patrol-boat—puts in alongside the pier to see what damage she's done, we'll do our best to rush her. Dash it all! Who says we are not having a good fling for our money?"

He spoke cheerfully, but at the same time he thoroughly realized the seriousness of the situation. Even should the patrol-boat tie up alongside the pier, which was doubtful, and he succeeded by a coup de main in capturing her, the triumph would be of short duration. Bottled up in the limited expanse of the Sea of Marmora, with the impassable Dardanelles at one end and the equally well-defended Bosphorus at the other, escape in anything except a submarine craft was impossible.

"Whatever are those fellows up to?" enquired Farnworth, as two more shells, fired in quick succession, burst far inland.

"They're giving their friends a taste of their own pills," replied Dick. "It's great! They've mistaken the troops for our men."

Such indeed was the case, for the search-light was slowly yet surely following the retreating, panic-stricken Turkish soldiers, while shell after shell hurtled towards the fugitives as fast as the gun could be discharged.

Suddenly came the report of a double concussion—so quickly that the detonations sounded as a single crash. Then came another.

"By Jove! The skipper is tackling the patrol-boat with our little anti-aircraft gun!" exclaimed Farnworth.

Once more the midshipman was right in his surmise. Taking advantage of the darkness, rendered doubly baffling to the Turks on the patrol-boat owing to the contrast afforded by the search-light, the Lieutenant-Commander of "E—" had boldly brought his craft within close range of the enemy craft.

He knew the risk. One shot from the Ottoman quick-firer would send the submarine to the bottom like a stone. On the other hand, the patrol-boat was nothing more than an old iron tug, on which a light quick-firer had been mounted. Formidable enough when operating against troops unprovided with guns, the Turkish craft was vulnerable even to the smallest quick-firer.

Taken completely by surprise as the first British shell played havoc with her bridge and search-light projector, the patrol circled in a vain endeavour to escape. A second shell ripped a large hole in her water-line, causing her to reel violently and commence to list heavily to starboard.

Only once did the patrol-boat attempt to reply to the devastating shell-fire of the submarine: but the missile, hastily and badly aimed, flew wide, exploding a couple of thousand yards away.

Huxtable's reply was to send a shell crashing against the frail shield of the Turkish gun. The explosion did its work thoroughly, for the gun crew were wiped out and the weapon dismantled.

Twenty seconds later, so destructive had been the effect of the shell upon the compartmentless hull of the craft, the patrol-boat disappeared beneath the surface, her boilers exploding with tremendous violence as she did so.

"Hurrah! She's done for!" exclaimed Farnworth excitedly.

As he spoke a light blinked from the submarine. Huxtable was about to send a message to the landing-party. Since they were unable to signal in return to say that they were ready, the Lieutenant-Commander waited for a brief interval, then began to flash the message.

"Return at once. Am waiting to pick you up."

Crosthwaite promptly obeyed the order. Unmolested his men marched to the pier-head. Deeply laden, the two boats pushed off and rowed slowly towards the submarine, on which a lantern was displayed to enable them to locate her position.

"Help! Aid me!" shouted a voice in broken English, before the boats had covered half the distance between the shore and the "E—".

A violent splashing in the phosphorescent water, followed by reiterated appeals for aid, caused Dick to steer the canvas boat in the direction of the commotion. A seaman in Turkish uniform was swimming for dear life. His strength was fast failing him, and it seemed impossible that he could hold out long enough to reach the shore. With his remaining energies he grasped the gunwale of the frail Berthon and hung on desperately.

"Don't take him on board," ordered Dick, as one of the seamen grasped the Turk by the collar. "You'll upset us if you do; but hold on to him."

The Sub's first intention was to return, towing the man into shallow water, and there let him shift for himself. On second thoughts he remembered that his orders to return to the submarine with the utmost dispatch were peremptory. However undesirable it was to take a prisoner on board, in addition to the rescued men of the *Hammerer's* whaler, his humane feelings would not allow him to refuse aid to his enemy.

"Give way!" ordered Dick.

The men bent to their oars. The Sub steered for the now discernible "E—", while the Turk, held in the iron grip of his rescuer, was ignominiously towed through the water.

"All present, sir!" reported Crosthwaite.

"Any casualties?" enquired Huxtable anxiously.

"Three, sir."

The Lieutenant-Commander looked worried. The interior of a submarine is no place for a wounded man. There was no medical attention available. The sufferers had to rely solely upon the rough yet good-natured attentions of their comrades. Nevertheless Huxtable had good cause to congratulate himself and his subordinate upon the result of the operations. Not only had a hostile craft been sunk, but all the survivors of the *Hammerer's* landing-party had been rescued.

And yet the business was far from being accomplished. A tedious wait—at least a nerve-racking ordeal—had to be followed by the return dash through the mine-strewn Dardanelles.

Saving the Old "Hammerer"

"Effendi, I speak truth. It is not my wish that I fight the English."

"How came you to speak English?" demanded Huxtable.

The examination of the rescued Turkish sailor was in progress. The man had recovered from the effects of the explosion and his subsequent exposure in the water. He was tall, lithe, olive-featured, and of an open countenance.

"I have served in English ship: one that traded between Smyrna and Malta, effendi," he replied. "My name it is Osman Kosmoli. I am an Armenian and a Christian."

"Eh?" interrupted the Lieutenant-Commander incredulously. "A Christian? I thought Christians were not allowed to serve in the Ottoman navy."

"Before the war, no; after the war, yes," replied Kosmoli composedly. "So long as a man he is a sailor it no matter. I no want to fight. They make me. I thank effendi for saving my life," and he bowed his head at Dick, who was sitting by the side of the Lieutenant-Commander.

Crosthwaite thrust his hand into his coat pocket and produced the document that von Eitelheimer had vainly endeavoured to induce him to sign.

"Then tell me what this means," he said.

The Armenian took the paper and read it slowly to himself. His eyebrows contracted as he did so.

"Bad, very bad!" he exclaimed.

"Read it aloud," ordered Dick.

It was another example of German perfidy, purporting to be a declaration expressing extreme disapproval of the Allies' operations against the Turks. It was a bogus confession to the effect that the British and French were guilty of deliberate acts against the Moslem religion, and that the avowed object of their expedition was to stamp out Mohammedanism in the Near East.

"A thundering good job you didn't sign it," remarked Huxtable. "The document would have been photographically reproduced and distributed broadcast throughout Persia, Egypt, Afghanistan, and India with the object of inciting the Mohammedan populace."

"What was to prevent von Eitelheimer from forging my signature?" asked Dick.

"He could have done so," admitted the Lieutenant-Commander, "but it wouldn't be quite the same thing. If you and young Farnworth had signed it and stated your rank, the signatures could not very well be disputed by our own people. They would naturally conclude that the autographs, if genuine, were obtained by fraud, but that is not the point. Ten to one von Eitelheimer, had you agreed to sign, would have made some excuse to have Turkish personages of high standing to witness the attestation. A document like that would cause no end of religious ferment amongst the Moslem world. Now, you see, we have evidence to prove that the Germans are at the root of the business, and I hope you will be able to hand the document personally to the Admiral for transmission to the proper authorities. By Jove, Crosthwaite! it has nipped a dangerous conspiracy in the bud."

"I'd like to have a few words with von Eitelheimer on the subject, sir," declared Dick.

"You may some day: you never know your luck," rejoined Huxtable oracularly.

At last the time-limit expired, and the "E—" was at liberty to attempt her hazardous return voyage. All hands knew that the perils which beset them were far greater than those they had successfully evaded on the run to Constantinople; for it was now practically impossible to creep through the Dardanelles. With a six- or seven-knot current bearing the submarine along, in addition to the "way" necessary to keep the craft under helm control, there was imminent risk of charging one of the hundreds of anchored mines before steps could be taken to avoid it; while should the submarine run aground the impact would inevitably shatter her hull.

Huxtable essayed the task in broad daylight. It was just possible, by keeping a sharp look-out and making quick use of the helm, to detect the presence of the moorings of these destructive weapons of modern warfare.

He took up his position at the for'ard scuttle of the conning-tower, while Devereux and Crosthwaite remained by the observation scuttles on either side of the elongated steel box.

Hour after hour passed. The "E—" was still proceeding without mishap, steered by a compass course. She was now well within the Dardanelles. The fixing of her position was merely a matter of guesswork, since the periscope could not be used without risk of being fired at from the alert batteries. Twice she had to circle, owing to the water shoaling, and attempt a fresh course. It was the only means of keeping to the deep-water channel as it wended its tortuous way through the

intricate Narrows.

Suddenly Dick gave an exclamation of surprise. Less than thirty feet from the scuttle, a large, ill-defined grey object darted past. Before he could call the skipper's attention to it, the thing had vanished. For several minutes the "E—" swayed and pitched in the undulations caused by the moving mass.

"A submarine, sir—that I can swear to," reported Crosthwaite.

"Then it's a dashed German one," declared Huxtable. "None of our own were to operate in the Narrows until we reported ourselves. That's rotten luck."

His face bore a grim expression as he spoke, then he broke into a boisterous laugh.

"We're in luck, Crosthwaite," he exclaimed.

"How, sir?" asked the Sub, puzzled at the rapid change in his superior's manner.

"How? Don't you see? The Turks have been expecting that German *unterseeboot*. Consequently they've made preparations. They've ceased to throw out floating mines, and have given her directions for a safe course through the anchored minefield, and we're in the same channel. By Jove! I'll risk it! We'll pop up and see where we are. I shouldn't be surprised if we were close to Sedd-ul-Bahr, or somewhere within range of the guns, otherwise the German submarine would be running awash with her ensign displayed."

Although Huxtable had declared that he would not be surprised at the result of his observation, when the periscope showed above the surface he was completely taken aback. He had considerably underrated the speed of the current, and instead of being still within the Dardanelles, Cape Helles was sighted bearing three miles N.W. What was more, "E—" was within two thousand yards of the *Hammerer* and the *Tremendous*, both battleships being engaged in a long-range bombardment of the Turkish trenches on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

Concealment was no longer necessary. Running awash, the submarine "made her number", thus revealing her identity; and in response to a request the *Hammerer* dispatched a picket-boat to take off her two missing officers and the survivors of her whaler's crew.

"Well, good-bye, Crosthwaite, old boy, and good luck!" exclaimed the genial Huxtable, as the picket-boat, skilfully handled by Midshipman Sefton, came alongside the submarine. "Hope you haven't been disappointed on the score of excitement. I did my level best to give you a good time."

"That you did, sir," replied the Sub. "By Jove! it makes me want to kick myself for not applying for submarine service when I had the chance."

"It's never too late to mend," rejoined the Lieutenant-Commander. "Once more, good luck to you!"

The picket-boat backed astern, and was soon pelting at a good eighteen knots towards her parent ship. The two midshipmen were exchanging their experiences with great gusto, while Dick, standing beside the coxswain, was trying to convince himself that it was not all a dream that he had really been to Constantinople and back again.

Suddenly the coxswain pointed towards the battleship.

"Something amiss there, sir," he exclaimed. "Bless me, if she ain't hard aground!"

Even as he spoke a furious cannonade from skilfully-hidden shore batteries was opened upon the luckless *Hammerer*, which, having struck a shoal, presented a fixed target to a hundred Turkish guns. All around her the water was churned by the bursting projectiles. To attempt to take the picket-boat any nearer would be almost suicidal.

"Easy ahead," ordered Dick, at the same time signing to the coxswain to put the helm hard over.

Anxiously the Sub awaited developments. The *Hammerer*, badly pounded, was replying fiercely and resolutely to the galling fire. Thick clouds of smoke poured from her twin funnels as her powerful engines, running at full speed astern, strove to release her from the grip of the shoal.

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Sefton. "Look, sir!"

Considering that Dick was looking all the time, the advice was unnecessary. Yet the midshipman's excitement was justifiable, for a striking example of British pluck was about to be shown.

Steaming slowly astern, the *Tremendous* backed into the shell-torn inferno. Reckless of the hail of projectiles, a swarm of bluejackets clustered on her poop, while from under her quarter a boat carrying a hawser sped towards her disabled consort. In an incredibly short space of time,

communication was established between the two battleships; but, just as the *Tremendous* gathered way, a shell severed the stout hempen rope.

Another attempt was made, but hardly was the boat clear of her parent ship when a projectile ploughed through her bows. Enshrouded in a cloud of smoke and steam, the pinnacle disappeared beneath the waves.

Undaunted, the *Tremendous* sent out a third hawser. Working under great difficulties, the crew of the *Hammerer* succeeded in getting the stiff wire rope on board and attaching it to a chain "necklace" round the base of her after turret.

"She's moving!" exclaimed Farnworth.

Slowly the *Hammerer* glided astern for almost her own length; then, with a bang that was audible above the roar of the guns, the hawser parted.

By the time the *Tremendous* had checked her way and had re-established communication, twenty minutes had elapsed. Already the *Hammerer's* top-hamper was little more than a tangled skein of steel. Her fore topmast had gone; her mainmast had been severed ten feet below the lower fighting-top. One of her funnels had gone by the board; the other was holed in twenty different places and looked little better than a sieve. Only the funnel-guys prevented it from sharing the fate of the former. Yet she kept up a heavy fire with unabated violence, while, to relieve the pressure of the Turkish batteries, two armoured cruisers closed and directed their attention upon the hostile guns.

Suddenly Dick sprang to the wheel, unceremoniously pushing aside the coxswain, whose whole attention was centred upon the stranded battleship.

"Full speed ahead both engines!" he shouted.

His quick eye had discerned a suspicious swirl on the surface within a cable's length of the picket-boat's starboard bow. Even as the little craft shot ahead, from the centre of the disturbed water appeared a periscope. It was not the periscope of a British submarine, of that Dick felt certain. It was a hostile craft, about to take her bearings prior to discharging a torpedo at the motionless *Hammerer* or her almost equally handicapped consort.

"Stand by, men!" ordered the Sub.

The picket-boat, having a dead weight of fifteen tons exclusive of the crew, was capable of dealing a heavy blow, but Crosthwaite realized that that would mean her own destruction. Already he had weighed up the situation. It was risking the lives of a mere handful of officers and men in an attempt to save the huge battleship and her complement of nearly eight hundred.

With a heavy crash the keel of the picket-boat came in violent contact with a submerged object. It was something more substantial than the slender periscope, which, shattered by the impact, had vanished. For a moment the British craft seemed on the point of turning turtle; then, with a sickening movement, she slid over the obstruction into deep water.

It was evident that the picket-boat would not survive the collision. The artificers, having taken steps to prevent an explosion of the boilers, abandoned the engine-room as the water rose above the beds of the engines. A minute later the crew were swimming for their lives.

"She's off, sir," announced a petty officer who was swimming strongly by the side of the Sub-lieutenant. "They'll pick us up all right."

The *Hammerer*, thanks to the efforts of the *Tremendous*, aided by her own engines going full speed astern, had shaken herself free from the dangerous shoal. Still replying briskly to the Turkish batteries, she glided into deep water, circled, and steamed slowly towards the spot where her picket-boat had disappeared.

"We'll get some of the shells meant for her," spluttered Sefton, who had not yet succeeded in getting rid of a few mouthfuls of salt which he had taken in when the picket-boat sank under him.

"No fear; she'll screen us," answered Dick cheerfully. "We'll—"

The sentence was never completed. A flying splinter of shell, dropping from an immense height, had struck the Sub on the head. Sefton was just in time to grab his superior officer by the coat-collar before he sank.

"Bear a hand, Farnworth!" he exclaimed. "We can't let old Crosthwaite go, but I'm afraid it's a case!"

* * * * *

It was a fortnight later when Dick Crosthwaite opened his eyes. He was lying in Bighi Hospital at Malta, with his head swathed in surgical bandages. He felt horribly weak, and was unable to recollect the circumstances that led to his being in bed in a shore hospital.

Two men were standing a short distance from his cot. Their backs were turned towards him, as they faced the open window. One he recognized as the genial captain of the *Hammerer*, the other was a fleet-surgeon on the hospital staff.

"Then you feel fairly confident that you'll be able to pull him through?" asked the *Hammerer's* skipper.

"There's every chance. He's as hard as nails, and will bob up like a cork."

"Rather a confusion of similes, my dear O'Loghlin," remarked the Captain with a chuckle. "All the same I'm glad to hear it. I want to ask you a favour. Let me know the moment Crosthwaite regains consciousness. I am particularly anxious, being his skipper, to be the first to tell him the good news."

"Very good, sir," replied the doctor. "I'll bear that in mind."

"It won't be detrimental to his recovery?"

"Faith, that it won't! It will buck him up considerably when he knows he's to get the D.S.O. He'll be up and fit for duty before we force the Dardanelles, you mark my words. He'll be in at the death when we take Constantinople."

"I hope so, too," agreed the captain of the *Hammerer*. "We can't afford to lose the services of such a promising young officer. I hope I'll live to see him attain flag rank."

Dick raised himself on one elbow.

"Thank you, sir!" he exclaimed.

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