The Young Buglers

by G. A. Henty

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PREFACE

To my Young Readers.

I remember that, as a boy, I regarded any attempt to mix instruction with amusement as being as objectionable a practice as the administration of powder in jam; but I think that this feeling arose from the fact that in those days books contained a very small share of amusement and a very large share of instruction. I have endeavored to avoid this, and I hope that the accounts of battles and sieges, illustrated as they are by maps, will be found as interesting as the lighter parts of the story. As in my tale, "The Young Franc-Tireurs," I gave the outline of the Franco-German war, so I have now endeavored to give the salient features of the great Peninsular struggle. The military facts, with the names of generals and regiments, the dates and places, are all strictly accurate, and any one who has read with care the story of "The Young Buglers" could pass an examination as to the leading events of the Peninsular war.

Yours truly,

THE AUTHOR.

THE YOUNG BUGLERS

CHAPTER I. — A COACHING ADVENTURE.

Had any of the boys in the lower forms of Eton in the year 1808, been asked who were the most popular boys of their own age, they would have been almost sure to have answered, without the slightest hesitation, Tom and Peter Scudamore, and yet it is probable that no two boys were more often in disgrace. It was not that they were idle, upon the contrary, both were fairly up in their respective forms, but they were constantly getting into mischief of one sort or another; yet even with the masters they were favorites, there was never anything low, disgraceful, or ungentlemanly in

their escapades, and they could be trusted never to attempt to screen themselves from the consequences by prevarication, much less by lying. If the masters heard that a party of youngsters had been seen far out of bounds, they were pretty sure that the Scudamores were among them; a farmer came in from a distance to complain that his favorite tree had been stripped of its apples—for in those days apples were looked upon by boys as fair objects of sport,—if the head-master's favorite white poodle appeared dyed a deep blue, if Mr. Jones, the most unpopular master in the school, upon coming out of his door trod upon a quantity of tallow smeared all over the doorstep, and was laid up for a week in consequence, there was generally a strong suspicion that Tom and Peter Scudamore were concerned in the matter. One of their tricks actually came to the ears of the Provost himself, and caused quite a sensation in the place, but in this case, fortunately for them, they escaped undetected.

One fine summer afternoon they were out on the water with two or three other boys of their own age, when a barge was seen ahead at some short distance from the shore. She was apparently floating down with the stream, and the fact that a horse was proceeding along the towing-path a little way ahead was not noticed, as the rope was slack and was trailing under water. The boys, therefore, as they were rowing against stream, steered their boat to pass inside of her. Just as they came abreast of the horse a man on the barge suddenly shouted to the rider of the horse to go on. He did so, the rope tightened, rose from the water just under the bow of the boat, and in another minute the boys were struggling in the water. All were good swimmers, and would have cared little for the ducking had it occurred accidentally, but the roars of laughter of the bargeman, and the chaff with which he assailed them as they scrambled up the bank, showed clearly enough that they had been upset maliciously. The boys were furious, and one or two proposed that they should report the case, but Tom Scudamore pointed out that the bargeman would of course declare that it was a pure accident, and that the boys were themselves in fault in not looking out whether

the barge was being towed, before going inside her, and so nothing would come of reporting.

The boat was dragged ashore and emptied, and in a few minutes they were rowing back towards the town. The distance was but short, and they did not repass the barge before they reached their boat-house. The brothers had exchanged a few words in a low voice on the way, and instead of following the example of the others, and starting at a run for the house where they boarded to change their clothes, they walked down by the river and saw that the barge had moored up against the bank, at a short distance below the bridge. They watched for a time, and saw the bargeman fasten up the hatch of the little cabin and go ashore.

That night two boys lowered themselves with a rope from the window of one of the dames-houses, and walked rapidly down to the river. There were a few flickering oil lamps burning, and the one or two old watchmen were soundly asleep in their boxes. They did not meet a soul moving upon their way to the object of the expedition, the barge that had run them down. Very quietly they slipped on board, satisfied themselves by listening at the half-open hatch to the snoring within that their enemy was there, then loosened the moorings so that they could be thrown off at a moment's notice.

"Now, Peter," the elder brother said, "open our lantern. The night is quite still. You hold your hand behind it, so that the light will not fall on our faces, and I will look whether he is only wrapped up in a blanket or has a regular bed; we must not risk setting the place on fire. Get the crackers ready."

A dark lantern was now taken out from under Tom's jacket, and was found to be still alight, an important matter, for striking a light with flint and steel was in those days a long and tedious business, and then opening it Tom threw the light into the cabin. It was a tiny place, and upon a bench, wrapped up in a blanket, the bargeman was lying. As the light fell on his eyes, he moved, and a moment afterwards started up

with an oath, and demanded who was there.

No answer came in words, but half a dozen lighted crackers were thrown into the cabin, when they began to explode with a tremendous uproar. In an instant the hatch was shut down and fastened outside. The rope was cast off, and in another minute she was floating down stream with the crackers still exploding inside her, but with their noise almost deadened by the tremendous outcry of shouts and howls, and by a continued and furious banging at the hatch.

"There is no fear of his being choked, Tom, I hope?"

"No, I expect he's all right," Tom said, "it will be pretty stifling for a bit no doubt, but there's a chimney hole and the smoke will find its way out presently. The barge will drift down to the weir before it brings up, there is not enough stream out for there to be any risk of her upsetting, else we daren't have turned her adrift."

The next day the whole town was talking of the affair, and in the afternoon the bargeman went up to the head-master and accused one of the boys of an attempt to murder him.

Greatly surprised, the Provost demanded what reason the man had for suspecting the boys, and the bargeman acknowledged that he had that afternoon upset a boat with four or five boys in her. "They would not bear you malice on that account," the Provost said; "they don't think much of a swim such weather as this, unless indeed you did it on purpose."

The man hesitated in his answer, and the Provost continued, "You evidently did do it on purpose, and in that case, although it was carried too far, for I hear you had a very narrow escape of being stifled, still you brought it upon yourself, and I hope it will be a lesson to you not to risk the lives of Eton boys for your amusement. I know nothing about this affair, but if you can point out the boys you suspect I will of course inquire into it."

The bargeman departed, grumbling that he did not know one of the young imps from

another, but if he did find them, he'd wring their necks for them to a certainty. The Provost had some inquiries made as to the boys who had been upset, and whether they had all been in at lock-up time; finding that they had all answered to their names, he made no further investigation.

This affair had taken place in the summer before this story begins, on the 15th of October, 1808. On that day a holiday was granted in consequence of the head-master's birthday, and the boys set off, some to football, some for long walks in the country.

The Scudamores, with several of their friends, strolled down the towing-path for some miles, and walked back by the road. As they entered their dames-house on their return, Tom Scudamore said for the twentieth time, "Well, I would give anything to be a soldier, instead of having to go in and settle down as a banker—it's disgusting!"

As they entered a boy came up. "Oh, Scudamore, Jackson's been asking for you both. It's something particular, for he has been out three or four times, and he wanted to send after you, but no one knew where you had gone."

The boys at once went into the master's study, where they remained all the afternoon. A short time after they went in, Mr. Jackson came out and said a word or two to one of the senior boys, and the word was quickly passed round, that there was to be no row, for the Scudamores had just heard of the sudden death of their father. That evening, Mr. Jackson had beds made up for them in his study, so that they might not have the pain of having to talk with the other boys. The housekeeper packed up their things, and next morning early they started by the coach for London.

Mr. Scudamore, the father of the young Etonians, was a banker. He was the elder of two brothers, and had inherited his father's business, while his brother had gone into the army. The banker had married the daughter of a landowner in the neighborhood, and had lived happily and prosperously until her death, seven years before this story

begins. She had borne him three children, the two boys, now fifteen and fourteen years old respectively, and a girl, Rhoda, two years younger than Peter. The loss of his wife afflicted him greatly, and he received another shock five years later by the death of his brother, Colonel Scudamore, to whom he was much attached. From the time of his wife's death he had greatly relaxed in his attention to his business, and after his brother's death he left the management almost entirely in the hands of his cashier, in whom he had unlimited confidence. This confidence was wholly misplaced. For years the cashier had been carrying on speculation upon his own account with the monies of the bank. Gradually and without exciting the least suspicion he had realized the various securities held by the bank, and at last gathering all the available cash he, one Saturday afternoon, locked up the bank and fled.

On Monday it was found that he was missing; Mr. Scudamore went down to the bank, and had the books taken into his parlor for examination. Some hours afterwards a clerk went in and found his master lying back in his chair insensible. A doctor on arriving pronounced it to be apoplexy. He never rallied, and a few hours afterwards the news spread through the country that Scudamore, the banker, was dead, and that the bank had stopped payment.

People could believe the former item of news, but were incredulous as to the latter. Scudamore's bank was looked upon in Lincolnshire as at least as safe as the Bank of England itself. But the sad truth was soon clear to all, and for awhile there was great distress of mind among the people, for many miles round, for most of them had entrusted all their savings of years to the Scudamores' bank. When affairs were wound up, however, it was found that things were not quite so bad as had been feared. Mr. Scudamore had a considerable capital employed in the bank, and the sale of his handsome house and estate realized a large sum, so that eventually every one received back the money they had entrusted to the bank; but the whole of the capital and the profits of years of successful enterprise had vanished, and it was calculated

by the executors that the swindler must have appropriated at least 80,000l.

For the first month after their father's death the boys stayed with the doctor who had long attended the family and had treated all their ailments since they were born. In the great loss of their father the loss of their fortune affected them but little, except that they were sorry to be obliged to leave Eton; for the interest of the little fortune which their mother had brought at her marriage, and which was all that now remained to them, would not have been sufficient to pay for their expenses there, and indeed such an education would have been out of place for two boys who had to make their own way in life. At the end of this month it was arranged that they were to go to their only existing relative, an elder sister of Mr. Scudamore. The boys had never seen her, for she had not for many years been friends with her brother.

The letter which she had written to the doctor, announcing her willingness to receive them, made the boys laugh, although it did not hold out prospects of a very pleasant future. "I am, of course," she said, "prepared to do my duty. No one can say that I have ever failed in my duty. My poor brother quarreled with me. It was his duty to apologize. He did not do so. Had it been my duty to apologize I should have done so. As I was right, and he was wrong, it was clearly not my duty. I shall now do my duty to my niece and nephews. Yet I may be allowed to say that I regret much that they are not all nieces. I do not like boys. They are always noisy, and not always clean. They do not wipe their shoes, they are always breaking things, they go about with all sorts of rubbish and dirt in their pockets, their hair is always rough, they are fond of worrying cats, and other cruel games. Altogether they are objectionable. Had my brother made up his mind to leave his children in my charge, it was clearly his duty to have had girls instead of boys. However, it is not because other people fail in their duty that I should fail in mine. Therefore, let them come to me this day fortnight. By that time I shall have got some strong and suitable furniture in the room that my nephews will occupy, and shall have time to make other arrangements. This letter will, if all goes well, reach you, I believe, in three days after the date of

posting, and they will take the same time coming here. Assure them that I am prepared to do my duty, and that I hope that they will make a serious effort at doing theirs. Ask my nephews, upon the occasion of their first arrival, to make as little noise as they can, because my cat, Minnie, is very shy, and if she is scared at the first meeting, she will take a very long time to get accustomed to them. I also particularly beg that they do not, as they come up to the house, throw stones at any of the pigeons who may be resting upon the roof, for the slates were all set right a few weeks ago, and I am sure I do not wish to have the slater here again; they were hanging about for ten days the last time they came. I do not know that I have anything else to say."

The boys received the reading of this singular epistle with shouts of laughter.

"Poor aunt," Tom said. "What does she think of us that she can suppose that, upon our very first arrival, we should come in like wild Indians, throwing stones at her pigeons, and frightening her Minnie into fits. Did you ever hear such an extraordinary idea, Doctor Jarvis?"

"At any rate, boys," the doctor said, when the laughter had ceased, "you may find your aunt a little peculiar, but she is evidently determined to do her duty to you, and you must do yours to her, and not play more pranks than you can help. As to you, Rhoda, you will evidently be in high favor, and as you are fortunately a quiet little lady, you will, I have no doubt, get on with her very well."

"I hope so," Rhoda said, smiling, "you see she means to be kind, though she does write funny letters, and, at any rate, there are Minnie and the pigeons; it sounds nice, you know. Do you know what aunt's place is like, Dr. Jarvis, and how to get there from here."

"No, my dear, I never was in that part of England. It is close to Marlborough that she lives, a very pretty country, I believe. There is, of course, no way to go across from here. You must go up to London by coach from here, and then to Marlborough by

the western coach. I will write to my brother James in town, where you stopped at night as you came through, boys, and I know that he will take you all in for the night, and see that you go off right in the morning."

"You're very kind, indeed, Doctor Jarvis. I do not know how to thank you for all you have done for us," Tom said earnestly, and the others cordially echoed the sentiment.

The day before starting the doctor had a long talk with the boys. He pointed out to them that their future now depended upon themselves alone. They must expect to find many unpleasantnesses in their way, but they must take their little trials pleasantly, and make the best of everything. "I have no fear as to Rhoda," their kind friend said. "She has that happy, amiable, and quiet disposition that is sure to adapt itself to all circumstances. I have no doubt she will become a favorite with your aunt. Try to keep out of scrapes, boys. You know you are rather fond of mischief, and your aunt will not be able to understand it. If you get into any serious difficulty write to me, you can rely upon always finding a friend in me."

The journey to London was no novelty to the boys, but Rhoda enjoyed it immensely. Her place had been taken inside, but most of the journey she rode outside with her brothers. She was greatly amazed at the bustle and noise of London, and was quite confused at the shouting and crowd at the place where the coach drew up, for two or three other coaches had just arrived from other directions. Mr. Jarvis had sent his man-servant to meet them, their luggage was sent direct to the booking-office from which the coach started for Marlborough, and the servant carried a small bag containing their night things. It was evening when they got in, and Rhoda could scarcely keep her eyes open long enough to have tea, for the coach had been two days and nights upon the road. The next day they stayed in town, and Mrs. Jarvis took them out to see the sights of London—the Tower and St. Paul's, and Westminster Abbey, and the beasts at Exeter Change. The boys had twice before spent a whole day in London, their father having, upon two occasions, made his

visits to town to fit in with their going up to school, but to Rhoda it was all new, and very, very wonderful.

The next day the coach started early for Marlborough. It was to take rather over twenty-four hours on the way. As before, Rhoda rode outside with her brothers until the evening, but then, instead of going inside, where there were five passengers already, she said, as the night was so fine and warm, she would rather remain with them. They were sitting behind the coachman, there were two male passengers upon the same seat with them, and another in the box seat by the coachman. The conversation turned, as in those days it was pretty sure to turn, upon highwaymen. Several coaches had been lately stopped by three highwaymen, who worked together, and were reported to be more reckless than the generality of their sort. They had shot a coachman who refused to stop, the week before on Hounslow Heath, they had killed a guard on the great north road, and they had shot two passengers who resisted, near Exeter.

Tom and Peter were greatly amused by observing that the passenger who sat next to them, and who, at the commencement of the conversation, showed a brace of heavy pistols with which he was provided, with much boasting as to what he should do if the coach were attacked, when he heard of the fate of the passengers who had resisted, became very quiet indeed, and presently took an opportunity, when he thought that he was not observed, of slipping his pistols under the tarpaulin behind him.

"I hope those dreadful men won't stop our coach," Rhoda said.

"They won't hurt you if they do, Rhoda," Tom said assuringly. "I think it would be rather a lark. I say, Peter," he went on in a whisper, "I think we might astonish them with those pistols that coward next to you has hid behind him."

"I should just think so," Peter said; "the bargee at Eton would be nothing to it."

The hours went slowly on. Rhoda and the boys dozed uncomfortably against each

other and the baggage behind them, until they were suddenly roused by a shout in the road beside them: "Stand for your lives!"

The moon was up, and they could see that there were three horsemen. One galloped to the horses' heads, and seized the rein of one of the leaders, the others rode by the coach.

The first answer to the challenge was a discharge from the blunderbuss of the guard, which brought one of the highwaymen from his horse.

The other, riding up to the side of the coach, fired at the guard, and a loud cry told that the shot had taken effect. In another moment the fellow was by the side of the coachman.

"Hold up!" he said, "or I will blow your brains out!"

The coachman did as he was ordered, and indeed the man at the leader's head had almost succeeded in stopping them. The passenger next to the boys had, at the first challenge, again seized his pistols, and the boys thought that he was going to fire after all.

"Lie down at our feet, Rhoda, quick!" Tom said, "and don't move till I tell you." The fate of the guard evidently frightened away the short-lived courage of the passenger, for, as the coachman again pulled up, he hastily thrust the pistols in behind him.

"Get down, every one of you," the highwayman shouted.

"Lie still, Rhoda," Tom whispered. "Now, Peter, get in underneath the tarpaulin."

This was done as the passengers descended. The luggage was not so heavily piled as usual, and the boys found plenty of room beneath the tarpaulin.

"Now, Peter, you take one of these pistols and give me the other. Now peep out. The moon is hidden, which is a good thing; now, look here, you shall shoot that fellow standing down below, who is swearing at the ladies inside for not getting out quicker. I'll take a shot at that fellow standing in front of the horse's heads."

"Do you think you can hit him, Tom?"

"I have not the least idea, but I can try; and if you hit the other one, the chances are he'll bolt, whether I hit him or not. Open the tarpaulin at the side so as to see well, and rest the pistol upon something. You must take a good shot, Peter, for if you miss him we shall be in a mess."

"All right," Peter said, in a whisper, "I can almost touch him with the pistol."

In loud and brutal tones the highwayman now began to order the frightened ladies to give up their watches and rings, enforcing his commands with terrible curses. When suddenly a pistol flashed out just behind him, and he fell off his horse with a ball through his shoulder.

Tom's shot, though equally well intended, was not so truly aimed. The highwayman had dismounted, and was standing just in front of the leaders, so that Tom had a fair view of him between them. The boys had both occasionally fired their father's pistols, for, in those days, each householder in the country always kept loaded pistols in his room, but his skill was not sufficient to make sure of a man at that distance. The bullet flew past at two feet to the left of his head. But its effect was scarcely less startling than if it had actually hit him, for, in its passage, it passed through the ear of the off leader. The horse made a start at the sudden pain, and then dashed forward. The rest of the team, already alarmed by the shot, followed her lead; before the startled highwayman could get out of the way they were upon him, in another instant he was under their heels, and the coach gave a sudden lurch as it passed over his body.

"Lie still, Rhoda, a little longer; it's all right, but the horses have run away," Tom exclaimed, as he scrambled forward, and caught hold of the reins, which the coachman had tied to the rail of the seat as he got down. "Catch hold of the reins, Peter, and help me pull."

Peter did so; but the united strength of the boys was wholly unequal to arresting the

headlong flight of the horses.

Fortunately the highwaymen had chosen a low bottom between two hills, to arrest the coach, consequently the road was up a hill of moderate steepness. The boys hoped that the horses would stop when they got to the top; but they went on with redoubled speed.

"This is something like going it," Peter said.

"Isn't it, Peter? They know their way, and we ain't lively to meet anything in the road. They will stop at their stable. At any rate, it's no use trying to steer them. Here, Rhoda dear, get up; are you very much frightened?"

Rhoda still lay quite still, and Peter, holding on with difficulty, for the coach quite rocked with the speed at which they were going, climbed over to her, and stooped, down. "Shall I help you up, Rhoda?"

"No, please, I would rather stop here till it's all over."

Fortunately the hill, up to the Tillage where they made the change, was a steep one, and the horses broke into a trot before they reached the top, and, in another minute drew up at the door of the inn. The astonishment of the ostlers at seeing the horses covered with lather, and coachbox tenanted only by two boys, behind whom a little white face now peered out, was extreme, and they were unable to get beyond an ejaculation of hallo! expressive of a depth of incredulous astonishment impossible to be rendered by words.

"Look here," Tom said, with all the composure, and much of the impudence, which then, as now, characterized the young Etonian, "don't be staring like a pack of stuck pigs. You had better get the fresh horses in, and drive back to the bottom, about four miles from here. There has been regular row with some fellows, and I expect two or three are killed. Now, just put up the ladder; I want to get my sister down."

Almost mechanically the men put the ladder up to the coach, and the boys and Rhoda got down.

"Do you say the coach has been attacked by highwaymen in Burnet bottom?"

"I don't know anything about Burnet bottom," Tom said. "It was a bottom about four miles off. There were three of them. The guard shot one of them, and the others shot the guard. Then we were stopped by them, and every one had to get down. Then the horses ran away, and here we are."

"Then there are two of those highwayman chaps with the passengers," one of the men said.

"You need not be afraid of them," Tom said carelessly; "one got shot, and I don't know about the other, but the wheel of the coach went over him, so I do not suppose he will be much trouble. Now, if I were you, I should not stand staring any more, but should make haste and take the coach back."

"Hullo, look at this grey," one of the men exclaimed, as, at last understanding what had taken place, they began to bustle about to change horses. "He's got blood all over the side of his head. One of those scoundrels has shot him through the ear."

Tom burst out laughing. "I am the scoundrel!" he said. "Peter, that explains why we went off so suddenly. I missed the fellow, and hit the leader in the ear. However, it comes to the same thing. By the way, we may as well take the pistols."

So saying, he ran up the ladder and brought down the pistols. By this time the fresh horses were in.

"I can't make nought of it," one of the ostlers said, climbing up into the coachman's seat. "Jump up, Bill and Harry. It's the rummiest go I ever heard of in coaching."

"Landlady, can you get us some tea at once, please," Tom said, going up to the landlady, who was looking on from the door of the house with an astonishment equal to that of the men at the whole affair; "as quickly as you can, for my sister looks regularly done up with fatigue, and then, please let her lie down till the coach is ready to start again. It will be three quarters of an hour before it is back, and then, I daresay, there will be a lot of talking before they go on. I should think they will be

wanting breakfast. At any rate, an hour's rest will do you good, Rhoda."

Rhoda was too worn out with the over-excitement even to answer. Fortunately there was hot water in order to make hot grog for the outriders of the coach, some tea was quickly made, and in ten minutes Rhoda was fast asleep on the landlady's bed.

Tom and Peter expressed their desire for something substantial in the way of eating, for the morning had now fairly broken. The landlady brought in some cold meat, upon which the boys made a vigorous attack, and then, taking possession of two benches, they dozed off until the coach arrived.

It had but three horses, for one had been sent off to carry Bill, the ostler, at full speed to the town at which they had last changed horses, to fetch a doctor and the constable. The other two men had remained with the guard, who was shot in the hip, and the highwayman, whose collar-bone was broken by Peter's shot. The fellow shot by the guard, and the other one, whom the coach wheels had passed over, were both dead.

"There's the coach, Tom."

"What a nuisance, Peter, they'll all be wanting to talk now, and I am just so comfortably off. Well, I suppose it's no use trying to get any more sleep."

So saying, they roused themselves, and went out to the door just as the coach drew up.

There was a general shout of greeting from the passengers, which was stopped, however, by a peremptory order from the coachman.

He was a large, stout man, with a face red from the effects of wind and exposure. "Jack," he said, to a man who was standing near, for the news of the attack upon the coach had quickly spread, and all the villagers were astir to see it come in. "Jack, hold the leader's head. Thomas, open the door, and let the insides out. Gents," he said solemnly, when this was done, "I'm going to do what isn't a usual thing by no means, in fact, I ain't no precedence for doing it; but then, I do not know any

precedence for this here business altogether. I never did hear of a coachman standing up on his box to give a cheer, no, not to King George himself; but, then, King George never polished off two highwaymen all to himself, leastway, not as I've heard tell of. Now, these two young gents have done this. They have saved my coach and my passengers from getting robbed, and so I'm going to give 'em three cheers. I'll trouble you to help me up into the box seat, gentlemen."

Assisted by the other passengers, the driver now gravely climbed up into the box seat, steadied himself there by placing one hand upon the shoulder of the passenger next him, took off his low-crowned hat, and said. "Follow me, gents, with three cheers for those young gents standing there; better plucked ones I never came across, and I've traveled a good many miles in my day."

So saying, he gave three stentorian cheers, which were echoed by all the passengers and villagers.

Then there was a momentary silence, and Tom, who, with his brother, had been feeling very uncomfortable, although rather inclined to laugh, seeing that he was expected to say something, said, "Thank you all very much; but we'd much rather you hadn't done it."

Then there was a general laugh and movement, and a general pressing forward of the passengers to shake the boys by the hand. The driver was assisted down from his elevated position, and got off the coach and came up to them. "That's the first speech I ever made, young gentlemen, and, if I know myself, it will be the last; but, you see, I was druv to it. You're a good sort, that's certain. What will you drink?"

The boys declared for beer, and drank solemnly with the driver, imitating him in finishing their mugs at a draught, and turning them topsy-turvy. There was now a great deal of talking, and many questions were asked. Tom and Peter modestly said that there was really nothing to tell. They saw that the gentleman next to them intended to use his pistols; but, not seeing a good opportunity, put them down

behind the tarpaulin, and the thought occurred to them that, by slipping behind it, they would get a good chance of a certain shot. Accordingly, they had fired, and then the horse had run away; and there was an end of it. There was nothing extraordinary in the whole matter.

"At any rate, my boys, you have saved me from a loss of a couple of hundred pounds which I had got hid in my boots, but which those fellows would have been sure to have have discovered," one of the passengers said.

There was a general chorus of satisfaction at many watches and trinkets saved, and then the first passenger went on,—

"I propose, gentlemen and ladies, that when we get to the end of our journey we make a subscription, according to the amount we have saved, and that we get each of these young gentlemen a brace of the very best pistols that can be bought. If they go on as they have begun, they will find them useful."

There was a general exclamation of approval, and one of the ladies, who had been an inside passenger, said, "And I think we ought to give a handsome ring to their sister as a memorial through life. Of course, she had not so much to do as her brothers, but she had the courage to keep still, and she had to run the risk, both of being shot, and of being upset by the coach just as they did."

This also was unanimously approved, and, after doing full justice to the breakfast set before them, the party again took their places. Rhoda being carried down asleep, by the landlady, and placed in the coach, one of the inside passengers getting out to make room for her, and she was laid, curled up, on the seat, with her head in a lady's lap, and slept quietly, until, to her astonishment, she was woke up, and told that she was in Marlborough.

CHAPTER II. — TWO YOUNG PICKLES.

An old-fashioned open carriage, drawn by a stiff, old-fashioned horse, and driven by

a stiff, old-fashioned man, was in waiting at the inn at which the coach drew up at Marlborough. Into this the young Scudamores were soon transferred, and, after a hearty good-bye from their fellow-passengers, and an impressive one from the coachman, they started upon the concluding part of their journey.

"How far is it to aunt's?" Tom asked.

"About six miles, young sir," the driver said gravely.

The young Scudamores had great difficulty to restrain their laughter at Tom's new title; in fact, Peter nearly choked himself in his desperate efforts to do so, and no further questions were asked for some time.

The ride was a pleasant one, and Rhoda, who had never been out of Lincolnshire before, was delighted with the beautiful country through which they were passing. The journey, long as it was—for the road was a very bad one, and the horse had no idea of going beyond a slow trot—passed quickly to them all; but they were glad when the driver pointed to a quaint old-fashioned house standing back from the road, and said that they were home.

"There are the pigeons, Rhoda, and there is Minnie asleep on that open window-sill."

Very many times had the young Scudamores talked about their aunt, and had pictured to themselves what she would be like; and their ideas of her so nearly approached the truth, that she almost seemed to be an old acquaintance as she came to the door as the carriage stopped. She was a tall, upright, elderly lady, with a kind, but very decided face, and a certain prim look about her manner and dress.

"Well, niece Rhoda and nephews, I am glad to see that you have arrived safely," she said in a clear, distinct voice. "Welcome to the Yews. I hope that we shall get on very well together. Joseph, I hope that you have not driven Daisy too fast, and that you did not allow my nephews to use the whip. You know I gave you very distinct instructions not to let them do so."

"No, my lady, they never so much as asked."

"That is right," Miss Scudamore said, turning round and shaking hands with the boys, who had now got out of the carriage and had helped Rhoda down. "I am glad to hear what Joseph tells me, for I know that boys are generally fond of furious driving and like lashing horses until they put them into a gallop. And now, how are you, niece Rhoda! Give me a kiss. That is right. You look pale and tired, child; you must have something to eat, and then go to bed. Girls can't stand racketing about as boys can. You look quiet and nice, child, and I have no doubt we shall suit very well. It is very creditable to you that you have not been spoilt by your brothers. Boys generally make their sisters almost as noisy and rude as they are themselves."

"I don't think we are noisy and rude, aunt," Tom said, with a smile.

"Oh, you don't, nephew?" Miss Scudamore said, looking at him sharply, and then shaking her head decidedly two or three times. "If your looks do not belie you both sadly, you are about as hair-brained a couple of lads as my worst enemies could wish to see sent to plague me; but," she added to herself, as she turned to lead the way indoors, "I must do my duty, and must make allowances; boys will be boys, boys will be boys, so they say at least, though why they should be is more than I can make out. Now, Rhoda, I will take you up with me. Your bedroom leads out of mine, dear. Hester," she said to a prim-looking servant who had come out after her to the door; "will you show my nephews to their room? Dinner will be ready at two; it is just a quarter to the hour now. I see that you have got watches, so that you will be able to be punctual; and I must request you, when you have done washing, not to throw the water out of the window, because my flower-beds are underneath."

Tom had great difficulty in keeping his countenance, while he assured his aunt that his brother and himself never did empty their basins out of the window.

"That is right," Miss Scudamore said doubtfully; "but I have heard that boys do such things."

Once fairly in their room and the door shut, the boys had a great laugh over their aunt's ideas as to boys.

"There is one comfort," Tom said at last; "whatever we do we shall never surprise her."

"I think we shall get on very well with her," Peter said. "She means to be kind, I am sure. This is a jolly room, Tom."

It was a low wainscoted room, with a very wide window divided into three by mullions, and fitted with latticed panes. They were open, and a delicious scent of flowers came in from the garden. The furniture was all new and very strong, of dark stained wood, which harmonized well with the paneling. There were no window curtains, but a valance of white dimity hung above the window. There was a piece of carpet between the beds; the rest of the floor was bare, but the boards were of old oak, and looked as well without it. Several rows of pegs had been put upon the walls, and there was a small chest of drawers by each bed.

"This is very jolly, Peter; but it is a pity that there are bars to the window."

When they came down to dinner they found that Rhoda, quite done up with her journey, had gone to bed.

"You like your room, I hope, nephews," Miss Scudamore said, after they had taken their seats.

"Yes, aunt, very much. There is only one drawback to it."

"What is that, Thomas?"

"Oh, please, aunt, don't call me Thomas; it is a dreadful name; it is almost as bad as Tommy. Please call me Tom. I am always called Tom by every one."

"I am not fond of these nicknames," Miss Scudamore said. "There is a flippancy about them of which I do not approve."

"Yes, aunt, in nicknames; but Tom is not a nickname; it is only a short way of

speaking. We never hear of a man being called Thomas, unless he is a footman or an archbishop, or something of that sort."

"What do you mean by archbishop?" Miss Scudamore asked severely.

"Well, aunt, I was going to say footman, and then I thought of Thomas à Becket; and there was Thomas the Rhymer. I have heard of him, but I never read any of his rhymes. I wonder why they did not call them poems. But I expect even Thomas à Becket was called Tom in his own family."

Miss Scudamore looked sharply at Tom, but he had a perfect command of his face, and could talk the greatest nonsense with the most serious face. He went on unmoved with her scrutiny.

"I have often wondered why I was not christened Tom, It would have been much more sensible. For instance, Rhoda is christened Rhoda and not Rhododendron."

"Rhododendron?" Miss Scudamore said, mystified.

"Yes, aunt, it is an American plant, I believe. We had one in the green-house at home; it was sent poor papa by some friend who went out there, I don't see anything else Rhoda could come from."

"You are speaking very ignorantly, nephew," Miss Scudamore said severely. "I don't know anything about the plant you speak of, but the name of Rhoda existed before America was ever heard of. It is a very old name."

"I expect," Peter said, "it must have meant originally a woman of Rhodes. You see Crusaders and Templars were always having to do with Rhodes, and they no doubt brought the name home, and so it got settled here."

"The name is mentioned in Scripture," Miss Scudamore said severely.

"Yes, aunt, and that makes it still more likely that it meant a woman of Rhodes; you see Rhodes was a great place then."

Miss Scudamore was silent for some time. Then she went back to the subject with

which the conversation had commenced. "What is the objection you spoke of to the room?"

"Oh! it is the bars to the window, aunt."

"I have just had them put up," Miss Scudamore said calmly.

"Just put up, aunt!" Tom repeated in surprise, "what for?"

"To prevent you getting out at night."

The boys could not help laughing this time, and then Peter said, "But why should we want to get out at night, aunt?"

"Why should boys always want to do the things they ought not?" Miss Scudamore said. "I've heard of boys being let down by ropes to go and buy things. I dare say you have both done it yourselves."

"Well, aunt," Tom said, "perhaps we have; but then, you see, that was at school."

"I do not see any difference, nephew. If you will get out at one window, you will get out at another. There is mischief to be done in the country as well as in towns; and so long as there is mischief to do, so long will boys go out of their way to do it. And now I will tell you the rules of this house, to which you will be expected to adhere. It is well to understand things at once, as it prevents mistakes. We breakfast at eight, dine at two, have tea at half-past six, and you will go to bed at half-past eight. These hours will be strictly observed. I shall expect your hands and faces to be washed, and your hairs brushed previous to each meal. When you come indoors you will always take off your boots and put on your shoes in the little room behind this. And now, if you have done dinner I think that you had better go and lie down on your bed, and get two or three hours' sleep. Take your boots off before you get into the bed."

"She means well, Peter," the elder brother said, as they went upstairs, "but I am afraid she will fidget our lives out."

For two or three days the boys wandered about enjoying the beautiful walks, and surprising and pleasing their aunt by the punctuality with which they were in to their meals. Then she told them that she had arranged for them to go to a tutor, who lived at Warley, a large village a mile distant, and who had some eight or ten pupils. The very first day's experience at the school disgusted them. The boys were of an entirely different class to those with whom they had hitherto associated, and the master was violent and passionate.

"How do you like Mr. Jones, nephews?" Miss Scudamore asked upon their return after their first day at school.

"We do not like him at all, aunt. In the first place, he is a good deal too handy with that cane of his."

"'He who spares the rod—'"

"Yes, we know that, aunt, 'spoils the child,'" broke in Tom, "but we would not mind so much if the fellow were a gentleman."

"I don't know what you may call a gentleman," Miss Scudamore said severely. "He stands very high here a schoolmaster, while he visits the vicar, and is well looked up to everywhere."

"He's not a gentleman for all that," Tom muttered; "he wouldn't be if he visited the Queen. One does not mind being trashed by a gentleman; one is used to that at Eton; but to be knocked about by a fellow like that! Well, we shall see."

For a week the boys put up with the cruelty of their tutor, who at once took an immense dislike to them on finding that they did not, like the other boys, cringe before him, and that no trashing could extract a cry from them.

It must not be supposed that they did not meditate vengeance, but they could hit upon no plan which could be carried out without causing suspicion that it was the act of one of the boys; and in that case they knew that he would question them all round, and they would not tell a lie to screen themselves.

Twice they appealed to their aunt, but she would not listen to them, saying that the other boys did not complain, and that if their master was more severe with them than with others, it could only be because they behaved worse. It was too evident that they were boys of very violent dispositions, and although she was sorry that their master found it necessary to punish them, it was clearly her duty not to interfere.

The remark about violence arose from Miss Scudamore having read in the little paper which was published once a week at Marlborough an account of the incident of the stopping of the coach, about which the boys had agreed to say nothing to her. The paper had described the conduct of her nephews in the highest terms, but Miss Scudamore was terribly shocked. "The idea", she said, "that she should have to associate with boys who had take a fellow-creature's life was terrible to her, and their conduct in resisting, when grown-up men had given up the idea as hopeless, showed a violent spirit, which, in boys so young, was shocking."

A few days after this, as the boys were coming from school, they passed the carrier's cart, coming in from Marlborough.

"Be you the young gentlemen at Miss Scudamore's?" the man asked. "Because, if you be, I have got a parcel for you."

Tom answered him that they were, and he then handed them over a heavy square parcel. Opening it after the cart had gone on, the boys, to their great delight, found that it consisted of two cases, each containing a brace of very handsome pistols.

"This is luck, Peter," Tom said. "If the parcel had been sent to the house, aunt would never have let us have them; now we can take them in quietly, get some powder and balls, and practice shooting every day in some quiet place. That will be capital. Do you know I have thought of a plan which will enrage old Jones horribly, and he will never suspect us?"

"No; have you, Tom? What is that?"

"Look here, Peter. I can carry you easily standing on my shoulders. If you get a very

long cloak, so as to fall well down on me, no one would suspect in the dark that there were two of us; we should look like one tremendously tall man. Well, you know, he goes every evening to Dunstable's to sing with Miss Dunstable. They say he's making love to her. We can waylay him in the narrow lane, and make him give up that new watch he has just bought, that he's so proud of. I heard him say he had given thirty guineas for it. Of course, we don't want to keep it, but we would smash it up between a couple of big stones, and send him all the pieces."

"Capital, Tom; but where should we get the cloak?"

"There is that long wadded silk cloak of aunt's that she uses when she goes out driving. It always hangs up in the closet in the hall."

"But how are we to get in again, Tom? I expect that he does not come back till half-past nine or ten. We can slip out easily enough after we are supposed to have gone to bed; but how are we to get back?"

"The only plan, Peter, is to get in through Rhoda's window. She is very angry at that brute Jones treating us so badly, and if I take her into the secret I feel sure she will agree."

Rhoda was appealed to, and although at first she said it was quite, quite impossible, she finally agreed, although with much fear and trembling, to assist them. First, the boys were to buy some rope and make a rope ladder, which Rhoda was to take up to her room; she was to open the window wide when she went to bed, but to pull the blind down as usual, so that if her aunt came in she would not notice it. Then, when she heard her aunt come tip to bed at half-past nine, she was to get up very quietly, drop the rope ladder out, fastening it as they instructed her, and then get into bed again, and go to sleep if she could, as the boys would not try to come in until after Miss Scudamore was asleep.

Two nights after this the schoolmaster was returning from his usual visit to Mr. Dunstable, when, to his horror, he saw a gigantic figure advance from under a tree

which overshadowed the lawn, and heard a deep voice say, "Your money or your life!"

Like all bullies, the schoolmaster was a coward, and no sooner did he see this terrible figure, and his ears caught the ominous click of a pistol which accompanied the words, than his teeth chattered, his whole figure trembled with fear, and he fell on his knees, crying, "Spare my life!—take all that I have, but spare my life!"

"You miserable coward!" the giant said, "I do not want to take your wretched life. What money have you?"

"I have only two shillings," he exclaimed; "I swear to you that I have only two shillings."

"What is the use of two shillings to me?—give them to the first beggar you see."

"Yes, sir," the schoolmaster said; "I swear to you that I will."

"Give me your watch."

The schoolmaster took out his watch, and, getting upon his feet, handed it to the giant.

"There now, you can go; but see," he added, as the schoolmaster turned with great alacrity to leave—"look here."

"Yes, sir."

"Look here, and mark my words well. Don't you go to that house where you have been to-night, or it will be the worse for you. You are a wretch, and I won't see that poor little girl marry you and be made miserable. Swear to me you will give her up."

The schoolmaster hesitated, but there was again the ominous click of the pistol.

"Yes, yes, I swear it," he said hastily. "I will give her up altogether."

"You had better keep your oath," the giant said, "for if you break it, if I hear you go there any more—I shall be sure to hear of it—I will put an ounce of lead in you, if I have to do it in the middle of your school. Do you hear me? Now you may go."

Only too glad to escape, the schoolmaster walked quickly off, and in a moment his steps could be heard as he ran at the top of his speed down the lane.

In a moment the giant appeared to break in two, and two small figures stood where the large one had been.

"Capital, Peter. Now, I'll take the cloak, and you keep the pistol, and now for a run home—not that I'm afraid of that coward getting up a pursuit. He'll be only too glad to get his head under the bedclothes."

Rhoda had carried out her brother's instructions with great exactness, and was in a great fright when her aunt came in to see her in bed, lest she should notice that the window was open. However, the night was a quiet one, and the curtains fell partly across the blind, so that Miss Scudamore suspected nothing, but Rhoda felt great relief when she said good-night, took the candle, and left the room. She had had hard work to keep herself awake until she heard her aunt come up to bed; and then, finding that she did not again come into the room, she got up, fastened one end of the rope ladder to a thick stick long enough to cross two of the mullions, let the other end down very quietly, and then slipped into bed again. She did not awake until Hester knocked at her door and told her it was time to get up. She awoke with a great start, and in a, fright at once ran to the window. Everything looked as usual. The rope ladder was gone, the window was closed, and Rhoda knew that her brothers must have come in safely.

Great was the excitement in Warley next day, when it became known that the schoolmaster had been robbed of his watch by a giant fully eight feet high. This height of the robber was, indeed, received with much doubt, as people thought that he might have been a tall man, but that the eight feet must have been exaggerated by the fear of the schoolmaster.

Two or three days afterwards the surprise rose even higher, when a party of friends who had assembled at Mr. Jones' to condole with him upon his misfortune, were

startled by the smashing of one of the windows by a small packet, which fell upon the floor in their midst.

There was a rush to the door, but the night was a dark one, and no one was to be seen; then they returned to the sitting-room, and the little packet was opened, and found to contain some watchworks bent and broken, some pulverized glass, and a battered piece of metal, which, after some trouble, the schoolmaster recognized as the case of his watch. The head-constable was sent for, and after examining the relics of the case, he came to the same conclusion at which the rest had already arrived, namely, that the watch could not have been stolen by an ordinary footpad, but by some personal enemy of the schoolmaster's, whose object was not plunder, but annoyance and injury.

To the population of Warley this solution was a very agreeable one. The fact of a gigantic footpad being in the neighborhood was alarming for all, and nervous people were already having great bolts and bars placed upon their shutters and doors. The discovery, therefore, that the object of this giant was not plunder, but only to gratify a spite against the master, was a relief to the whole place. Every one was, of course, anxious to know who this secret foe could be, and what crime Mr. Jones could have committed to bring such a tremendous enemy upon him. The boys at the school assumed a fresh importance in the eyes of the whole place, and being encouraged now to tell all they knew of him, they gave such a picture of the life that they had led at school, that a general feeling of disgust was aroused against him.

The parents of one or two of the boys gave notice to take their sons away, but the rest of the boys were boarders, and were no better off than before.

Miss Scudamore was unshaken in her faith in Mr. Jones and considered the rumor current about him to be due simply to the vindictive nature of boys.

"Well, aunt," Tom said one day, after a lecture of this sort from her, "I know you mean to be kind to us, but Peter and I have stood it on that account, but we can't

stand it much longer, and we shall run away before long."

"And where would you run to, nephew?" Miss Scudamore said calmly.

"That is our affair," Tom said quite as coolly, "only I don't like to do it without giving you warning. You mean kindly, I know, aunt, but the way you are always going on at us from morning to night whenever we are at home, and the way in which you allow us to be treated by that tyrannical brute, is too much altogether."

Miss Scudamore looked steadily at them.

"I am doing, nephew, what I consider to be for your good. You are willful, and violent, and headstrong. It is my duty to cure you, and although it is all very painful to me, at my time of life, to have such a charge thrust upon me, still, whatever it costs, it must be done."

For the next month Mr. Jones' life was rendered a burden to him. The chimney-pots were shut up with sods placed on them, and the fireplaces poured volumes of smoke into the rooms and nearly choked him. Night after night the windows of his bedroom were smashed; cats were let down the chimney; his water-butts were found filled with mud, and the cord of the bucket of his well was cut time after time; the flowers in his garden were dug up and put in topsy-turvy. He himself could not stir out after dark without being tripped up by strings fastened a few inches above the path; and once, coming out of his door, a string fastened from scraper to scraper brought him down the steps with such violence that the bridge of his nose, which came on the edge of a step, was broken, and he was confined to his bed for three or four days. In vain he tried every means to discover and punish the authors of these provocations. A savage dog, the terror of the neighborhood, was borrowed and chained up in the garden, but was found poisoned next morning.

Watchmen were hired, but refused to stay for more than one night, for they were so harassed and wearied out that they came to the conclusion that they were haunted. If they were on one side of the house a voice would be heard on the other. After the

first few attempts, they no longer dared venture to run, for between each round strings were tied in every direction, and they had several heavy falls, while as they were carefully picking their way with their lanterns, stones struck them from all quarters. If one ventured for a moment from the other's side his lantern was knocked out, and his feet were struck from under him with a sharp and unexpected blow from a heavy cudgel; and they were once appalled by seeing a gigantic figure stalk across the grass, and vanish in a little bush.

At the commencement of these trials the schoolmaster had questioned the boys, one by one, if they had any hand in the proceeding.

All denied it. When it came to Tom Scudamore's turn, he said. "You never do believe me, Mr. Jones, so it is of no use my saying that I didn't do it; but if you ask Miss Scudamore, she will bear witness that we were in bed hours before, and that there are bars on our windows through which a cat could hardly get."

The boys had never used Rhoda's room after the first night's expedition, making their escape now by waiting until the house was quiet, and then slipping along the passage to the spare room, and thence by the window, returning in the same way.

Under this continued worry, annoyance, and alarm, the schoolmaster grew thin and worn, his school fell off more and more; for many of the boys, whose rest was disturbed by all this racket, encouraged by the example of the boys of the place who had already been taken away, wrote privately to their friends.

The result was that the parents of two or three more wrote to say that their boys would not return after the holidays, and no one was surprised when it became known that Mr. Jones was about to close his school and leave the neighborhood.

The excitement of the pranks that they had been playing had enabled the boys to support the almost perpetual scoldings and complaints of their aunt; but school once over, and their enemy driven from the place, they made up their minds that they could no longer stand it.

One day, therefore, when Rhoda had, as an extraordinary concession, been allowed to go for a walk with them, they told her that they intended to run away.

Poor Rhoda was greatly distressed.

"You see, Rhoda dear," Tom said, "although we don't like leaving you, you will really be happier when we are gone. It is a perpetual worry to you to hear aunt going on, on, on—nagging, nagging, nagging for ever and ever at us. She is fond of you and kind to you, and you would get on quietly enough without us, while now she is in a fidget whenever you are with us, and is constantly at you not to learn mischief and bad ways from us. Besides you are always in a fright now, lest we should get into some awful scrape, as I expect we should if we stopped here. If it weren't for you, we should not let her off as easily as we do. No, no, Rhoda, it is better for us all that we should go."

Poor Rhoda, though she cried bitterly at the thought of losing her brothers, yet could not but allow to herself that in many respects she should be more happy when she was freed from anxiety, lest they should get into some scrape, and when her aunt would not be kept in a state of continued irritation and scolding. She felt too that, although she herself could get on well enough in her changed life, that it was very hard indeed for the boys, accustomed as they had been to the jolly and independent life of a public school, and to be their own master during the holidays, with their ponies, amusements, and their freedom to come and go when they chose. Rhoda was a thoughtful child, and felt that nothing that they could go through could do them more harm or make them more unhappy than they now were. She had thought it all over day after day, for she was sure that the boys would, sooner or later come to it, and she had convinced herself that it was better for them. Still it was with a very sad heart that she found that the time had come.

For some time she cried in silence, and then, drying her eyes, she said, trying to speak bravely, though her lips quivered.

"I shall miss you dreadfully, boys; but I will not say a word to keep you here, for I am sure it is very, very bad for you. What do you mean to do? Do you mean to go to sea?"

"No, Rhoda; you see uncle was in the army, and used to talk to us about that; and, as we have never seen the sea, we don't care for it as some boys do. No, we shall try and go as soldiers."

"But my dear Tom, they will never take you as soldiers; you are too little."

"Yes, we are not old enough to enlist at present," Tom said; "but we might go in as buglers. We have thought it all over, and have been paying old Wetherley, who was once in the band of a regiment, to teach us the bugle, and he says we can sound all the calls now as well as any bugler going. We did not like to tell you till we had made up our minds to go; but we have gone regularly to him every day since the first week we came here."

"Then you won't have to fight, Tom," Rhoda said joyfully.

"No," Tom said, in a rather dejected tone; "I am afraid they won't let us fight; still we shall see fighting, which is the next best thing."

"I heard in Warley yesterday that there will be a movement of the army in Spain soon, and that some more troops will be sent out, and we shall try and get into a regiment that is going."

They talked very long and earnestly on their plans, and were so engrossed that they quite forgot how time went, and got in late for tea, and were terribly scolded in consequence. For once none of them cared for the storm; the boys exulted over the thought that it would be the last scolding they would have to suffer; and Rhoda had difficulty in gasping down her tears at the thought that it was the last meal that she would take with them, for they had settled that they would start that very night.

CHAPTER III. — ENLISTED.

It was a bright moonlight night when the boys, after a sad farewell from Rhoda, let themselves down from the window, and started upon their journey. Each carried a bundle on a stick; each bundle contained a suit of clothes, a few shirts and stockings, a pair of shoes, and a pistol. The other pistols were carried loaded inside their jackets, for there was no saying whom they might meet upon the road. They had put on the oldest suit of clothes they possessed, so as to attract as little attention as possible by the way. After they had once recovered from their parting with Rhoda their spirits rose, and they tramped along lightly and cheerfully. It was eleven o'clock when they started, and through the night they did not meet a single person. Towards morning they got under a haystack near the road, and slept for some hours; then they walked steadily on until they had done twenty miles since their start. They went into a small inn, and had some breakfast, and then purchasing some bread and cold ham, went on through the town, and leaving the London road, followed that leading to Portsmouth, and after a mile or two again took up their quarters until evening, in a haystack.

It is not necessary to give the details of the journey to Portsmouth. After the first two days' tramp, having no longer any fear of the pursuit, which, no doubt, had been made for them when first missed, they walked by day, and slept at night in sheds, or under haystacks, as they were afraid of being questioned and perhaps stopped at inns. They walked only short distances now, for the first night's long journey had galled their feet, and, as Tom said, they were not pressed for time, and did not want to arrive at Portsmouth like two limping tramps. Walking, therefore, only twelve miles a day after the first two days, they arrived at Portsmouth fresh and in high spirits. They had met with no adventures upon the road, except that upon one occasion two tramps had attempted to seize their bundles, but the production of the pistols, and the evident determination of the boys to use them if necessary, made the men abandon their intention and make off, with much bad language and many threats, at which the boys laughed disdainfully.

Arrived at Portsmouth, their first care was to find a quiet little inn, where they could put up. This they had little difficulty in doing, for Portsmouth abounded with public-houses, and people were so much accustomed to young fellows tramping in with their bundles, to join their ships, that their appearance excited no curiosity whatever. Tom looked older than he really was, although not tall for his age, while Peter, if anything, overtopped his brother, but was slighter, and looked fully two years younger. Refreshed by a long night's sleep between sheets, they started out after breakfast to see the town, and were greatly impressed and delighted by the bustle of the streets, full of soldiers and sailors, and still more by the fortifications and the numerous ships of war lying in the harbor, or out at Spithead. A large fleet of merchantmen was lying off at anchor, waiting for a convoy, and a perfect fleet of little wherries was plying backwards and forwards between the vessels and the shore.

"It makes one almost wish to be a sailor," Peter said, as they sat upon the Southsea beach, and looked out at the animated ocean.

"It does, Peter; and if it had been ten years back, instead of at present, I should have been ready enough to change our plans. But what is the use of going to sea now? The French and Spanish navies skulk in harbor, and the first time our fellows get them out they will he sure to smash them altogether, and then there is an end to all fighting. No, Peter, it looks tempting, I grant, but we shall see ten times as much with the army. We must go and settle the thing to-morrow. There is no time to be lost if the expedition starts in a fortnight or three weeks."

Returning into the town, the boys were greatly amused at seeing a sailor's wedding. Four carriages and pair drove along; inside were women, while four sailors sat on each roof, waving their hats to the passers-by, and refreshing themselves by repeated pulls at some black bottles, with which they were well supplied. Making inquiries, the boys found that the men belonged to a fine frigate which had come in a day or

two before, with several prizes.

The next morning they went down to the barracks. Several non-commissioned officers, with bunches of gay ribbons in their caps, were standing about. Outside the gates were some boards, with notices, "Active young fellows required. Good pay, plenty of prize-money, and chances, of promotion!"

The boys read several of these notices, which differed only from each other in the name of the regiment; and then Tom gave an exclamation of satisfaction as he glanced at a note at the foot of one of them, "Two or three active lads wanted as buglers."

"There we are, Peter; and, oh, what luck! it is Uncle Peter's regiment! Look here, Peter," he said, after a pause, "we won't say anything about being his nephews, unless there is no other way of getting taken; for if we do it won't be nice. We shall be taken notice of, and not treated like other fellows, and that will cause all sorts of ill-feeling and jealousy, and rows. It will be quite time to say who we are when we have done something to show that we shan't do discredit to him. You see it isn't much in our favor that we are here as two runaway boys. If we were older we could go as volunteers, but of course we are too young for that."

It should be mentioned that in those days it was by no means unusual for young men who had not sufficient interest to get commissions to obtain permission to accompany a regiment as volunteers. They paid their own expenses, and lived with the officers, but did duty as private soldiers. If they distinguished themselves, they obtained commissions to fill up vacancies caused in action.

"There is our sergeant, Tom; let's get it over at once."

"If you please," Tom said, as they went up to the sergeant, "are you the recruiting sergeant of the Norfolk Rangers?"

"By Jove, Summers, you are in luck to-day," laughed one of the other sergeants; "here are two valuable recruits for the Rangers. The Mounseers will have no chance

with the regiment with such giants as those in it. Come, my fine fellows, let me persuade you to join the 15th. Such little bantams as you are would be thrown away upon the Rangers."

There was a shout of laughter from the other non-commissioned officers.

Tom was too much accustomed to chaffing bargees at Eton to be put out of countenance.

"We may be bantams," he said, "but I have seen a bantam lick a big dunghill cock many a time. Fine feathers don't always make fine birds, my man."

"Well answered, young one," the sergeant of the Rangers said, while there was a general laugh among the others, for the sergeant of the 15th was not a favorite.

"You think yourself sharp, youngster," he said angrily. "You want a licking, you do; and if you were in the 15th, you'd get it pretty quickly."

"Oh! I beg your pardon," Tom said gravely; "I did not know that the 15th were famous for thrashing boys. Thank you; when I enlist it shall be in a regiment where men hit fellows their own size."

There was a shout of laughter, and the sergeant, enraged, stepped forward, and gave Tom a swinging box on the ear.

There was a cry of "shame" from the others; but before any of them could interfere, Tom suddenly stooped, caught the sergeant by the bottom of the trousers, and in an instant he fell on his back with a crash.

For a moment he was slightly stunned, and then, regaining his feet, he was about to rush at Tom, when the others threw themselves in between them, and said he should not touch the boy. He struck him first, and the boy had only given him what served him right.

The sergeant was furious, and an angry quarrel was going on, when an officer of the Rangers came suddenly out of barrack.

"Hullo, Summers, what is all this about? I am surprised at you. A lot of non-commissioned officers, just in front of the barrack gates, quarreling like drunken sailors in a pothouse. What does it all mean?"

"The fact is this, Captain Manley," the sergeant said, saluting, "these two lads came up to speak to me, when Sergeant Billow chaffed them. The lad gave the sergeant as good as he got, and the sergeant lost his temper, and hit him a box on the ear, and in a moment the young one tripped him up, and pretty nigh stunned him; when he got up he was going at the boy, and, of course, we wouldn't have it."

"Quite right," Captain Manley said. "Sergeant Billow, I shall forward a report to your regiment. Chaffing people in the street, and then losing your temper, striking a boy, and causing a disturbance. Now, sergeant," he went on, as the others moved away, "do you know those boys?"

"No, sir; they are strangers to me."

"Do you want to see the sergeant privately, lads, or on something connected with the regiment?"

"I see that you have vacancies for buglers, sir," Tom said, "and my brother and myself want to enlist if you will take us."

Captain Manley smiled. "You young scamps, you have got 'runaway from home' as plainly on your faces as if it was printed there. If we were to enlist you, we should be having your friends here after you to-morrow, and get into a scrape for taking you."

"We have no friends who will interfere with us, sir, I can give you my word of honor as a gentleman." Captain Manley laughed. "I mean," Tom said confused, "my word of honor, as—as an intending bugler."

"Indeed we have no one to interfere with us in any way, sir," Peter put in earnestly. "We wouldn't tell a lie even to enlist in the Rangers."

Captain Manley was struck by the earnestness of the boys' faces, and after a pause he said to the sergeant,—

"That will do, Summers; I will take these lads up to my quarters and speak to them."

Then, motioning to the boys to follow him, he re-entered the barracks, and led the way up to his quarters.

"Sit down," he said, when they had entered his room. "Now, boys, this is a foolish freak upon your part, which you will regret some day. Of course you have run away from school."

"No, sir, we have run away from home," Tom said.

"So much the worse," Captain Manley said gravely. "Tell me frankly, why did you do so? No unkindness at home can excuse boys from running away from their parents."

"We have none, sir," Tom said. "We have lost them both—our mother many years ago, our father six months. Our only living relation, except a younger sister, is an aunt, who considers us as nuisances, and who, although meaning to do her duty, simply drives us out of our minds."

Captain Manley could not resist a smile. "Do you not go to school?"

"We did go to a school near, but unfortunately it is broken up."

Captain Manley caught a little look of amusement between the boys. "I should not be surprised if you had something to do with its breaking up," he said with a laugh. "But to return to your coming here. There is certainly less reason against your joining than I thought at first, but you are too young."

"We are both strong, and are good walkers," Tom said.

"But you cannot be much over fifteen," Captain Manley said, "and your brother is younger."

"We are accustomed to strong exercise, sir, and can thrash most fellows of our own

size."

"Very likely," Captain Manley said, "but we can't take that into consideration. You are certainly young for buglers for service work; however, I will go across with you to the orderly-room, and hear what the colonel says."

Crossing the barrack-yard, they found the colonel was in and disengaged.

"Colonel Tritton," Captain Manley said, "these lads want to enlist as buglers."

The colonel looked up and smiled. "They look regular young pickles," he said. "I suppose they have run away from school."

"Not from school, colonel. They have lost both parents, and live with an aunt, with whom they don't get on well. There does not seem to be much chance of their being claimed."

"You are full young," the colonel said, "and I think you will be sorry, boys, for the step you want to take."

"I don't think so, sir," Tom said.

"Of course, you don't at present," the colonel said. "However, that is your business. Mind, you will have a rough time of it; you will have to fight your way, you know."

"I'll back them to hold their own," Captain Manley said, laughing. "When I went out at the barrack-gate just now there was a row among a lot of recruiting sergeants, and when I went up to put a stop to it, I found that a fellow of the 15th had chaffed these boys when they went up to speak to Summers, and that they had got the best of it in that line; and the fellow having lost his temper and struck one of them, he found himself on his back on the pavement. The boy had tripped him up in an instant."

The colonel laughed, and then said suddenly and sharply to Peter, "Where did you learn that trick, youngster?"

"At Eton," Peter answered promptly, and then colored up hotly at his brother's reproachful glance.

"Oh, ho! At Eton, young gentlemen, eh!" the colonel said. "That alters the matter. If you were at Eton your family must be people of property, and I can't let you do such a foolish thing as enlist as buglers."

"Our father lost all his money suddenly, owing to a blackguard he trusted cheating him. He found it out, and it killed him," Tom said quietly.

The colonel saw he was speaking the truth. "Well, well," he said kindly, "we must see what we can do for you, boys. They are young, Manley, but that will improve, and by the time that they have been a year at the depôt—"

"Oh, if you please, colonel," Tom said, "we want to go on foreign service, and it's knowing that your regiment was under orders for foreign service we came to it."

"Impossible!" the colonel said shortly.

"I am very sorry for that, sir," Tom said respectfully, "for we would rather belong to this regiment than any in the service; but if you will not let us go with it we must try another."

"Why would you rather belong to us than to any other?" the colonel asked, as the boys turned to leave the room.

"I had rather not say, sir," Tom said. "We have a reason, and a very good one, but it is not one we should like to tell."

The colonel was silent for a minute. He was struck with the boys' appearance and manner, and was sorry at the thought of losing them, partly from interest in themselves, partly because the sea service was generally so much more attractive to boys, that it was not easy to get them to enlist as buglers and drummers.

"You see, lads, I should really like to take you, but we shall be starting in a fortnight, and it would be altogether impossible for you to learn to sound the bugle, to say nothing of learning the calls, by that time."

"We can't play well, sir," Tom answered, his spirits rising again, "but we have

practiced for some time, and know a good many of the calls."

"Oh, indeed!" the colonel said, pleased; "that alters the case. Well, lads, I should like to take you with the regiment, for you look straightforward, sharp young fellows. So I will enlist you. Work hard for the next fortnight, and if I hear a favorable report of you by that time, you shall go."

"Thank you very much," the boys said warmly, delighted to find their hopes realized.

"What are your names?" the colonel asked.

"Tom and Peter," Tom answered.

"Tom and Peter what?" the colonel said.

The boys looked at each other. The fact that they would of course be asked their names had never occurred to them, and they not had therefore consulted whether to give their own or another name.

"Come, boys," Colonel Tritton said good-temperedly, "never be ashamed of your names; don't sail under false colors, lads. I am sure you will do nothing to disgrace your names."

Tom looked at Peter, and saw that he agreed to give their real names, so he said, "Tom and Peter Scudamore."

"Peter Scudamore! Why, Manley, these boys must be relations of the dear old colonel. That explains why they chose the regiment. Now, boys, what relation was he of yours?"

"I do not admit that he was a relation at all, colonel," Tom said gravely, "and I hope that you will not ask the question. Supposing that he had been a relation of ours, we should not wish it to be known. In the first place, it would not be altogether creditable to his memory that relations of his should be serving as buglers in his old regiment; and in the second place, it might be that, from a kindness towards him,

some of the officers might, perhaps, treat us differently to other boys, which would make our position more difficult by exciting jealousy among others. Should there be any relation between him and us, it will be time enough for us to claim it when we have shown ourselves worthy of it."

"Well said, boys," the officers both exclaimed. "You are quite right," the colonel went on, "and I respect your motive for keeping silence. What you say about jealousy which might arise is very sensible and true. At the same time, I will promise you that I will keep my eye upon you, and that if an opportunity should occur in which I can give you a chance of showing that there is more in you than in other boys, be sure you shall have the chance."

"Thank you very much indeed, colonel," both boys exclaimed.

"Now, Manley, I shall be obliged if you will take them to the adjutant, and tell him to swear them in and attest them in regular form; the surgeon will, of course, examine them. Please tell the quartermaster to get their uniforms made without loss of time; and give a hint to the bugle-major that I should be pleased if he will pay extra attention to them, and push them on as fast as possible."

Captain Manley carried out these instructions, the boys were duly examined by the surgeon and passed, and in half an hour became His Majesty's servants.

"Now, boys," Captain Manley said as he crossed with them to the quarters of the bandmaster, "you will have rather a difficult course to steer, but I have no doubt you will get through it with credit. This is something like a school, and you will have to fight before you find your place. Don't be in a hurry to begin; take all good-natured chaff good-naturedly; resent any attempt at bullying. I have no doubt you will be popular, and it is well that you should be so, for then there will be no jealousy if your luck seems better than that of others. They will, of course, know that you are differently born and educated to themselves, but they will not like you any the worse for that, if they find that you do not try to keep aloof from them or give yourselves

airs. And look here, boys, play any tricks you like with the men, but don't do it with the non-commissioned officers. There is nothing they hate so much as impudence from the boys, and they have it in their power to do you a great deal of good or of harm. You will not have much to do with the bandmaster. Only a portion of the band accompanies us, and even that will be broken up when we once enter upon active campaigning. Several of the company buglers have either left lately, or have got their stripes and given up their bugles, and I do not fancy that their places will be filled up before we get out there. Now, your great object will be to get two of these vacancies. I am afraid you are too young, still there will be plenty more vacancies after we are once in the field, for a bullet has no respect for buglers; and you see the better you behave the better your chance of being chosen."

"What is the difference exactly, sir?" Tom asked.

"The company bugler ranks on the strength of the company, messes, marches, and goes into action with them; the other buglers merely form part of the band, are under the bandmaster, play at the head of the regiment on its march, and help in the hospitals during a battle."

"Macpherson," he said as he entered the bandmaster's quarters, where a number of men and a few lads were practicing, "I have brought you two lads who have entered as buglers."

The bandmaster was a Scotchman—a stiff-looking, elderly man.

"Weel, Captain Manley, I'm wanting boys, but they look vera young, and I misdoubt they had better have been at school than here. However, I'll do my best with them; they look smart lads, and we shall have plenty of time at the depôt to get them into shape."

"Lots of time, Macpherson, lots of time. They say they know a few calls on the bugle, so perhaps they had better stick to the calls at present; you will have plenty of time to begin with them regularly with the notes when all the bustle is over."

"Eh, ye know the calls, boys? Hardy and Graves, give them your bugles, and let us hear them. Now for the advance."

Tom and Peter felt very nervous, but they had really practiced hard for an hour a day for the last four months, and could play all the calls they knew steadily and well. The bandmaster made no remark until they had sounded some half a dozen calls as he named them, and then he said, "The lads have a vera gude idea of it, Captain Manley. They are steadier and clearer than mony a one of the boys already. Will ye begin at once, lads, or will ye wait till ye get your uniform?"

"We had rather begin at once," the boys answered together.

"Vera gude. Hardy, take two bugles out of the chest, and then take these lads—What's your name, boys? Eh? Scudamore? A vera gude name—take them over to Corporal Skinner, he will be practicing with the others on the ramp."

With a word of grateful thanks to Captain Manley as he went out before them, the boys followed their new guide out to the ramparts. A guide was hardly necessary, for an incessant bugling betokened the place, where, in one of the bastions behind the barracks, seven or eight buglers were sounding the various calls under the direction of Corporal Skinner.

The corporal was a man of few words, for he merely nodded when the boy—who had not opened his lips on the way, indeed, he was too busy wondering who these young swells were, and what they had run away for, to say a word—gave the bandmaster's message to the effect that the new-comers knew some of the calls and were to be under his tuition for the present, pointed to them where to stand, and in another minute Tom and Peter were hard at work adding to the deafening din. After half an hour's practice they were pleased at seeing Captain Manley stroll up and call their instructor aside, and they felt sure that he was speaking to him of them. This was so, for the officer was carrying out the instructions he had received from Colonel Tritton.

"Corporal," he said, "I want to say a word to you about those boys who have just joined. They seem to have a fair idea of the calls."

"Yes, sir, they only know a few, but those they do know they can sound as well as any of them."

"That is right, corporal. Now look here, what I am going to say is not to go farther, you understand."

"Yes, sir, I will keep my mouth shut."

"Very well. You can see the lads are not like most of our band boys. They are a gentleman's sons who have got into some scrape or other and run away from school."

"I was thinking as much, sir."

"The colonel believes that he knows their family, Skinner; but of course, that will not make any difference in regard to them. Still he would be pleased, I know, if they could sound the calls well enough to go with the regiment. They are most anxious to learn. Now I shall be glad if you can get them up to the mark. It will, of course, entail a lot of extra trouble upon you, but if you can get them fit in time, I will pay you a couple of guineas for your extra time."

"Thank you, sir," the corporal saluted. "I think I can manage it—at any rate if I don't it won't be for want of trying."

"Who are those nice-looking lads I saw with you, Manley?" Major James asked as the captain came into the messroom to lunch.

"Those are two buglers in his Majesty's Norfolk Rangers."

There was a general laugh.

"No, but really, Manley, who are they? I was quite struck with them; good style of boys."

"It is a fact, major. Harding will tell you so," and he nodded to the adjutant.

"Yes, Manley is saying the thing that's right," the adjutant answered. "The doctor passed them, and I swore them in."

"I am sorry for it," the major said. "There were three or four of us standing on the mess-room steps and we all noticed them. They were gentlemen, if I ever saw one, and a hard life they will have of it with the band boys. However, they are not likely to stay there. They have run away from school, of course, and will be claimed. I wonder you enlisted them."

"The colonel's orders, major," the adjutant said. "Manley took them to him, I believe, and then brought them to me."

"I don't think you need feel anxious about them among the boys, major," Captain Manley said. "I fancy they can hold their own. I found them outside the gate where a row was going on among some of the recruiting sergeants, and one of those boys had just tripped up a sergeant of the 15th and nearly broken his head."

There was a general laugh.

"They are quite interesting, these prodigies of yours, Manley. How did the boy do it? I should not have thought him strong enough to have thrown a man off his balance."

"I asked Summers about it afterwards," Captain Manley said, "the fellow gave one of the boys a box on the ear, and in an instant the boy stooped, caught his foot and pulled it forward and up. The thing was done in a moment, and the sergeant was on his back before he knew what's what."

"By Jove," a young ensign said, "I have seen that trick done at Eton."

"That is just where the boy said he learnt it," Captain Manley said. "The colonel asked him suddenly, and it slipped out."

"If they're Etonians, I ought to know them," the ensign said. "I only left six months ago. What are their names?"

"Their name is Scudamore."

"By Jove, they were in the same house with me. Uncommonly sharp little fellows, and up to no end of mischief. It was always believed, though no one could prove it, that they were the boys who nearly suffocated the bargee."

There was a roar of laughter.

"Tell us all about, Carruthers."

"Well, there was not very much known about it. It seems the fellow purposely upset a boat with four or five of our fellows in it, and that night a dozen lighted crackers were thrown down into the little cabin where the fellow was asleep; the hatch was fastened and he was sent drifting down stream with the crackers exploding all about him. The smoke nearly suffocated the fellow, I believe There was a tremendous row about it, but they could not bring it home to any one. We always put it down to the Scudamores, though they never would own to it; but they were the only fellows in the boat who would have done it, and they were always up to mischief."

"But what makes them come here as buglers?" the major asked.

"Their father was a banker, I believe, down in the Eastern Counties somewhere. He died suddenly in the middle of the half before I left, and they went away to the funeral and never came back again."

"The fact is," Captain Manley said, "I fancy by what they say, though they did not mention their father was a banker, that he lost all his money suddenly and died of the shock. At any rate they are alone in the world, and the colonel has no doubt that they are some relation—nephews, I should imagine—of Peter Scudamore, who was our colonel when I joined. One of them is called Peter. They acknowledged that they had a particular reason for choosing this regiment; but they would neither acknowledge or deny that he was a relation. Now that we know their father was a banker, we shall find out without difficulty—indeed I have no doubt the colonel will know whether Peter Scudamore had a brother a banker."

"What's to be done, Manley?" Major James said. "I don't like the thought of poor old

Peter's nephews turning buglers. All of us field officers, and the best part of you captains, served under him, and a better fellow never stepped. I think between us we might do something."

"I would do anything I could," Carruthers said, "and there are Watson and Talbot who were at Eton too. Dash it, I don't like to think of two Etonians in a band," "You are all very good," Captain Manley said, "but from what I see of the boys they will go their own way. They have plenty of pride, and they acknowledge that their reason for refusing to say whether they are any relation of the colonel was that they did not want to be taken notice of or treated differently from other boys, because it would cause jealousy, and make their position more difficult. All they asked was that they might accompany the regiment, and not remain behind at the depôt; and as, fortunately, they have both been practising with the bugle, and can sound most of the calls as well as the others, the colonel was able to grant their request. Had they been older, of course, we could have arranged for them to go with us as volunteers, we who knew the colonel, paying their expenses between us: as it is, the only thing we can do for them—and that is what they would like best is to treat them just like the other boys, but to give them every chance of distinguishing themselves. If they don't get knocked over, they ought to win a commission before the campaign is over."

In the meantime Tom and Peter had been introducing themselves to the regiment. The exercise over, they had returned to dinner. It was a rough meal, but the boys enjoyed it, and after it was over a number of the men of the band, with whom they messed, crowded round to ask the usual questions of new-comers—their curiosity heightened in the present instance by the fact that the boys differed so widely from ordinary recruits.

"Look here," Tom said, laughing, "I can't answer you all at once, but if you put me on the table I will tell you all about us."

There was a general laugh, and many of the soldiers other than the band sauntered up to see what was going on.

"The first thing to tell you," Tom said, "is our names. We go by the names of Tom and Peter Scudamore, but I need scarcely tell you that these are not our real names. The fact is—but this is quite a secret—we are the eldest sons of Sir Arthur Wellesley—"

Here Tom was interrupted by a shout of laughter.

"Sir Arthur," Tom went on calmly, "wished to make us colonels of two of the Life Guard regiments, but as they were not going on foreign service we did not see it, and have accordingly entered the regiment which Sir Arthur, our father, in speaking to a friend, said was the finest in the service—namely, the Norfolk Rangers. We believe that it is the custom, upon entering a regiment, to pay our footing, and I have given a guinea to Corporal Skinner, and asked him to make it go as far as he could."

There was great laughter over Tom's speech, which was just suited to soldiers, and the boys from that moment were considered part of the regiment.

"There's good stuff in those boys," an old sergeant said to another, "plucky and cool. I shouldn't be surprised if what Tom Dillon said was about right; he was waiting at mess just now, and though he didn't hear all that was said, he picked up that there was an idea that these boys are related to the old colonel. He was a good fellow, he was, and, though I say nothing against Colonel Tritton, yet we missed Colonel Scudamore terribly. Strict, and yet kind, just the sort of fellow to serve under. If the boys take after him they will be a credit to the regiment, and mark my words, we shan't see them in the band many years."

CHAPTER IV. — A TOUGH CUSTOMER.

Like most boys who are fond of play, Tom and Peter Scudamore were capable of hard work at a pinch, and during the three weeks that they spent at Portsmouth they

certainly worked with a will. They had nothing to do in the way of duty, except to practice the bugle, and this they did with a zeal and perseverance that quite won the heart of Corporal Skinner, and enabled him to look upon Captain Manley's two guineas as good as earned. But even with the best will and the strongest lungs possible, boys can only blow a bugle a certain number of hours a day. For an hour before breakfast, for two hours before dinner, and for an hour and a half in the evening they practiced, the evening work being extra, alone with their instructor. There remained the whole afternoon to themselves. Their employment of those hours had been undertaken at Peter's suggestion.

"Look here, Tom," he said, at the end of the first day's work, "from what the corporal says, we shall have from one till about five to ourselves. Now, we are going to Spain, and it seems to me that it would be of great use to us, and might do us a great deal of good, to know something of Spanish. We have got four pounds each left, and I don't think that we could lay it out better than in getting a Spanish master and some books, and in setting to in earnest at it. If we work with all our might for four hours a day with a master, we shall have made some progress, and shall pick up the pronunciation a little. I dare say we shall be another ten days or a fortnight on the voyage, and shall have lots of time on our hands. It will make it so much easier to pick it up when we get there if we know a little to start with."

"I think it is a capital idea, Peter; I should think we are pretty sure to find a master here."

There was no difficulty upon that score, for there were a large number of Spanish in England at the time; men who had left the country rather than remain under the French yoke, and among them were many who were glad to get their living by teaching their native language. There were two or three in this condition in Portsmouth, and to one of these the boys applied. He was rather surprised at the application from the two young buglers—for the uniforms were finished twenty-four

hours after their arrival—but at once agreed to devote his whole afternoons to them. Having a strong motive for their work, and a determination to succeed in it, the boys made a progress that astonished both themselves and their teacher, and they now found the advantage of their grounding in Latin at Eton. Absorbed in their work, they saw little of the other boys, except at meals and when at practice.

One evening when at supper, one of the buglers, named Mitcham, a lad of nearly eighteen, made some sneering remark about boys who thought themselves above others, and gave themselves airs. Tom saw at once that this allusion was meant for them, and took the matter up.

"I suppose you mean us, Mitcham. You are quite mistaken; neither my brother nor myself think ourselves better than any one, nor have we any idea of giving ourselves airs. The fact is—and I am not surprised that you should think us unsociable—we are taking lessons in Spanish. If we go with the regiment it will be very useful, and I have heard it said that any one who lands in a foreign country, and who knows a little of the grammar and pronunciation, will learn it in half the time that he would were he altogether ignorant of both. I am sorry that I did not mention it before, because I can understand that it must seem as if we did not want to be sociable. I can assure you that we do; and that after this fortnight is over we shall be ready to be as jolly as any one. You see we are altogether behindhand with our work now, and have got to work hard to put ourselves on your level."

Tom spoke so good-temperedly that there was a general feeling in his favor, and several of them who had before thought with Mitcham, that the new-comers were not inclined to be sociable, felt that they had been mistaken. There was, however, a general feeling of surprise and amusement at the idea of two boys voluntarily taking lessons in Spanish. Mitcham, however, who was a surly-tempered young fellow, and who was jealous of the progress which the boys were making, and of the general liking with which they seemed to be regarded, said,—

"I believe that's only an excuse for getting away from us."

"Do you mean to say that you think that I am telling a lie?" Tom asked quietly.

"Yes, if you put it in that way, young 'un," Mitcham said.

"Hold your tongue, Mitcham, or I'll pull your ears for you," Corporal Skinner said: but his speech was cut short by Tom's putting one hand on the barrack table, vaulting across it, and striking Mitcham a heavy blow between the eyes.

There was a cry of "a fight!" among the boys, but the men interfered at once.

"You don't know what you are doing, young 'un," one said to Tom; "when you hit a fellow here, you must fight him. That's the rule, and you can't fight Mitcham; he's two years older, at least, and a head taller."

"Of course I will fight him," Tom said. "I would fight him if he were twice as big, if he called me a liar."

"Nonsense, young 'un!" another said, "it's not possible. He was wrong, and if you had not struck him I would have licked him myself; but as you have done so, you had better put up with a thrashing, and have done with it."

"I should think so, indeed!" Tom said disdainfully. "I may get a licking; I dare say I shall; but it won't be all on one side. Look here, Mitcham, we will have it out to-morrow, on the ramparts behind the barracks. But, if you will apologize to me for calling me a liar, I'll say I am sorry I hit you."

"Oh, blow your sorrow!" the lad said. "I'll give you the heartiest licking you ever had in your life, my young cock."

"Oh, all right," Tom said cheerfully. "We will see all about it when the time comes."

As it was evident now that there was no way out of it, no one interfered further in the matter. Quarrels in the army are always settled by a fair fight, as at school; but several of the older men questioned among themselves whether they ought to let this go on, considering that Tom Scudamore was only between fifteen and sixteen, while

his opponent was two years older, and was so much heavier and stronger. However, as it was plain that Tom would not take a thrashing for the blow he had struck, and there did not seem any satisfactory way out of it, nothing was done, except that two or three of them went up to Mitcham, and strongly urged him to shake hands with Tom, and confess that he had done wrong in giving him the lie. This Mitcham would not hear of, and there was nothing further to be done.

"I am afraid, Tom, you have no chance with that fellow." Peter said, as they were undressing.

"No chance in the world, Peter; but I can box fairly, you know, and am pretty hard. I shall be able to punish him a bit, and you may be sure I shall never give in. It's no great odds getting a licking, and I suppose that they will stop it before I am killed. Don't bother about it. I had rather get knocked about in a fight than get flogged at Eton any day. I would rather you did not come to see it, Peter, if you don't mind. When you fought Evans it hurt me ten times as much as if I had been fighting, and, although you licked him, it made me feel like a girl. I can stand twice the punishment if I don't feel that any blow is hitting you as well as myself."

Tom's prediction about the fight turned out to be nearly correct. He was more active, and a vastly better boxer than his antagonist, and although he was constantly knocked down, he punished him very heavily about the face. In fact, the fight was exactly similar to that great battle, fifty years afterwards, between Sayers and Heenan. Time after time Tom was knocked down, and even his second begged him to give in, but he would not hear of it. Breathless and exhausted, but always cool and smiling, he faced his heavy antagonist, eluding his furious rushes, and managing to strike a few straight blows at his eyes before being knocked down. By the time that they had fought a quarter of an hour half the regiment was assembled, and loud were the cheers which greeted Tom each time he came up, very pale and bleeding, but confident, against his antagonist.

At last an old sergeant came forward. "Come," he said, "there has been enough of this. You had better stop."

"Will he say he was sorry he called me a liar?" Tom asked.

"No, I won't," Mitcham answered.

The sergeant was about to use his authority to stop it, when Tom said to him, in a low voice:

"Look, sergeant! please let us go on another five minutes. I think I can stand that, and he can hardly see out of his eyes now. He won't see a bit by that time."

The sergeant hesitated, but a glance at Tom's antagonist convinced him that what he said was correct. Mitcham had at all times a round and rather puffy face, and his cheeks were now so swollen with the effect of Tom's straight, steady hitting, that he could with difficulty see.

It was a hard five minutes for Tom, for his antagonist, finding that he was rapidly getting blind, rushed with fury upon him, trying to end the fight. Tom had less difficulty in guarding the blows, given wildly and almost at random, but he was knocked down time after time by the mere force and weight of the rush. He felt himself getting weak, and could hardly get up from his second's knee upon the call of time. He was not afraid of being made to give in, but he was afraid of fainting, and of so being unable to come up to time.

"Stick a knife into me; do anything!" he said to his second, "if I go off, only bring me up to time. He can't hold out much longer."

Nor could he. His hitting became more and more at random, until at last, on getting up from his second's knee, Mitcham cried in a hoarse voice, "Where is he? I can't see him!"

Then Tom went forward with his hands down. "Look here, Mitcham, you can't see, and I can hardly stand. I think we have both done enough. We neither of us can give

in, well because—because I am a gentleman, you because you are bigger than I am; so let's shake hands, and say no more about it."

Mitcham hesitated an instant, and then held out his hand. "You are a good fellow, Scudamore, and there's my hand; but you have licked me fairly. I can't come up to time, and you can. There, I am sorry I called you a liar."

Tom took the hand, and shook it, and then a mist came over his eyes, and his knees tottered, as, with the ringing cheers of the men in his ears, he fainted into his second's arms.

"What a row the men are making!" the major said, as the sound of cheering came through the open window of the mess-room, at which the officers were sitting at lunch. "It's a fight of course, and a good one, judging by the cheering. Does any one know who it is between?"

No one had heard.

"It's over now," the adjutant said, looking out of the window, "Here are the men coming down in a stream. They look very excited over it. I wonder who it has been. Stokes," he said, turning to one of the mess servants, "go out, and find out who has been fighting, and all about it."

In a minute or two the man returned. "It's two of the band boys, sir."

"Oh, only two boys! I wonder they made such a fuss over that. Who are they?"

"One was one of the boys who have just joined, sir. Tom Scudamore, they call him."

"I guessed as much," Captain Manley laughed; "I knew they would not be long here without a fight. Who was the other?"

"Well, sir, I almost thought it must be a mistake when they told me, seeing they are so unequally matched, but they all say so, so in course it's true—the other was Mitcham, the bugler of No. 3 Company."

"What a shame!" was the general exclamation, while Captain Manley got up and

called for his cap.

"A brutal shame, I call it," he said hotly. "Mitcham's nearly a man. It ought not to have been allowed. I will go and inquire after the boy. I will bet five pounds he was pretty nearly killed before he gave in."

"He didn't give in, Captain Manley," the servant said. "He won the fight. They fought till Mitcham couldn't see, and then young Scudamore went up and offered to draw it, but Mitcham acknowledged he was fairly licked. It was a close thing, for the boy fainted right off; but he's come round now, and says he's all right."

"Hurrah for Eton!" Carruthers shouted enthusiastically. "Hurrah! By Jove, he is game, and no mistake. He won a hard fight or two at Eton, but nothing like this. I call it splendid."

"The boy might have been killed," the major said gravely; while the younger officers joined in Carruthers's exclamation at Tom's pluck. "It is shameful that it was allowed. I suppose the quarrel began in their quarters. Sergeant Howden is in charge of the room, and ought to have stopped it at once. Every non-commissioned officer ought to have stopped it. I will have Howden up before the colonel to-morrow."

"I think, major," Captain Manley said, "if you will excuse me, the best plan, as far as the boy is concerned, is to take no notice of it. As it is, he must have won the hearts of all the regiment by his pluck, and if he is not seriously hurt, it is the very best thing, as it has turned out, that could have happened. If any one gets into a scrape about it, it might lessen the effect of the victory. I think if you call Howden up, and give him a quiet wigging, it will do as well, and won't injure the boys. What do you think?"

"Yes, you are right, Manley, as it has turned out; but the boy might have been killed. However, I won't do more than give Howden a hearty wigging, and will then learn how the affair begun. I think, Dr. Stathers, that it would be as well if you went round and saw both of them. You had better, I think, order them into hospital for the night,

and then the boy can go to bed at once, and come out again to-morrow, if he has, as I hope, nothing worse than a few bruises. Please come back, and tell us how you find them."

The report was favorable, and the next morning Tom came out of hospital, and took his place as usual, with the party upon the ramparts—pale, and a good deal marked, but not much the worse for his battle; but it was some days before the swelling of his adversary's face subsided sufficiently for him to return to duty.

Tom's victory—as Captain Manley had predicted—quite won the hearts of the whole regiment, and the nicknames of "Sir Tom," and "Sir Peter"—which had been given to them in jest after Tom's speech about Sir Arthur Wellesley—were now generally applied to them. The conversation in the mess-room had got about, and the old soldiers who had served under Colonel Scudamore would have done anything for the lads, although, as yet, they were hardly known personally except to the band, as their devotion to work kept them quite apart from the men.

It was just three weeks after they had joined before the order came for embarkation, and a thrill of pleasure and excitement ran through the regiment when it was known that they were to go on board in four days. Not the least delighted were Tom and Peter. It had already been formally settled that they were to accompany the regiment, and it was a proof of the popularity that they had gained, that every one looked upon their going as a matter of course, and that no comment was excited even among those who were left behind. Three days before starting they had met Captain Manley in the barrack-yard, and after saluting, Tom said, "If you please, sir, we wanted to ask you a question."

"What is that, lads?"

"If you please, sir, we understand that the boys of the band have their bags carried for them, but the company buglers carry knapsacks, like the men?"

"Yes, boys; the company buglers carry knapsacks and muskets."

"I am afraid we could not carry muskets and do much marching, sir, but we have each a brace of pistols."

Captain Manley smiled. "Pistols would not look the thing on a parade-ground, boys; but in a campaign people are not very particular, and I have no doubt the colonel will overlook any little breach of strict uniformity in your cases, as it is evident you can't carry muskets. You can use your pistols, I hope," he said with a smile. "Hit a penny every time at twenty paces!"

"No, sir, we can't do that," Tom said seriously. "We can hit a good-sized apple nineteen times out of twenty."

"The deuce you can!" Captain Manley said. "How did you learn to do that?"

"We have practiced twelve shots a day for the last six months, sir. We were thinking of asking you, sir, if you would like to carry a brace of them through the campaign. They are splendid weapons; and we shall only carry one each. They would get rusty and spoil, if we left them behind, and we should be very pleased to think they might be useful to you, after your great kindness to us."

"It is not a very regular thing, boys," Captain Manley said, "for a captain to be borrowing a brace of pistols from two of his buglers; but you are exceptional buglers, and there is something in what you say about rusting. Besides, it is possible you may lose yours, so I will accept your offer with thanks, with the understanding that I will carry the pistols, and you shall have them again if anything happens to yours. But how about the knapsacks?"

"We were thinking of having two made of the regimental pattern, sir, but smaller and lighter, if you think that it would be allowed."

"Well, I think, boys, if you are allowed to carry pistols instead of muskets, no great objection will be made as to the exact size of the knapsacks. Yes, you can get them made, and I will speak to the colonel about it."

"Perhaps," he hesitated, "you may be in want of a little money; do not hesitate if you

do. I can let you have five pounds, and you can pay me," he said with a laugh, "out of your share of our first prize-money."

The boys colored hotly.

"No, thank you, Captain Manley; we have plenty of money. Shall we bring the pistols to your quarters?"

"Do, lads, I am going in to lunch now, and will be in in half an hour."

The boys at once went out and ordered their knapsacks. They had just sold their watches, which were large, handsome, and of gold, and had been given to them by their father when they went to Eton. They were very sorry to part with them, but they agreed that it would be folly to keep gold watches when the twenty pounds which they obtained for them would buy two stout and useful silver watches and would leave them twelve pounds in money. They then returned to barracks, took out a brace of their pistols, carefully cleaned them, and removed the silver plates upon the handles, and then walked across to Captain Manley's quarters.

Rather to their surprise and confusion they found five or six other officers there, for Captain Manley had mentioned at lunch to the amusement of his friends that he was going to be unexpectedly provided with a brace of pistols, and several of them at once said that they would go up with him to his quarters, as they wanted to see the boys of whom they had spoken so much during the last fortnight. Tom and Peter drew themselves up and saluted stiffly.

"You need not be buglers here, boys," Captain Manley said. "This is my room, we are all gentlemen, and though I could not, according to the regulations, walk down the street with you, the strictest disciplinarian would excuse my doing as I like here."

The boys flushed with pleasure at Captain Manley's kind address, and as he finished Carruthers stepped forward and shook them warmly by the hand.

"How are you both?" he said. "You have not forgotten me, I hope."

"I had not seen you before. I did not know you were in the regiment, Carruthers," the boys said warmly, pleased to find a face they had known before; and then breaking off:—"I beg your pardon—Mr. Carruthers."

"There are no misters here as far as I am concerned, Scudamore. There were no misters at Eton. This is a change, isn't it? Better than grinding away at Greek by a long way. Well, I congratulate you on your fight. You showed there was some good in dear old Eton still. I wish you had let me know it was coming off. I would have given anything to have seen it—from a distance, you know. If it had been the right thing, I would have come and been your backer."

There was a general laugh, and then the officers all began to talk to the boys. They were quiet and respectful in their manners, and fully confirmed the favorable report which Captain Manley had given of them.

"Where are the pistols, boys?" their friend asked presently.

"Here, sir," and the boys produced them from under their jackets. "We have no case, sir; we were obliged to leave it behind us when we—"

"Ran away," one of the officers said, laughing.

"They are a splendid pair of pistols," Captain Manley said, examining them; "beautifully finished, and rifled. They look quite new, too, though, of course, they are not."

"They are new, sir," Tom said; "we have only had them six months, and they were new then."

"Indeed," Captain Manley said surprised; "I thought, of course, they were family pistols. Why, how on earth, if it is not an impertinent question, did you boys get hold of two brace of such pistols as these? I have no right to ask the question, boys. I see there has been a plate on the handles. But you said you had no relations, and I was surprised into asking."

The boys colored.

"The question was quite natural, sir; the pistols were presented to us by some people we traveled with once; we took the plates off because they made a great fuss about nothing, and we thought that it would look cockey."

There was a laugh among the officers at the boys' confusion.

"No one would suspect you of being cockey, Scudamore," Captain Manley said kindly; "come, let me see the plates."

The boys took the little silver plates from their pockets and handed them silently to Captain Manley, who read aloud, to the surprise of those around him,—"'To Tom' and 'Peter,' they are alike except the names. 'To Tom Scudamore, presented by the passengers in the Highflyer coach on the 4th of August, 1808, as a testimony of their appreciation of his gallant conduct, by which their property was saved from plunder.' Why, what is this, you young pickles, what were you up to on the 4th of August last year?"

"There was nothing in it at all, sir," Tom said; "we were on the coach and were stopped by highwaymen. One of the passengers had pistols, but was afraid to use them, and hid them among the boxes. So when the passengers were ordered to get down to be searched, we hid ourselves, and when the highwaymen were collecting their watches, Peter shot one, and I drove the coach over another. The matter was very simple indeed; but the passengers saved their money, so made a great fuss about it."

There was much laughter over Tom's statement, and then he had to give a detailed account of the whole affair, which elicited many expressions of approval.

"It does you credit, boys," Captain Manley said, "and shows that you are cool as well as plucky. One quality is as valuable as the other. There is every hope that you will do the regiment credit, boys, and you may be sure that we shall give you every chance. And now good-bye for the present."

"Good-bye, sir," Tom and Peter again drew themselves up, gave the military salute, and went off to their comrades.

For when the order came to prepare for the embarkation, both Spanish and bugling were given up, and the boys entered into the pleasure of the holiday with immense zest. They had no regimental duties to perform beyond being present at parade. They had no packing to do, and fewer purchases to make. A ball or two of stout string, for, as Peter said, string is always handy, and a large pocket-knife, each with a variety of blades, were the principal items. They had a ring put to the knives, so that they could sling them round the waist. They had, therefore, nothing to do but to amuse themselves, and this they did with a heartiness which astonished the other boys, and proved conclusively that they did not want to be unsociable. They hired a boat for a sail and took five or six other boys across to Ryde, only just returning in time for tattoo, and they played such a number of small practical jokes, such as putting a handful of peas into the bugles and other wind instruments, that the band-master declared that he thought that they were all bewitched, and he threatened to thrash the boys all round, because he could not find out who had done it.

Especially angry was the man who played the big drum. This was a gigantic negro, named Sam, a kind-hearted fellow, constantly smiling, except when the thought of his own importance made him assume a particularly grave appearance. He was a general favorite, although the boys were rather afraid of him, for he was apt to get into a passion if any jokes were attempted upon him, and of all offences the greatest was to call him Sambo. Now none of the men ventured upon this, for when he first joined, Sam had fought two or three desperate battles on this ground, and his great strength and the insensibility of his head to blows had invariably given him the victory. But, treated with what he conceived proper respect, Sam was one of the best-tempered and best-natured fellows in the regiment; and he himself, when he once cooled down, was perfectly ready to join in the laugh against himself, even after he had been most put out by a joke.

The day before the regiment was to embark, the officers gave a lawn party; a large number of ladies were present, and the band was, of course, to play. The piece which the bandmaster had selected for the commencement began with four distinct beats of the big drum. Just before it began, Captain Manley saw Tom and Peter, who with some of the other boys had brought the music-stands into the ground, with their faces bright with anticipated fun.

"What is the joke, boys?" he asked good-humoredly, as he passed them.

"I can't tell you, sir," Tom said; "but if you walk up close to the band, and watch Sam's face when he begins, you will be amused, I think."

"Those are regular young pickles," Captain Manley said to the lady he was walking with; "they are Etonians who have run away from home, and are up to all kinds of mischief, but are the pluckiest and most straightforward youngsters imaginable. I have no doubt that they are up to some trick with our black drummer."

On their way to where the band was preparing to play, Captain Manley said a word or two to several of the other officers, consequently there was quite a little party standing watching the band when their leader lifted his baton for the overture to begin.

There was nothing that Sam liked better than for the big drum to commence, and with his head thrown well back and an air of extreme importance, he lifted his arm and brought it down with what should have been a sounding blow upon the drum. To his astonishment and to the surprise of all the band, no deep boom was heard, only a low muffled sound. Mechanically Sam raised his other arm and let it fall with a similar result. Sam looked a picture of utter astonishment and dismay, with his eyes opened to their fullest, and he gave vent to a loud cry, which completed the effect produced by his face, and set most of those looking on, and even the band themselves, into a roar of laughter. Sam now examined his sticks, they appeared all right to the eye, but directly he felt them his astonishment was turned into rage.

They were perfectly soft. Taking out his knife he cut them open, and found that the balls were merely filled with a wad of soft cotton, the necessary weight being given by pieces of lead fastened round the end of the stick inside the ball with waxed thread.

Sam was too enraged to say more than his usual exclamation of astonishment, "Golly!" and he held out his drumsticks to be examined with the face of a black statue of surprise.

Even the band-master was obliged to laugh as he took the sticks from Sam's hand to examine them.

"These are not your sticks at all, Sam," he said, looking closely at them. "Here, boy," he called to Tom, who might have been detected from the fact of his being the only person present with a serious face, "run to the band-room and see if you can find the sticks."

In a few minutes Tom returned with the real drumsticks, which, he said truly, he had found on the shelf where they were usually kept. After that things went on as usual; Sam played with a sulky fury. His dignity was injured, and he declared over and over again that if he could "find de rascal who did it, by jingo, I pound him to squash!" and there was no doubt from his look that he thoroughly meant what he said. However, no inquiries could bring to light the author of the trick.

CHAPTER V. — OVERBOARD.

There were no lighter hearts than those of Tom and Peter Scudamore on board the transport "Nancy," as, among the hearty cheers of the troops on board, and the waving of hats and handkerchiefs from friends who had come out in small boats to say good-bye for the last time, she weighed anchor, and set sail in company with some ten or twelve other transports, and under convoy of two ships of war. It would be difficult to imagine a prettier scene. The guns fired, the bands of the various

regiments played, and the white sails opened out bright in the sun as the sailors swarmed into the rigging, anxious to outvie each other. Even the soldiers pulled and hauled at the ropes, and ran round with the capstan bars to get the anchors apeak. Tom and Peter, of course, had, like the other boys, got very much in the way in their desire to assist, and, having been once or twice knocked over by the rush of men coming along with ropes, they wisely gave it up, and leaned over the side to enjoy the scene.

"This is splendid, Tom, isn't it?"

"Glorious, Peter; but it's blowing pretty strong. I am afraid that we sha'n't find it quite so glorious when we get out of the shelter of the island."

Peter laughed. "No; I suppose we sha'n't all look as jolly as we do now by night-time. However, the wind is nor'-westerly, which will help us along nicely, if, as I heard one of the sailors say just now, it does not go round to the south."

"Bugler, sound companies one, two, and three to breakfast."

The order interrupted the conversation, and, for the next hour, the boys had little time for talk. Half the regiment was on board the "Nancy," and, after breakfast, the men were divided into three watches, of which one was always to be on deck, for the ship was very crowded, and there was scarcely room for all the men to be below together. The boys were in the same watch, for the day previous to starting Tom had been appointed bugler to the 2d Company, Peter to the 3d. The 1st Company, or Grenadiers, were in the watch with the band, the 2d and 3d Companies were together, and the 4th and 5th.

Tom was very ill for the first two days of the voyage, while Peter did not feel the slightest effects from the motion. Upon the third day the wind dropped suddenly, and the vessels rolled heavily in the swell, with their sails flapping against the masts. Tom came up that morning upon deck feeling quite well again, and the boys were immensely amused at seeing the attempts of the soldiers to move about, the sudden

rushes, and the heavy falls. A parade had been ordered to take place; but as no one could have stood steady without holding on, it was abandoned as impossible. The men sat about under the bulwarks, and a few amused themselves and the rest by trying to play various games, such as laying a penny on the deck, and seeing which would pitch another to lay nearest to it, from a distance of five yards. The difficulty of balancing oneself in a heavily rolling vessel, and of pitching a penny with any degree of accuracy, is great, and the manner in which the coins, instead of coming down flat and remaining there, rolled away into the scuppers, the throwers not unfrequently following them, produced fits of laughter.

Tom was still feeling weak from his two days' illness, and was not disposed actively to enter into the fun; but Peter enjoyed the heavy rolling, and was all over the ship. Presently he saw Sam, the black drummer, sitting in a dark corner below quietly asleep; his cap was beside him, and the idea at once occurred to Peter that here was a great opportunity for a joke. He made his way to the caboose, and begged the cook to give him a handful of flour. The cook at first refused, but was presently coaxed into doing so, and Peter stole to where Sam was asleep, and put the flour into his cap, relying that, in the darkness, Sam would put it on without noticing it. Then, going up to the deck above, Peter put his head down the hatchway, and shouted loudly, "Sam!"

The negro woke at the sound of his name. "What is it?" he asked. Receiving no reply, he got on to his feet, muttering, "Some one call Sam, that for certain, can't do without Sam, always want here, want there. I go up and see."

So saying, he put on his cap, and made his way up to the upper deck. As he stood at the hatchway and looked round, there was, first a titter, and then a roar of laughter from the men sitting or standing along by the bulwarks. In putting on his cap some of the flour had fallen out, and had streaked his face with white. Sam was utterly unconscious that he was the object of the laughter, and said to one of the men

nearest to him, "Who call Sam?"

The man could not reply, but Tom, who was sitting close by, said, "It was no one here, Sam, it must have been the bandmaster; there he is, close to the quarter-deck."

Sam made his way along towards the point indicated, and as he did so some of the officers upon the quarter-deck caught sight of him. "Just look at Sambo," Carruthers exclaimed, "somebody has been larking with him again. Look how all the men are laughing, and he evidently has no suspicion of the figure he is."

The sergeant, who, the bandmaster having remained at the depôt, was now acting as chief of the band, did not see Sam until the latter was close to him. "You want me, sergeant?"

Sergeant Wilson looked up, and was astonished.

"What on earth have you been doing to yourself, Sam?" he asked.

"Me been having little nap down below," Sam said.

"Yes; but your face, man. What have you been doing to your face?"

Sam, in his turn, looked astonished. "Nothing whatsomeber, sargeant."

"Take off your cap, man, and look inside it." Sam did as ordered; and as he removed the cap, and the powder fell from it all over his face and shoulders, there was a perfect shout of laughter from the soldiers and crew, who had been looking on, and the officers, looking down from the rail of the quarter-deck, retired to laugh unnoticed.

The astonishment and rage of Sam were unbounded, and he gave a perfect yell of surprise and fury. He stamped wildly for a minute or two, and then, with a sudden movement rushed up on to the quarter-deck with his cap in his hand. The colonel, who was holding on by the shrouds, and talking with the major, in ignorance of what was going on, was perfectly astounded at this sudden vision of the irate negro, and neither he nor the major could restrain their laughter.

"Scuse me, colonel, sah, for de liberty," Sam burst out; "but look at me, sah; is dis right, sah, is it right to make joke like dis on de man dat play de big drum of de regiment?"

"No, no, Sam; not at all right," the colonel said, with difficulty. "If you report who has played the trick upon you, I shall speak to him very seriously; but, Sam, I should have thought that you were quite big enough to take the matter in your own hands."

"Me big enough, Massah Colonel, me plenty big; but me not able to find him."

"Well, Sam, it is carrying a joke too far; still, it is only a trick off duty, and I am afraid that it is beyond my power to interfere."

Sam thought for a moment, and, having by this time cooled down from his first paroxysm of rage, he said, "Beg pardon, massa, you quite right, no business of any one but Sam; but Sam too angry to 'top to think. Scuse liberty, colonel," and Sam retired from the quarter-deck, and made a bolt below down the nearest hatchway, when he plunged his head into a bucket of water, and soon restored it to its usual ebony hue.

Then he went to the cook and tried to find out to whom he had given flour, but the cook replied at once, "Lor, I've given flour to the men of each mess to make puddings of, about thirty of them," and Sam felt as far off as ever.

Presently, however, a big sailor began to make fun of him, and Sam retorted by knocking him down, after which there was a regular fight, which was carried on under the greatest difficulty, owing to the rolling of the ship. At last Sambo got the best of it, and this restored him so thoroughly to a good temper that he was able to join in the laugh at himself, reserving, however, his right to "knock de rascal who did it into a squash."

The following day the weather changed, a wind sprang up nearly from the north, which increased rapidly, until toward afternoon it was blowing half a gale, before which the whole fleet, with their main and topsails set, ran southward at great speed.

A heavy cross sea was running, the wares raised by the gale clashing with the heavy swell previously rolling in from the westward, and so violent and sudden were the lurches and rolls of the "Nancy" that the master feared that her masts would go.

"How tremendously she rolls, Tom."

"Tremendously; the deck seems almost upright, and the water right under our feet each time she goes over. She feels as if she were going to turn topsy-turvy each roll. It's bad enough on deck; but it will be worse down below."

"A great deal worse, Peter, it's nearly dark already; it will strike eight bells in a minute or two, and then we shall have to go down. There's no danger, of course, of the ship turning over, but it won't be pleasant down below. Look out, Peter!"

The exclamation was caused by an awful crash. The ship had given a tremendous lurch, when the long-boat, which was stowed amidships, suddenly tore away from its fastenings and came crashing down. It passed within three feet of where the boys were sitting, and completely tore away the bulwark, leaving a great gap in the side, where it had passed through. "Look, Tom, Sam's overboard!" Peter exclaimed.

Sam had been sitting on the bulwark, a few feet from them, holding on by a shroud, when the boat came down upon him; with a cry he had let go of the shroud and started back, falling into the water just as the boat struck the bulwark. "There he is, Tom," Peter said, as he saw the black only a few yards from the side. "He is hurt, come on," catching up the end of a long rope coiled up on the deck close to their feet, the boys jumped overboard together. A dozen strokes took them up to Sam; but the black hull of the ship had already glanced past them. They could hear loud shouts, but could not distinguish a word.

"Quick, round him, Peter!" and, in a moment, the boys twisted the rope round the body of the black, and knotted it just as the drag of the ship tightened it. Thus Sam's safety was secured, but the strain was so tremendous as they tore through the water, that it was impossible for the boys to hold on, and, in a moment, they were torn from

their hold.

"All right, Peter," Tom said cheerily, as they dashed the water from their eyes, "there is the boat."

The remains of the boat were not ten yards distant, and in a few strokes they had gained it. It was stove in and broken, but still held together, floating on a level with the water's edge. With some trouble the boys got inside her, and sat down on the bottom, so that their heads were just out of water.

Then they had time to look round. The ship was already disappearing in the gathering darkness.

"This boat will soon go to pieces, Tom," was Peter's first remark.

"I expect it will, Peter; but we must stick to its pieces. We had better get off our boots. The water is pretty warm, that's one comfort."

"Do you think the ship will come back for us, Tom?"

"I don't think she can, Peter; at any rate, it is certain she can't find us, it would take a long time to bring her round, and then, you see, she could not sail straight back against the wind."

"Look here, Tom, I remember when I climbed up to look into the boats yesterday that there were some little casks lashed under the seats, and a sailor told me they were always kept full of water in case the boats were wanted suddenly. If they are still there we might empty them out, and they could keep us afloat any time."

"Hurrah! Peter, capital, let's see."

To their great delight the boys found four small water-kegs fastened under the seats. Three of these they emptied, and fastening one of them to that which they had left full, and then each taking hold of one of the slings which were fastened to the kegs for convenience of carriage, they waited quietly. In less than ten minutes from the time when they first gained their frail refuge, a great wave broke just upon them, and

completely smashed up the remains of the boat. They had cut off some rope from the mast, which they found with its sail furled ready for use in the boat, and now roughly lashed themselves together, face to face, so that they had a keg on each side. They had also fastened a long piece of rope to the other kegs, so that they would float near them.

It was a long and terrible night for them, generally their heads and chests were well above the water, but at times a wave would break with its white crest, and, for a time, the foam would be over their heads. Fortunately the water was warm, and the wind fell a good deal. The boys talked occasionally to each other, and kept up each other's courage. Once or twice, in spite of the heavy sea, they were so much overcome with exhaustion that they dozed uneasily for a while, with their heads upon each other's shoulders, and great was their feeling of relief and pleasure when morning began to break.

"It is going to be a splendid day, Peter, and the wind is dropping fast."

"Look, Tom," Peter said, "there are some of the planks of the boat jammed in with the kegs."

It was as Peter said; the two kegs, one empty and the other full, were floating about ten yards off, at the length of the rope by which they were attached to the boys, while with them was a confused mass of wreckage of the boat.

"That is capital, Peter, we will see if we can't make a raft presently."

As the sun rose and warmed the air, the boys strength and spirits revived, and in a few hours they were so refreshed that they determined to set about their raft. The wind had now entirely dropped, the waves were still very high, but they came in long, smooth, regular swells, over which they rose and fell almost imperceptibly.

"They must be rolling a good deal more in the 'Nancy' than we are here, Peter. Now, the first thing is to have a drink. What a blessing it is we have water." With their knives they soon got the bung out of the water-keg, and each took a long drink, and

then carefully closed it up again.

"There, Peter, we have drunk as much as we wanted this time; but we must be careful, there is no saying how long we may be before we are picked up. Hurrah, Peter, here are the masts and sails, so we shall have plenty of cord."

It took the boys nearly three hours to complete their task to their satisfaction. When it was concluded they had the three empty kegs lashed in a triangle about five feet apart, while two planks crossing the triangle, assisted to keep all firm and tight; floating in the center of the triangle was the keg of water. "There, I don't think we can improve that, Peter," Tom said at last, "now, let us get on and try it." They did so, and, to their great delight, found that it floated a few inches above water. "We may as well get the masts on board, Peter, and let the sails tow alongside. They may come in useful; and now the first thing is to dry ourselves and our clothes."

The clothes were soon spread out to dry, and the boys luxuriated in the warmth of the sun.

"What great, smooth waves these are, Tom, sometimes we are down in a valley which runs miles long, and then we are up on a hill."

"Here we lay, all the day, in the bay of Biscay, oh!" Tom laughed. "I only hope that the wished-for morrow may bring the sail in sight, Peter. However, we can hold on for a few days, I suppose. That is a four-gallon keg, so that we have got a quart of water each for eight days, and hunger isn't so bad to bear as thirst. We have pretty well done for our uniforms, our bugles are the only things that have not suffered."

For the boys' companies being on deck at the time of the accident, they both had their bugles on when they jumped overboard.

"Our last upset was when that bargee canted us over at Eton, rather a different business that, Peter."

"My shirt is not dry yet, Tom; but I shall put it on again, for the sun is too hot to be pleasant."

Tom followed Peter's example.

"Do you think, Tom, that we had better try to get up a sort of sail and make for land, or remain where we are?"

"Remain where we are, Peter, I should say. I suppose we must be a hundred miles from the French coast, and even if the wind blew fair we should be a long time getting there, and with the certainty of a prison when we arrived. Still, if there were a strong west wind, I suppose it would be our best way; as it is we have nothing to do but to wait quietly, and hope for a ship. We are in the right line, and there must be lots of vessels on their way, besides those which sailed with us, for Portsmouth. So we must keep watch and watch. Now, Peter, you lie down on that plank, it is just about long enough, you shall have two hours' sleep, and then I'll have two, after that we will have four hours each."

"How are we to count time?" Peter said laughing.

"I never thought of that," Tom said, looking at his watch. "Of course it has stopped. We must guess as near as we can; at any rate, you go to sleep first, and, when I am too sleepy to keep watch any longer, I will wake you up."

So passed that day and the next night. A light breeze sprung up from the southwest, and the sun again shone out brightly.

"I feel as if I wanted breakfast horribly," Peter said, with an attempt at a smile. "Do you think that there is any possibility of catching anything?"

"We have nothing to make hooks with, Peter, and nothing to bait them with if we had."

"There are lots of tiny fish swimming all about, Tom, if we could but catch them."

Tom was silent for awhile; then he said, "Look here, Peter. Let us cut a piece off the sail about five feet long, and say three feet wide, double it longways, and sew up the ends so as to make a bag; we can unravel some string, and make holes with our

knives. Then we can sink it down two or three feet, and watch it; and when we see that some little fish have got in it, we can draw it up very gently, and, by raising it gradually from the sea, the water will run out, and we shall catch the fish."

Peter agreed that at any rate it was worth trying; for, even if it did not succeed, it was better for them to be doing something than sitting idle. The sail and the floating wreckage were pulled alongside, and the boys set to work. In three hours a large and shallow bag was made, with some improvements upon Tom's original plan. The mouth was kept open by two crossed pieces of wood, and four cords from the corners were attached to the end of the oar which formed their fishing-rod. At last it was finished, and the bag lowered.

To the horror of the boys, it was discovered that it would not sink. They were ready to cry with vexation, for the want of food had made them feel faint and weak.

"What have we got that is heavy?" Tom asked in despair.

"I have got fourpence in halfpence, Tom, and there are our knives and watches."

Their pockets were ransacked, and the halfpence, knives, and watches were placed in the bottom of the bag and lowered. Still the wood-work kept afloat.

"There are the bugles, Tom," Peter cried in delight. These had been fastened to the raft, and were now hastily untied and placed in the canvas bag.

It sank now, and the boys lowered it five or six feet, so that they could partly see into it. "There are lots of little fish swimming about, Tom," Peter said in a whisper. "Some are almost as long as one's hand. Do you think that they will go in, Tom?"

"I hope the glitter of the bugles and watches will attract them, Peter."

"There, Tom, there—I saw a whole swarm of little ones go in."

"Wait a minute or two, Peter, to let them get well down, and then draw up as quietly as possible."

Very cautiously the boys raised the point of their rod until the top of the

square-mouthed bag was level with the surface; then they brought it close to them and looked in, and as they did so gave a simultaneous cheer. There, in the bottom of the canvas, two feet below them, were a number of little fish moving about. Raising the rod still higher, they gradually lifted the net out of the sea, the water running quickly off as they did so, and then they proceeded to examine their prize.

"We will take out one and one, Peter; give them a nip as you take them up, that will kill them." There were two fish of about three inches long, another three or four of two inches, and some thirty or forty the size of minnows. It was scarcely more than a mouthful each, but it was a stay for a moment to their stomachs, and no one ever said a thanksgiving with deeper feeling and heartiness than did the boys when they had emptied their canvas net.

"We need not be anxious about food now, Peter; if we can catch these in five minutes, we can get enough each day to satisfy us. They quench the thirst too. We must limit ourselves to half a pint of water a day, and we can hold on for a fortnight. We are safe to be picked up before that."

All the afternoon and evening the boys continued to let down and draw up their net, sometimes bringing in only a few tiny fish, sometimes getting half a dozen of the larger kind. By nightfall they had satisfied the cravings of hunger, and felt stronger and better. One or two sails had been seen during the day, but always at such distances that it was evident at once that they could not pass within hail. That night, fatigued with their exertions, both laid down and went to sleep until morning, and slept more comfortably than before; for they had fastened a piece of the sail tightly on the top of the raft, and lay softly suspended in that, instead of being balanced upon a narrow and uncomfortable plank. They felt new creatures when they woke, pulled up their net, had a mouthful of raw fish, took off their clothes, and had a swim, and then set to earnestly to fish. The sun was brighter, and the fish in consequence kept deeper than upon the preceding day; still by evening they had

caught enough to take the edge off, if not to satisfy, their hunger. The fishing, however, during the last hours of daylight was altogether neglected, for behind them they could see a sail, which appeared as if it might possibly come close enough to observe them. There was still the long, steady swell coming in from the Atlantic, and a light breeze was blowing from the north. The boys had been so intent upon their fishing, that they had not noticed her until she was within nine or ten miles of them. "She will not be up for an hour and a half, Peter," Tom said, "and the sun will be down long before that. I fear that the chance of their seeing us is very small indeed. However, we will try. Let us get the net out of the water, and hold it and the oar up. It is possible that some one may see the canvas with a telescope before the sun goes down. Take the things out of the net."

The oar with the canvas bag was elevated, and the boys anxiously watched the course of the vessel. She was a large ship, but they could only see her when they rose upon the top of the long smooth waves. "I should think that she will pass within a mile of us, Peter," Tom said, after half an hour's watching, "but I fear that she will not be much closer. How unfortunate she had not come along an hour earlier. She would have been sure to see us if it had been daylight. I don't think that there is much chance now, for there is no moon. However, thank God, we can hold on very well now, and next time we may have better luck."

The sun had set more than half an hour before the ship came abreast of them. They had evidently not been seen.

"Now, Peter," Tom said, "let us both hallo together; the wind is very light, and it is just possible they may hear us."

Again and again the boys shouted, but the ship sailed steadily on. Peter dashed the tears aside, and Tom said, with a quiver in his voice, "Never mind, Peter; better luck next time, old boy. God has been so good to us, that I feel quite confident we shall be saved."

"So do I, Tom," Peter said. "It was only a disappointment for a minute. We may as well put the oar down, for my arm and back ache holding it."

"Mind how you do it, Peter. If we let the end go through the canvas, we shall lose our watches and bugles, and then we shall not be able to fish."

"Oh, Tom, the bugles!"

"What, Peter?" Tom said, astonished.

"We can make them hear, Tom, don't you see?"

"Hurrah, Peter! so we can. What a fool I was to forget it!"

In a moment the bugles rang out the assembly across the water. Again and again the sharp, clear sound rose on the quiet evening air.

"Look, Peter, there are men going up the rigging to look round. Sound again!"

Again and again they sounded the call, and then they saw the ship's head come round, and her bow put towards them, and then they fell on their knees and thanked God that they were saved.

In ten minutes the ship was close to them, thrown up into the wind, a boat was lowered, and in another minute or two was alongside.

"Hallo!" the officer in charge exclaimed, "two boys, all alone. Here, help them in, lads—that's it; now pull for the ship. Here, boys, take a little brandy from this flask. How long have you been on that raft?"

"It is three days since we went overboard, sir; but we were in the water for about eighteen hours before we made the raft."

Tom and Peter drank a little brandy, and felt better for it; but they were weaker than they thought, for they had to be helped up the side of the ship. A number of officers were grouped round the gangway, and the boys saw that they were on board a vessel of war.

"Only these boys?" asked the captain in surprise of the officer who had brought

them on board.

"That is all, sir."

"Doctor, you had better see to them," the captain said. "If they are strong enough to talk, after they have had some soup, let them come to my cabin; if not, let them turn in in the sick bay, and I will see them in the morning. One question though, boys. Are there any others about—any one for me to look for or pick up?"

"No one else, sir," Tom said, and then followed the doctor aft. A basin of soup and a glass of sherry did wonders for the boys, and in an hour they proceeded to the captain's cabin, dressed in clothes which the doctor had borrowed from two of the midshipmen for them, for their own could never be worn again; indeed, they had not brought their jackets from the raft, those garments having shrunk so from the water, that the boys had not been able to put them on again, after first taking them off to dry.

The doctor accompanied them, and in the captain's cabin they found the first lieutenant, who had been in charge of the boat which picked them up.

"I am glad to see you looking so much better," the captain said as they entered. "Sit down. Do you know," he went on with a smile, "I do not think that any of us would have slept had you not recovered sufficiently to tell your story to-night. We have been puzzling over it in vain. How you two boys came to be adrift alone on a raft, made up of three water-kegs, as Mr. Armstrong tells me, and how you came to have two bugles with you on the raft, is altogether beyond us."

"The last matter is easily explained, sir," Tom said. "My brother and myself are buglers in H.M.'s Regiment of Norfolk Rangers, and as we were on duty when we went overboard, we had our bugles slung over our shoulders."

"Buglers!" the captain said in surprise. "Why from your appearance and mode of expressing yourselves, I take you to be gentlemen's sons."

"So we are, sir," Tom said quietly, "and I hope gentlemen—at any rate we have been

Etonians. But we have lost our father, and are now buglers in the Rangers."

"Well, lads," the captain said after a pause, "and now tell us how you came upon this little raft?"

Tom related modestly the story of their going overboard from the "Nancy," of the formation of the raft, and of their after proceedings. Their hearers were greatly astonished at the story; and the captain said, "Young gentlemen, you have done a very gallant action, and have behaved with a coolness and bravery which would have done credit to old sailors. Had your father been alive he might have been proud indeed of you. I should be proud had you been my sons. If you are disposed to change services I will write directly we reach the Tagus to obtain your discharge, and will give you midshipmen's berths on board this ship. Don't answer now; you can think it over by the time we reach Portugal. I will not detain you now; a night's rest will set you up. Mr. Armstrong will introduce you to the midshipmen to-morrow; you are passengers here now, and will mess with them. Good-night."

It was not many minutes before the boys were asleep in their hammocks. If people's ears really tingle when they are being spoken about, Tom and Peter would have had but little sleep that night. The first lieutenant related the circumstances to the other lieutenants; the second lieutenant, whose watch it was, told the gunner, who related it to the petty officers; the doctor told his mates, who retailed the story to the midshipmen; and so gradually it went over the whole ship, and officers and men agreed that it was one of the pluckiest and coolest things ever done.

The boys slept until nearly breakfast time, and were just dressed when Mr. Armstrong came for them and took them to the midshipmen's berth, where they were received with a warmth and heartiness which quite surprised them. The midshipmen and mates pressed forward to shake hands with them, and the stiflingly close little cock-pit was the scene of an ovation. The boys were quite glad when the handshaking was over, and they sat down to the rough meal which was then usual

among midshipmen. As the vessel had only left England four days before, the fare was better than it would have been a week later, for there was butter, cold ham and tongue upon the table. After breakfast they were asked to tell the story over again, and this they did with great modesty. Many questions were asked, and it was generally regretted that they were not sailors. Upon going up on deck there was quite an excitement among the sailors to get a look at them, and the gunner and other petty officers came up and shook hands with them heartily, and the boys wished from the depths of their hearts that people would not make such a fuss about nothing; for, as Tom said to Peter, "Of course we should not have jumped overboard if we had thought that we could not have kept hold of the rope."

That day they dined in the cabin with the captain, who, after the officers present had withdrawn, asked them if they would tell him about their past lives. This the boys did frankly, and took the opportunity of explaining that they had chosen the army because the enemies' fleet having been destroyed, there was less chance of active service in the navy than with the army just starting for Lisbon, and that their uncle having commanded the regiment that they were in, they had entered it, and had received so much kindness that they had fair reason to hope that they would eventually obtain commissions. Hence, while thanking him most warmly for his offer, they had decided to go on in the path that they had chosen.

The captain remarked that, after what they had said, although he should have been glad to have them with him, he thought that they had decided rightly.

The next morning, when the boys woke, they were surprised at the absence of any motion of the vessel, and upon going on deck they found that they were running up the Tagus, and that Lisbon was in sight.

CHAPTER VI. — PORTUGAL.

The boys were delighted with the appearance of the Tagus, covered as it now was

with a fleet of transports and merchantmen. As they were looking at it, the officer commanding the marines on board, who had talked a good deal to them upon the preceding day, came up to them. "I thought that you would be in a fix about clothes, my lads," he said. "You could not very well join in these midshipman's uniforms, so I set the tailor yesterday to cut down a couple of spare suits of my corps. The buttons will not be right, but you can easily alter that when you join. You had better go below at once and see if the things fit pretty well. I have told the tailor to take them to the cock-pit and if they do not fit they can alter them at once."

Thanking the officer very much for his thoughtful kindness, and much relieved in mind—for they had already been wondering what they should do—the boys ran below, and found that the tailor had guessed their sizes pretty correctly, aided as he had been by the trousers they had worn when they came on board. A few alterations were necessary, and these he promised to get finished in a couple of hours. They had scarcely gone on deck again when the anchor was let fall, and a boat was lowered, in order that the captain might proceed to shore with the despatches of which he was the bearer.

Just as he was upon the point of leaving the deck, his eye fell upon the boys. "I shall be back again in an hour or two," he said; "do not leave until I return. I will find out where your regiment is, and if it has marched I will give you a certificate of how I picked you up, otherwise you may be stopped on the way, and get into a scrape as two boys who have strayed away from their regiment."

So saying, the captain got into his boat and rowed to shore. It was one o'clock before he returned. The boys had dinner with the gunroom officers, then changed their dress, and had now the appearance of buglers in the marines.

The captain at once sent for them. "Your regiment went on yesterday with the rest of the division. It halts to-day ten miles out of the town. There is the certificate I spoke of. Mr. Armstrong is just going off with two boats' crew to assist in unloading

stores; I have asked him to hand you over to the charge of some officer going up with a convoy. And now good-bye, lads. I wish you every luck, and hope that some day or other you may win your epaulets."

With renewed thanks for his kindness, the boys went up on deck. There they shook hands and said good-bye to all the officers and midshipmen. As they were waiting while the boats were being lowered, two of the sailors went aft to the captain, who had come up from below and was walking alone on the quarter-deck, and, with a touch of the hat, the spokesman said, "Your honor, we're come to ax as how, if your honor has no objection, we might just give a parting cheer to those 'ere youngsters."

"Well, Jones," the captain said, smiling, "it's rather an unusual thing for the crew of one of His Majesty's ships to cheer two young soldiers."

"It is unusual, your honor, mighty unusual, because soldiers ain't in general of much account at sea; but you see, your honor, this ain't a usual circumstance, nohow. These here boys, which ain't much more than babbies, have done what there ain't many men, not even of those who are born and bred to the sea, would have done; and we should just like to give them a bit of a cheer for good luck."

"Very well, Jones, tell the men they can do as they like."

Accordingly, as the boys took their seats in the boat they were surprised at seeing the crew clustering to the side of the ship, while some of the men ran up the rigging.

"What can the men be up to?" Tom asked Mr. Armstrong in surprise.

The lieutenant smiled, for he knew what was coming.

"Sheer off, men," he said, and as he did so the boatswain of the ship gave the word, "Now, lads, three cheers for them boys; may they have the luck they deserve."

Three thundering cheers burst from the whole crew, the men in the boats tossing their oars in the naval fashion of acknowledgment of the salute. Tom and Peter, astonished and affected, stood up, took off their caps, and waved their hands in

thanks to the crowd of faces looking down upon them, and then sat down again and wiped their eyes.

"Row on," the lieutenant said, and the oars fell in the water with a splash; one more cheer arose, and then the boats rowed for the landing-place. The boys were too much affected to look up or speak, until they reached the shore, nor did they notice a boat which rowed past them upon its way to the vessel they had left, just after they had started. It contained an officer in a general's uniform. The boat steered to the ship's side, and the officer ascended the ladder. The captain was on deck. "Ah, Craufurd," he said, "this is an unexpected pleasure."

"I have just come back from my division for a few hours, Merivale; there are a lot of stores which are essential, and some of my artillery is not landed, so I thought I could hurry things up a bit. My spare charger, and most of the chargers of my staff, are being landed, too; the ship they came in was a day or two late; and as I had to confer with the Portuguese Minister of War, I am killing a good many birds with one stone. I heard you had just come in, and as I was on board the "Clio" about my charger, I thought it would not be much out of my way to run round and shake hands with you."

"I am very glad you did. Come into my cabin; you can spare time to take some lunch, I hope."

While they were at lunch General Craufurd remarked, "So you have just lost one of your officers, I see; promoted to another ship, eh?"

"Lost an officer!" Captain Merivale said in surprise. "No, not that I have heard of. What makes you think so?"

"I thought so by the cheering the ship's crew gave that boat that left the ship just before I came up. There was only a naval lieutenant in her, and I supposed that he had just got his ship, and I thought by the heartiness of the cheering what a good fellow he must be."

"But it was not the lieutenant the men were cheering," Captain Merivale said with a smile.

"No!" General Craufurd said, surprised. "Why, there was no one else in the boat. I looked attentively as I passed. There was only a lieutenant, a midshipman who was steering, the men rowing, and two little marine buglers, who had their handkerchiefs up to their faces. So you see I took a very minute survey."

"You did indeed," Captain Merivale said, laughing. "Well, it was just these little buglers that the crew of the ship were cheering."

General Craufurd looked up incredulously. "You're joking, Merivale. The crew of His Majesty's frigate 'Latona' cheer two buglers of marines! No, no, that won't do."

"It is a fact, though, Craufurd, unlikely as it seems, except that the buglers belong to the Norfolk Rangers, and not to the Marines."

"The Rangers! They are in Hill's division. What is it all about? There must be something very strange about it."

"There is indeed," Captain Merivale said, "very strange." And he then related the whole story to his visitor.

"They are trumps indeed," the general said when the narrative was ended, "and I am very glad that I happened to hear it. I will speak to Hill about it, and will keep my eye upon them. Be assured they shall have their epaulets as soon as possible—that is, if their conduct is at all equal to their pluck. It is the least we can do when, as you say, they have refused midshipmen's berths to stick to us. And now I must be off."

The boat landed General Craufurd at the same landing-place at which Tom and Peter had disembarked half an hour before. Lieutenant Armstrong had spoken a few words to the officer who was superintending the landing of stores and horses, and he, being far too busy to stop to talk, briefly said that the boys could go up to join their regiment with a convoy of stores which would start that night.

After saying good-bye to their friend the lieutenant, the boys sat down upon some bales, and were watching with much amusement and interest the busy scene before them. As General Craufurd passed they rose and saluted.

"You are the boys from the 'Latona,' are you not?"

"Yes, sir," the boys answered in surprise.

"Can you ride?"

"Yes, sir."

"Follow me, then."

Much surprised, the boys followed the general until he made his way through the confusion to a group of newly landed horses. Near them were a couple of mounted Hussars, who, at the sight of the general, rode forward with his charger. He made a sign to them to wait a moment, and walked up to the men who were holding the newly landed horses.

"Which of you have got charge of two horses?"

Several of the men answered at once.

"Which of you are servants of officers on my staff?"

Three of those who had answered before replied now.

"Very well; just put saddles on to two of them. These lads will ride them; they are going out with me at once; they will hand them over to your masters."

In another five minutes Tom and Peter, to their surprise and delight, were clattering along through the streets of Lisbon upon two first-rate horses in company with the two Hussars, while, twenty lengths ahead, trotted General Craufurd with two officers who had been down to Lisbon upon duty similar to his own. Once outside the town, the general put his horse into a gallop, and his followers of course did the same. Once or twice General Craufurd glanced back to see how the boys rode, for a doubt had crossed his mind as to whether he had been wise in putting them upon

such valuable horses, but when he saw that they were evidently accustomed to the work, he paid no further attention to them.

The officers riding beside him, however, looked back several times.

"What luck we have, to be sure, Tom," Peter said, "and I can't understand this a bit. How could the general know that we came from the 'Latona'; as he evidently did, and by the way these officers have looked back twice, I can't help thinking that he is talking about us."

Tom was as puzzled as Peter, but they soon forgot the subject, and engaged in an animated conversation with the Hussars as to the situation and position of the army, and the supposed strength and locality of the French, concerning which they were, of course, in complete ignorance. An hour and a half's sharp riding took them to Torres Vedras, a small town which afterwards became celebrated for the tremendous lines which Wellington erected there. The troops were encamped in its vicinity, the general having his quarters at the house of the Alcalde, or Mayor.

"Your regiment is a mile and a half distant, lads," General Craufurd said as they drew up at his quarters; "you will have difficulty in finding it this evening. Sergeant, take these lads round to the house where my orderlies are quartered, and give them some supper. They can join their regiment in the morning. I have heard of you, lads, from Captain Merivale, and shall mention your conduct to General Hill, and be assured I will keep my eye upon you."

The boys were soon asleep upon a heap of straw, and at six next morning were upon the road, having already had some coffee and bread for breakfast. They had no difficulty in finding their way, for orderlies were already galloping about, and the bugle calls came sharp upon their ears. The division was to march at seven. The Rangers happened to be the first in advance, so that they passed through the other regiments to arrive at theirs.

The tents were down when they arrived, and packed in readiness for the bullock

carts which stood by. The boys paused a little distance off, and looked on with delight at the busy scene. At a note on the bugle the tents and other baggage were stowed in the carts, and then the men hitched on their knapsacks, unpiled arms, and began to fall into rank.

No one noticed the boys as they passed between the groups and approached the band, who were mustering by the colors, which were as usual placed in front of the guard tent.

"There's Sambo," Tom said; "I am glad they got him safe on board."

The negro was the first to perceive the boys as they came close up to him. As he saw them he gave a sudden start, his eyes opened wider and wider until the whites showed all round, his teeth chattered, the shiny black of his face turned to a sort of dirty gray, and he threw up his hands with a loud cry, "oh, golly, here's dose boys' spirits!"

He stepped back, heedless that the big drum was behind him, and the next moment went back with a crash into it, and remained there with his knees doubled up and his face looking out between them, too frightened and horror-struck to make the least movement to extricate himself.

For a moment no one noticed him, for at his cry they had all turned to the boys, and stood as if petrified at seeing those whom they believed had been drowned before their eyes a week before. The silence did not last long, the boys bursting into a shout of laughter at Sam's appearance.

"Spirits! Sam," Tom said; "not by a long way yet, man. How are you all? Come, get out of that, Sam and shake hands." And as the band with a shout crowded round them, the boys helped Sam, who was trembling all over from the shock and fright, from the drum.

For a moment the boys were quite confused and bewildered, for as they hauled Sam to his feet their comrades of the band pressed round them cheering, every one trying

to shake them by the hand.

The news spread like wildfire among the troops, and there was at once a general rush to the spot. The boys were seized in an instant, and each raised on the shoulders of two of the grenadiers, and as they made their appearance above the heads of the crowd a tremendous cheer broke from the whole regiment.

"What can be the matter?" was the general exclamation of the colonel and officers, who were just finishing their breakfasts in a cottage which stood close behind the spot where their tents had been pitched in the rear of the regiment. "What can be the matter?"—and as the cheering continued there was a general rush to the door. There they stood astonished at seeing the whole of the men clustered in one spot, shouting and waving their caps.

"What can be the matter?" the colonel said again; "the whole regiment seems to have gone mad."

"We shall know in a minute," Captain Manley said; "they are coming in this direction."

"Look at that fellow Sambo," exclaimed Carruthers; "he looks madder than all the rest."

In spite of the intense surprise which all were feeling, there was a general laugh, for the black was performing antics like one possessed; his cap was gone, he jumped, he yelled, he waved his arms, with a drumstick in each hand, wildly over his head, he twisted round and round; he seemed really out of his mind. Suddenly he left the crowd, and rushed on ahead at full speed towards the group of officers, still leaping and yelling and waving his drumsticks.

The officers instinctively drew together as he approached, for they thought that the gigantic negro was really out of his mind. He stopped suddenly as he came up to them, and tried to fall into his usual attitude of attention.

"Oh, Massa Colonel," he said in hoarse, sobbing tones, "only to think, only to think.

Scuse Sam, sar, but Sam feel he's going to bust right up wid joy, massa. Dat no matter, but only to think. Bress de Almighty, sar! only to think!"

None of the officers spoke for a minute in answer to these disjointed exclamations. They were affected at the man's great emotion. His black skin was still strangely pale, his eyes were distended, his lips quivered, tears were rolling down his cheeks, and his huge frame was shaken with sobs.

"Calm yourself, Sam—be calm, my man," the colonel said kindly. "Try and tell us what has happened. What are the men so excited about? What is the matter with them?"

"Oh, Massa Colonel," Sam said, "me try tell you all 'boat it. Only to think, sar, dose boys cum back again; dose boys, sar, bress dem, dat jumped into de water and got drowned just to save dis poor niggar, sar. Dey cum back again; only tink ob dat!"

The officers looked at one another in surprise.

"I do believe he means the Scudamores! colonel," Captain Manley exclaimed; "but no, it is impossible, no one could have lived five minutes in that sea, and we know that they could not have been picked up, for we were the last ship in the fleet."

"Yes, yes, sar, dat's dem, dey cum back sure enuff," Sam said.

Then Carruthers exclaimed, "I do believe it is so; there are a couple of boys on the shoulders of the men in the middle of the crowd. Yes, and, by Jove, it is the Scudamores. Hurrah! I am glad."

There was a general exclamation of pleasure from the whole group, for the regret for the boys, who had, as was believed, perished in the performance of such a gallant action, had been general and sincere, and Captain Manley lifted his cap and said reverently, "Thank God, these gallant lads are saved;" and those around, although some of them were but little addicted to prayer, repeated the words and imitated the action.

Carruthers would have stepped forward in his eagerness to greet his former school-fellows, but Captain Manley laid his hand quietly on his shoulder and said in a low tone, "Wait, Carruthers, let the colonel welcome them."

And now the crowd came up to the cottage, those in front falling back as they approached, so as to let the grenadiers come forward with their burden. The boys were lowered to the ground, and stood at once at attention; their faces were both flushed with excitement, and their eyes swollen with tears, so much were they both moved by the welcome which had greeted them.

There was a dead silence for a moment, and then Colonel Tritton said in a loud, clear voice, which was heard all over the throng of men, "I am glad, lads, to see you back again. I never expected to have seen you again after we caught a glimpse of you as the sea washed you away. You have seen how the men have welcomed you, and I can assure you that the pleasure of the officers that two such gallant young fellows should have been saved is no less than that of your comrades. A braver act than that which you performed was never done. I shake hands with you, and congratulate you in the name of the whole regiment." And, suiting the action to the words, Colonel Tritton stepped forward and shook the boys warmly by the hand, amidst a great cheer upon the part of the whole regiment. Then he held up his hand for silence again. "Bugler, sound the assembly; fall in, my lads, or we shall be late. Come in here, boys; you can get something to eat, and tell us in a few words how you were saved, for, even now that I see you it seems almost impossible."

CHAPTER VII. — THE PASSAGE OF THE DUORO—TALAVERA.

Very severe was the drill and discipline, and not very abundant was the food, and there was a general feeling of pleasure when, by the general concentration of the army at Coimbra, it was evident that active operations were about to commence. On

the 5th of May 9000 Portuguese, 3000 Germans, and 13,000 British troops were assembled. Sir Arthur was already there, and upon the 6th General Beresford marched with 10,000 men, and orders were issued for the rest of the army to march out early the next day.

The Norfolk Rangers were in high glee that night, and many were the tales told by the old soldiers of former engagements in which they had taken part. Next morning, at daybreak, the tents were struck, the baggage packed, and the wagons loaded. The people of Coimbra came out in crowds to see the troops march, and many were the blessings and good wishes poured out as the long line wound through the streets of the city.

Hill's division was the last, and the rain was pouring down with great force by the time they started. The march, however, was not a very long one, for Beresford's division, which was to operate upon the Upper Duoro, had a long distance to make, and it was necessary that all should be ready for simultaneous action. For this purpose the army halted the next day, and upon the 9th marched to Aveiro on the River Vonga. Here a large flotilla of boats was found, and the Norfolk Rangers with two other regiments were ordered to embark at once. The Portuguese fishermen entered heart and soul into the business, and in perfect silence the little flats were rowed up the lake of Ovar.

The soldiers were greatly crowded in the boats, and were glad, indeed, when just as morning dawned they landed at the town of Ovar.

By this movement they were placed upon the right flank of Francheschi, the general who commanded the advanced division of the French army. Soon after they had landed the French were attacked in front, and finding their flank turned, and the whole British force, which they had believed to be seven days' march away, in their front, they fell back hastily.

To their great disappointment, the Rangers took no share in this the first skirmish of

the war. But Hill's orders were not to press on the enemy's rear. Three days more of marching and skirmishing brought them close to the Duoro on the evening of the 11th. The enemy crossed that evening and destroyed the bridge, and during the night the British troops were all brought up, and massed behind the hill called the Serra. This hill stood upon a sharp elbow which the river makes just above the town of Oporto, and the British were here completely hidden from Marshal Soult, who had no idea that they were so close at hand. Indeed, knowing that the bridge was broken and that all the boats had been carefully taken over to that side of the river, the Marshal dreamt not that Sir Arthur would attempt to cross, but imagined that he would take boats lower down near the mouth of the river and there endeavor to cross. To prevent such an attempt Soult had massed his army below Oporto.

The troops were ordered to pile arms, and eat their breakfast, but to keep in position. "I wonder how we are to cross the river, Tom?" Peter said. "It is three hundred yards across, with a rapid current, no man in the world could swim that, and carry his musket and ammunition across."

"I expect Sir Arthur is reconnoitering, Peter; I saw him go up the hill to that convent there; he must be able to see from there right over Oporto."

An hour passed, and then two or three officers were seen coming down from the hill; one went up to General Hill, who happened at that moment to be talking to Colonel Tritton. "You are to prepare to cross, sir, Colonel Waters has discovered a small boat brought across by a Portuguese in the night. They are going to cross to that great convent you see upon the other side. They will bring back boats with them, and you will cross at once, take possession of the convent, and hold it against any force that may be brought against you until reinforcements arrive."

Very quickly were the orders passed, and with a smile of satisfaction the men took their arms and fell in. They were moved near the river, and kept under shelter of some houses.

"Keep near me," Colonel Tritton said to Tom and Peter, "I may want you to carry messages, there will be no sounding of bugles to-day."

Keeping under the shade of some trees so that they could command a view of the river without being seen from the opposite side, Colonel Tritton with two of his officers and his two buglers, watched what was going on. A few paces ahead of them were Generals Paget and Hill, like themselves, watching the daring experiment. Behind, under shelter of the houses, were the troops in dense masses. The Rangers, as the first regiment in General Hill's division, were in front, and would naturally be the first to cross. It was a most anxious moment, as Colonel Waters and two Portuguese pushed the tiny boat from shore and pulled across stream. The bulk of the Serra Hill hid the river at this point, and even the convent opposite, from the sight of the French army formed up below the town, but there were no doubt stragglers all over the city, and the whole baggage of the French army was in retreat by the road to Valarga which ran at a short distance behind the convent.

Most anxiously their eyes were strained upon the opposite bank, from which they expected to see the flash of musketry, as the little boat neared the convent. All, however, was as still as death. Behind them they heard a rumble, and looking round saw eighteen guns on their way up the hill. From this eminence they could command the ground around the Seminary, as the convent across the water was called, and thus afford some aid to the troops as they crossed.

There was a murmur of satisfaction as the boat neared the opposite shore, and after lying still for a moment to reconnoiter the convent, pulled boldly up to the landing-place, where its occupants disembarked and entered the Seminary. Their absence was not long. In a few minutes they reappeared with eight or ten men, and then at once entered and cast off three large boats moored along side.

The boys could hardly repress a cheer as they saw them fairly under weigh. An

officer now left the side of the General, and came to Colonel Tritton, "You will get your first company in readiness to embark, sir; do not let them show themselves until the last moment."

Colonel Tritton joined his men. "Captain Manley, take your company forward, when the first boat touches the shore embark. Let there be no noise or confusion."

"God bless you, Peter," Tom said, as they separated; "your company won't be many minutes after us;" for the bugler of the first company was ill, and Tom was ordered to take his place.

As the boat touched the shore Captain Manley ordered the leading files of his company to come from under cover and take their place in the boat. Twenty-four men entered, and when the other boats were also full Captain Manley took his place, followed by his bugler, and the boats pushed off again.

There was a dead silence in the boat, broken only by the sound of the oars as the Portuguese tugged manfully at them, each oar being double-banked by a soldier. The rest sat with their muskets in their hands, their pouches open ready for use, and their eyes fixed upon the shore. All was quiet, and with a sigh of relief, and a hearty hurrah muttered under their breath, the men leapt from the boat and ran up to the Seminary.

It was a large building with a flat roof, and the enclosure around it was surrounded by a high wall which swept round to the water's edge on either side. The only entrance was through a stout gate studded with iron. This was already closed and barred; the captain at once distributed his men at the upper windows of the Seminary, with orders not to show themselves until the alarm was given.

They had scarcely taken their places when they were joined by the occupants of the second boat, while those of the third, in which General Paget himself crossed, were but a minute or two later. Just as they touched the shore, however, there was a sudden shout heard, this was followed by others, and in five minutes a wild hubbub

was heard in the town. Drums beat to arms, and it was evident that the enemy were at last awake to the fact that the British had effected a lodgment upon their side of the stream.

"We shall have it hot presently," Captain Manley said to Tom. "They will be a quarter of an hour before they can get round here, and we shall have the three boats back by that time. The one we came in is half-way across already."

Seven or eight minutes later a heavy column of men was seen pouring out of the upper gate of the town. As they got into the open ground, they threw out clouds of skirmishers, and pushed down towards the convent. A heavy fire was at once opened upon them by the English guns upon the Serra Hill. There was no longer any need for concealment. The soldiers in the convent took their places at the windows, and as they did so could hear the loud hurrahs of their comrades as they crowded down to the bank upon the other side of the river to await their turn to embark. Before the enemy were within musket-shot, three boat loads more had been landed, and there were, therefore, 150 men now in the convent. From the gates of the city the French artillery came pouring out, and, taking up a position upon an eminence, opened fire upon the convent just as the infantry had got within musket-range.

So suddenly did the noise of the enemy's cannonade, the crashing of the balls against the thick walls of the Seminary, the rattle of the enemy's musketry, and the louder roar of the muskets of the defenders, blended on both sides with shouts and cheers, break out, that for a minute or two Tom felt almost bewildered. He had no time, however, to think, for an officer came up to Captain Manley. "The general is up on the roof; he wants a bugler sent up to him."

Captain Manley nodded to Tom, who followed the aide-de-camp on to the roof. Here he could see all that was passing, and an exciting sight it was. Crowds of French soldiers were approaching the wall, keeping up a tremendous musketry fire, whilst behind them three batteries of field-guns were sending their messengers of

death. From every upper window of the convent the answering flashes came thick and fast, while overhead hummed the shot from the British guns, on the Serra Hill. Oporto itself was in a state of uproar. Drums were beating, trumpets sounding, bells clanging, while from the house-tops the population, men and women, were waving their handkerchiefs to the English, gesticulating and making all sorts of pantomimic expression of joy.

Looking at the river behind, Tom saw with pleasure that some more boats had been obtained, and that strong reinforcements would soon be across. The whistling of the bullets and the hum of the round shot were incessant, and Tom acknowledged to himself that he felt horribly uncomfortable—much more uncomfortable than he had any idea that he should feel under fire. Had he been actively engaged, he would have hardly experienced this feeling; but to stand impassive under a heavy fire is trying to the nerves of the oldest soldier. He was angry with himself that he was not more indifferent to the whizzing of the balls; but the sensation of discomfort under fire is beyond the control of the will, and it is no unusual thing to see a young soldier who, later in the day, may display an almost reckless courage, yet at first flinch whenever balls hiss close by him, in spite of all his efforts to the contrary. Tom was able, however, to control any outward manifestation of his feelings, and took his place a few paces behind General Paget, who was standing with one of his officers by his side, watching the force which, momentarily increasing, was, in spite of the British fire, making its way onward towards the gate.

It was evident that the general considered the danger to be pressing, as he once or twice looked back to see how quickly the reinforcements were crossing the river. The first time that he did so, his eye fell on Tom. "Get behind those big chimneys, lad. There is no use in exposing yourself unnecessarily."

Tom obeyed the order with alacrity, and, once in shelter, was soon able to bring his nerves under control, and to look round the corner of his shelter without flinching

when the bullets sang past. In five minutes General Hill joined Paget on the roof, and just as he did so the latter was severely wounded and fell.

Tom ran forward to assist him, and, kneeling beside him, partially supported him until four men came up and carried him below. The position of the little garrison was now very precarious, the artillery fire concentrated upon them was heavy, and the French swarmed up to the wall, which they in vain endeavored to climb. The English kept up a tremendous fire upon them, cheering constantly as fresh reinforcements arrived, or as the enemy was momentarily repulsed.

Tom had now lost all nervousness, and was standing eagerly watching the fight, when a ball knocked his shako off. The general happened to turn around at the moment. "That was a narrow escape," he said with a smile. "What is your name, lad?"

"Scudamore, sir," Tom answered.

"Scudamore—Scudamore. Yes, I remember the name now. You are one of the lads General Craufurd spoke to me about. I want to see you. Come to me to-morrow with your brother. Go down now and join your company; I do not want you here."

Tom gladly went down, for he longed to be doing something. He soon found his company, and, taking up a firelock of one of the men who had fallen, was soon hard at work loading and firing into the assailants. For an hour the strife continued. Fortunately General Murray had found some boats three miles higher up the stream, and had crossed, thus menacing the enemy's line of retreat. Suddenly a great pealing of bells were heard in Oporto, with shouting and cheering, and the house-tops were covered with people waving their handkerchiefs. The French were evacuating the town. The inhabitants at once took across some large barges to Villa Neva, a suburb lying across the river and just below the Serra Hill. Here Sherbrooke began to cross.

It was now the time for the English to take the offensive. There were now three battalions in the seminary, and as the French drew sullenly off to join the column

now flowing steadily out from Oporto along the Valonga road, the gates were thrown open, and the English passing out formed outside the walls, and poured volley after volley into the retreating foe. Had Murray fallen upon their flank, the disaster of the French would have been complete; but this general feared that the enemy would turn upon him, and destroy his division before assistance could arrive, and he therefore remained inactive, and allowed the long column of fugitives to pass unmolested.

For the next eight days the English army followed hotly in pursuit, and several skirmishes occurred; but Soult effected a most masterly retreat, saving his army, when it seemed upon the brink of destruction, by leaving his guns and baggage behind him, and leading his men by paths over mountains supposed to be impassable for any large body of men. He lost altogether 6000 men in this short campaign. This included 3600 prisoners either captured in action or left behind in the hospitals, and 1400 killed. The number of guns left behind was fifty-eight. The English had only 300 killed and wounded.

Sir Arthur's plans for the invasion of Spain were not yet complete, and he accordingly halted his army to await supplies and reinforcements. During this time the young buglers had no opportunity of calling upon Major-General Hill. The transport supplied by the Spanish Government had failed grossly, and the troops were badly fed at a time when, taking long marches, they most required support. The first day after they halted the boys determined that they would, as soon as they were off duty, call upon General Hill. While parade was going on, however, they saw the general ride up to Colonel Tritton, and enter into conversation with him. The bugler, who was standing near, was ordered to sound the call for the officers to assemble in front; and when they did so, Colonel Tritton left the general's side and spoke a few words with them. There was a short conversation, and then the colonel rejoined the general's side, and the officers returned to their places. The colonel now rode forward to the center of the line, and said in loud tones, "Men, I have a piece of

news to tell you which I think that you will be glad to hear. Upon my arrival at Lisbon I reported the gallant conduct of Tom and Peter Scudamore in rescuing one of their comrades when washed overboard in the Bay of Biscay. Captain Merivale, of the "Latona," also reported it, and General Hill, when he heard the circumstances, was also good enough to send home a report recommending them for promotion. He has received an answer from the Commander-in-Chief announcing that they are both granted commissions in this regiment as a reward for their act of distinguished gallantry. The regiment is dismissed."

As the men fell out they gave a loud and general cheer, and Tom and Peter were surrounded by their comrades, who shook them by the hand, and congratulated them upon their promotion. The boys were too much surprised and affected to speak, and they had scarcely recovered from their bewilderment, when Carruthers came up to them, and led them to the colonel. Here General Hill first, and then all the officers, warmly shook hands with them. The boys were much touched by the warmth with which they were received, and were soon hurried off to the tents of the officers. Several of the ensigns were slight young men, and they insisted upon rigging the boys out in uniform, and the boys had the less scruple in accepting the kind offer, inasmuch as they expected every day to enter Spain, when the baggage would be cut down to the smallest possible proportion, and the officers as well as the men be obliged to leave almost everything behind them. Sam was delighted at the promotion of his friends, and asked to be appointed their servant, a request which was at once acceded to. The regiment had now been three months in Spain, and the boys had continued to work hard at Spanish, devoting several hours a day to its study, and talking it whenever they could find an opportunity—no difficult matter, as Portugal was full of Spanish who had crossed the frontier to avoid the hated yoke of the French.

The delay in invading Spain was caused partly from want of transport, but more by the utter incapacity of the Spanish Junta or government, and by the arrogance and

folly of Cuesta, the Spanish Commander-in-Chief, who was always proposing impracticable schemes to Wellington, and, inflated with Spanish pride and obstinacy, believed that his own worthless troops were fully a match for the French, and was jealous in the highest degree of the British general.

At last, on the 27th of June, the British army advanced. Scarcely had they made a day's march, however, when the utter faithlessness of the Spaniards became manifest. The provisions and transport promised were not forthcoming, and from the very day of their advance the British were badly fed, and indeed often not fed at all; and so great were their sufferings during the campaign—sufferings caused by the heartlessness of the people whom they had come to deliver from a foreign yoke, that the British soldiers came to cherish a deep and bitter hatred against the Spanish; and it was this intense feeling of animosity which had no little to do with the cruel excesses of the English soldiery upon the capture of Burgos and San Sebastian.

After many delays from these causes, the British army reached Oropesa upon the 20th July, and there formed a junction with Cuesta's army. Upon the 22d the allied armies moved forward, and upon the same day the Spaniards came in contact with the French, and should have inflicted a severe blow upon them, but the ignorance and timidity of the Spanish generals enabled the enemy to draw off and concentrate without loss.

The British troops had now been for many days upon half rations, and Sir Arthur gave notice to the Junta, that unless his requisitions were complied with, he should retire from Spain. Cuesta, however, believing that the French were retreating in haste, pushed his army across the river Alberche, with the vain idea of defeating them, and entering Madrid in triumph. Sir Arthur, seeing the fatal consequences which would ensue, were the Spaniards attacked alone, laid aside his previously-formed resolution, and put his army in motion across the Alberche. The position of the allied armies was now most dangerous—far more so, indeed, than the

English general supposed. Badly informed by the Spanish, he greatly underrated the enemy's forces. Taking advantage of the delay caused by the want of provisions and carriage, Soult, Victor, and Ney were marching their forces from various points, and concentrating to crush the invading army. Upon the 26th the French met the Spanish army. General Zayas, who commanded the Spanish advance of 4000 infantry and 2000 cavalry, scarcely offered any resistance, his men broke and fled in disorder, and the panic would have spread to the whole Spanish army, had not General Albuquerque brought up 3000 more cavalry and held the French at bay, while Cuesta retreated in great disorder. The Spanish loss by dispersion and flight was no less than 4000 men, and the whole army would have been broken up had not General Sherbrooke advanced with his division, and placed it between the French and the flying Spaniards.

The allies now recrossed the Alberche and took up a position to cover Talavera. Sir Arthur chose a strong defensive position, as it was evident that the Spanish were worse than useless in the open field. The Spaniards were placed with their right resting upon Talavera, their left upon a mound whereon a large field-redoubt was constructed. Their front was covered by a convent, by ditches, stone walls, breastworks, and felled trees; and thus, worthless as were the troops, they could scarcely be driven from a position almost impregnable.

The line beyond the Spanish was continued by Campbell's division, next to which came that of Sherbrooke, its left extending to a steep hill. Mackenzie and Donkin had not yet fallen hack from the Alberche. Hill was in rear. The British troops, including the German legion, were 19,000 strong, with thirty guns. The Spaniards had 33,000 men and seventy guns. The Spanish contingent could, however, be in no way relied upon, and were, indeed, never seriously engaged. The real battle was between the 19,000 British troops and 50,000 French. The French attacked the British outposts with great impetuosity, and Mackenzie and Donkin were driven in with a loss of 4000 men. The latter took up his position with his brigade on the hill

on Sherbrooke's left; the former took post with Campbell's division, to which he belonged. The French cavalry now galloped up towards the portion of the line held by the Spanish, and discharged their pistols at them, whereupon 10,000 Spanish infantry and the whole of their artillery broke and fled in wild confusion. For miles they continued their flight, but in the evening the Spanish cavalry were sent round in pursuit, and drove some 4000 of these cowards back to their lines. Seeing the wild confusion which was raging on the allies' right, Victor resolved, although evening was at hand, to make a sudden dash upon the hill upon their left, which, held only by Donkin's brigade, was the key of the position. The hill was very steep upon the front, or French side, while towards the rear it sloped gradually. Ruffin's division was ordered to the attack, followed by Villette in support, while Lapisse was ordered to engage the German legion, which was on the left of Sherbrooke's division.

Hill's division was lying down behind the hill when Ruffin's troops advanced to the attack. There was no expectation of an attack that evening, and the woods and increasing darkness covered the movements of the French troops. Weary and hungry, the English soldiers, disgusted at the inhuman neglect of the Spaniards, and furious at their cowardice, were chatting over the events of the day and discussing the chances, by no means bright, of the expected battle to-morrow. All that day they had had no food whatever save a small portion of grain, served out raw and unground. Tom and Peter had been chatting with the officers, who were grouped under a tree, when Sambo came up to them and beckoned them aside.

"Look here, Massa Tom, here six eggs; tree for you, tree for Massa Peter."

"Thank you, Sam, that is capital; but you know you will get into a row if you get caught taking things."

"Me no take 'em, massa. Old hen give them to me."

Tom laughed.

"How was that, Sam?"

"Well, Massa, me saw her sitting on nest. Me went up and said to her, 'Give me some eggs, old girl.' She say 'Cluck.' I says, 'Cluck means yes, I suppose?' She say 'Cluck' again. Clear 'nuff that, so me take eggs, eat tree, bring six, young massa."

"I am afraid, Sam," Tom said, laughing, "your story would hardly save you from the triangles, if you had been caught. However, as it is rude to return a present, of course you cannot take them back to the hen. I suppose they are raw?"

"Yes, massa; no good make fire; make hole bofe ends, suck 'em."

"All right, Sam; it is not the nicest way, but, under the circumstances, perhaps it is the best; at any rate, I am too hungry to wait till we can get a fire lighted."

So saying, the boys sucked the raw eggs, and then joined the men, when, just as they did so, first a dropping rifle shot, and then a perfect roar of musketry broke out upon the hill above them. It needed no order to be given. The men fell into their places and prepared to climb the hill and assist Donkin's brigade, which was evidently unable alone to resist the attack. Knapsacks were thrown off, firelocks tightly grasped, and the regiment impatiently awaited orders to advance. None were more impatient than the colonel, who after a few minutes, seeing by the fire that the English were falling back, and that the French had gained the crest of the hill, waited no longer for orders, but gave the word for the regiment to advance. They were but half way up the hill when General Hill himself galloped down to meet them, and then turning, led the way beside Colonel Tritton.

General Hill had had a narrow escape. Donkin had repulsed the French who attacked him in front, but his force was insufficient to guard the whole crest of the hill. Consequently, the enemy had come up round his flank, and were now in actual possession of the crest. General Hill, ignorant of this, had ridden with his brigade-major right into the midst of the French before he found out his mistake. His brigade-major, Fordyce, was killed, his own horse wounded, and his bridle seized by a French grenadier. He had, however, broken away, and had ridden off under a

storm of bullets.

With a cheer the Norfolk Rangers followed their gallant leader. They reached the crest, poured a tremendous volley into the enemy, and charged with the bayonet. The French, of whom but a small portion had as yet gained the crest, were unable to resist the impetuous onslaught, and at once gave way.

The Rangers were now joined by the 48th and the 29th, so that these, with Donkin's brigade, formed a strong body of troops. The French, who had fallen back, now united with their main body, and the attack was renewed with all the force of Ruffin's division. The heavy mass pressed upwards, in spite of the destructive fire of the British, and were within twenty yards of the crest, when, with a hearty cheer, the English troops burst upon them with the bayonet, and the French again fell back, broken and disheartened.

This ended the fighting on the 27th of July. Long lines of bivouac fires soon blazed upon either side. The wounded were carried down the hill to the field-hospital, which had been erected under its cover, and the men, eating their scanty supper, wrapped themselves in their great coats, and were soon asleep. The officers chatted for a short time longer, but as all were tired, and the next day was sure to be a severe one, they, too, soon lay down by their fire.

When morning broke, it was seen that the enemy had massed a large force of artillery upon a hill just opposite to the one held by the English. Soon afterwards Ruffin's division, as before supported by Villette, advanced to the attack, covered by the tremendous fire from his artillery. The British had no adequate force of artillery to reply to the iron storm, and the balls swept through their lines, mowing down their ranks, and causing great loss. The regiments in reserve lay down to avoid the iron shower, while the Rangers and 48th prepared to resist the French when they came within fighting distance.

As their men approached the summit of the hill, the French artillery was obliged to

cease playing in that direction, and turned its attention to the British center, while a fierce musketry contest took place between the French and Hill and Donkin's men.

The ground was rough, and the troops on both sides, broken up into small bodies, fought desperately. General Hill was wounded, and the British troops fell fast. The French, however, suffered even more, and, as Hill brought up his reserve, the English gained ground foot by foot, until they drove them again down the steep side of the hill. As the French retired, their artillery once more opened fire to cover their retreat.

A pause now ensued; the French in this brief contest had lost 1400 men, and the British had suffered severely. The French then held a council of war, and determined to attack along the whole line in force. Hours passed away; the English munched their corn, smoked their pipes, and watched the enemy scattered over the plain. The weather was very hot, and the men of both sides went down to a little stream which divided their positions, drank, and filled their water-bottles in perfect amity. Some of the officers, who spoke French conversed with the French officers, exchanged cigars for brandy, and joked and laughed as if they had been the best of friends.

At one o'clock the French drums were heard to beat, and the men were soon formed in order. Tom and Peter stood with a group of officers on the brow of the hill. Nothing could be finer than the sight. Far away the view stretched over the country, thickly wooded, and with château and farm-houses scatted here and there. Through the trees the dense masses of the French could be seen, as they moved in columns towards the positions from which they were to attack. Upon an eminence, nearly opposite to their position, the boys could see a long line of the French artillery. Far away, to the right, rose the churches of Talavera, while behind the hill were the British and Spanish cavalry, ready to charge should the French endeavor to turn the British left by pushing round its foot. Fifty paces from the officers of the Norfolk Rangers sat Sir Arthur Wellesley, on horseback, watching attentively through a

field-glass the movements of the enemy, and at a short distance behind him were his staff. The British troops were standing in easy order, a little behind the crest of the hill, so as to be sheltered from the artillery fire with which the French were sure to cover the advance of their column of attack.

"This is a grand sight, Peter," Tom said, "but I wish they would begin; it makes one fidgety waiting for it."

Scarcely had Tom spoken when, as if in answer to his wish, a series of jets of white smoke puffed out from the opposite hill, and two or three seconds later came the thunder of eighty guns, and the whizzing sound of as many balls. Instinctively the group drew back a pace, but it was not upon them that this tremendous fire was opened. It was directed against the right of the British line, and almost at the same moment a cloud of skirmishers appeared among the trees, followed by the dark columns of Sebastiani's division.

Upon these the English guns at once opened fire; but rushing forward with their usual impetuosity, they cleared away the obstacles which had been raised across the British front, and charged with fury against the British position. Campbell's division, however, assisted by Mackenzie's brigade and two Spanish battalions, stood firm, and driving back the skirmishers, advanced in line, cheering loudly. The head of the French column withered away under their tremendous fire, and, pushing forward, they overlapped it, and drove them back with terrible loss, capturing ten guns. Then Campbell prudently recalled his men to their first position, and the British artillery, which had necessarily been silent while friend and foe were mingled together, opened furiously upon the French as they tried to re-form upon their supports. A Spanish cavalry regiment dashed down upon their flank, and they retired again in great disorder.

Every incident of the fight could be seen from the British position on the hill, and the troops almost held their breath with excitement as the British lines clashed

against the head of the French column, and a loud shout of triumph burst out spontaneously as the French broke and fled.

But it was now the turn of the left. Already Villette's division, preceded by the Grenadiers and supported by Ruffin's division, was advancing, and the British cavalry were ordered to charge them. The ground was, however, quite unfit for cavalry. Colonel Arentschild, a very experienced officer, who commanded the German Hussars, drew up his regiment at the edge of a deep cleft which crossed their front, and refused to take his men to certain destruction. The 23d Dragoons, however, dashed into the ravine. Men and horses rolled over in all directions; still, they got across, and, charging furiously between the French infantry regiments, which poured in a terrible fire, fell upon a brigade of Chasseurs in their rear. Victor sent up his Polish lancers and Westphalian light horse to the assistance of the Chasseurs, who already outnumbered the 23d, and this gallant regiment was completely broken, the survivors escaping to the shelter of Bassecourt's Spanish division, which lay beyond the hill, having lost 257 men and officers.

Tom and Peter did not see this disastrous affair, for on the approach of the enemy's column they fell into their places in the ranks. It was, however, in vain that the French tried to gain the crest of the hill, their efforts at this point being indeed far more feeble than they had been either in the morning or upon the previous night. It was in the center that their great effort was made. Here Lapisse threw his division against that of Sherbrooke, and, covered by his own artillery and by the guns upon the hill, charged right up to the position. The British, however, repulsed them, and the guards, carried away by the excitement of the moment, followed them with reckless ardor. The French reserves of infantry and cavalry came up, the artillery plied the British with shot and shell, the fugitives rallied and again came to the attack, and the Guards fell back in confusion. The Germans next to them, severely pressed, began to waver, and for a time it seemed that the British, victorious upon both flanks, were yet to lose the battle by being broken in the center.

Now, however, the 48th, which Sir Arthur had ordered down from the hill when he saw the rash advance of the Guards, was seen advancing in line through the disordered masses. Wheeling back, it allowed the retreating regiments to pass through it and then again formed and fell upon the flank of the victorious French column. The French paused in their advance, the Guards and Germans rallied and came back again to the fight, the shots of the British guns plowed lines in the column, the French wavered, and, as the British light cavalry trotted up with the intention of charging them, fell back, and drew off to their first position amidst shouts of victory along the whole length of the British line.

Thus the battle ceased, each party occupying the ground it had held in the morning. The British loss in killed, wounded, and missing, in the two days' fighting, was 6200; that of the French 7400. Had the British been in a condition to have sallied from their position and pursued the retiring enemy, the victory would have had far greater results; but, exhausted and half-starved, the British were incapable of following up their advantage.

The next morning at daybreak, the French army quitted its position, and, retiring across the Alberche, formed line of battle there, and awaited the attack, should the English take the offensive. This they were in no position to do, although in the course of the day Craufurd had come up with the 43d, 52d, and 95th Regiments. These three regiments had heard of the first day's fighting from the Spanish fugitives, and had marched with all speed to the assistance of their friends. They had, carrying their kit and ammunition, weighing from 50 lb. to 60 lb., actually marched sixty-two miles in twenty-six hours in the hottest season of the year, one of the greatest feats recorded in military history.

The Rangers had suffered heavily, and in the two days' fighting had lost thirty-eight killed and 109 wounded. Among the former were two officers, while several others were wounded. The Scudamores had, fortunately, both escaped without a scratch.

The inhumanity of the Spaniards was now more markedly shown than ever. Although both in Cuesta's army, and in the town of Talavera provisions were abundant, yet the inhabitants carefully concealed them, while both the wounded and fighting men of the British army were in want. So great was the misery and indignation of the soldiers at this shameful treatment, from those for whom they were doing so much, that they would willingly have attacked the Spanish army and plundered the town; and from this period to the end of the war the British hated the Spanish with a deep and bitter hatred.

Wellesley now received news that Soult had crossed the mountains through the pass of Banos, which had been left undefended by the Spanish, and was marching upon his rear. Believing that Soult had only 13,000 men with him—whereas in fact, he had 50,000—Sir Arthur left the Spanish army at Talavera in charge of the hospitals, with 6000 sick and wounded, and retraced his steps, with the intention of giving battle to this new enemy.

Upon the 3d, however, he learned the real strength of Soult's army, and upon the same day heard that General Cuesta had basely retreated from Talavera, without having provided any transport whatever, according to his promise, for the British sick and wounded. All of these who had strength to crawl rejoined the British army, but 1500, who were unable to walk, were left behind, and fell into the hands of the French, by whom they were treated with far greater kindness and attention than they had been by the Spanish. Upon the 4th Cuesta joined Sir Arthur, and at six o'clock next morning the only possible course for safety was adopted. Victor was advancing from Talavera, Soult was hurrying from Placentia to cut off the retreat of the British, and accordingly Sir Arthur fell back upon Arzobispo, on the Tagus.

The artillery, the baggage and wounded, first crossed the bridge, and at two o'clock the entire army was across. So great was the hunger of the men that a herd of swine happening to be seen close to the line of march, the soldiers ran upon them, shot and

bayoneted them, and devoured them raw. Taking up a strong position, guarding the bridges of the Tagus, the British army remained quiet until the end of August. During this time they became so weakened by starvation that they could scarcely walk; a great portion of the cavalry horses, and nearly all the baggage animals died of hunger, and at last, Sir Arthur, finding that no remonstrances availed with the Junta, fell back again to the Portuguese frontier by slow marches, for the army was so utterly enfeebled that it resembled a vast body of invalids, rather than an army of unbeaten soldiers.

CHAPTER VIII. — A PAUSE IN OPERATIONS.

Talavera was fought in July, 1809, and for four months longer Sir Arthur Wellesley kept his troops on the Spanish frontier, where his presence served as a check against any invasion, even by a very formidable army, of Portugal. After the utter bad faith and cowardice shown by the Spanish, the great commander was determined never again to trust in their promises, or to undertake any movement dependent for success upon their co-operation. The Junta then declared that the Spaniards would alone and unaided sweep the French beyond the Pyrenees, and a Spanish army of 45,000 infantry, 7000 cavalry, and 60 guns advanced in November against Madrid. It was met by a French army of 24,000 infantry, 5000 cavalry, and 50 guns. The battle began at eleven in the morning, and by three the French, with a loss of only 1700 killed and wounded, had utterly routed the Spanish, with a loss of 5000 killed and wounded, 45 guns, and 26,000 prisoners! After this signal and disgraceful defeat, Lord Wellington—for he had now been raised to the peerage—felt that nothing whatever could be done at present in Spain, and so fell back into Portugal, where for many months he occupied himself in preparing to meet the storm which would, he knew, fall ere long upon that country. The Portuguese authorities were as incapable, as untrustworthy, and as intractable as were those of Spain; but here, happily, Lord

Wellington had more power. England was paying large subsidies towards keeping up the Portuguese army, which was commanded by Lord Beresford, having under him many British officers. The Portuguese troops were hardy, obedient, and far braver than the Spaniards; but difficulties often arose in keeping the army together, because the Portuguese Government, although England was paying the principal expenses of the army, yet starved their soldiers, and often kept them for months without pay. It was only by the strongest remonstrances, and by the oft-repeated threat that he would embark the British troops, and abandon Portugal altogether, unless these and other abuses were done away with, that Lord Wellington succeeded in reducing this incapable and insolent Government to reason.

Reinforcements arrived but slowly from England, for a considerable portion of the available troops of England were frittered away in holding Cadiz and in an expedition to Sicily. In these two places some 25,000 English troops were wasted—a force, which, had it been added to Wellington's army, would have enabled him to take the field against the French, instead of being forced to remain in Portugal for upwards of a year without discharging a single shot against the enemy. Tom and Peter Scudamore, however, were not destined to remain inactive all these weary months. One day in November, just before the army fell back from the Spanish frontier, General Hill was dining at mess with the regiment; for, rough as was the accommodation, the officers had succeeded in establishing a general mess. The conversation turned upon the difficulty of discovering what force the various French generals had at their disposal, the reports received by the Commander-in-Chief being often ridiculously incorrect. There was also an immense difficulty in communicating with the guerilla chiefs who, almost always beaten when they came to blows with any considerable bodies of the French, yet managed to harass them terribly by cutting off convoys, falling upon small parties, and attacking outposts and bands of foragers. Knowing every mountain pass and road, these men could, if they would, keep Lord Wellington informed of every

considerable movement of the enemy, and might in return receive instruction for acting, when required, in concert before the communication of an advancing army, or might create a diversion by uniting their bands, and threatening some important post.

The next day the boys went to Colonel Tritton's quarters, and, referring to the conversation of the day before, said that they were willing to carry any messages that the general might require sent, and to obtain any information wanted.

"Nonsense, boys, you would be hung as spies before you had been gone a week."

"I don't think so, sir," Tom said; "we have had very little to do during the six months we have been out here except to learn the language of the country, and I think now we could pass very well as Spanish boys. Besides, who would suspect boys? We are quite ready to chance detection if we can be allowed to go."

"I don't like it, boys; you are too young. Well, if not too young," he said, in answer to a movement of Tom's to speak, "we all like you too well to run the risk of hearing you have been hung like a couple of young puppies."

"You are very kind, colonel; but you know you promised to give us a chance if you could, and having a chance of course means having extra danger; but I really don't think that there would be any great danger in it."

"Well, boys," Colonel Tritton said, after a few moments' thought, "I do not feel justified in refusing your application, and will mention it to General Hill. There are very few officers in the army who speak Spanish fluently, and you being boys would, as you say, avert suspicion. But I tell you fairly that I hope General Hill will at once refuse to entertain the idea."

"Thank you, sir," the boys said. "Of course that is all we could ask you to do."

The next day, after parade was over, Colonel Tritton walked on to General Hill's quarters at a sort of half farm-house, half country-seat, a short distance from the village, round which the Rangers were encamped. As he came up to the house,

General Hill came out from his door talking to a Spanish officer, who had the day before brought some despatches from one of the Spanish generals to Lord Wellington.

Colonel Tritton joined them, and they stood talking together upon the state of affairs in Spain, and of the advance of the Spanish army on Madrid, which was then just taking place. As they did so two very ragged, unkempt Spanish boys, shoeless and wretched-looking, limped up, and began to beg. General Hill shook his head, and the Spaniard impatiently motioned them away.

"Por Dios," one whined; "give us something; we are starving. The French have burnt down our houses, and killed our fathers and mothers—we are starving. 'Por l'amor de Dios!'"

"What's the poor little beggar say?" General Hill asked the Spaniard.

"The usual story—house burnt, father and mother killed, starving. I dare say it's all a lie."

"Where did you live?" he asked in Spanish.

"In the village of Oros, near Valencia."

"And how did you come here?"

"The French burnt the village because the guerillas had killed a party of theirs in it, and they killed all the people, and then carried off the mules and horses, and took us to drive some of them. That was four months ago. We had to drive till the other day at Tamanes, when our men beat the French; our mules were taken, and, as they did not want us as drivers we had nothing to do but to come on in hopes that the kind English would give us food."

The Spanish officer translated what the boy said, and General Hill remarked, "Yes, that was a brilliant affair of the Duke del Pasque's. Here," he called to an orderly, "give these boys some bread. I will see what can be done for them afterwards. I am

afraid nothing. Poor little wretches! their story is a very common one."

The boys received the bread with a great show of thankfulness, and, sitting down by the roadside, began to munch it with great appetite. The Spanish officer now mounted his horse and rode off, while General Hill and Colonel Tritton remained standing where he had left them. Colonel Tritton then told General Hill of the Scudamores' request to be allowed to penetrate into Spain as spies or with dispatches.

"The young pickles!" General Hill laughed. "What will they be wanting to do next? Pooh, pooh! it would be out of the question."

"I believe they do really speak Spanish exceedingly well." Colonel Tritton said. "They generally act as interpreters for us, and none of the officers speak Spanish with anything like the same fluency."

"As far as the language goes, they might get on, perhaps," General Hill said; "but they look as thorough English boys as you could see. They would be detected at once."

"Yes," Colonel Tritton said, "they are both thorough English boys; I should know them anywhere. What a contrast to the miserable, limping, hang-dog lads there! Poor little chaps! Why, upon my word, I believe the fellows are laughing."

General Hill looked sharply at them, and, as he looked from one to the other, he said sarcastically, "Poor little chaps indeed! You said that very naturally, Tritton. It really does you credit as an actor."

Colonel Tritton looked at the general with an expression of blank astonishment.

"What," said the general, "were you really taken in too"

"Taken in?" repeated Colonel Tritton vaguely.

"Don't you see, Tritton, those poor little chaps you are pitying so are those two young scamps we were talking about."

Colonel Tritton stared in astonishment at the boys, and then, as he recognized them, he joined the general in a shout of laughter, while the two boys stood up and saluted with an attempt at gravity which was only partially successful, so amused were they at the astonishment of their colonel, as well as pleased at the success of their disguise.

Just at this moment there was a sound of tramping horses, and directly afterwards an officer rode up, followed by four or five others, and at a short distance in the rear by an escort of orderlies. The boys needed not the exclamation of General Hill, "Here is Wellington." They knew who the rider was, who checked his horse as he reached the gate, for they had often seen him as he rode through the camp. A slight man, very careful and neat in his dress, with an aquiline nose and piercing eyes. Peter was rising as he drew up his horse, when Tom said, "Don't get up, Peter; go on with your bread. It would look absurd for us to salute now, and would draw attention to us," he went on, as Lord Wellington dismounted, threw the bridle off his horse to an orderly, and saying to General Hill, "I wanted to see you; come in." Colonel Tritton went into the house, followed by the two officers. "We'll stop here till they come out again, Peter. Perhaps General Hill may speak to him about us. At any rate, we will keep up our disguise till they've gone. Let us play at odd and even." It was a game of which Spanish boys are very fond, and they may be seen in any of the Spanish towns sitting by the houses on door-steps in the sun playing. It was half an hour before the general came out again. He was about to mount his horse, when he glanced at the boys, who were sitting against the wall a few paces off, seemingly absorbed in their play, and paying no attention whatever to him. Suddenly he changed his mind, dropped his rein, and walked up to them.

"What are you playing for?" he asked abruptly in Spanish.

"Reals, señor," Tom said looking up, but not moving.

"You are poor; how can you pay?" asked the general.

"Oh! we don't pay," Tom laughed. "We keep count. I owe him twelve thousand now. I will pay him when I get rich. He can wait." And he held out his closed hand again for Peter to guess the number of stones it contained.

"Come inside," Lord Wellington said abruptly, and, turning led the way into the house again, followed by General Hill, Colonel Tritton, and the two boys.

"It is not often I change my mind," he said to General Hill; "but for once I do so now. When you told me about these lads, I refused to employ them on such dangerous service, even when you told me of the courage and coolness which they exhibited on the voyage. Now I have tried them myself, I see that they will do. If they could keep up their disguise when I spoke to them suddenly, and answer without hesitation or any excitement which could have shown that they were not what they pretended to be, they can do so with a French general. I am no judge of the purity of their Spanish; but as you tell me they deceived a Spanish officer just now, they will be able to pass with Frenchmen. Now, lads," he went on turning to them, "you have thought over, of course, the risks you are going to run, and are prepared, if detected, to be hung like dogs." The boys bowed.

"You will receive detailed instructions through Colonel Tritton, together with such despatches as I may wish sent. They will be written as small as possible. You will not go for a week; devote all your time to studying the map. The largest size we have shall be sent to your colonel this afternoon. Of course you will be supplied with money, and for anything you can think of likely to assist you, speak to Colonel Tritton. You are beginning well, young sirs. If you like, you ought to made a noise in the world. Now, Hill, I must be off."

And the general left the room with the officers, while the boys were stammering out their thanks.

"Where did you dress up, boys?" Colonel Tritton asked them after the general had ridden off. "You did not come out from camp like this I hope?"

"No, colonel; we changed in that little wood there."

"What have you colored your skins with?"

"We got some iodine from the doctor, sir, and mixed it with water till it was just thick enough to tinge our skin. It will wash pretty well off with plenty of scrubbing, but we mean to use walnut juice when we start; it lasts much longer, and is a better brown."

"I am not sure, boys, that you had not better leave your faces alone, they and your hands are so sunburnt that you would pass well enough, though you must dye your arms and legs. Fortunately, your hair is pretty dark, for you can't well carry dye. Think well over all these things, for your lives may depend on some trifle of this kind. I shall see you at mess."

So saying, Colonel Tritton walked on, leaving the boys to follow at their leisure. Just as they were about to turn off to make for the woods they saw a soldier coming along the road.

"That's Sam, if I am not mistaken, Peter, we will have some fun with him. We can trust him to say nothing in the regiment about meeting us like this."

The two boys accordingly sat down by a low wall by the roadside, and as Sam came up talked away to each other in Spanish. He passed without paying any attention to them. After he had gone a few yards, Tom said in a deep, loud voice, "Sambo." The black halted suddenly, and turned round. First he looked angrily at the boys, then he went to the side of the road and looked over the wall. Then with a very perplexed air he looked up and down the road.

"Who dat have impudence to call dis colored gentleman Sambo," he said to himself. "Some fellow did, dat for sartin, not dose little Spanish trash, dey not know Sam's name, some rascal in regiment; he's hid somewhere. I pound him to squash when I find him."

Muttering thus he turned to proceed on his way, but before he had gone twenty

yards, he again heard a deep shout. "Here, you, Sambo."

The black jumped as if he was shot, "My golly," he exclaimed, and then walked back to the boys, who were talking together, shook his head and again looked over the wall. Then he stooped down to the boys, and shook his fist in their faces, "You little debils, you call Sambo, I pound you to squash." The boys both leapt to their feet with an air of intense surprise and alarm, and began to cry out in Spanish.

"No, can't be you," Sam said, "dis chile must be witched, no place for men to hide, sartin not dem boys. Stone wall can't call Sambo all by self, Sam's going out of mind. Oh! Lor, dis berry bad affair," and Sam sat down by the roadside with a face of such perfect bewilderment and dismay that the boys could stand it no longer, but went off together into a scream of laughter, which caused Sam to jump to his feet again. "What you larf for, what you larf for, you little rascals, you play trick, eh? you call Sambo, who taught you dat name?" and he seized the two boys and shook them furiously.

"Oh! Sam, Sam, you will kill us with laughing," Tom got out at last. "Do leave go, man, or we shall choke," and as Sam, astonished, loosed his hold, the boys sat down and laughed till their sides ached.

"Golly," exclaimed the negro, as he looked at them, "Dose boys again. What on earth you do, Massa Tom, Massa Peter, in dose ragged close, what you dress up like two beggars for? Lor! how you take in dis chile, me tink you little Spanish trash, sure enuff." It was some time before the boys could compose themselves, and then Tom made Sam sit close by his side.

"Look here, Sam, this isn't a joke, this is a serious business and before I tell you anything about it, you must promise to keep the secret strictly, as it would do us a great deal of harm if it was known." Sam declared at once that if they tore him to pieces with wild horses he would say nothing. Tom then explained the whole thing to him and Sam at once declared that he would go too.

"Quite impossible, Sam. You do not speak a word of Spanish and although at any of the seaport towns you could pass as a runaway sailor, there could be no possible reason for your wandering about the country with two Spanish boys."

Sam thought for some time. "Now dat berry unlucky Massa Tom, dat Sam play big drum. Big drum fine music, but big drum not go well by self. If Sam had played fiddle, Sam could go, but Sam couldn't go nohow with big drum."

"I should think not, Sam, with the name of the regiment painted on it. No, no, you must stay behind. There won't be any fighting now till the spring, and by that time we shall be back with the regiment."

"But what you do without Sam? who black Massa's boots? who brush his clothes?"

Tom laughed. "These clothes would fall all to pieces, if they were brushed much, Sam, and at present we have no boots to be blacked."

"Where you get dose clothes, Massa Tom," Sam asked, examining with great disgust the rags the boys had on.

"We bought some peasant's clothes about our size, and the first beggar boys we saw we offered to exchange. You should have seen their faces of astonishment. When we got the clothes we made them into a bundle, and took them to the bakehouse, and got the baker to put them into the oven for a few hours to kill anything there might be in them. Now, Sam, it is time for us to be going. It will take us an hour's scrubbing to get the color off us. Be sure you keep our secret."

CHAPTER IX. — WITH THE GUERILLAS.

It was on a fine morning at the end of March that a cortége of muleteers and mules left the little town of Alonqua. It was now four months since the Scudamores left the army, and in the intervening time they had tramped through a large portion of Spain. They had carried with them only a dozen or so little despatches done up in tiny rolls

of the length and about the thickness of a bodkin, These were sewn inside the lining of their coats, in the middle of the cloth where it was doubled in at the seams, so that, even were the clothes to be examined carefully and felt all over, the chances of detection were slight indeed. They had each, on starting, half a dozen pieces of Spanish gold coin sewn between the thicknesses of leather of the soles of each of their shoes, for they did not start in the beggar clothes in which they had first disguised themselves. Their clothes were, indeed, worn and somewhat patched, but were of stout material, and they wore shoes, but no stockings. They had, indeed, the appearance of Spanish boys of the peasant class. The weather in the north of Spain is often very cold in winter, and the boys felt that, with rags and bare feet, they should suffer severely. All that they had to say and do had been learned by heart. The names and addresses of the agents of the British Government at every town had been laboriously learned before starting, and, as Peter said ruefully, it was worse than a dozen Greek impositions.

At each place of any importance they would find the person to whom they were instructed to apply, would accost him with some password, and would be put up by him while they remained there. When they had gained the intelligence they required—of the number of French troops in the place and its neighborhood, a knowledge always obtained by going round, counting the men on parade, or, in the case of small villages, finding out easily enough from a peasant the number, quartered there, they would write a report on the number the intentions as far as they could learn them, the amount of food in store, and the sentiments of the population, would enclose the despatch in a goose-quill and give it to their host, who was responsible for forwarding it.

In a great number of cases, indeed, the man to whom they were accredited was a muleteer. These men hated the French with a hatred even more deep and deadly than that of other Spaniards, for, in addition to the national causes of hatred, their mules were constantly being requisitioned or seized by the troops and they themselves

forced to accompany the army for long distances at a nominal rate of pay for themselves and their animals. Then, too, they were in close connection with the guerillas, for whom they carried goods up into the mountains from the towns, and when the chance came would leave their animals in the mountains and join in cutting off an enemy's convoy. They acted as messengers and spies too, and took their friends in the hills early news of intended movements of the enemy. Many a day had the boys traveled in the company of these muleteers, merry, careless fellows, singing and talking to their mules, apparently the best-natured of men, until something would be said which would recall the hated foe, and then their black eyes would flash, their fingers clutch their knife-handles, and they would pour out long strings of deep Spanish oaths. Great was the surprise of these men on receiving the password from two boys, but they never hesitated an instant in taking them in, in giving them hospitality as long as they remained, and in either accompanying them to the next town, or handing them over to the charge of some comrade going in that direction. Not even to them did the Scudamores ever betray that they were not what they were taken to be, two Spanish boys employed by the English commander as messengers. Often they were questioned how the English had come to entrust important communications to two boys, and their reply always was that their father and mother had fled to Portugal from the French, and were living there near the English lines, and that they had offered their lives in case of their sons' treachery.

This system of hostages seemed probable enough to their questioners, and if the boys' fare was rather harder, and their treatment more unceremonious than it would have been had they said that they were British officers in disguise, they ran far less risk of detection from an accidental word or sign. Indeed it would have been next to impossible for them, had they desired it, to convince any one of their identity. There was no fear now of their accent betraying them. Since they had left the army they had never, even when alone together, spoken in English. They made the rule and kept to it for two reasons, the one being that they found that if they did not get into

this habit of always speaking Spanish, they might inadvertently address each other in English, and thus betray themselves; the second, that they wanted to learn to speak absolutely like natives. This they had in the four months thoroughly learned to do. At first their pronunciation and occasional mistakes excited curiosity when asked questions as to the part of Spain from which they had come, but their constant communication with their muleteer friends had quite removed this, and for the last two months not one person had doubted that they were not only Spanish, but that they came from the northern provinces.

Hitherto they had journeyed principally between large towns and over country held by the French, but that part of their work was finished; they had accurately computed the number of the army with which Massena was to advance shortly to besiege Ciudad Rodrigo, and they had now to carry the despatches to the guerilla leaders. Hitherto they had not in a single instance excited suspicion. Not a Frenchman had asked them a question, and no adventure of anything like an exciting nature had taken place. They were now, however, entering into a country entirely different from that which they had hitherto traversed. The northeast of Spain is wild and mountainous, and offers immense natural facilities for irregular warfare. Through the various passes of the Pyrenees lead all the roads from France, whether to Vittoria on the great road to Madrid, or through Navarre to Catalonia. Here and there fortified towns still held out against the French, and the town of Gerona, in Catalonia, had only fallen after a six months' regular siege, and a desperate defense which fully rivals that of Saragossa. Is it not a little singular that the Spaniards, who in the open field were, with a few remarkable exceptions, absolutely contemptible, yet frequently defended towns with wonderful fortitude, courage, and desperation. It may, indeed, be said that in every siege where the Spaniards were commanded by brave and resolute chiefs they behaved admirably. This great range of hill country was the stronghold of the guerillas, and every convoy from France had to be protected by a large force, and even then often suffered greatly from the harassing

attacks of their active enemies.

The bands of the guerilla chiefs differed greatly in strength, varying from merely ten or a dozen men to three or four thousand, and indeed each band varied continually. The men, when not required, would scatter to their homes, cultivate their little patches of ground, and throw down the spade and take up the rifle again when they heard of a convoy to cut off, or an invading column to beat back. The bands, too, would vary in proportion to the renown of their chiefs. An energetic man, who, at the head of a handful, had performed some daring feats, would find himself a week afterwards the leader of many hundreds, while a chief who was slow and dilatory would find his band melt away like snow in summer.

The character of the warfare depended much upon the character of the French generals. A few of these kept the troops under their command sternly in hand, would permit no plundering, and insisted upon their fair treatment of the Spaniards. These in turn wanted nothing better than to remain quietly in their homes, and the guerilla bands would melt away to nothing. Other generals, furious at the savage nature of the warfare, and the incessant toil and loss entailed upon their troops, allowed the latter to do as they pleased, and burning houses and dead bodies marked their course. Then the peasantry, now turned guerillas, retaliated as savagely, giving no quarter, sacrificing all prisoners, and putting the wounded to death, sometimes with torture. On both sides horrible atrocities were committed.

The guerillas were armed partly with rifles and carbines, partly with muskets landed on the coast by the British Government, who also, from time to time, sent powder and money to assist them to continue their resistance to the French. Although nowhere really formidable, yet, being scattered over a great extent of country, these bands occupied very large bodies of French troops, who would otherwise have been disposable for general operations in the field. The English commander-in-chief had, of course, no shadow of authority over the guerillas, or, indeed, over any of the

Spanish troops, and his communication to them simply asked what arms and ammunition they required, and begged them to send him a list of the number of men they could each throw on the French communications and lines of retreat in case he should find himself in a position to make a general advance against them. He also recommended most strongly the bearers of the despatch to their care. It was to the chief known as Nunez that they were now bound. The mule train was nominally destined for Vittoria, to which town the leader had got a pass, specifying the number of mules and the nature of the goods they carried, from the French commandant at Alonqua, for no one was allowed to take the goods about the country without a pass, in order to prevent supplies being forwarded to the mountains. This pass, however, only mentioned twelve mules with four drivers, and this was the number which started from Alonqua. Another score of mules, however, joined them at a short distance from the town where a by-road turned off. Some of these had gone out from the town unloaded, as if taken out to graze, others had not entered the town, but had come direct from the sea-coast by by-paths with powder, and had been awaiting the departure of Garcias, the name of the leader of the party. They had eight men with them, all armed to the teeth.

"Is it all right, Garcias?"

"All right," the leader said; "they have sent out their squadrons on the other road, so I think we are safe for to-day."

"What boys have you got there with you?"

"They have business with Nunez; letter from the coast."

The cavalcade was now in motion again, and wound gradually up into the hills. Presently they came to a point where four roads met. A clump of trees grew hard by, and the boys gave a start of horror at seeing the bodies of six French soldiers swinging from them. "Ay, that's Nunez's work, I expect," Garcias said coolly. "There were three of his men swinging there last week, so as a lesson he has hung up

six of the French. He is a rough boy to play with, is Nunez."

At sunset the party slept in a small farm, and at daybreak continued their journey. They were now in the heart of the mountains, and their path lay sometimes up deep ravines, sometimes along rocky ledges. At last, about midday, they entered a valley in which stood a small village. "That's Nunez's head-quarters to-day," Garcias said; "to-morrow he may be no one knows where."

"But does he have to sally out by the wretched road by which we have come?" Tom asked.

"No, no," Garcias replied; "he would not catch much prey that way. There are three other ways out of the valley. That winding path you see there leads up to Santona. That road on the other side leads out on to the plain, and thence to Vittoria; while the footpath over the brow opposite leads right down into the wide valley through which the main north road runs. So you see this is a handy spot. From that brow we can see the convoys going to and from France, and can pour down upon them if they are weak; while, if a column is sent in search of us, we can vanish away long before they can catch us. Nunez does not use the direct road over the brow for his attack, but follows the Santona or Vittoria road for a while, and then makes a swoop round. He does not want to bring the French up to this village, for his family and the families of many of the men live here."

As they approached the village, they found that there was a good deal of bustle going on. Armed men were coming out of the cottages, and gathering in a group round a rough stone cross, which stood in the center of a sort of green. "We are just in time," Garcias said; "Nunez is starting on some expedition or other."

When they reached the spot there were nearly two hundred men assembled. They greeted Garcias with shouts of welcome as he arrived. "Ah, ah! Garcias, just in time. Our last skin of wine was emptied last night; we will bring some more up to-morrow; but if you had not come we should have had to start thirsty, and that's

unlucky besides being unpleasant."

"Where is Nunez!" Garcias asked.

"Here he comes," was the reply; and the boys turning saw a figure approaching, which by no means answered to the expectation of the celebrated guerilla chief. He was small and almost humpbodied, but very broad. His head seemed too large for his body, and a pair of fierce eyes gleamed out from beneath his shaggy eyebrows. His mustache was thin and bristly and his month wide, but with thin lips. The boys could understand the reputation for cruelty and mercilessness which attached to this sinister-looking figure, but there was none of the savage power which they had expected to see in so celebrated a leader.

"Any news, Garcias?" he asked shortly, as he came up.

"None, captain, except that these boys have brought some despatches for you from the English Lord."

Nunez looked sharply at them, and held out his hand without speaking. Tom gave him the little quill.

The guerilla opened it, read the contents, and, saying briefly, "An answer to-morrow," strode on to his men, and in a few minutes they were defiling out at the end of the valley.

"That hardly seems a strong enough body to attack a French convoy, Garcias," Tom remarked.

"No, it would not be, but there is only a part of his band here; the rest will join him at some place agreed on—perhaps ten miles from here. I believe he has about thousand men under his orders. Now come along; we shall be none the worse for dinner," and, leaving his men to unload the mules, he led the way into the little posada, or inn.

"Ah! Mother Morena," he said to an old woman who was crouching near a blazing

wood fire, "warming yourself as usual; it's well you've a good fire, for you will be able to get us some dinner all the more quickly. Twelve of us altogether, and all as hungry as wolves."

"Ah!" exclaimed the old woman crossly; "it seems as if I were never to have an hour's quiet, just as all that roaring, greedy lot, with their Mother Morena here and Mother Morena there, and their grumbling at the olla, and their curses and their quarrels, are off, and I think I am going to have a quiet afternoon, then you come in with your twelve hungry wolves."

"Ah! mother, but wolves don't pay, and we do, you see."

The frugal supper over, the boys laid down on the benches, and were soon asleep. The next day passed slowly, for the band were not expected to return until late at night—perhaps not until the next morning, as the pass where the attack would be made was some fifteen miles off, and the convoy might not pass there until late in the afternoon. The boys soon made friends with some of the women and children of the place, to whom they told stories of the great cities of the plain, and of the great water which washed the shores of Spain. The greater portion of the Spanish peasantry are incredibly ignorant, and very few of the inhabitants of this village had ever gone beyond the mountains. Walking about in the village, but apparently mixing but very little in the games of the other children, were two little girls, whose gay dress of rich silk seemed strangely out of place in such a spot.

Tom asked one of the women who they were, and she replied, with a toss of the head, "They are the captain's children. The last time the band went out they found among the baggage and brought up here, the dresses of the children of some fine lady, and the captain kept them all as part of his share, just as if there were no children in the village whom it would become a great deal better than those stuck-up little things. Not," she said, softening a little, "that they were not nice enough before they got these things; but since they came their heads have been quite turned by the

finery and they are almost too grand to speak to their old playfellows."

"Is their mother alive?"

"No, poor thing, she was killed by the French when the village she lived in was burned by them, because some of them were found hung in the neighborhood. The captain was away at the time and the children were out in the woods. When he came back he found them crying by the side of their mother's body, in the middle of the burning village. So then he took to the mountains, and he never spares a Frenchman who falls into his hands. He has suffered, of course, but he brought it upon himself, for he had a hand in hanging the French soldiers, and now he is a devil. It will be bad for us all; for some day, when the French are not busy with other things, they will rout us out here, and then who can blame them if they pay us for all the captain's deeds? Ah! me, they are terrible times, and Father Predo says he thinks the end of the world must be very near. I hope it will come before the French have time to hunt us down."

The boys had a hard struggle not to smile, but the woman spoke so earnestly and seriously, that they could only shake their heads in grave commiseration for her trouble; and then Tom asked, "Is the captain very fond of the children?"

"He worships them," the woman said; "he has no heart and no pity for others. He thinks no more of blood than I do of water; but he is as tender as a woman with them. One of them was ill the other day—a mere nothing, a little fever—and he sat by her bedside for eight days without ever lying down."

"I suppose," Tom said, "they never bring prisoners up here?"

"Yes, they do," the woman said; "not common soldiers; they kill them at once; but sometimes officers, if they want to exchange them for some of ours who may have been taken, or if they think they are likely to get a high ransom for them. But there, it always comes to the same thing; there, where you see that mound on the hillside, that's where they are. They blindfold them on their way up here, lest they might find

their way back after all. Only one or two have ever gone down again. I wish they would finish with them all down below; they are devils and heretics these French; but I don't care about seeing them killed. Many of us do, though, and we have not many diversions up here, so I suppose it's all for the best."

"I wish that fellow had given us our answer before he went away," Tom said to Peter when they were alone. "I hope he won't bring any prisoners up here; these massacres are frightful, and one side seems as bad as the other. Well, in another month we shall have finished with all this work, and be making for the frontier again. Shan't I be glad when we catch sight of the first red-coats!"

In the middle of the night the boys were roused by a general bustle, and found that a messenger had just arrived, saying that the expedition had been successful, that a portion of the enemy had been cut off, their rear-guard destroyed, and that the whole band would be up soon after daylight. The village was astir early, but it was not until nine o'clock that the guerilla band arrived. The boys saw at a glance that they were stronger in numbers than when they started, and that with them were some twenty or thirty baggage animals.

The women flocked out to meet them with shrill cries of welcome. The booty taken was not of any great value in money, but was more valuable than gold to the guerillas.

Each one of the band carried, in addition to his own piece, a new French musket, while in the barrels on the mules were powder and ball; there were bales of cloth, and some cases of brandy and champagne, and a few boxes and portmanteaus of officers' baggage. In the rear of all, under a strong guard, were two French officers, both wounded, a lady and a child of some seven or eight years old.

After a boisterous greeting to their wives, the band broke up, and scattered over the village, three or four men remaining to guard the captives, who were told to sit down against a wall.

The whole band were soon engaged in feasting, but no one paid the least attention to the prisoners. The lady had sunk down exhausted, with the little girl nestled close to her, the officers faint and pale from loss of blood, leaned against the wall. One of them asked the guards for some water, but the men paid no attention to the request, answering only with a savage curse. Tom and Peter, who were standing by, immediately went to the inn, filled a jug with water, and, taking a drinking horn and some bread, went back. One of the guards angrily ordered them back as they approached.

"I am not going to free them," Tom said, soothingly; "there can be no reason why they should die of thirst, if they are enemies."

"I am thirsty myself," one of the guard said, "and it does us good to see them thirst."

"What, has no one brought you anything to drink?" Tom said, in a tone of surprise. "Here, Peter, you give this bread and water to these prisoners; I will run to Mother Morena's and bring some wine for the guard."

The guard would not allow Peter to approach the captives until Tom arrived with a large jug of wine, and a cold fowl, which he had obtained at the inn. These the Spaniards accepted, and allowed the boys to give the water to the prisoners. All drank eagerly, with every expression of thankfulness, the lady seizing Peter's hand and kissing it as he handed the horn to the child. The lady was a very bright, pretty woman, though now pale and worn with fatigue and emotion, and the child was a lovely little creature.

The boys, on leaving the prisoners, hurried to Garcias.

"What are they going to do with the prisoners, Garcias?"

"They have brought them up here to exchange for Nunez's lieutenant, who was taken last week. One of the men went off last night to Vittoria with a letter to offer to exchange. One of the officers is a colonel, and the young one a captain. The lady is, they say, the wife of General Reynier."

"Then they are safe," Tom said joyfully, "for, of course the French would exchange a guerilla against three such prisoners."

"Yes," Garcias said, "they are safe if Vagas has not been shot before the messenger gets to Vittoria. The messenger will hear directly he gets there, and if they have finished Vagas, he will come straight back, for his letter will be of no use then."

"But the French would pay a ransom for them."

"Yes; but the captain is never fond of ransoming, and if the news comes that Vagas is shot it is all up with them."

"But they will never murder a woman and child in cold blood!" Tom said, in tones of indignant horror.

"Women are killed on both sides," the muleteer said, placidly. "I don't hold to it myself, but I don't know, after all, why a woman's life is a bit more precious than a man's. Vagas's wife and children are here, too, and if the news comes of his death, she would stir the band up to kill the prisoners, even if the captain wanted to save them, which he certainly will not do."

"When is the messenger expected back?"

"If he goes to Vittoria and finds Vagas is alive, and arranges for the exchange, he won't be back till late to-night, perhaps not till to-morrow; but, if he hears, either on the way or directly he gets there, that he is dead, he may be back this afternoon." Soon after this conversation Garcias was sent for to the chief, and returned with a small note, which he handed to the boys as the answer to the despatch, and urged them to go at once. The boys said that they could not leave until they saw the end of this terrible drama which was passing before their eyes. It was early in the afternoon when a man was seen coming along the path from Vittoria. A hundred eager eyes examined him, and ere long it was declared as certain that it was the messenger. The boys' heart sank within them as they saw the fierce look cast by the Spaniards in the direction of the prisoners, for every one in the village was well aware of the meaning

of this early return. The boys had arranged upon the course they would pursue, and they at once hurried to Garcias.

"Please come with us at once to Nunez. We want to see him before the messenger arrives."

"I will come with you," Garcias said; "but if you think that any talking of yours will persuade Nunez to move out of his way, you are mistaken. It is more likely to cost you your own lives, I can tell you; however, I gave you the promise I would do my best for you when you started with me, and I will go with you now, though what you want to interfere for here is more than I can make out. Pshaw! what matters two or three of these accursed French, more or less?"

As they neared the chief's house they saw him coming towards them. His brow was as black as thunder; he was evidently prepared for the news of his lieutenant's death.

"These messengers want to speak to you for a moment," Garcias said.

The chief stopped with an impatient gesture.

"Señor," Tom said, with a dignity which surprised the chief; "we are not what we seem. We are two English officers, and we have come to beg of you, to implore you, not to tarnish the cause for which you fight by shedding the blood of women and children."

The boys had agreed that it would be altogether hopeless to try to save the French officers.

"British officers, indeed," exclaimed Nunez, "a likely story. Do you know them as such, Garcias?"

"No," Garcias said bluntly, "I never guessed at it; but now they say so, I think it's likely enough, for they don't seem to see things in the same way as other people."

"I can give you proof of it," Tom said, calmly, pulling up the sleeve of his coat, and showing a cicatrix in his forearm. Taking a knife from his pocket, he cut into the

skin, and drew forth a tiny silver tube. This he opened, and handed to Nunez a paper signed by Lord Wellington, declaring the bearers to be British officers, and requesting all loyal Spaniards to give them every assistance.

The captain read it through, and flung it down. "You may be officers," he said contemptuously; "but if you were Lord Wellington himself, I would not spare these accursed French. Listen!" and as he spoke a howl of rage ran from the other end of the village, and told too plainly the nature of the tidings the messenger had brought.

"I again protest," Tom said firmly. "I protest, as a British officer, and in the name of humanity, against this cold-blooded murder of a woman and child. It is a disgrace to Spain, a disgrace to the cause, it is a brutal and cowardly act."

The guerilla furiously drew a pistol; but Garcias placed himself between him and Tom. "I have promised him a safe conduct," he said, "and have given my word for his safety. He is only a boy, and a young fool; don't trouble with him."

Fortunately at this moment, for the guerilla was still irresolutely handling his pistol, a crowd was seen coming towards them, headed by a woman who seemed frantic with rage and grief. All were shouting, "Death to the assassins! death to the French!" The chief at once moved forward to meet them.

Tom and Peter gave a significant glance towards each other, and then Tom turned to go back towards the house which Nunez inhabited, while Peter hurried towards the spot where the prisoners were kept. Already a crowd was assembling who were talking threateningly at the French officers. Peter made his way through them until he stood by the lady, who, with her child clinging to her neck, looked in terror at the angry crowd, whose attention, however, was directed to the officers, who stood looking calmly indifferent to their threats and insults.

"Do you speak Spanish, madam?" Peter asked, leaning over her.

She shook her head.

"Do you speak English?" he asked, in that tongue.

"Yes, yes, a little." the lady said, eagerly; "who are you? What is this fierce crowd about?"

"Hush!" Peter said. "I am a friend. Listen. In a few minutes they are going to shoot you all." The lady gave a stifled cry, and pressed her child close to her. "Remember, when they come to you, ask for a priest; gain a few minutes, and I hope to save you and the child."

So saying, he slipped away into the crowd again. He had scarcely done so when Nunez arrived, accompanied by many of his men. The crowd fell back, and he strode up to the French officers. "French dogs," he said, "you are to die. I spared you to exchange, but your compatriots have murdered my lieutenant, and so now it's your turn. You may think yourselves lucky that I shoot you, instead of hanging you. Take them to that wall," he said, pointing to one some twenty yards off.

The Frenchmen understood enough Spanish to know that their fate was sealed. Without a word they took each other's hands, and marched proudly to the spot pointed out. Here, turning round, they looked with calm courage at the Spaniards, who formed up with leveled muskets at a few paces distance. "Vive la France! Tirez," said the elder, in a firm, voice, and in a moment they fell back dead, pierced with a dozen balls.

Peter had turned away when Nunez appeared on the scene, to avoid seeing the murder, and with his eyes fixed in the direction in which Tom had gone, he listened almost breathlessly to what should come. The French lady had sat immovable, cowering over her child, while her countrymen were taken away and murdered. As Nunez passed where she crouched, he said to two of his men, "Put your muskets to their heads, and finish them!" As the men approached, she lifted up her face, pale as death, and said,—

"Un prêtre, uno padre!"

"She wants a priest," the men said, drawing back; "she has a right to absolution."

There was a murmur of assent from those around, and two or three started to the priest's house, situated only a few yards away, being one of the end houses of the village. The priest soon appeared, came up to the spot, and received orders to shrive the Frenchwoman. He attempted a remonstrance, but was silenced by a threat from Nunez, and knowing from experience of such scenes that his influence went for nothing with Nunez and his fierce band, he bent over her, and the crowd drew back, to let them speak unheard. At this moment, to Peter's intense relief, he saw Tom approaching with the captain's two children walking beside him. Absorbed in what was passing before them, no one else looked round, and Peter slipped away and joined his brother. They came within twenty yards of the crowd, and then paused.

"Wait a minute," Tom said to the children, "your father is busy."

In another minute Nunez shouted roughly, "There that will do; finish with it and have done! I want to be off to my dinner."

Tom and Peter simultaneously drew out a large Spanish knife, and each took one of the children firmly by the shoulder.

"Stop! Señor Nunez!" Tom shouted in a loud, clear tone. "Stop! or by heaven there will be four victims instead of two! Let one of you lift a finger against these captives—let one of you come one step nearer to us—and, by the Holy Virgin, we will drive our knives into these children's hearts!"

A cry of astonishment broke from the crowd, and one of agony and rage from Nunez, who tottered against a wall in horror at the danger in which his daughters were placed.

"Listen! all of you," Tom said, "we are English officers, we have shown our papers to Nunez, and he knows it is so. We will not suffer this murder of a mother and her child. If they are to die, we will die with them; but these two children shall die too! Now, what is it to be?"

A dozen of the guerillas leveled their guns at the two daring boys.

"No! no!" Nunez shrieked; "lower your guns. Don't hurt the children, señors. The captives shall not be hurt; I swear it! They shall go free. Give me my children."

"Not if I know it," Tom said; "Do you think I could trust the word of a man who would murder women and children in cold blood? No; these girls shall go with us as hostages, till we are safe under French guard."

"They will tell them the way up here," said one of the woman in the group, "and then we shall be all killed."

"No," Tom said; "the lady shall swear not to tell the way up here. She shall swear on your priest's crucifix. We will give you our words as British officers."

"But how are the children to get back here again?" another asked, for Nunez was so paralyzed that he could only gaze on the children, who were crying bitterly, and implore them to stand quiet, and not try to get away. After more parleying the arrangements were completed. The crowd fell back on either side, so as to leave a large space round the French lady. Tom and Peter then went up to them with the little girls. The lady was sobbing with joy and excitement at this unexpected relief.

"Can you walk?" Tom asked her in English.

"Yes," she said, getting up hastily, but almost falling again.

"Garcias will go first, as guide. The priest will give you his arm," Tom went on, "these two young women will go with you and carry your child if necessary. You will walk on, twenty yards ahead of us. We follow with these girls. No one is to follow us, or accompany us. We are to go on like that till we come upon your outposts, and then the priest and the two women will bring back Nunez's children."

"You will send them safe back, you swear?" asked Nunez, in tremulous tones.

"Psha!" Tom said contemptuously, "you don't suppose we are child-murderers, like yourself."

"Remember!" the guerilla said, in a sudden burst of passion, "if you ever cross my

path again, I will—"

"Do terrible things no doubt," Tom said scornfully; "and do you beware, too. It is wild beasts like yourself who have brought disgrace and ruin on Spain. No defeat could dishonor and disgrace her as much as your fiendish cruelty. It is in revenge for the deeds that you and those like you do, that the French carry the sword and fire to your villages. We may drive the French out, but never will a country which fights by murder and treachery become a great nation. Are you ready, Garcias!"

"I am ready," the muleteer said, stepping forward from the silent and scowling throng.

"We can trust you," Tom said heartily; "take us the short way straight down into the valley; we may have the luck to come upon a passing French troop in an hour. Think of that, madam," he said to the French lady, "let that give you strength and courage."

So saying, the procession set out in the order Tom had indicated, amidst the curses of the guerillas, who were furious at seeing themselves thus bearded. At the brow of the hill Tom looked back, and saw that the guerillas were still standing in a group, in front of which he could distinguish the figure of Nunez. Taking off his hat, he waved an ironical farewell, and then followed the party down the hillside into the broad valley below. They could see the road stretching like a thread along it, but to their disappointment, not a figure was visible upon it. Now that there was no longer danger of treachery, the party closed up together.

"How far is it to Vittoria, Garcias?"

"Twenty good miles, señor."

"But we shall never get there," Tom said in dismay. "I am sure the lady could not walk another five miles; she is quite exhausted now."

"You will not have to go five miles, señor. There is a body of four or five hundred French in that large village you see there; it is not more than three miles at most."

It was a weary journey, for the French lady, exhausted by fatigue and excitement, was often obliged to stop and sit down to rest, and, indeed, could not have got on at all had not Garcias on one side and the padre on the other helped her on. At last, just as the sun was setting, they approached the village, and could see the French sentries at its entrance. When within a hundred yards they paused.

"We are safe now," Tom said; "it is not necessary for you to go farther. Good-by, little ones; I am sorry we have given you such a fright, but it was not our fault. Good-by, padre; I know that you will not grudge your walk, for the sake of its saving the lives of these unfortunates. Good-by, Garcias; thanks for your kindness and fidelity. I will report them when I return, and will, if I get a chance, send you a remembrance of our journey together."

"Good-by, señors," Garcias said, shaking them by the hand; "you English are different to us, and I am not surprised now at your General holding Portugal against all the French armies." Then he lowered his voice, so that the Spanish women standing by could not hear him. "Be on your guard, señors; don't move on from the village without a strong convoy is going on; change your disguise, if possible; distrust every one you come across, and, in heaven's name, get back to your lines as soon as possible, for you may be assured that your steps will be dogged, and that you will be safe nowhere in Spain from Nunez's vengeance. The guerillas communicate with each other, and you are doomed if you fall into the hands of any, except, perhaps, one or two of the greater chiefs. Be always on your guard; sleep with your eyes open. Remember, except in the middle of a French regiment, you will never be really safe."

"Thanks, Garcias!" the boys said earnestly, "we will do our best to keep our throats safe. At any rate, if we go down, it shall not be for want of watchfulness!"

Another shake of the hands, and the party separated. The Spanish woman who was carrying the sleeping French child handed her over to Tom, who took her without

waking her while Peter lent his arm to the French lady.

"Madam," Tom said in English, "you will soon be among your friends. I know that you will keep your promise not to divulge the situation of the village you have left. I must ask you, also, to promise me not to say that we speak English, or to say anything which may create a suspicion that we are not what we seem. You will, of course, relate your adventures, and speak of us merely as Spanish boys, who acted as they did being moved by pity for you. We must accompany you for some time, for Nunez will move heaven and earth to get us assassinated, and all we want is that you shall obtain permission for us to sleep in the guard-room, so as to be under shelter of French bayonets until we can decide upon our course of action."

The lady assented with a gesture, for she was too exhausted to speak, and as they reached the French sentries she tottered and sank down on the ground insensible.

CHAPTER X. — MADRID.

The French sentries, who had been watching with surprise the slow approach of two peasant boys, the one carrying a child, the other assisting a woman clad in handsome, but torn and disheveled clothes, on seeing the latter fall, called to their comrades, and a sergeant and some soldiers came out from a guard-room close by.

"Hallo!" said the sergeant. "What's all this? Who is this woman? And where do you come from?"

The boys shook their heads.

"Of course," the sergeant said, lifting the lady, "they don't understand French; how should they? She looks a lady, poor thing. Who can she be, I wonder?"

"General Reynier," Tom said, touching her.

"General Reynier!" exclaimed the sergeant to his comrades. "It must be the general's wife. I heard she was among those killed or carried off from that convoy that came

through last night. Jacques, fetch out Captain Thibault, and you, Noel, run for Dr. Pasques."

The officer on guard came out, and, upon hearing the sergeant's report, had Madame Reynier at once carried into a house hard by, and sent a message to the colonel of the regiment. The little girl, still asleep, was also carried in and laid down, and the regimental doctor and the colonel soon arrived. The former went into the house, the latter endeavored in vain to question the boys in French. Finding it useless, he walked up and down impatiently until a message came down from the doctor that the lady had recovered from her fainting fit, and wished to see him at once.

Tom and Peter, finding that no one paid any attention to them, sat, quietly down by the guard-house.

In a few minutes the French colonel came down. "Where are those boys?" he exclaimed hastily. There was quite a crowd of soldiers round the house, for the news of the return of General Reynier's wife and child had circulated rapidly and created quite an excitement. "Where are those boys?" he shouted again.

The sergeant of the guard came forward.

"I had no orders to keep them prisoners, sir," he said in an apologetic tone, for he had not noticed the boys, and thought that he was going to get into a scrape for not detaining them; but he was interrupted by one of the soldiers who had heard the question, bringing them forward.

To the astonishment of the soldiers, the colonel rushed forward, and, with a Frenchman's enthusiasm, actually kissed them. "Mes braves garçons!" he exclaimed. "Mes braves garçons! Look you, all of you," he exclaimed to the soldiers, "you see these boys, they are heroes, they have saved, at the risk of their own lives, mark you, General Reynier's wife and daughter; they have braved the fury of that accursed Nunez and his band, and have brought them out from that den of wolves." And then, in excited tones, he described the scene as he had heard it from Madame Reynier.

At this relation the enthusiasm of the French soldiers broke out in a chorus of cheers and excited exclamations. The men crowded round the boys, shook them by the hands, patted them on the back, and in a hundred strange oaths vowed an eternal friendship for them.

After a minute or two, the colonel raised his hand for silence. "Look you," he said to the men. "You can imagine that, after what these boys have done, their life is not safe for a moment. This accursed Nunez will dog them and have them assassinated if he can. So I leave them to you; you will take care of them, my children, will you not?"

A chorus of assurances was the reply, and the boys found themselves as it were adopted into the regiment. The soldiers could not do enough for them, but, as neither party understood the other's language, the intercourse did not make much progress. They had, however, real difficulty in refusing the innumerable offers of a glass of wine or brandy made to them by every group of soldiers as they moved about through the village.

The boys felt that their position was a false one; and although, in point of fact, they had no report to make upon the regiment, still the possibility that if discovered they might be thought to have been acting as spies on men who treated them with so much friendliness was repugnant to them. However, their stay was not to be prolonged, for the regiment had already been stationed for a month at the village, and was to be relieved by another expected hourly from France, and was then to go on to Madrid. This they learned from one of the soldiers who could speak a few words of Spanish.

It was upon the third day after their arrival that the expected regiment came in, and next morning the boys started soon after daybreak with their friends. They had not seen Madame Reynier during their stay in the village, for she was laid up with a sharp attack of illness after the excitement she had gone through. She was still far

from fit to travel, but she insisted on going on, and a quantity of straw was accordingly laid in a cart, pillows and cushions were heaped on this, and an awning was arranged above to keep off the sun. The regiment had taken on the transport animals which had come in with the baggage of the troops the night before; hence the mule drivers and other followers were all strangers. The boys were marching beside the regiment, talking with one of the sergeants who had been previously for two years in Spain, and spoke a little Spanish, when the colonel, who had been riding alongside Madame Reynier, told them as he passed on to the head of the regiment, that she wished to speak to them.

The boys fell out, and allowed the troops and the line of baggage animals and carts to pass them. As the latter came along, Tom observed one of the Spanish drivers glance in their direction, and immediately avert his head.

"Peter, that fellow is one of Nunez's band; I will almost swear to his face. No doubt he has joined the convoy for the purpose of stabbing us on the first opportunity. I expected this. We must get rid of them at once."

The boys had both been furnished with heavy cavalry pistols by order of the colonel, to defend themselves against any sudden attack, and, placing his hand on the butt in readiness for instant use, Tom, accompanied by his brother walked up to the Spaniard.

"You and those with you are known," he said. "Unless you all fall out at the next village we come to, I will denounce you, and you haven't five minutes to live after I do so. Mind, if one goes on you all suffer."

The Spaniard uttered a deep execration, and put his hand on his knife, but seeing that the boys were in readiness, and that the French baggage guard marching alongside would certainly shoot him before he could escape, he relinquished his design.

"Mind," Tom said, "the first village; it is only a mile ahead, and we shall probably

halt there for five minutes; if one of you goes a single foot beyond it, you will swing in a row."

So saying, the boys dropped behind again until Madame Reynier's cart came along. The sides were open, and the lady, who was sitting up, supported by pillows, with her child beside her, saw them, and called to them to climb up to her. They did so at once, and she then poured forth her thanks in tones of the deepest gratitude.

"My husband is not at Madrid," she said when she saw by the boys' confusion that they would be really glad if she would say no more; "but when he hears of it he will thank you for saving his wife and child. Of course," she went on, "I can see that you are not what you seem. Spanish boys would not have acted so. Spanish boys do not speak English. That makes it impossible for me in any way to endeavor to repay my obligation. Had you been even Spanish peasants, the matter would have been comparatively easy; then my husband could have made you rich and comfortable for life; as it is—"

She paused, evidently hoping that they would indicate some way in which she could serve them.

"As it is, madam," Tom said, "you can, if you will, be of great service to us by procuring for us fresh disguises in Madrid, for I fear that after what happened with Nunez our lives will not be safe from his vengeance anywhere in Spain. Already we have discovered that some of his band are accompanying this convoy with the intention of killing us at the first opportunity."

"Why do you not denounce them instantly?" Madame Reynier said, rising in her excitement and looking round.

"We cannot well do that," Tom said, "at least not if it can be avoided. They know already that we have recognized them, and will leave at the next village; so we are safe at present, but in Madrid we shall be no longer so. We cannot remain permanently under the guard of the bayonets of the 63d Line; and indeed our

position is as you may guess, a false and unpleasant one, from which we would free ourselves at the first opportunity. We shall therefore ask you, when you get to Madrid, to provide us with fresh disguises and a pass to travel west as far as the limits of the French lines."

"You can consider that as done," Madame Reynier answered; "I only regret that it is so slight a return. And now," she said lightly, to change the conversation, "I must introduce you to this young lady. Julie," she asked in French, "do you remember those boys?"

"Yes," Julie said; "these are the boys who gave mamma and Julie water when those wicked men would not give us anything to drink when we were thirsty; and it was these boys that mamma said prevented the wicked men from killing us. They are good boys, nice boys, but they are very ragged and dirty."

Madame Reynier smiled, and translated Julie's answer.

"You know," she went on, hesitatingly, "that I know that—that you are English officers. I heard you say so when you saved us. But how is it that you can be officers so very young?"

Tom explained that in England the officers entered for the most part directly, and not, as in the French army, by promotion from the ranks, and that, consequently, the junior officers were much younger than those of equal rank in the French service.

The convoy had now reached the village, and a halt was ordered, and the boys alighting, walked forward to see that their unwelcome attendants quitted them. As the soldiers fell out from their order of march and sat down under the shade of the houses many of the Spaniards with the baggage-train followed their example, and the boys saw the man to whom they had spoken go up to four others, and in a short time these separated themselves from the rest, went carelessly round a corner, and when the order came to continue the march, failed to make their appearance. Their absence passed unnoticed save by the boys, for the natives frequently took

advantage of the passage of troops and convoys to travel from one part of the country to another, for the guerillas were for the most part little better than brigands, and would plunder their own countrymen without scruple whenever the opportunity was favorable.

The march to Madrid was accomplished without adventure, and the boys improved the occasion by endeavoring to pick up as many French phrases as they could, as they marched along by the side of the sergeant who had specially taken them under his charge. He knew a little Spanish, so they managed to keep up a conversation with him in a strange medley of the two languages, which helped to pass the time away merrily. At Madrid they took up their quarters in the barracks with the regiment; they had already explained their plan of disguise to Madame Reynier, and she had promised to provide all that was necessary and to obtain the military pass for them.

They had soon reason to congratulate themselves that their stay in Madrid was under the protection of French bayonets. During the day after their arrival they remained quietly in barracks, as the appearance of two Spanish peasants walking about the street with French soldiers would have excited comments. In the evening, however, they agreed with their friend the sergeant, who was going into the town with three or four of his comrades, that they should accompany them, not, however, walking actually with them, but following a few paces behind, so as to be within reach of their assistance should any one molest them.

They reached the Piazza del Sol, the great central square of Madrid, without incident, and amused themselves with the sight of the constant stream of people passing to and fro, the ladies in their graceful black mantillas, the men in cloaks and Spanish sombreros, or round felt hats. Presently the sergeant and his companions left the square, and turning down one of the narrow streets which run into it, amused themselves by looking into the shops, with their gay fans, bright handkerchiefs, and

other articles of Spanish manufacture.

Tom and Peter followed their example, keeping some ten paces behind them. It was now nearly dark, and the streets were but badly lighted except by the lamps in the shop windows.

"It may be all fancy, Tom," Peter said, "but I can't help thinking that we are followed. There are three follows who have passed us twice, and I am pretty sure they are particularly noticing us. Keep your hand on your pistol."

As the boys paused at another shop window, the three men again approached, this time from ahead.

"Look out, Tom," Peter said sharply.

As the men came up to them, one of them exclaimed,

"Now!"

The boys faced round, pistol in hand, with a cry to their friends, just as the three Spaniards, with drawn knives, were upon them.

The sudden movement disconcerted them, and two sprang back from the leveled tubes of the pistols, with fierce oaths of surprise, the third, however, rushed in and struck at Tom; the latter instinctively moved aside, and the knife inflicted a heavy gash on the shoulder, and almost at the same moment Peter's bullet crashed through the fellow's skull.

His comrades, with a cry of rage, rushed in, but before they could strike, the sergeant was up and ran one through the body with his sword, whereon the other fled. The whole affair lasted only three or four seconds. In less than a minute the street was absolutely deserted, for rows and fights were so common between the soldiers and the people, that all prudent people got out of the way the moment a knife was drawn.

"Well done, lad," the sergeant said to Peter, "I thought your brother was done for.

Luckily I had faced your way when the fellow attacked you, and was on my way to help you before they began, but I feared I should be too late. That was a wonderfully pretty snap shot of yours, and you were as cool as old hands. Peste! I don't know what to make of you boys. Now come along, we had better get away from this carrion before any one comes up and asks questions. First, though, let me tie up your shoulder."

This was soon done, and while the sergeant was engaged upon it, his comrades, old soldiers, turned over the dead Spaniards, searched their pockets, and chuckled as they found several gold pieces.

One or two French soldiers alone came near them before they left the spot, attracted by the sound of the pistol. A word from the sergeant, "These scoundrels attacked us, they have got their coup," satisfied them, and the boys and their friend soon regained the crowded main street, leaving the bodies for the watch to find and bury.

Arrived at the barracks, Tom's arm was examined by the surgeon, and the cut pronounced a deep flesh wound, but of no consequence; it was soon strapped up, and with his arm in a sling Tom went down to the sergeant's quarters, where they slept. Here they had to go through much patting on the back, for their friend had described the readiness and coolness with which they stood at bay, and popular as they were before they were now more so than ever. For the rest of their stay in Madrid the boys did not stir out of barracks. One at least of Nunez's envoys they knew to be alive, and he could enlist any number of the lower class against them, so they resolved not to go out until they should finally start.

After a fortnight's stay they were sent for to the colonel's quarters, where they found Madame Reynier and her child. "I had a letter from my husband this morning," she said, "from his camp near Cordova, thanking you with all his heart for the inestimable service you rendered him, and begging me to tell you that you can count on his gratitude to the extent of his life at any and all times. You need no assurance

of mine. And now about your journey. All is prepared for you to leave to-morrow morning. You are to come here to the colonel's quarters soon after daybreak. Here are your two disguises, for the one as a young bachelor of medicine, for the other as a young novice. Here is your pass, signed by the minister, authorizing you both to pass on to your relations at Ciudad Rodrigo, and to go unmolested thence where you choose, also recommending you to the care of all French and Spanish authorities. A regiment marches to-morrow morning for the frontier; the colonel is a cousin of my husband. I have told him that some friends of yours rendered me much kindness and service on my way down, and that I particularly commend you to his care. He has promised to allow you to follow the regiment, and to see that you get quarters at each halting-place. He does not know you for anything but what you appear to be. When you have put on these dresses to-morrow morning, step out by the private door from these quarters, looking carefully when you start to see that there is no one in the street. Then go boldly to No. 15, Rue St. Geronimo; go into the courtyard, there you will see two stout mules with all necessaries, under charge of a soldier, who will have instructions to hand them over to you without asking any questions; then go down to the Retiro and wait till the 16th come along. The Colonel will be on the look-out for you, and you will ride up to him and hand him this note. And now farewell, dear boys; never shall I forget you, or cease to pray for you, and may be when this terrible war is over we may meet as friends again. Keep these little tokens of remembrance of your grateful friends." So saying, Madame Reynier pressed into the boys' hands two magnificent gold watches and chains, held her child up for each of them to kiss, threw her arms round their necks and kissed them herself, and then drawing down her veil to conceal the tears which were standing in her eyes, left them hastily.

That night the boys said good-by to their friend the sergeant, and to those soldiers with whom they had most companionship. "You have guessed, no doubt, sergeant," Tom said, in his mixture of Spanish and French, "that we are not exactly what we

seem to be, but if we should ever meet again, under different circumstances, I want you to remember that our connection with the regiment has been in a way forced upon us. I should not like you to think, that is that under the pretence of friendship, we have been treacherously learning things. Do you understand?"

"I understand, mes braves," the sergeant said, "Jacques Pinteau is no fool, and he saw from the first that you were not two ragged Spanish peasant boys by birth. I daresay I can guess what you are, but there need be no ill-will for that, and as you only came among us by accident, as it were, there is no more to be said either way. There is one thing certain, wherever or however we meet, we shall be friends."

So well were Madame Reynier's plans arranged that the boys passed from Madrid to the frontier without a single hitch or unpleasantness. Tom was soberly attired as a student at the university, Peter was muffled up to the eyes as a timid young novice, going from school to enter a convent, of which his aunt was lady superior, at Ciudad Rodrigo. The colonel, and, following his example, the officers of the regiment were polite and civil. The marches were of easy length, the mules stout and smooth-going, with well-filled traveling sacks. The weather was delightful, and the boys enjoyed the fortnight's march exceedingly. Upon the road they learned that Massena had laid siege to Ciudad Rodrigo, and that the 16th was on its way to join the besieging army.

It was the end of June, 1810, when the 16th joined Massena's force before Ciudad Rodrigo. The siege had continued for some time, the British light division, under General Craufurd, lay upon the other side of the river Agueda, which separated them alike from the town and the French army. The colonel of the 16th politely expressed to Tom his regret that he could not, for the present, conduct them to their final destination, but that he hoped that the gate would soon be open for them. Tom thanked him for the civility which he had shown them upon the road, and said that he would, with his sister, take up his abode for the present a few miles from the

beleaguered fortress. On leaving the regiment the boys went higher up the Agueda to the little town of Villar, where there was a bridge. This however, was watched by the troops of both armies, and there was, at present, no chance of affecting a passage.

CHAPTER XI. — THE FIGHT ON THE COA.

All through the winter of 1809-1810, Wellington had remained quietly on the frontier of Portugal, engaged in disciplining his troops, many of whom were raw drafts from the militia, in urging upon the home Government the necessity of fresh reinforcements, if the war was to be carried on with the smallest hopes of success, and in controversies and disputes with the Portuguese regency. This body of incapables starved their own army, refused supplies and transport to the British, and behaved with such arrogance and insolence that Wellington was several times driven to use the threat that, unless measures were taken to keep the Portuguese troops from starving, and to supply food to the British, he would put his army on board the transports at Lisbon, and give up the struggle altogether.

Spring found the army still on the frontier, and when the French advanced in force in May to lay siege to the Spanish frontier fortress of Ciudad Rodrigo, Wellington to the intense disappointment of his own troops, and the bitter anger of the Portuguese and Spaniards, refused to fight a battle to save the fortress, which, under its gallant old governor, Andrea Hernati, was defending itself nobly.

Wellington's position was, however, a very difficult one, and his responsibilities were immense. Allowing for the detachments which were massing to check three other French columns advancing in different directions, he had but 25,000 men with which to attempt to raise the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo, or to draw off the besieged garrison. Massena had under him 60,000 French veterans, and was desiring nothing more than that Wellington should attack him. The chances of victory then were by

no means strong, and in any case victory could only have been purchased by a loss of men which would have completely crippled the British general, and would have rendered it absolutely necessary for him to fall back again at once. A defeat or even a heavy loss of men, would have so dispirited the faint-hearted Government at home that they would undoubtedly have recalled the whole expedition, and resigned Portugal to its fate. Thus Wellington decided not to risk the whole fate of the British army and of Portugal for merely a temporary advantage, and so stood firm against the murmurs of his own troops, the furious reproaches of the Portuguese and Spaniards, and the moving entreaties for aid of the gallant governor of the besieged town.

At the same time that he refused to risk a general battle, he kept Craufurd's division in advance of the Coa, and within two hours' march of the enemy, thereby encouraging the garrison of Ciudad Rodrigo, and preventing Massena from pushing forward a portion of his army while the rest pursued the siege.

Craufurd's front was guarded by the Agueda, a river only passable by two or three bridges and fords in wet weather, but fordable in many places in the dry season. At the commencement of June the Agueda fell, and the French crossed in strength at various places. Craufurd, however, still maintained his position in front of the Coa with great skill and boldness. He had under his command only 4000 infantry, 1100 cavalry, and six guns, and his maintenance of his position, almost within gun-shot of an enemy's army, 60,000 strong, for three months, is one of the finest feats of military audacity and ability ever performed.

Until the 11th of July the boys remained quietly at a cottage occupied by peasants, who believed their story that they were only waiting to proceed when the French army advanced. They were freed from molestation or inquiry upon the part of the French by the pass with which Madame Reynier had supplied them.

Upon that day Ciudad Rodrigo surrendered, and Massena prepared at once to enter

Portugal. Upon the 21st the cavalry advanced in great force, and upon the following day the boys resolved upon endeavoring to rejoin the British army. The Agueda was now easily fordable in many places, but the boys determined to swim across, at a distance from the point at which the French army was now pouring forward.

As evening came on they left the cottage, and walked two miles up the stream, and, as soon as night fell, took off the costumes which had proved of such service to them and left them on the bank; then fastening their peasants' suits upon two bundles of rushes to keep them dry, entered the little river, and were soon upon the opposite shore. They knew, from what they had heard in the afternoon, that Craufurd had fallen back upon Almeida, a fortified town, and that it was probable he would at once cross the Coa, as resistance to the force now approaching him seemed nothing short of madness.

No good, indeed, could be gained by a fight in such a position, with a deep river in the rear, crossed by only a narrow bridge, and commanded by both banks, and Wellington's orders had been imperative "that, upon no account whatever was Craufurd to fight beyond the Coa."

Craufurd, however, a rash and obstinate, although a skilful general, was determined upon having a brush with the enemy before he fell back. He anticipated, no doubt, that only an advanced guard of the enemy would come up at first, and his intention was to inflict a severe check upon them with the magnificent little division under his command, and then fall back triumphantly across the Coa. Massena, however, was well aware of the fighting powers of the light division, and was preparing to hurl suddenly upon him a force more than sufficient to crush it.

The Scudamores had but little fear of meeting with any large body of the enemy, as the main French advance was direct from Ciudad Rodrigo; their cavalry would, however, be scattered all over the country, and were they to fall into the hands of any of these parties they would have been shot instantly, upon suspicion of

endeavoring to convey news of the French movements to Craufurd.

The point where they crossed the river was between Villar and Naves Frias, and, after an hour's walking, they struck the little rivulet called Duas Casas. This they crossed at once, as they knew that by following its southern bank until they saw some high ground to their left they would find themselves near Almeida, which they hoped to reach before the English retreated.

All night they tramped through the fields of stubble, where the corn had been long since cut for the use of Craufurd's cavalry, but walking at night through an unknown country is slow work, and when day began to break they entered a small wood just beyond the point where the Turones, as the southern arm of the Duas Casas is called, branches off from the main stream. Several times in the course of the day bodies of the enemy's cavalry came near their place of concealment, and the Scudamores congratulated themselves that they had not given way to their impatience, and tried to push on across the twenty miles that alone separated them from their friends.

At nightfall the wind rose, and a heavy rain began to fall. They had no stars by which to steer their course, and were, therefore, forced to follow the bank of the Turones, although they knew that it would lead them some distance to the north of Almeida. It was slow work, indeed, for they had to grope their way along in the storm, following every turn and bend of the river, which formed their only guide. After several hours' toil they came into a road running north and south. This they knew was the road leading from Guarda to Almeida, and it gave them a clue as to the distance they had come. Still following the river, they continued their course until they approached San Pedro, whence they knew that a road ran directly to the British position in front of Almeida, that is if the British still maintained their position there.

As they approached the village, they heard a deep, hollow sound, and stopping to listen, and laying their ears to the ground, could distinguish the rumble of heavy

carriages.

"The French are advancing in force, Peter; we are just in time; they are going to attack us in the morning at daybreak. We know the direction now; let us turn to the left, and try to get on in advance of them. They probably will not push on much farther until there is light enough to permit them to form order of battle; they are evidently, by the sound, going to the left, rather than straight on."

The Scudamores now hurried on, and presently the rumbling of the artillery died away, and they ventured to push to their left, and to get on the road, which they found deserted. Half an hour's run, for they knew that every minute was of importance, and they heard the welcome challenge, "Who comes there?" "Two British officers," they answered, and in a few minutes they were taken to the officer in charge of the picket, and having once convinced him of their identity, were heartily greeted and welcomed.

"The French are advancing in great force to attack," Tom said; "please forward us instantly to the general."

The matter was too important for an instant's delay, and a sergeant was at once told off to accompany them.

The first faint blush of daylight was in the east when they arrived at the cottage which served as General Craufurd's quarters, and, upon their speaking to the sentinel at the door, a window was thrown open, and a deep voice demanded "What is it?"

"We have just arrived through the French lines," Tom said, "the enemy are at hand in force."

The casement closed, and an instant afterwards the general came out. "Who are you?"

"We belong to the Norfolk Rangers, general, and have been detached on service in the interior; we have only just made our way back."

"How am I to know your story is true?" the general asked sharply.

"You may, perhaps, remember, sir, we landed from the 'Latona,' and you kindly lent us horses to accompany you."

"Aha! I remember," the general said. "Well, your news?"

"The French have crossed the Turones in force, sir; at least they have a good many guns with them."

"Which way were they going?"

"As far as we could judge by the sound, sir, they were taking up a position between Villa Formosa and Fort Conception."

"Good," the general said shortly; then turning to three or four of his staff who had followed him from the cottage, "Get the troops under arms at once. Come in here, gentlemen."

The Scudamores entered, and as they came into the light of a candle which stood on the table the general smiled grimly.

"It is lucky you were able to recall yourselves to my memory, for I should have needed some strong evidence to persuade me you were British officers had I seen you before you spoke. You are wet to the skin; there is a brandy bottle, and you will find some bread and cold fowl in that cupboard."

Five minutes later the boys followed General Craufurd from his hut.

Short as was the time which had elapsed since their arrival, the troops were already under arms, for three months of incessant alarm and watchfulness had enabled this splendid division to act as one man, and to fall in at any hour of the day or night in an incredibly short time. Ten minutes later and the ramble of the baggage wagons was heard along the road towards the bridge. The morning was clearing fast, the clouds lifted, and the daylight seemed to break with unusual suddenness.

The dark masses of the French became visible forming up before the Turones, and

Craufurd hurried forward his cavalry and guns to check their advance.

"Hurry the infantry up, hurry them up," the general said urgently to the officers by him. "Let them take post along the ridge, and then fall back fighting towards the bridge. Major MacLeod," he said to an officer of the 43d, "take these gentlemen with you; they are officers of the Norfolk Rangers. They will join your regiment for the present. When your regiment falls back, occupy that stone inclosure a little way down the slope at the left of the road, and hold the enemy in check while the troops file over the bridge."

The officer addressed looked with surprise at the boys, and signing to them to follow, hurried off to his regiment, which was on the left of the British line.

Next to them came a regiment of Portuguese riflemen, with a wing of the 95th upon either flank, while the 52d formed the right of the line.

Upon reaching the regiment, Major MacLeod briefly introduced the boys to the colonel, who said, "As you have no arms, gentlemen, I think you had better make for the bridge at once."

"Thank you, sir," Tom replied, "there will be some muskets disposable before long, and directly they are so we will take our place in the ranks."

They had now leisure to look round and examine their position, and a glance was sufficient to show how great was the peril in which General Craufurd's obstinacy had placed his little force. In front of them were 24,000 French infantry, 5000 cavalry, and 30 pieces of artillery. An overwhelming force indeed, and one which could scarcely have been withstood by the 4000 British infantry, even under the most favorable conditions of position. The position, however, was here wholly against the British. They stood at the edge of a plateau, and behind them the ground fell away in a steep hillside to the Coa, a mile distant, and across the Coa there was but a single bridge.

The enemy was approaching fast. Ney's great brigade of cavalry swept the British

horse before them, and the infantry were following at a run.

Resistance on the edge of the plateau was hopeless, and Craufurd ordered the infantry to fall back at once. The 43d filed into the inclosure, rapidly cut loopholes in the wall, and as the enemy appeared on the crest above opened a tremendous fire, under cover of which the cavalry and artillery trotted briskly and in good order down the road to the bridge.

The Scudamores, having no duty, stood at the entrance to the inclosure and watched the fight on their right. As the masses of French infantry appeared on the edge of the plateau they made no pause, but opening a heavy fire pressed forward on the retiring British troops, who were falling back in open order, contesting every inch of ground. So rapidly and hotly, however, did the French press after them that the British were soon pushed back beyond the line of the inclosure, and as the French followed closely, it was evident that the 43d would be cut oft and surrounded.

Their colonel saw their danger, and called upon them to fall in and retreat, but the entrance was so narrow that it was clear at a glance that ere one company could pass through it the French would be upon them, and the regiment caught like rats in a trap.

Officers and men alike saw the danger, and there was a pause of consternation.

Peter was standing next to the colonel, and said suddenly as the idea flashed across him, "The wall is not very strong, sir, if the men mass against it and push together I think it will go."

The colonel caught at the idea. "Now, lads, steady, form against the rear wall four deep, close together, shoulder to shoulder, as close as you can pack; now get ready, one, two, three!" and at the word the heavy mass of men swung themselves against the wall; it swayed with the shock, and many stones were displaced; another effort and the wall tottered and fell, and with a glad shout the 43d burst out, and trotting on at the double soon joined the rifles and 95th.

The ground was rough and broken with rocks, vineyards and inclosures, and the troops, fighting with admirable coolness and judgment, took advantage of every obstacle and fell back calmly and in good order before the overwhelming force opposed to them.

Fortunately the jealousies of the French generals, which throughout the campaign contributed in no slight degree to the success of the British, was now the cause of their safety, for Montbrun, who commanded the French heavy cavalry, refused to obey Ney's order to charge straight down to the bridge, in which case the whole English infantry would have been cut off; the French hussars, however, being on the British rear, charged among them whenever the ground permitted them to do so.

Upon the British right the ground was more open than upon the left, and the 52d was therefore obliged to fall back more quickly than the rest of the line, and were the first to arrive at the bridge head, which was still choked with artillery and cavalry. This was the most dangerous moment, the rest of the infantry could not retreat until the bridge was clear, and the French with exulting shouts pressed hard upon them to drive them back upon the river.

Major MacLeod, seeing the urgent danger, rallied four companies of his regiment upon the little hill on the right of the road, while Major Rowan collected two companies on another to the left. Here they were joined by many of the riflemen, and for a while the French advance was checked.

The Scudamores had remained throughout close to Major MacLeod, and had long since armed themselves with the muskets and pouches of fallen men, and with 43d shakoes on their heads, were fighting among the ranks.

The cloud of French skirmishers pressed hotly forward, and MacLeod, seeing that the bridge was still blocked, resolved suddenly upon a desperate measure. Taking off his cap, he pointed to the enemy, and calling upon his men to follow him, rode boldly at them. Peter Scudamore caught up a bugle which had fallen from a dead

bugler by his side, blew the charge, and the soldiers, cheering loudly, followed MacLeod against the enemy.

Astounded at this sudden and unexpected attack, the French skirmishers paused, and then fell back before the furious charge of the 43d, who pressed after them with loud and continuous cheering. Looking back, MacLeod saw that the bridge was now clear, and recalled the troops, who fell back rapidly again before the French infantry had recovered sufficiently from their surprise to press them.

The hussars were, however, again forward, and were galloping down the road, which was here sunken between somewhat high banks. Tom and Peter were with the last company, which turned and prepared to receive them, when Tom, pointing to a coil of rope upon a cart which had broken down, shouted, "Quick, tie it to these posts across the road." Two or three men sprang to assist him, and in a minute the rope was stretched across the road at a foot from the ground, and fastened round a stone post on either side. They had scarcely seized their muskets and leapt on the bank again, when the French cavalry came thundering down the road. "Fire, a few of you," Tom said, "so as to call their attention up here," and in accordance with his order a dropping fire was opened. The French came along at a gallop; a few of the leading horses saw the rope and leapt it, but those behind caught it and fell, the mass behind pressed on, and in an instant the lane was choked with a confused mass of men and horses. "Now a volley," Tom cried, "and then to the bridge."

Every musket was emptied in to the struggling mass, and then with a cheer, the men ran briskly down to the bridge, and crossed—the last of the British troops over the Coa.

The rest of the infantry and artillery had already taken ground on the heights behind the river, and these opened fire upon the French as they approached the head of the bridge in pursuit. The British were now, however, safe in the position which they ought to have taken up before the advance of the French, and had General Craufurd

obeyed his orders not to fight beyond the Coa, the lives of 306 of his gallant troops, including the officers, would have been saved.

The battle, however, was not yet over. The artillery on both sides played across the ravine, the French skirmishers swarmed down to the river bank, and between them and the British infantry a rapid fire was exchanged, while a heavy column marched down to the bridge. With a deep-sounding cheer they advanced upon it, while with answering cheers the British opened fire upon them. The depth of the ravine at first deceived the British marksmen, and the column pressed on until its head was three-quarters across the bridge. Then the shower smote it, and beneath that terrible fire the head of the column melted away. Still it pressed on until across the bridge the corpses lay piled in a mass as high as the parapet, and beyond this heap, this terrible line, there was no living. Then sullenly and slowly the French fell back, while the British cheers rose exultingly along the hillside.

Twice again did fresh columns pour on to the bridge, but only to melt away under the British fire, neither of them reaching the dreadful line which marked the point reached by the head of the first. The artillery and musketry fire on both sides continued until four in the afternoon, when a heavy rain set in, and the fire ceased altogether.

As the Coa was fordable at several points lower down, and the French could therefore have turned the position next day, the British troops fell back during the night behind the Pinhel river, where Picton's division was also encamped.

Next morning the boys exchanged their Spanish suits for the uniform of British officers, which they obtained from the effects of some of those who had fallen upon the previous day, these being, as is usual in a campaign, at once sold by auction, the amount realized being received by the paymaster for the benefit of the dead men's relatives. Major MacLeod had witnessed their ready presence of mind in throwing the rope across the road, and so checking the French charge, and giving time to the

rear-guard to cross the bridge, and had made a very favorable report upon the subject.

Two days later and they joined the Rangers, who were stationed at Guarda, and were received with the greatest heartiness by their brother officers, with warm but respectful greetings by the men, and with uproarious demonstrations of gladness on the part of Sambo.

"The betting was two to one that you had gone down, boys," Captain Manley said, after the first greetings; "but Carruthers and myself have taken up all offers, and win I don't know how many dinners and bottles of wine. I had the strongest faith you would get through somehow. You will take up your quarters with me. I have two bedrooms upstairs there, which Sam has taken possession of in your name. He would have it that you were sure to be back in time for the first fight. Dinner will be ready at six, and after that there will be a general gathering round the fire in the open to hear your adventures. No doubt you would be dining with the colonel, but I know he is engaged to the general."

"Yes, he told us so," Tom said, "and we are to dine with him to-morrow."

"All right, then; we'll make a night of it. Carruthers is coming to dine, and Burke and Lethbridge; but the room won't hold more than six. We are going to have a feast, for Sam has got hold of a sucking-pig; where he got it from I dare not inquire, and Lethbridge said his fellow had, somehow or other, found a turkey; as to wine, we shall have it of the best, for Burke is quartered at the monastery, and the monks are so delighted at finding him a good Catholic that they have given him the run of their cellar."

It was a jovial dinner, and no words can express the satisfaction and delight which beamed on Sam's face as he stood behind his master, or the grin of pride with which he placed the sucking-pig on the table.

"Sam, Sam!" Captain Manley said reprovingly, "I fear that pig is not honestly come

by, and that one of these days we shall hear that you have come to a bad end."

"No, no, Massa Captain Manley, sar," Sam said, "dat pig come quite honest, dat pig made present to Sam."

"A likely story that, Sam. Come, out with it. I have no doubt it was quite as honest as Lethbridge's turkey anyhow. Come, tell us how it was."

Thus invoked, Sam's face assumed the pompons air with which he always related a story, and he began,—

"Well, sar, de affair happened in dis way. When de massas arribe, two o'clock, and went in for long talk wid de colonel, dis chile said to himself, 'Now what am I going to get them for dinner?' De rations sarve out dis morning war all skin and bone, and war pretty nigh finished at lunch. Sam say to himself, 'Captain Manley's sure to say, 'You dine wid me;' but as Captain Manley hadn't got no food himself, de invitation was berry kind, berry kind indeed; but massa wasn't likely to get fat on dat invitation."

Sam's narrative was interrupted by a perfect shout of laughter upon the part of all at table, Captain Manley joining heartily in the laugh against himself. When they had a little recovered again, Sam went on as gravely as ever. "Dis struck Sam berry serious, not to have nothing for dinner after being away seben months; presently idea occur to dis chile, and he stroll permiscuous up to big farm-house on hill. When Sam got near house, kept out of sight of window; at last got quite close, took off shako, and put head suddenly in at window. Sure enough, just what Sam expected, dere sat missus of farm, fat ole woman, wid fat ole servant opposite her. De door was open, and dis little pig and several of his broders and sisters was a frisking in and out. De old women look up bofe togeder, and dey give a awful shriek when dey saw dis chile's head; dey fought it were de debil, sure enough. Dey drop down on dere knees, and begin to pray as fast as maybe. Den I give a loud 'Yah! yah!' and dey screams out fresh. 'Oh! good massa debil!' says the ole woman, 'what you want? I

been berry, berry bad, but don't take me away.' You see, Massa Tom, I pick up little Spanish, 'nuff to understand since you been gone. I not say nuffin, and de ole woman den go on, 'If you want one soul Massa Debil, take dis here,' pointing to her serbant;' she been much more wicked nor me.' Den de serbant she set up awful shriek, and I says, 'Dis time I hab pity on you, next time I come, if you not good I carry you bofe away. But must take soul away to big debil 'else he neber forgibe me. Dere, I will carry off soul of little pig. Gib it me.' De serbant she gives cry ob joy, jump up, seize little pig, and berry much afraid, bring him to window. Before I take him I say to old missus, 'Dis a free gibt on your part?' and she say, 'Oh, yes, oh, yes, good Massa Debil, you can take dem all if you like.' I say, 'No; only one—and now me gib you bit advice. My Massa down below hear you very bad ole women, never gib noting to de poor, berry hard, berry hard. Me advise you change your conduct, or, as sure as eggs is eggs, he send me up again for you no time.' Den I gave two great 'Yah! yah's!' again berry loud, and showed de white ob my eyes, and dey went down on to knees again, and I go quietly round corner ob house, and walk home wid de pig which was giben to me. Noting like stealing about dat, Massa Manley, sar!"

Sam's story was received with roars of laughter, and when they had recovered themselves a little, Captain Manley said, "It is lucky we march to-morrow, Sam, for if the good woman were to catch a glimpse of you in uniform, and were to find she had been tricked, she might lay a complaint against you, and although, as you say, the pig was freely given to you, I imagine the Provost Marshal might consider that it was obtained under false pretences. But here are the other men outside, we had better adjourn, for every one is longing to hear your adventures."

It was a lovely evening, and as the officers of the Norfolk Rangers sat or lay round the fire, which was lit for light and cheerfulness rather than warmth, the boys, after their long wanderings among strangers, felt how pleasant and bright life was among friends and comrades. They had first to relate their adventures with the guerillas, after which it was agreed that they had earned the right to be silent for the rest of the

evening, and song, and jest, and merry story went round the ring.

Sam was installed under the direction of the doctor, a jovial Irishman, as concocter of punch, and his office was by no means a sinecure.

"Now, major, give us the song of the regiment," Captain Manley said, and, as he spoke, there was a general cry round the circle of "The Rangers, the Rangers." "I'm agreeable," the major said. "Give me another tumbler of punch to get my pipes in order. Make it a little sweeter than the last brew, Sam; yes, that's better. Well, here goes—full chorus, and no shirking."

THE RANGERS.

"Hurrah for the Rangers, hurrah! hurrah! Here's to the corps that we love so well; Ever the first in the deadly fray, Steady and firm amid shot and shell. Scattered as skirmishers out in the front, Contesting each foot of the ground we hold, Nor yielding a step though we bear the brunt Of the first attack of the foeman bold. Hurrah for the Rangers, hurrah! hurrah! Here's to the corps that we love so well; Ever the first in the deadly fray, Steady and firm amid shot and shell. "Steady boys, steady, the foe falls back, Sullenly back to the beat of the drum, Hark to the thunder that nears our flank Rally in square, boys, their cavalry come. Squadron on squadron, wave upon wave, Dashing along with an ocean's force, But they break into spray on our bayonets' points, And we mock at the fury of rider and horse. Hurrah for the Rangers, &c. "The gunner may boast of the death he deals As he shatters the foe with his iron hail, And may laugh with pride as he checks the charge, Or sees the dark column falter and quail. But the gunner fights with the foe afar, In the rear of the line is the battery's place, The Ranger fights with a sterner joy For he strives with his foemen face to face. Hurrah for the Rangers, &c. "The cavalry man is dashing and gay, His steed is fast, and his blade is fine, He blithely rides to the fiercest fray, And cuts his way through the foeman's line, But the wild, fierce joys of the deadly breach, Or the patient pluck of the serried square Are far away from the

horseman's reach, While the Norfolk Rangers are sure to be there. Hurrah for the Rangers, &c."

Long, loud, and hearty was the cheering as the last chorus concluded. "Very good song, very well sung, jolly companions every one," shouted the doctor. "Now, Manley, keep the ball rolling, give us the 'The Bivouac,'" Captain Manley emptied his glass, and, without hesitation, began—

THE BIVOUAC.

"The weary march is over, boys, the camp fire's burning bright, So gather round the blazing logs, we'll keep high feast to-night, For every heart is full of joy, and every cheek aglow, That after months of waiting, at last we meet the foe. To-morrow's sun will see the fight, and ere that sun goes down, Our glorious flag another wreath of victory shall crown. Hurrah, hurrah for the bivouac, With comrades tried and true, With faces bright, and spirits light, And the foemen's fires in view. "Then fill your cups with Spanish wine, and let the toast go round, Here's a health to all who love us on dear old England's ground. Be their tresses gold or auburn, or black as ebon's hue, Be their eyes of witching hazel, loving gray, or heaven's blue, Here's to them all, the girls we love, God bless them every one; May we all be here to toast them when to-morrow's work is done. Hurrah, hurrah, &c. "But whate'er to-morrow bring us, it shall shed no gloom to-night, For a British soldier does not flinch from thought of death in fight; No better ending could we wish, no worthier do we know, Than to fall for King and country, with our face towards the foe; And if we go, our friends who stay will keep our memory bright, And will drink to us in silence by many a camp-fire's light. Hurrah, hurrah, &c."

When the last chorus had ceased, the boys, who had had a long march that morning, and were thoroughly tired, stole quietly off to bed, but it was not till long after they had gone to sleep that the jovial party round the fire broke up, and that Sam was relieved from his duties of concocter of punch.

CHAPTER XII. — BUSACO AND TORRES VEDRAS.

Instead of pressing forward upon his invasion of Portugal, Massena prepared to besiege Almeida, and for a month the British and Portuguese army remained in their position within a few hours' march of that town. Wellington expected that Almeida would be able to resist for two months, and hoped to find some opportunity for falling suddenly upon the besiegers; but even a resistance of two months would have made it so late in the season that Massena must have postponed his invasion until the next spring.

Upon the morning of the 26th of August the French batteries opened fire, and from Guarda the dull, heavy roar of artillery could be heard all day. As darkness fell, the officers of the Rangers were, as usual, assembling round their fire, when the earth seemed to shake beneath their feet, and a flash like that of summer lightning lit the eastern sky. "What can that be?" was the general exclamation. A minute later, and a deep, heavy, prolonged roar sounded in their ears—then all was quiet.

"That is a big magazine," Captain Manley said, "and I'm afraid it's the town, for it sounded too heavy for a mere field magazine. If it be the town, you'll see it won't hold out much longer; even if the actual damage is not very great, a great explosion always damages the morale of a defense, and in that case we shall have Massena upon us, and there will be wigs on the green ere many days are over."

Captain Manley's conclusions were correct. The magazine of Almeida had exploded with terrific effect. Only six houses were left standing in the town, a considerable portion of the ramparts was thrown down, and five hundred people killed on the spot. The stones were hurled in all directions with such force that forty of the besiegers were hurt in the trenches.

Colonel Cox, who commanded, endeavored to rally the panic-stricken garrison, and upon the following morning attempted to negotiate with Massena, who sent an officer to demand instant surrender.

Defense was, in fact, impossible, but Colonel Cox attempted to negotiate, because he hoped that Wellington would at once advance to his rescue. His intentions were frustrated, however, by the treachery and mutiny of the principal Portuguese officers under him, and the French at once took possession of the ruins.

The British army fell back a short distance when the news of the disaster arrived, and a fortnight of great anxiety and watchfulness passed, as it was not certain by which road or roads Massena would advance.

It was not until the 18th of September that Massena fairly commenced his march, having chosen the road from Visen through Martagoa, and the next day the news reached the Rangers that the British army was to concentrate on the heights of Busaco.

"So we are going to have a fight for it," Carruthers said to the boys, as the officers assembled in readiness to take their places when the troops had fallen in. "What will be the end of it?"

"We shall lick them," an old captain said, "though they are two to one, and then they will march round us somehow, and then we shall have to fall back in all haste on Lisbon, and embark there, and we shall eat our Christmas dinner in England."

There was a general murmur of assent, for at that time the belief was almost universal in the British army that they would be forced to abandon Portugal.

"I do not know," Major Fanshawe said. "I heard last night, from a man who has just returned from sick leave at Lisbon, that there are thousands of peasants employed under our engineers in getting up some tremendous works some fifteen miles this side of Lisbon. I should not be surprised yet if Massena finds the chief a nut too hard to crack, with all his force."

"I have heard something about these works at Torres Vedras," Captain Manley said, "a mere rumor; still I believe there must be something in it. Wellington has only some twenty-five thousand British troops, and as many Portuguese, while Massena

has over a hundred thousand veterans at his command. Our game would be hopeless unless we have something to fall back on. No; I have every faith in our general. But there goes the bugle."

On the 24th the Rangers, with the rest of Picton's division, arrived on the crest of Busaco, where Cole's and Craufurd's divisions arrived on the same day. This position was one of immense strength, being a long ridge, with a very deep valley in front. Upon the opposite side of this ravine the slope was as steep and sharp as that of Busaco itself, so that the opposite crest was within easy cannon shot. The enemy, in order to attack the British position, would have to descend into the bottom of this steep ravine, and then climb up the precipitous ascent, to meet the British soldiers awaiting them, fresh and unshaken, at the top. So strong, indeed, was the position that the English generals were doubtful whether Massena would venture to attack.

Upon the 25th Craufurd moved his division forward, and would have repeated his mistake of the Coa had not Wellington himself gone forward and recalled the troops, bringing them off with difficulty in the face of the advancing masses of the French. By three in the afternoon, 40,000 French infantry were on the ridge opposite Busaco, and it appeared probable that the battle would take place that afternoon, in which case the British position would have been precarious, for neither Spencer's, Hill's, nor Leith's divisions were up.

Massena, however, was miles behind, and Ney, who commanded the advance, could not attack without orders; thus, the moment favorable for the French passed by. When Massena arrived next day, the British divisions were all up and in their places, and the long crest of Busaco swarmed with troops. Hill occupied the right across the road to Pena Cova, then came Leith's 5th division, then came Picton with the 3d division, with Spencer's division, the 1st, next to him. On a plateau in front of a convent lay Craufurd and Pack, while Cole, with the 4th division, was on the left.

The 27th and 28th were passed in comparative tranquillity, the rival armies

surveying each other across the chasm. From the woods far below came up the constant crack of the rifle, as the skirmishers on either side pushed each other backwards; and on the evening of the 28th this fighting increased so much in strength and intensity, that the British troops were some time under arms in expectation of a night attack, for the enemy's riflemen had pressed far up on the hill-side towards the British lines. As the night went on, however, the fire ceased, and the dark ravine between the two long lines of bright watch-fires became hushed and still.

The Rangers were with Picton's division, and were out as an advance half way down the ravine, two companies being down in the bottom as skirmishers. Morning was but just breaking when a heavy fire burst out in front. The regiment sprang to its feet, and prepared for action. It was not long in coming, for the fire rolled rapidly up the hill towards them, and the skirmishing companies came running back, pressed by a heavy column of the enemy. Reynier had formed in two divisions, one of which was now pressing forward against Picton's right, while the object of the other was to gain the crest still farther to the right, and so place themselves between Picton and Leigh. The whole regiment was at once engaged, but the French assault was too powerful to be resisted, and the Rangers and the other regiments of the advanced brigade gave way sullenly, while the French eagerly pressed up the hill, although a battery opened upon them from the crest, while they were unsupported by their own artillery.

"Golly, Massa Peter, dese fellows fight berry hard; look as if dey lick us dis time," the black, who was in Peter's company, said to him as the regiment retreated.

"The battle has only begun yet, Sam. We have plenty of fresh troops at the top of the hill."

"Good ting, dat, Massa Peter. Berry hard work, dis—climb hill, carry kit, fire gun, dodge de bullets, all sam time."

"You didn't dodge that bullet sharp enough, Sam," Peter said with a laugh, as the negro's shako was carried off with a ball.

"Him cum too fast. Dere, you frog-eating thief." he said angrily as he fired his musket at an advancing foe. "Dat serve you right," he went on to himself as the Frenchman fell. "You spoil Sam's hat. Dis colored gentleman catch cold first time him come on to rain."

The French continued their impetuous advance. Picton's right, as they climbed the hill, fell back towards his center, and in half an hour from the first shot being fired the head of the French column had won the crest, and, being between Leigh and Picton's divisions, had cut the British position. Then the column nearest to Picton's division began to wheel to its right, so as to sweep the crest.

"Lie down, the Rangers; every man down," shouted the colonel, and the breathless men threw themselves panting on the ground. A wild Irish shout was heard behind them as they did so, and a tremendous volley of musketry rang over their heads, and then the 88th and a wing of the 45th dashed across them, and, with fierce cheers, charged that portion of the column engaged in wheeling. Breathless and in disorder from their prodigious efforts, the French were unable to resist this fresh attack. In an instant the British were among them, and mixed up in wild confusion, fighting hand to hand, the mass of combatants went mingled together down the hill. Nor was the success of the French column which had gained the crest of long duration, for Leith brought up one of his brigades; Colonel Cameron, with the 9th Regiment, dashed at the enemy with the bayonet, without firing a single shot, while the 38th attacked their flank; and the French, unable to resist the onslaught, relinquished their position and retreated down the hill. Nor upon the French right had Ney's attack proved more successful.

Napier thus describes the combat in this quarter of the field:—"When the light broke, three heavy masses detached from the sixth corps were seen to enter the

woods below, and to throw forward a profusion of skirmishers; one of them, under General Marchand, emerging from the dark chasm and following the main road, seemed intent to turn the right of the light division; a second, under Loison, made straight up the mountain against the front; the third remained in reserve. Simon's brigade, leading Loison's attack, ascended with a wonderful alacrity, and though the light troops plied it incessantly with musketry, and the artillery bullets swept through it from the first to the last section, its order was never disturbed, nor its speed in the least abated. Ross's guns were worked with incredible quickness, yet their range was palpably contracted every round; the enemy's shots came ringing up in a sharper key, the English skirmishers, breathless and begrimed with powder, rushed over the edge of the ascent, the artillery drew back, and the victorious cries of the French were heard within a few yards of the summit. Craufurd, standing alone on one of the rocks, had been intently watching the progress of their attack, and now, with a shrill tone, ordered the two regiments in reserve to charge. The next moment a horrid shout startled the French column, and eighteen hundred British bayonets went sparkling over the hill. Yet so brave, so hardy were the leading French, that each man of the first section raised his musket, and two officers and ten men fell before them. Not a Frenchman had missed his mark. They could do no more. The head of their column was violently thrown back upon the rear, both flanks were overlapped at the same time by the English wings, three terrible discharges at five yards' distance shattered the wavering mass, and a long line of broken arms and bleeding carcases marked the line of flight."

Ney did not renew the attack, and with some desultory skirmishing the battle ended at two o'clock, and an hour's truce enabled both parties to carry off their wounded.

Small parties of the French came in contact with the English skirmishers during the afternoon, but the battle of Busaco was over.

"Don't call dat much of battle," Sam said discontentedly. "Just little fierce fight,

berry out of bref, and den, just as second wind came, all ober."

The battle of Busaco was indeed one of secondary importance. The losses were not great on either side, although that of the French was fully threefold greater than that of the British, as the former were exposed during their attack to the grape and shell of the British guns, while the French guns afforded no assistance to their infantry. The French loss, in killed and wounded and prisoners, did not exceed 4000, of which only 800 were killed. Nor was any strategical advantage gained by the battle, for the French, upon the following day, found a road across the hills to the British left from Martagoa through Bonzalva.

Throughout the day they made feints of renewing the attack upon the English position, and it was not until late in the afternoon that long columns of men were seen crossing the hill to the left; and Wellington discovered that Busaco had been won in vain, for that his flank was turned, and there was nothing for it but to fall back upon Torres Vedras. Before night the whole British army was in retreat.

"What a horrible scene of confusion," Tom remarked, as they marched into the town of Coimbra next day.

"Confusion!" Captain Manley said; "it is enough to drive a commander-in-chief out of his mind. Here Wellington has for weeks been endeavoring to get the Portuguese Government to compel all the population to retire upon Lisbon, carrying all they can, destroying the mills, and burning all the corn they could not carry off. The Government did issue the order, but it has taken no steps whatever to carry it out, although they knew all along that we could never repel the invasion in the open. As it is, the greater portion of these poor wretches will lose all they possess, which they might have carried off quietly enough during the last two months. Many of them will lose their lives, and they will block the roads so that we shall have the French down on us to a certainty."

Nothing could be more sad than the scene. The streets of Coimbra were crowded

with fugitives from the country round, and these, as well as the inhabitants, were all preparing to push onwards towards Lisbon. Bullock carts and carriages, mules, donkeys, and horses were crowded together, all laden with the aged, the children, the sick, and such property as was most portable and valuable. Happily Massena had a circuitous detour to make; the road in the mountain defile was scarcely passable, and throughout the march he displayed but little energy; consequently it was not until the morning of the first of October that his cavalry engaged those of the light division which was covering the retreat. The division fell back through the town, and the inhabitants, who had lingered to the last in some vague hope that the French would not come, now rushed out again. The bridge behind the town was choked, and the troops had to halt for some time. In the rear the pistol shots of the cavalry told of the approach of the French, and the din made by the panic-stricken fugitives was increased by the yells of the prisoners shut up and forgotten in the prison hard by. Their cries and supplications were too painful to be resisted, and the British forced the prison doors and let them free. Once across the bridge, the troops found the defile of Condeixa so choked up that it was impossible to effect a passage, and, had the French pressed them the division must have been destroyed.

The French infantry, however, had not arrived, and by night the road was cleared, and the troops passed on.

There was no pursuit, for Massena allowed his troops to halt and plunder Coimbra, and the British by easy marches, fell back to Torres Vedras; but though unpursued, the disorder and relaxation of discipline which always marks a retreat, showed itself, and Wellington was obliged to hang several plunderers, and to resort to other severe measures to restore to discipline that army which, only a week before, had repulsed the best troops of France. Towards the end of the march the French pressed them again, and Craufurd, with his light division, had a narrow escape of being cut off.

Great was the satisfaction of the British troops when they took up the position so

carefully prepared for them; equally great the surprise of Massena and the French army when they beheld the almost impregnable line of redoubts and fortresses of whose very existence they had only heard a confused rumor two or three days before. And yet formidable as was the chain of forts occupied by the British, this was weak in comparison to the second line, some five or six miles in the rear, to which Wellington would have fallen back if driven from his first position. This second position was indeed that which he had originally intended to have taken up, the redoubts on the exterior range of hills being intended as outposts; but, while Massena delayed his advance, the outside line of fortifications had so grown and increased in strength, that Wellington resolved to hold them in the first place.

There were, therefore, as will be seen by the plan, three lines of defense. The first from Alhandra on the Tagus to Zizandre on the sea-coast. This, following the windings of the hills, was twenty-nine miles long; the second and main line was from Quintella on the Tagus to the mouth of the San Lorenza, twenty-four miles in length; the third, intended to cover an embarkation, in case of necessity, extended from Passo d'Arcos on the Tagus to the town of Junquera on the coast.

Massena spent some days in surveying the British position, and came to the conclusion that it was too strong to be attacked. Had the order of Wellington been carried out, and the whole country wasted of provisions, the French army must have made a precipitate retreat to avoid starvation, for they had no provisions or connection with Spain. Wilson and Trant, with Portuguese levies, hung upon their rear, and captured Coimbra, where Massena had left his sick and wounded, 5000 in number, upon the very day after the main French army advanced from the town. So vast were the supplies, however, left in the country that Massena was able to take up his position, first immediately in front of the British lines, and afterwards at Santarem, within a day's march of them, and to maintain his army in food throughout the winter until the beginning of March.

"Have you seen the Gazette, Scudamore?" Carruthers asked, rushing into the tent one morning about a week after the regiment had settled down in its tents on the heights of Torres Vedras.

"No; what's up?" Tom replied.

"There you are; you have both got your steps. Thomas Scudamore, ensign, Norfolk Rangers, to be lieutenant, for distinguished services in the field. Peter Scudamore, ditto, ditto. I wondered the chief had done nothing for you after your journey through Spain."

"I am sure I did not expect anything," Tom answered, "and was quite content when the colonel told us that Lord Wellington had said he was pleased with the manner we had done our work. However, I am very glad; but it is not pleasant going over five or six fellows' heads."

"Fortune of war," Carruthers said laughing. "Besides, two of them are at the depôt, Sankey is away on sick leave, and none of the three who are senior to you here will ever set the Thames on fire. No, no, you have fairly earned your step and no one can say a word against it."

The news soon spread, and the boys were heartily congratulated by all the officers of the regiment on their promotion, which placed them next on the list to Carruthers, who had previously been the junior lieutenant. Promotion in those days was rapid, and after a severe engagement an ensign only joined upon the previous week might find himself a lieutenant, from the number of death vacancies caused in the ranks above him. The Norfolk Rangers had not suffered heavily at Talavera, or the boys might have had their lieutenant's rank before this, without performing any exceptional services.

"I wish we could get two months' leave, Tom," Peter said that night. "Of course it is impossible, but it would be jolly to drop in upon Rhoda. By her letter she seems well and happy, and aunt is very kind to her. It would be nice; and now we are

lieutenants, aunt wouldn't tell us to rub our shoes."

"No," Tom laughed, "or be afraid of our pelting her pigeons and Minnie."

"No," Peter said. "Evidently she is coming round. Rhoda said that since she has heard that we have got our commissions she has given up prophesying once or twice a day that we shall come to a bad end—probably hanging."

"Yes, and Rhoda said in her letter yesterday that aunt was quite touched with those lace mantillas we got at Madrid, and sent off the day after we rejoined, and actually remarked that, although we could no longer be looked upon as boys, and seemed really as hair-brained and fond of getting into scrapes as ever, yet it was evident that we were good, kindly lads, and meant well at heart."

"I wish," Tom said, with a sudden burst of laughter, "that we could dress in our old disguises, I as a student of theology you as a mild young novice; what a lark we would have with her!" and the boys went off into such shouts of laughter, that their aunt would have thought them more scatter-brained than ever if she had heard them, while from the tent of Captain Manley on one side, and of Carruthers and another young officer on the other, came indignant expostulations, and entreaties that they would keep quiet, and let other people go to sleep.

CHAPTER XIII. — ALBUERA.

Very heavily did five months in the lines of Torres Vedras pass to the Norfolk Rangers. When, in the beginning of November, Massena fell back to Sautarem, the greater portion of the army followed him in readiness for attack should any openings be found. Massena, however, entrenched himself in a very strong position, and Wellington could no more attack him than he could attack the lines of Torres Vedras; so that both armies faced each other in inactivity until the beginning of March, when Massena broke up his camp and began to retreat.

The Norfolk Rangers had been one of the regiments which had remained in their

quarters on Torres Vedras throughout the winter, and great was the joy with which they received orders to strike their tents and push on in pursuit. The retreat of Massena was masterly. Ney's division covered the rear, and several sharp fights took place which are known in history as the combats of Pombal, Redinha, Cazal Nova, Foz d'Aronce, and Sabugal.

In most of these the enemy were driven from their position by the British outflanking them and threatening their line of retreat; but in the last, by a mistake of General Erskine, a portion of his division attacked the enemy in rear, and, although vastly outnumbered, drove him off from the crest he held with desperate valor. Wellington himself said, "This was one of the most glorious actions British troops were ever engaged in."

The next day the French crossed the Coa and Turones, and took up their position under the guns of Ciudad Rodrigo, which they had left six months before with the full assurance that they were going to conquer Portugal, and drive the British into the sea. The invasion cost Massena thirty thousand men, killed in battle, taken prisoners, or dead from hardships, fatigues and fevers.

The Scudamores were not present at the battle of Sabugal, for on the afternoon after the combat of Foz d'Aronce an orderly rode up to the regiment and handed a note to the colonel. He read it, and at once summoned the Scudamores at his side.

"An order from the commander-in-chief," he said, "for you to go to him at once."

Following the orderly, the boys soon arrived at the cottage at which Lord Wellington had established his headquarters.

"His lordship is with Lord Beresford," the aide-de-camp to whom they gave their names said, "but the orders are that you are to be shown in at once."

The lads were ushered into a small room, where, seated at a table, were the commanders-in-chief of the British and the Portuguese troops.

"Young gentlemen," the former said, looking up with his keen piercing eyes, "I have

not seen you since your return from Spain. I am content with what you did, and with the detailed report you sent me in. I shall keep my eye upon you. Lord Beresford has asked me for two officers as aides-de-camp, and he specially requires them to have a perfect knowledge of Spanish. I have mentioned your names to him. It is not often that I confidently recommend young officers, but from what I know of you I have felt able to do so in the present case. You will, with him, have opportunities of distinguishing yourselves such as you could not have with your regiment. You accept the appointments?"

Tom and Peter would far rather have remained with their regiment, but they felt that, after what Lord Wellington had said, they could not refuse; they consequently expressed at once their willingness to serve, and their thanks to the general for his kindness in recommending them.

"You can ride, I hope?" Lord Beresford, a powerfully-built, pleasant-looking man, said.

"Yes, sir, we can both ride, but at present—"

"You have no horses, of course?" Lord Beresford put in. "I will provide you with horses, and will assign servants to you from one of the cavalry regiments with me. Will you join me at daybreak to-morrow? we shall march at once."

There was a general expression of regret when the Scudamores informed their comrades that they were again ordered on detached duty. As to Sam, when Tom told him that he could not accompany them, he was uproarious in his lamentations, and threatened to desert from his regiment in order to follow them. At this the boys laughed, and told Sam that he would be arrested and sent back before he had gone six hours.

"I tink, Massa Tom, dat you might hab told de general dat you hab got an fust-class serbent, and dat you bring him wid you."

"But we shall be mounted now, Sam, and must have mounted men with us. You

can't ride, you know."

"Yes, massa, dis child ride first-rate, he can."

"Why, Sam, I heard you say not long ago you had never ridden on a horse all your life."

"Never hab, massa, dat's true 'nuff; but Sam sure he can ride. Berry easy ting dat. Sit on saddle, one leg each side—not berry difficult dat. Sam see tousand soldiers do dat ebery day; dey sit quite easy on saddle; much more easy dat dan beat big drum."

The boys laughed heartily at Sam's notion of riding without practice, and assured him that it was not so easy as he imagined.

"Look here, Sam," Peter said at last, "you practice riding a little, and then next time we get away we will ask for you to go with us." And with this Sam was obliged to be content.

Half an hour later, when the boys were chatting with Captain Manley, Carruthers, and two or three other officers, in the tent of the first-named officer, they heard a commotion outside, with shouts of laughter, in which they joined as soon as they went out and saw what was going on.

Sam, upon leaving the Scudamores, determined at once upon trying the experiment of riding, in order that he might—for he had no doubt all would be easy enough—ride triumphantly up to his masters' tent and prove his ability to accompany them at once. He was not long before he saw a muleteer coming along sitting carelessly on his mule, with both legs on one side of the animal, side-saddle fashion, as is the frequent custom of muleteers. It was evident, by the slowness of his pace, that he was not pressed for time.

Sam thought that this was a fine opportunity.

"Let me have a ride?" he said to the muleteer in broken Portuguese.

The man shook his head. Sam held out a quarter of a dollar. "There," he said, "I'll

give you that for a hour's ride."

The muleteer hesitated, and then said, "The mule is very bad tempered with strangers."

"Oh, dat all nonsense," Sam thought, "he only pretend dat as excuse; any one can see de creature as quiet as lamb; don't he let his master sit on him sideways?"

"All right," he said aloud, "I try him."

The muleteer dismounted, and Sam prepared to take his place on the saddle. By this time several of the Rangers had gathered round, and these foreseeing, from the appearance of the mule and the look of sly amusement in the face of the muleteer, that there was likely to be some fun, at once proposed to assist, which they did by giving advice to Sam of the most opposite nature. Sam was first going to mount on the off side, but this irregularity was repressed, and one wag, taking the stirrup of the near side in his hand, said, "Now, Sam, up you go, never mind what these fellows say, you put your right foot in the stirrup, and lift your left over the saddle."

Sam acted according to these instructions, and found himself, to his intense amazement and the delight of the bystanders, sitting with his face to the mule's tail.

"Hullo," he exclaimed in astonishment, "dis all wrong; you know noting about de business, you Bill Atkins."

And Sam prepared to descend, when, at his first movement, the mule put down his head and flung his heels high in the air. Sam instinctively threw himself forward, but not recovering his upright position before the mule again flung up her hind quarters, he received a violent blow on the nose. "Golly!" exclaimed the black in a tone of extreme anguish, as, with water streaming from his eyes, he instinctively clutched the first thing which came to hand, the root of the mule's tail, and held on like grim death. The astonished mule lashed out wildly and furiously, but Sam, with his body laid close on her back, his hands grasping her tail, and his legs and feet pressing tight to her flanks, held on with the clutch of despair.

"Seize de debil!—seize him!—he gone mad!"—he shouted frantically, but the soldiers were in such fits of laughter that they could do nothing.

Then the mule, finding that he could not get rid of this singular burden by kicking, started suddenly off at full gallop.

"Stop him—stop him," yelled Sam. "Gracious me, dis am drefful."

This was the sight which met the eyes of the Scudamores and their brother officers as they issued from their tents. The soldiers were all out of their tents now, and the air rang with laughter mingled with shouts of "Go it, moke!" "Hold on, Sam!"

"Stop that mule," Captain Manley shouted, "or the man will be killed."

Several soldiers ran to catch at the bridle, but the mule swerved and dashed away out of camp along the road.

"Look, look," Tom said, "there are the staff, and Lord Wellington among them. The mule's going to charge them."

The road was somewhat narrow, with a wall of four feet high on either side, and the general, who was riding at the head of the party, drew his rein when he saw the mule coming along at a furious gallop. The staff did the same, and a general shout was raised to check or divert her wild career. The obstinate brute, however, maddened by the shouts which had greeted her from all sides, and the strange manner in which she was being ridden, never swerved from her course. When she was within five yards of the party, the general turned his horse, touched him with his spur, and leaped him lightly over the wall; one or two others followed his example, but the others had not time to do so before the mule was among them. Two horses and riders were thrown down, one on either side, with the impetus of the shock, and then, kicking, striking and charging, the animal made its way past the others and dashed on in despite of the attempts to stop her, and the cries of "Shoot the brute," "Ride him down," and the angry ejaculations of those injured in its passage. Thirty yards behind the group of officers were the escort, and these prepared to catch the mule, when turning to the

left she leaped the wall, eliciting a scream of terror from Sam, who was nearly shaken from his hold by the sudden jerk.

The anger of the officers was changed into a burst of amusement at seeing Sam's dark face and staring eyes over the mule's crupper, and even Lord Wellington smiled grimly. An order was hastily given, and four troopers detached themselves from the escort and started off in pursuit. The mule was, however, a fast one, and maddened by fright, and it was some time before the foremost of the troopers was up to her. As he came alongside, the mule suddenly swerved round and lashed out viciously, one of her heels coming against the horse's ribs, and the other against the leg of the rider, who, in spite of his thick jack-boot, for some time thought that his leg was broken.

He fell behind, and the others, rendered cautious by the lesson, came up but slowly, and prepared to close upon the animal's head, one from each side. Just as they were going to do so, however, they were startled by a scattered fire of musketry, and by the sound of balls whizzing about their ears, and discovered that in the ardor of the chase they had passed over the space which separated the French from the English lines, and that they were close to the former. At the same moment they saw a party of cavalry stealing round to cut off their retreat. Turning their horses, the dragoons rode off at full speed, but the French cavalry, on fresher horses, would have caught them before they reached the English lines had not a troop of British horse dashed forward to meet them upon seeing their danger. As to the mule, she continued her wild gallop into the French lines, where she was soon surrounded and captured.

The boys were greatly vexed at the loss of their faithful black, but they had little time for grieving, for an hour after they rode off with General Beresford's division. Three days' march brought them to Campo Mayor, a town which had, two days before, surrendered to the French, who, surprised by the sudden appearance of the British, evacuated the place hastily and retreated, after suffering much from a brilliant charge of the 13th Hussars, who, although unsupported, charged right

through the French cavalry, and Beresford then prepared to lay siege to Badajos. Had he pushed forward at once, he would have found the place unprepared for a siege, but, delaying a few days at Elvas to give his tired troops repose, the French repaired the walls, and were in a position to offer a respectable defense, when he made his appearance under its walls. The army was very badly provided with heavy guns, but the approaches were opened and the siege commenced in regular form, when the news arrived that Soult was marching with a powerful army to its relief. The guns were therefore withdrawn, the siege raised, and Beresford marched to meet Soult at Albuera.

On the 15th of May he took up his position on rising ground looking down on Albuera, having the river in his front. Acting with him, and nominally under his orders, was a Spanish force under Blake. This was intended to occupy the right of the position, but with the usual Spanish dilatoriness, instead of being upon the ground, as he had promised, by noon, Blake did not arrive until past midnight; the French accordingly crossed the river unmolested, and the British general found his right turned.

Beresford's position was now a very faulty one, as the woods completely hid the movements of the enemy, and a high hill, which they had at once seized, flanked the whole allied position and threatened its line of retreat.

When the morning of the 16th dawned the armies were numerically very unequal. The British had 30,000 infantry, 2,000 cavalry, and 38 guns; the French, 19,000 infantry, 4,000 cavalry, and 40 guns; but of these the French were all veteran troops, while Beresford had but 6,000 British troops, the remainder being Spanish and Portuguese, upon whom no reliance whatever was to be placed. The British officers present were all of opinion that their chances of success, under the circumstances, were slight indeed.

The battle commenced at nine in the morning by an attack by the French general

Godinot upon the bridge of Albuera. Their columns were, however, so completely plowed by the guns of the Portuguese upon the eminence behind it, that they made no progress, and Beresford perceived at once that the main attack would be made on his right. He despatched Tom Scudamore with orders to Blake to throw back his troops at right angles to the main front. The pig-headed Spaniard refused to obey, asserting that the main attack was in front. Colonel Hardinge was sent to insist upon the order being carried out, but Blake still refused, and Beresford himself rode furiously across and took the command just as the French column debouched from the wood on the right.

Before the Spanish movement was completed the French were among them. Their cavalry swept round to the right rear, and menaced the line of retreat, the infantry charged the wavering Spanish battalions, and the latter at once fell into confusion and began to fall back. William Stewart now arrived with a brigade of the second division to endeavor to retrieve the day; but as they were advancing into position, four regiments of French cavalry, whose movements were hidden in the driving rain until they were close at hand, fell upon them and rode down two-thirds of the brigade, the 31st regiment alone having time to form square and repulse the horsemen.

Beresford himself, with his staff, was in the middle of the mélée, and the lads found themselves engaged in hand-to-hand combats with the French troopers. All was confusion. Peter was unhorsed by the shock of a French hussar, but Tom shot the trooper before he could cut Peter down. Free for a moment, he looked round, and saw a French lancer charging, lance at rest, at Lord Beresford. "Look out, sir!" he shouted, and the general, turning round, swept aside the lance thrust with his arm; and as the lancer, carried on by the impetus of his charge, dashed against him, he seized him by the throat and waist, lifted him bodily from his saddle, and hurled him insensible to the ground. Just at this moment General Lumley arrived with some Portuguese cavalry, and the French lancers galloped off.

The Spanish cavalry, who had orders to charge the French cavalry in flank, galloped up until within a few yards of them, and then turned and fled shamefully.

Beresford, now furious at the cowardice of the Spanish infantry, seized one of their ensigns by the shoulder, and dragged him, with his colors, to the front by main force, but the infantry would not even then advance.

The driving rain saved the allied army at this critical moment, for Soult was unable to see the terrible confusion which reigned in their ranks, and kept his heavy columns in hand when an attack would have carried with it certain victory.

In the pause which ensued, the British regiments began to make their way to the front. Colbourn, with the 31st Regiment, was already there; Stewart brought up Haughton's brigade; and the 29th burst its way through the flying Spaniards and joined the 31st, these movements being made under a storm of shot and shell from the French artillery. Colonel Hartman brought up the British artillery, and the Spanish generals Zayas and Ballesteros succeeded in checking and bringing forward again some of the Spanish infantry.

The French advanced in great force, the artillery on both sides poured in grape at short distance, and the carnage was terrible. Still the little band of British held their ground. Stewart was twice wounded, Haughton and Colonels Duckworth and Inglis slain. Of the 57th Regiment twenty-two officers and four hundred men fell out of the five hundred that had mounted the hill, and the other regiments had suffered nearly as severely. Not a third were standing unhurt, and fresh columns of the French were advancing.

The battle looked desperate, and Beresford made preparations for a retreat. At this moment, however, Colonel Hardinge brought up General Cole with the fourth division, and Colonel Abercrombie with the third brigade of Colbourn's second division. Beresford recalled his order for retreat, and the terrible fight continued. The fourth division was composed of two brigades, the one, a Portuguese under

General Harvey, was pushed down to the right to keep off the French cavalry, while the Fusilier brigade, composed of the 7th and 23rd fusilier regiments, under Sir William Myers, climbed the desperately contested hill, which Abercombie ascended also, more on the left.

It was time, for the whole of the French reserves were now coming into action; six guns were already in the enemy's possession, the remnant of Haughton's brigade could no longer sustain its ground, and the heavy French columns were advancing exultantly to assured victory.

Suddenly, through the smoke, Cole's fusilier brigade appeared on the right of Haughton's brigade, just as Abercrombie came up on its left. Startled by the sight, and by the heavy fire, the French column paused, and, to quote Napier's glowing words, "hesitated, and then, vomiting forth a storm of fire, hastily endeavored to enlarge their front, while a fearful discharge of grape from all their artillery whistled through the British ranks. Myers was killed, Cole and the three colonels, Ellis, Blakeney and Hawkshawe, fell wounded; and the fusilier battalions, struck by the iron tempest, reeled and staggered like sinking ships; but suddenly and sternly recovering, they closed with their terrible enemies, and then was seen with what a strength and majesty the British soldier fights. In vain did Soult with voice and gesture animate his Frenchmen; in vain did the hardiest veterans break from the crowded columns and sacrifice their lives to gain time for the mass to open out on such a fair field; in vain did the mass itself bear up, and, fiercely striving, fire indiscriminately upon friends and foes, while the horsemen hovering on its flank threatened to charge the advancing line. Nothing could stop that astonishing infantry; no sudden burst of undisciplined valor, no nervous enthusiasm weakened the stability of their order; their flashing eyes were bent on the dark columns in their front, their measured tread shook the ground, their dreadful volleys swept away the head of every formation, their deafening shouts overpowered the dissonant cries that broke from all parts of the tumultuous crowd, as, slowly and with horrid carnage, it

was pushed by the incessant vigor of the attack to the farthest edge of the hill. In vain did the French reserves mix with the struggling multitude to sustain the fight; their efforts only increased the irremediable confusion, and the mighty mass breaking off like a loosened cliff, went headlong down the steep; the rain flowed after in streams discolored with blood, and eighteen hundred unwounded men, the remnant of six thousand unconquerable British soldiers, stood triumphant on the fatal hill."

While this dreadful fight was going on, Hamilton's and Collier's Portuguese divisions, ten thousand strong, marched to support the British, but they did not reach the summit of the hill until the battle was over; they suffered, however, a good deal of loss from the French artillery, which, to cover the retreat, opened furiously upon them.

The French were in no position to renew the attack, the allies quite incapable of pursuit, and when night fell the two armies were in the same position they had occupied twenty-four hours before.

Never was British valor more conspicuously displayed than at the battle of Albuera. Out of 6,000 infantry they lost 4,200 killed and wounded, while the Spanish and Portuguese had but 2,600 killed and wounded out of a total of 34,000; the French loss was over 8,000.

This desperate fight had lasted but four hours, but to all engaged it seemed an age. The din, the whirl, the storm of shot, the fierce charges of the cavalry, the swaying backwards and forwards of the fight, the disastrous appearance of the battle from the first, all combined to make up a perfectly bewildering confusion.

The Scudamores, after its commencement, had seen but little of each other. Whenever one or other of them found their way to the general, who was ever in the thickest of the fray, it was but to remain there for a moment or two before being despatched with fresh messages.

Tom's horse was shot under him early in the day, but he obtained a remount from an orderly and continued his duty until, just as the day was won, he received a musket ball in the shoulder. He half fell, half dismounted, and, giddy and faint, lay down and remained there until the cessation of the fire told him that the battle was over. Then he staggered to his feet and sought a surgeon. He presently found one hard at work under a tree, but there was so large a number of wounded men lying or sitting round, that Tom saw that it would be hours before he could be attended to. As he turned to go he saw an officer of the staff ride by.

"Ah, Scudamore! Are you hit too?—not very badly, I hope? The chief was asking after you just now."

"My shoulder is smashed, I think," Tom said, "and the doctor has his hands full at present; but if you will tie my arm tight across my chest with my sash, I shall be able to get on."

The officer at once leapt from his horse, and proceeded to bind Tom's arm in the position he requested.

"Have you seen my brother," Tom asked.

"No, I have not; he was close to Beresford when the fusiliers dashed up the hill; his horse fell dead, but he was not hit, for I saw him jump up all right. I did not see him afterwards. As he could not have got a fresh mount then, I expect he joined the fusiliers and went up the hill."

"Is the loss heavy?" Tom asked.

"Awful—awful," the officer said. "If it had lasted another quarter of an hour, there would have been nobody left alive; as it is, there are not 2,000 men at the outside on their feet."

"What, altogether?" Tom exclaimed.

"Altogether," the officer answered sadly. "We have lose two men out of every three

who went into it."

"Thank you," Tom said. "Now where shall I find the general?"

"Up on the hill. I shall see you there in a few minutes. I hope you will find your brother all right."

Very slowly did Tom make his way up the steep slope, sitting down to rest many times, for he was faint from loss of blood and sick with the pain of his wound, and it was a long half hour before he joined the group of officers clustered round the commander-in-chief.

He was heartily greeted; but in answer to his question as to whether any one had seen his brother, no one could give a satisfactory reply. One, however, was able to confirm what had been before told to him, for he had seen Peter on foot advancing with the fusilier brigade. Tom's heart felt very heavy as he turned away towards the front, where the fusiliers were standing on the ground they had so hardly won. The distance he had to traverse was but short, but the journey was a ghastly one. The ground was literally heaped with dead. Wounded men were seen sitting up trying to stanch their wounds, others lay feebly groaning, while soldiers were hurrying to and fro from the water carts, with pannikins of water to relieve their agonizing thirst.

"Do you know, sergeant, whether they have collected the wounded officers, and, if so, where they are?"

"Yes, sir, most of them are there at the right flank of the regiment."

Tom made his way towards the spot indicated, where a small group of officers were standing, while a surgeon was examining a long line of wounded laid side by side upon the ground. Tom hardly breathed as he ran his eye along their faces, and his heart seemed to stop as he recognized in the very one the surgeon was then examining the dead-white face of Peter.

He staggered forward and said in a gasping voice, "He is my brother—is he dead?"

The surgeon looked up. "Sit down," he said sharply, and Tom, unable to resist the order, sank rather than sat down, his eyes still riveted on Peter's face.

"No," the surgeon said, answering the question, "he has only fainted from loss of blood, but he is hit hard, the bullet has gone in just above the hip, and until I know its course I can't say whether he has a chance or not."

"Here, sergeant, give me the probe," and with this he proceeded cautiously to examine the course of the ball. As he did so his anxious face brightened a little.

"He was struck slantingly," he said, "the ball has gone round by the back; turn him over, sergeant. Ah, I thought so; it has gone out on the other side. Well, I think it has missed any vital part, and in that case I can give you hope. There," he said after he had finished dressing the wound and fastening a bandage tightly round the body; "now pour some brandy-and-water down his throat, sergeant, and sprinkle his face with water. Now, sir, I will look at your shoulder."

But he spoke to insensible ears, for Tom, upon hearing the more favorable report as to Peter's state, had fainted dead off.

The surgeon glanced at him. "He'll come round all right," he said. "I will go on in the mean time," and set to work at the next in the ghastly line.

It was some time before Tom recovered his consciousness; when he did so, it was with a feeling of intense agony in the shoulder.

"Lie quiet," the surgeon said, "I shan't be long about it."

It seemed to Tom, nevertheless, as if an interminable time passed before the surgeon spoke again.

"You'll do," he said. "It is an awkward shot, for it has broken the shoulder bone and carried a portion away, but with quiet and care you will get the use of your arm again. You are lucky, for if it had gone two inches to the left it would have smashed the arm at the socket, and two inches the other way and it would have been all up

with you. Now lie quiet for awhile; you can do nothing for your brother at present. It may be hours before he recovers consciousness."

Tom was too faint and weak to argue, and a minute later he dropped off to sleep, from which he did not wake until it was dusk. Sitting up, he saw that he had been aroused by the approach of an officer, whom he recognized as one of General Beresford's staff.

"How are you, Scudamore?" he asked. "The general has just sent me to inquire."

"He is very kind," Tom said. "I think that I am all right, only I am horribly thirsty."

The officer unslung a flask from his shoulder. "This is weak brandy-and-water. I have brought it over for you. I am sorry to hear your brother is so bad, but the doctor gives strong hopes of him in his report."

Tom bent down over Peter. "He is breathing quietly," he said. "I hope it is a sort of sleep he has fallen into. What are we doing?"

"Nothing," the officer answered; "there is nothing to do; every unbounded man is under arms in case the French attack us in the night. I expect, however, they will wait till morning, and if they come on then, I fear our chance is a slight one indeed. We have only 1,800 of our infantry; the German regiments and the Portuguese will do their best; but the Spanish are utterly useless. Soult has lost more men than we have, but we are like a body which has lost its back-bone; and if the French, who are all good soldiers, renew the battle, I fear it is all up with us."

"Have you got all our wounded in?" Tom asked.

"No," the officer said bitterly. "Our unwounded men must stand to arms, and Lord Beresford sent over to Blake just now to ask for the assistance of a battalion of Spaniards to collect our wounded, and the brute sent back to say that it was the custom in allied armies for each army to attend to its own wounded."

"The brute!" Tom repeated with disgust. "How the poor fellows must be suffering!"

"The men who are but slightly wounded have been taking water to all they can find, and the doctors are at work now, and will be all night going about dressing wounds. The worst of it is, if the fight begins again to-morrow, all the wounded who cannot crawl away must remain under fire. However, the French wounded are all over the hill too, and perhaps the French will avoid a cannonade as much as possible, for their sake. It is a bad look-out altogether; and between ourselves, Beresford has written to Lord Wellington to say that he anticipates a crushing defeat."

"Is there any chance of reinforcements?" Tom asked.

"We hope that the third brigade of the fourth division will be up to-morrow by midday; they are ordered to come on by forced marches. If Soult does not attack till they arrive, it will make all the difference, for 1,500 fresh men will nearly double our strength. But I must be going now. Good-bye."

The surgeon presently came round again to see how the wounded officers were getting on. Tom asked him whether there was anything he could do for Peter; but the surgeon, after feeling his pulse, said: "No, not as long as he breathes quietly like this; but if he moves pour a little brandy-and-water down his throat. Now gentlemen, all who can must look after the others, for there is not an available man, and I must be at work all night on the field."

There were many of the officers who were not hit too severely to move about, and these collected some wood and made a fire, so as to enable them to see and attend to their more severely wounded comrades. Tom took his place close to Peter, where he could watch his least movement, and once or twice during the night poured a little brandy-and-water between his lips. The other officers took it by turns to attend to their comrades, to keep up the fire, and to sleep. Those whose turn it was to be awake sat round the fire smoking, and talking as to the chances of the morrow, getting up occasionally to give drink to such of the badly wounded as were awake.

Tom, faint with his wound, found it, towards morning, impossible to keep awake,

and dozed off, to wake with a start and find that it was broad daylight. Soon afterwards, to his intense satisfaction, Peter opened his eyes. Tom bent over him. "Don't try to move, Peter; lie quiet, old boy."

"What's the matter?" Peter asked with a puzzled look.

"You have been hit in the body, Peter, but the doctor means to get you round in no time. Yes," he continued, seeing Peter's eyes fixed on his bandaged shoulder, "I have had a tap too, but there's no great harm done. There, drink some brandy-and-water, and go off to sleep again, if you can."

The morning passed very slowly, the troops being all under arms, expecting the renewed attack of Soult, but it came not; and when early in the afternoon, the third brigade of the fourth division marched into camp, they were received with general cheering. A heavy load seemed taken off every one's heart, and they felt now that they could fight, if fight they must, with a hope of success.

The new-comers, wearied as they were with their long forced marches, at once took the outpost duties, and those relieved set about the duty of collecting and bringing in all the wounded.

Next morning the joyful news came that Soult was retiring, and all felt with a thrill of triumph that their sacrifices and efforts had not been in vain, and that the hard-fought battle of Albuera was forever to take its place among the great victories of the British army.

CHAPTER XIV. — INVALIDED HOME.

Two days after the battle of Albuera, Lord Wellington himself arrived, and from the officers of his staff Tom heard the details of the battle of Fuentes d'Onoro, which had been fought a few days previously, and which had been nearly as hardly contested as had Albuera itself, both sides claiming the victory.

The next day, the bulk of Beresford's army returned to the neighborhood of Badajos, which they again invested, while a long convoy of wounded started for Lisbon. The Scudamores accompanied it as far as Campo Major, where a large hospital had been prepared for those too ill to bear the journey. Peter was still unconscious. Fever had set in upon the day after the battle, and for three weeks he lay between life and death. Tom's arm was mending very slowly, and he would have had hard work indeed in nursing Peter had it not been for the arrival of unexpected assistance. A large villa had been taken close to the main hospital for the use of officers, and one of the rooms was allotted to the Scudamores.

Upon the evening of the second day after their arrival, Tom was sitting by Peter's bedside, when, after a preliminary tap, the door opened, and to Tom's perfect amazement Sambo entered. The negro hurried forward, threw himself on his knees, seized Tom's hand and kissed it passionately, and then looking at the thin and fever-flushed face of Peter, he hid his face in his hands and sobbed unrestrainedly.

"Hush, Sam, hush," Tom said soothingly. "My poor fellow, why, where have you come from? I thought you were a prisoner with the French."

"I knew how it would be, Massa Tom," the black said, paying no attention to the questions. "First thing Sam said to himself when he got among French fellows, 'Dere, dose young gentlemen dey get into all sorts of danger widout Sam, sartin sure dey get hurt widout Sam to look after dem.' Dat idea troubled Sam berry much, took away Sam's sleep altogether."

"Well it turned out so, as you see, Sam," Tom said with a smile, "but tell me how did you get away? But first give me some lemonade out of that jug, then you can tell me all about it."

"Why, Massa Tom," Sam said, when he had complied with the request, "you didn't think dat dis chile was going to stop prisoner with dose French chaps; Sam not such a fool as dat, nohow. When dat cussed mule—I tell you fair, Massa Tom, dis chile

conclude dat riding not such a berry easy ting after all—when dat cussed mule ran into French camp, de soldiers dey catch him, and dey take Sam off, and den dey jabber and laugh for all de world like great lots of monkeys. Well, for some time Sam he didn't say nothing, all de wind shook out of his body. Besides which he couldn't understand what dey say. Den all of a sudden, to Sam's surprise, up came a colored soldier, and he speak to Sam in de English tongue. 'Holla, broder, how you come here?" I ask. 'I been cook on board English merchant ship,' he say. 'Ship she taken by French privateer. When dey come to port dey say to me, "You not Englishman, you hab choice, you go to prison, or you be French soldier." Natural, I not want go prison, so I conclude be French soldier. I daresay dey gib you choice too.' Well, massa, a wink as good as a nod to blind hoss. So dey take me to tent, put me under guard, and next day a French officer come dat speak English. He ask me all sorts ob questions, and at last he ask me why I list English soldier. So you see I had got a little lie all ready, and me tell him, me one poor Melican negro man, cook on board Melican ship. Ship taken by English man-ob-war. Put Sam in prison and give him choice to go as soldier. "Den you not care about English,' de officer say, and Sam draw hisself up and pat his chest and say, 'Me Melican citizen, me no Britisher's slave, some day me go back States, go on board Melican man-ob-war, me pay out dese Britishers for make Sam slave.' Den de officer laugh, and say dat if I like I could fight dem now; and if I prefer French uniform to French prison, me could have him. Ob course I accep' offer, and harp an hour after me in French uniform. French officer try to make joke ob Sam, and ask whether I like cavalry or foot soldier. Sam say he had enuff of quadruples at present. Me remain French soldier three weeks, den cum great battle, dey call him Fuentes donory. Sam's regiment fight. Sam not like fire at red coats, so break bullet off catridge, neber put him in gun. We charge right into middle of village full of English soldiers, de bullets fly all about. Sam not see de point ob getting kill by mistake, so he tumble down, pretend to be dead. Presently French beaten back; when English soldier wid doctor

cum look at wounded, dey turn Sam ober, and dey say, 'Hullo, here dead nigger.' 'Nigger yourself, John Atkins,' I say for sure enuff it's de ole regiment—'you say dat once again me knock your head off;' me jump up, and all de world call out, 'Hullo, why it's Sam.' Den me splain matter, and all berry glad, cept John Atkins, and next morning me gib him licking he member all his life, me pound him most to a squash. Four days ago colonel send for Sam, say, 'Sam, berry bad job, bofe Massas wounded bad, send you to nurse dem;' so dis chile come. Dat all, Massa Tom. Here letter for you from colonel, now you read dis letter, den you get in bed, you sleep all night, Sam watch Massa Peter."

Greatly relieved to have his faithful servant again, and to know that Peter would be well cared for, instead of being left in charge of the Spanish hospital orderly, whenever weakness and pain obliged him to lie down, Tom abandoned his place by the bedside, and prepared for a tranquil night's rest, first reading the colonel's letter.

"We are all grieved, my dear Scudamore, at hearing that you are both wounded, and that your brother is at present in a serious state. We trust, however, that he will pull through. I hear that Beresford has praised you both most highly in despatches, and that your names are sent home for companies. I heartily congratulate you. We have had some tough work at Fuentes d'Onoro, although nothing to what yours must have been at Albuera, still it was hot enough in all conscience, and we had over a hundred casualties in the regiment. Carruthers and Manley were both slightly wounded. Jones, Anstruther, Palmer, and Chambers were killed, and several of the others hit more or less hard. Sam has leave to remain with you until you rejoin, which will not, I fear, be for some little time. Every one sends kind messages. Yours truly, J. Tritton."

Nothing could exceed the care and devotion with which Sam nursed his two masters, and Tom had the greatest difficulty in persuading him to lie down and get a short sleep each day while he sat by Peter's bed. At the end of three weeks Peter took a

favorable turn. His fever abated, and he awoke to consciousness. Another fortnight and he was sufficiently convalescent to be moved, and accordingly they started to travel by very easy stages to Lisbon, there to take ship for England, as the doctor ordered Tom as well as his brother to go home for a while to recruit. Tom was the less reluctant to do so, as it was evident that with the force at his command Wellington would not be able to undertake any great operation, and that the siege and capture of Badajoz was the utmost likely to be accomplished in that season's campaign. The mails in due course had brought out the Gazette, and in it Tom and Peter Scudamore were promoted to be captains, unattached.

Colonel Tritton, upon being applied to, readily gave leave for Sam to accompany his masters. It was a long journey to Lisbon, but the jolting of the country cart was made bearable by a layer of hay, two feet deep, upon which the mattresses were laid, Sam seeing that at each night's halt the hay was taken out, well shaken, and then returned to the cart, so as to preserve it light and elastic. A thick canopy of boughs kept off the heat of the sun, and under it, within reach of the invalids hung a gourd of fresh water, and a basket of fruit. Several other cart-loads of wounded officers accompanied them, and at night they would draw up by a grove of trees where water was handy, those who could walk would get out, the others would be lifted out on their mattresses, a great fire made, and round it the beds laid in a circle, and then the evening would be spent in pleasant chat, with many an anecdote and an occasional song, until the fire burnt low, the talk died away, and each, covered in his blankets to keep off the night dew, fell asleep. Pleasant as was the journey, however, it was with a thrill of delight that they caught their first sight of Lisbon, with its broad river, and the blue line of the sea beyond. A few days later, and they embarked on board a transport, which seven days afterwards, after a calm passage, arrived at Spithead.

Peter was by this time gaining strength fast, but his back was so stiff and sore that he was unable to move it, and was obliged to swing himself along on crutches. The next day the coach took them to London, and they started the morning after for

Marlborough. This time they had to go inside the coach, two gentlemen, who had previously secured the seats, kindly giving them up in favor of the wounded young officers, while Sam took his place on the roof, and amused his fellow-passengers with wonderful accounts of his adventures at the war. At the inn at which they took dinner, they alighted, and Tom recognized in the driver the same coachman who had driven them upon the memorable occasion of their being stopped by highwaymen three years before. "You don't remember us, coachman, do you?"

"No, gentlemen, I can't say as how,—but eh! no, why you're the werry boys as shot the highwaymen. Well, I am glad to see you again, though you do look white and bad, both of you. I heard as how there were two wounded officers inside, and that black soldier has been telling all sorts of tales of the wonderful things as his masters had done, but not knowing as how it was you, I didn't much believe all he was telling. Now I quite see as how it was true; and how are you both?"

"Getting on all right," Tom said, returning the warm shake of the coachman's hand, "and do you know, those pistols have saved our lives more than once."

"Have they now," the coachman said, in high admiration, "but there, we most be moving, we are three minutes after time as it is; I shall see you again next time we stop, gentlemen."

During the next stage the coachman and guard recounted to the outside passengers the affair of the stopping the coach, and Sam's black face shone with delight at the tale. Then he had his say, and related the story of his falling overboard and being rescued, and in consequence the lads were quite embarrassed when they next halted, by the attention of their fellow-travelers, who could scarcely understand how it was possible that two mere boys should have performed such feats of bravery.

Arrived at Marlborough they looked round in vain for the one-horsed vehicle which had before met them. "I expect that aunt has not got our letter, Peter," Tom said. "It would probably go up to town in the coach with us, and is likely enough in the

letter-bag in the boot. Well, we must have a post-chaise. Won't aunt and Rhoda be surprised; but they must be expecting us, because they will have had our letter from Lisbon."

The horses were soon in, Sam took his seat in the rumble, and in a few minutes they were bounding over the road at a very different pace to that at which they had before traversed it. "There's the house among the trees," Peter said at last, "with aunt's pigeons on the roof as usual, and there's Minnie asleep on the window-sill, and there! yes, there's Rhoda."

As he spoke a girl, who was sitting reading under a tree, leapt to her feet, on hearing a carriage stop, and then, catching sight of Peter waving his hat, while Tom made frantic efforts to open the door, gave a scream of delight, and rushed towards them, threw her arms round Tom's neck as he jumped out, and then leapt into the chaise and hugged and cried over Peter. He was soon helped out, and as they turned to go towards the house they saw their aunt coming out to meet them.

Tom ran forward and throwing his arms round her neck kissed her heartily, and before she could recover from her surprise, Peter was alongside. "Please, aunt, you must kiss me," he said, "for I want my arms for my crutches." His aunt leaned forward and kissed him, and then wiped the tears from her eyes.

"I am glad to see you back, my dear nephews," she said. "We did not understand each other very well before, but we shan't make any more mistakes. This is your black servant, I suppose," she said, as Sam came along, with a trunk in each hand. "Dear! dear! what a dreadfully ugly man."

"How do you do, Sam?" Rhoda said, when he came up. "We have heard so much of you, and how kindly you nursed my brothers."

"Sam quite well, tank you, little missy," Sam said, grinning all over his face and showing his white teeth.

Miss Scudamore shrank towards Tom as Sam passed on, "Dear me, what

sharp-looking teeth he has, Tom. They don't eat curious things, these black men, do they?"

"What sort of curious things, aunt?"

"Well, my dear, I know that these outlandish people do eat strange things, and I have heard the Chinese eat dogs and cats. Now, if he has a fancy for cats, I daresay I could buy him some in the village, only he will have to cook them himself, I could never ask Hannah to cook cats; but please ask him not to touch Minnie."

Peter had to stop in his walk and grasp his crutches tightly, not to burst into a scream of laughter, while Tom answered with great gravity, "My dear aunt, do not alarm yourself, I will answer for the safety of Minnie as far as Sam is concerned."

When they reached the house, Miss Scudamore said—

"I think you young people will enjoy yourselves more if you go and sit under the shade of the elm there, you will have a deal to say to each other, and had better be alone." They were all glad at the suggestion, as they were longing to be alone together.

Sam, by Miss Scudamore's directions, carried out a great easy chair, of which Peter took possession. Rhoda sat on the grass at his feet, and Tom threw himself down at full length. They were all too happy to speak much for a time, and could only look fondly at each other. "You have grown a great deal, Rhoda, but I do not think that you are altered a bit otherwise."

"You are neither of you altered so much as I expected," Rhoda said. "I had made up my mind that you would be changed a great deal. It sounds so grand—Captains, indeed! I expected to have curtsey to you and treat you with great respect; instead of that you look regular boys, both of you. Of course you are big, and Peter looks very tall; how tall are you, Peter?"

"Just over six feet," Peter said.

"Yes," Rhoda said, "you are tall enough, and Tom is broad enough for men, but somehow you look regular boys still."

"This is very disrespectful Rhoda, to two Captains in His Majesty's service."

"It seems ridiculous, doesn't it," Rhoda said.

"It does," Tom said heartily, and the three went off into a shout of laughter.

"It isn't really ridiculous you know," Rhoda said, when they had recovered their gravity. "To think of all the dangers you have gone through. Aunt was as proud as could be when she saw your names over and over again in despatches, and I have been like a little peacock. Your doings have been the talk of every one round here, and I am sure that if they had known you had been coming, the village would have put up a triumphal arch, and presented you with an address."

"Thank goodness, they did not know it then," Tom said, "for it would have been a deal worse to stand than the fire of a French battery. Well, Rhoda, and now as to yourself; so you have really been always very happy with aunt?"

"Very happy," Rhoda said; "she is most kind and indulgent, and so that I attend to her little fancies, I can do just as I like. I have had lessons regularly from the rector's eldest daughter, who has been educated for a governess; and in every respect, aunt is all that is kind. Fancy her being afraid of Sam eating Minnie."

After chatting for upwards of an hour, they went into the house, and the rest of the day was spent in talking over all that had happened since they left. Sam was in the kitchen where he made himself very much at home, and although Hannah and the cook were at first rather awed by his size, his black face and rolling eyes, they were soon pacified by his good humor and readiness to make himself useful, and were wonderfully interested by his long stories about what "Massas" had done in the war.

Miss Scudamore, who was a little uneasy as to how things would go on in the kitchen, made some excuse for going in once or twice in the course of the evening. She found things going on much better that she had expected, indeed so much better,

that after Rhoda had gone up to bed, where Peter had two hours before betaken himself, she said to Tom as he was lighting his candle, "One minute, nephew; I could not speak before Rhoda, but I wanted to say something to you about your negro. I have heard that all soldiers are very much given to make love, and we know from Shakespeare, that Othello, who was black too, you will remember, nephew, made love to Desdemona, which shows that color does not make so much difference as one would think. Now I do hope your man will not make love to Hannah, I don't think she would like it, my dear, and yet you know she might; one never knows what women will do; they are always making fools of themselves," she added angrily, thinking at the moment how a young girl she had trained up as a cook had, after being with her three years, left a few weeks before to marry the village blacksmith, "and I should be sorry to lose Hannah. She has been with us more than twenty years. If he must fall in love with one, my dear, let it be the cook."

Tom had a great command of his countenance, but he had great difficulty in steadying his muscles. After a moment or two he said, "I will give Sam a hint, aunt, if it becomes necessary, but I do not think you need fear. I do not fancy Sam is matrimonially inclined at present, and he wouldn't leave us even to marry Desdemona herself. Good night, aunt."

So saying, Tom went upstairs, where he repeated to Peter, who was still awake, his conversation with his aunt, and the two went into shouts of laughter over the idea of Sam making love to the prim Hannah.

The next six months passed over quietly and happily. The boys were made a great deal of by the whole county, and Miss Scudamore was greatly gratified at the name and credit they had gained for themselves. She no longer worried about them, but as Rhoda declared, quite spoiled them, and as Sam made no attempt to win the love of the faithful Hannah, there was no cloud to mar the pleasure of the holiday.

CHAPTER XV. — CIUDAD RODRIGO AND BADAJOS.

It was in the beginning of December, 1811, that the Scudamores again sailed up the Tagus to Lisbon, after an absence of just six months. When they had passed the medical board, they were transferred from the unattached list to the 52d Regiment, which was, fortunately for them, also in Spain. No events of great importance had taken place during their absence. Wellington, after the battles of Fuentes d'Onoro and Albuera, had been compelled to fall back again to the frontier in the face of greatly superior forces, and had maintained his old position on the Coa till the approach of winter compelled the French to retire into the interior, where they had their magazines and depôts.

The Scudamores found that the 52d were encamped on the Agueda, and they at once prepared to go up country to join them. Their chargers—presents from their aunt on leaving—were fresh and vigorous, and they purchased a strong country horse for Sambo, who, thanks to some practice which he had had in England, was now able to cut a respectable figure on horseback. A few hours were sufficient to make their preparations, and at noon on the day after landing, they mounted, and, followed by Sam, accompanied by a muleteer and two mules carrying their baggage, they started from the hotel at which they had put up.

As they rode down the main street they saw several mounted officers approaching, and at once recognized in the leader the commander-in-chief, who had just arrived from the front to pay one of his flying visits, to endeavor to allay the jealousies in the Portuguese Council, and to insist upon the food which the British Government was actually paying for, being supplied to the starving Portuguese soldiers. Drawing their horses aside, they saluted Lord Wellington as he rode past. He glanced at them keenly, as was his custom, and evidently recognized them as he returned the salute.

When he had passed, they turned their horses and continued their way. They had not gone fifty yards, however, when an officer came up at a gallop. Lord Wellington

wished them to call at his quarters in an hour's time.

There are few things more annoying than, after having got through all the trouble of packing and getting fairly on the road, to be stopped; but there was no help for it, and the boys rode back to their hotel again, where, putting up their horses, they told Sam not to let the muleteer leave, for they should probably be on the road again in an hour.

At the appointed time they called at the head-quarters, and giving their cards to two officers on duty, took their seats in the anteroom. It now became evident to them that their chance of an early interview was not great, and that they would in all probability be obliged to pass another night in Madrid. Portuguese grandees passed in and out, staff officers of rank entered and left, important business was being transacted, and the chance of two Line captains having an interview with the commander-in-chief appeared but slight. Two hours passed wearily, and then an orderly sergeant came into the room and read out from a slip of paper the names "Captain Thomas Scudamore; Captain Peter Scudamore. This way, if you please," he added, as the boys rose in answer to their names, and he led the way into a room where a colonel on the staff was seated before a table covered with papers.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I have news which I think will be pleasant to you both. Lord Wellington has not forgotten the services you rendered in carrying his communications to the guerilla chiefs. Your reports were clear and concise, and your knowledge of Spanish especially valuable. Lord Beresford, too, has reported most favorably of your conduct while with him. There happen to be two vacancies on his staff, and he has desired me to fill them up with your names."

Although the Scudamores would in some respects rather have remained with their regiment, yet they could not refuse an honor which was generally coveted as being a post in which an active officer had plenty of opportunities of distinguishing himself, and which was certain to lead to speedy promotion. They accordingly expressed

their warm thanks for the honor which Lord Wellington had done them.

"Are you well mounted?" Colonel Somerset asked.

"We have one capital charger each," Tom said.

"You will want another," Colonel Somerset remarked. "There are a lot of remounts landed to-day. Here is an order to Captain Halket, the officer in charge. Choose any two you like. The amount can be stopped from your pay. How about servants; you are entitled to two each?"

"We have one man of the Norfolk Rangers—a very faithful fellow, who has returned with us from leave; if he could be transferred, he would do for us both if we had a cavalry man each for our horses."

The colonel at once wrote an order for Sam's transfer from his regiment on detached service, and also one to the officer commanding a cavalry regiment stationed in Madrid, to supply them with two troopers as orderlies.

"May I ask, sir, if we are likely to stay in Madrid long—as, if so, we will look out for quarters?" Tom asked.

"No; the general returns to-morrow, or next day at latest, to Almeida, and of course you will accompany him. Oh, by-the-by, Lord Wellington will be glad if you will dine with him to-day—sharp six. By-the-way, you will want to get staff uniform. There is the address of a Spanish tailor, who has fitted out most of the men who have been appointed here. He works fast, and will get most of the things you want ready by to-morrow night. Don't get more things than are absolutely necessary—merely undress suits. Excuse my asking how are you off for money? I will give you an order on the paymaster if you like."

Tom replied that they had plenty of money, which indeed they had, for their aunt had given them so handsome a present upon starting, that they had tried to persuade her to be less generous, urging that they really had no occasion for any money beyond their pay. She had insisted, however, upon their accepting two checks,

saying that one never knew what was wanted, and it was always useful to have a sum to fall back on in case of need.

Two days later the Scudamores, in their new staff uniforms, were, with some six or eight other officers, riding in the suite of Lord Wellington on the road to the Coa. The lads thought they had never had a more pleasant time, the weather was fine and the temperature delightful, their companions, all older somewhat than themselves, were yet all young men in high health and spirits. The pace was good, for Lord Wellington was a hard rider, and time was always precious with him. At the halting-places the senior officers of the staff kept together, while the aides-de-camp made up a mess of their own, always choosing a place as far away as possible from that of the chief, so that they could laugh, joke, and even sing, without fear of disturbing his lordship.

Sam soon became a high favorite with the light-hearted young fellows, and his services as forager for the mess were in high esteem.

Three days of hard riding took them to Almeida, where the breaches caused by the great explosion had been repaired, and the place put into a defensible position. Tom and Peter had been afraid that there would be at least four months of enforced inactivity before the spring; but they soon found that the post of aide-de-camp to Wellington was no sinecure. For the next month they almost lived in the saddle. The greater portion of the English army was indeed lying on the Agueda, but there were detached bodies of British and large numbers of Portuguese troops at various points along the whole line of the Portuguese frontier, and with the commanders of these Lord Wellington was in constant communication.

Towards the end of December some large convoys of heavy artillery arrived at Almeida, but every one supposed that they were intended to fortify this place, and none, even of those most in the confidence of the commander-in-chief, had any idea that a winter campaign was about to commence. The French were equally

unsuspicious of the truth. Twice as strong as the British, they dreamt not that the latter would take the offensive, and the French marshals had scattered their troops at considerable distances from the frontier in winter quarters.

Upon the last day of the year the Scudamores both happened to have returned to the front—Tom from Lisbon, and Peter from a long ride to a distant Portuguese division. There was a merry party gathered round a blazing fire in the yard of the house where they, with several other aides-de-camp, were quartered. Some fifty officers of all ranks were present, for a general invitation had been issued to all unattached officers in honor of the occasion. Each brought in what liquor he could get hold of, and any provisions which he had been able to procure, and the evening was one of boisterous fun and jollity. In the great kitchen blazed a fire, before which chickens and ducks were roasting, turkeys and geese cut up in pieces for greater rapidity of cooking, were grilling over the fire, and as they came off the gridiron they were taken round by the soldier-servants to their masters as they sat about on logs of wood, boxes, and other substitutes for chairs. Most of the officers present had already supped, and the late-comers were finishing their frugal meal, after which the soldiers would take their turn. There was a brewing of punch and an uncorking of many a bottle of generous wine; then the song and laugh went round, and all prepared to usher in the new year joyously, when a colonel of the staff, who had been dining with Lord Wellington, entered. "Here's a seat, colonel," was shouted in a dozen places, but he shook his head and held up his hand.

"Gentlemen, I am sorry to disturb you, but orders must be obeyed. Villiers, Hogan, Scudamores both, Esdaile, Cooper, and Johnson, here are despatches which have to be taken off at once. Gentlemen, I should recommend you all to look to your horses. All attached to the transport had better go to their head-quarters for orders."

"What is up, colonel?" was the general question.

"The army moves forward at daybreak. We are going to take Ciudad."

A cheer of surprise and delight burst from all. There was an emptying of glasses, a pouring out of one more bumper to success, and in five minutes the court was deserted save by some orderlies hastily devouring the interrupted supper, and ere long the tramp of horses could be heard, as the Scudamores and their comrades dashed off in different directions with their despatches.

The next morning a bridge was thrown over the Agueda at Marialva, six miles below Ciudad, but the investment was delayed, owing to the slowness and insufficiency of the transport. Ciudad Rodrigo was but a third-class fortress, and could have been captured by the process of a regular siege with comparatively slight loss to the besiegers. Wellington knew, however, that he could not afford the time for a regular siege. Long before the approaches could have been made, and the breaches effected according to rule, the French marshals would have been up with overwhelming forces.

Beginning the investment on the 7th, Wellington determined that it must be taken at all costs in twenty-four days, the last day of the month being the very earliest date at which, according to his calculations, any considerable body of French could come up to its relief.

Ciudad lies on rising ground on the bank of the Agueda. The fortifications were fairly strong, and being protected by a very high glacis, it was difficult to effect a breach in them. The glacis is the smooth ground outside the ditch. In well-constructed works the walls of the fortification rise but very little above the ground beyond, from which they are separated by a broad and deep ditch. Thus the ground beyond the ditch, that is, the glacis, covers the walls from the shot of a besieger, and renders it extremely difficult to reach them. In the case of Ciudad, however, there were outside the place two elevated plateaux, called the great and small Teson: Guns placed on these could look down upon Ciudad, and could therefore easily breach the walls. These, then, were the spots from which Wellington

determined to make the attack. The French, however, were aware of the importance of the position, and had erected on the higher Teson an inclosed and palisadoed redoubt, mounting two guns and a howitzer. A great difficulty attending the operation was that there were neither fuel nor shelter to be obtained on the right bank of the river, and the weather set in very cold, with frost and snow, at the beginning of the siege. Hence the troops had to be encamped on the left bank, and each division, as its turn came, to occupy the trenches for twenty-four hours, took cooked provisions with it, and waded across the Agueda.

On the 8th, Pack's division of Portuguese and the light division waded the river three miles above the fortress, and, making a circuit took up a place near the great Teson. There they remained quiet all day. The French seeing that the place was not yet entirely invested paid but little heed to them. At nightfall, however, Colonel Colborne, with two companies from each of the regiments of the light division, attacked the redoubt of San Francisco with such a sudden rush that it was carried with the loss of only twenty-four men, the defenders, few and unprepared, being all taken prisoners. Scarcely, however, was the place captured than every gun of Ciudad which could be brought to bear upon it opened with fury. All night, under a hail of shot and shell, the troops labored steadily, and by daybreak the first parallel, that is to say, a trench protected by a bank of earth six hundred yards in length was sunk three feet deep. The next day the first division, relieved the light division.

Tom and Peter, now that the army was stationary, had an easier time of it, and obtained leave to cross the river to see the operations. The troops had again to wade through the bitter cold water, and at any other time would have grumbled rarely at the discomfort. When they really engage in the work of war, however, the British soldier cares for nothing, and holding up their rifles, pouches and haversacks, to keep dry, the men crossed the river laughing and joking. There was but little done all day, for the fire of the enemy was too fast and deadly for men to work under it in daylight. At night the Scudamores left their horses with those of the divisional

officers, and accompanied the troops into the trenches, to learn the work which had there to be done. Directly it was dusk twelve hundred men fell to work to construct their batteries. The night was dark, and it was strange to the Scudamores to hear the thud of so many picks and shovels going, to hear now and then a low spoken order, but to see nothing save when the flash of the enemy's guns momentarily lit up the scene. Every half minute or so the shot, shell, and grape came tearing through the air, followed occasionally by a low cry or a deep moan. Exciting as it was for a time, the boys having no duty, found it difficult long to keep awake, and presently dozed off—at first to wake with a start whenever a shell fell close, but presently to sleep soundly until dawn. By that time the batteries, eighteen feet thick, were completed.

On the 10th the fourth division, and on the 11th the third, carried on the works, but were nightly disturbed, not only by the heavy fire from the bastions, but from some guns which the French had mounted on the convent of San Francisco in the suburb on the left. Little was effected in the next two days, for the frost hardened the ground and impeded the work. On the night of the 13th the Santa Cruz convent was carried and the trenches pushed forward, and on the next afternoon the breaching batteries opened fire with twenty-five guns upon the points of the wall at which it had been determined to make the breaches, while two cannons kept down the fire of the French guns at the convent of San Francisco. The French replied with more than fifty pieces, and all night the tremendous fire was kept up on both sides without intermission. Just at daybreak the sound of musketry mingled with the roar of cannon, as the 40th Regiment attacked and carried the convent of San Francisco. Through the 16th, 17th, and 18th the artillery duel continued, some times one side, sometimes the other obtaining the advantage; but during each night the trenches of the besiegers were pushed forward, and each day saw the breaches in the ramparts grow larger and larger. On the 19th the breaches were reported as practicable—that is, that it would be possible for men to scramble up the fallen rubbish to the top, and orders were therefore given for the assault for that night.

The attack was to be made at four points simultaneously; the 5th, 94th, and 77th were to attack from the convent of Santa Cruz, to make for the ditch, enter it, and work their way along to the great breach; Mackinnon's brigade of the third division was to attack the great breach from the front; the light division posted behind the convent of San Francisco were to attack from the left, and make their way to the small breach; while a false attack, to be converted into a real one if the resistance was slight, was to be made by Pack's Portuguese at the St. Jago gate at the opposite side of the town. As night fell the troops moved into their position, and Lord Wellington went to the convent of San Francisco, from whose roof he could survey the operations. The Scudamores, with the rest of the staff, took up their places behind him. Suddenly there was a shout on the far right, followed by a sound of confused cheering and firing, while flashes of flame leapt out along the walls, and the guns of the place opened fire with a crash. Now the 5th, 94th, and 77th rushed with great swiftness along the ditch, when, at the foot of the great breach, they were met by the third division. Together they poured up the breach, and the roar of musketry was tremendous. Once at the top of the breach, however, they made no progress. From a trench which had been cut beyond it, a ring of fire broke out, while muskets flashed from every window in the houses near. It was evident that some serious obstacle had been encountered, and that the main attack was arrested.

"This is terrible," Peter said, as almost breathless they watched the storm of fire on and around the breach. "This is a thousand times worse than a battle. It is awful to think how the shot must be telling on that dense mass. Can nothing be done?"

"Hurrah! There go the light division at the small breach," Tom exclaimed, as the French fire broke out along the ramparts in that quarter. A violent cheer came up even above the din from the great breach, but no answering fire lights the scene, for Major Napier, who commanded, had forbidden his men to load, telling them to trust entirely to the bayonet. There was no delay here; the firing of the French ceased almost immediately, as with a fierce rush the men of the light division bounded up

the ruins and won the top of the breach. For a moment or two there was a pause, for the French opened so fierce a fire from either side, that the troops wavered. The officers sprang to the front, the soldiers followed with the bayonet, and the French, unable to stand the fierce onslaught, broke and fled into the town. Then the men of the light division, rushing along the walls, took the French who were defending the great breach in rear, and as these gave way, the attacking party swept across the obstacles which, had hitherto kept them, and the town was won. Pack's Portuguese had effected an entrance at the St. Jago gate, which they found almost deserted, for the garrison was weak, and every available man had been taken for the defence of the breaches.

Thus was Ciudad Rodrigo taken after twelve days' siege, with a loss of twelve hundred men and ninety officers, of which six hundred and fifty men and sixty officers fell in that short, bloody fight at the breaches. Among the killed was General Craufurd, who had commanded at the fight on the Coa.

Upon entering the town three days afterwards, at the termination of the disgraceful scene of riot and pillage with which the British soldier, there as at other places, tarnished the laurels won by his bravery in battle, the boys went to the scene of the struggle, and then understood the cause of the delay upon the part of the stormers. From the top of the breach there was a perpendicular fall of sixteen feet, and the bottom of this was planted with sharp spikes, and strewn with the fragments of shells which the French had rolled down into it. Had it not been for the light division coming up, and taking the defenders—who occupied the loopholed and fortified houses which commanded this breach—in rear, the attack here could never have succeeded.

The next few days were employed in repairing the breaches, and putting the place again in a state of defence, as it was probable that Marmont might come up and besiege it. The French marshal, however, when hurrying to the relief of the town,

heard the news of its fall, and as the weather was very bad for campaigning, and provisions short, he fall back again to his winter quarters, believing that Wellington would, content with his success, make no fresh movement until the spring. The English general, however, was far too able a strategist not to profit by the supineness of his adversary, and, immediately Ciudad Rodrigo was taken, he began to make preparations for the siege of Badajos, a far stronger fortress than Ciudad, and defended by strong detached forts. Three days after the fall of Rodrigo General Hill came up with his division; to this the Norfolk Rangers now belonged, and the Scudamores had therefore the delight of meeting all their old friends again. They saw but little of them, however, for they were constantly on the road to Lisbon with despatches, every branch of the service being now strained to get the battering-train destined for the attack on Badajos to the front, while orders were sent to Silviera, Trant, Wilson, Lecca, and the other partisan leaders, to hold all the fords and defiles along the frontier, so as to prevent the French from making a counter-invasion of Portugal.

On the 11th of March the army arrived at Elvas, and on the 15th a pontoon bridge was thrown across the Guadiana. The following day the British troops crossed the river, and invested Badajos, with fifteen thousand men, while Hill and Graham, with thirty thousand more moved forward, so as to act as a covering army, in case the French should advance to raise the siege. Badajos was defended by five thousand men, under General Phillipson, a most able and energetic commander, who had in every way strengthened the defences, and put them in a position to offer an obstinate resistance.

Before attacking the fortress it was necessary to capture one of the outlying forts, and that known as the Picurina was selected, because the bastion of the Trinidad, which lay behind it, was the weakest portion of the fortress. The trenches were commenced against this on the night of the 17th, and, although the French made some vigorous sorties, the works progressed so rapidly that all was ready for an

assault on the forts on the 25th, a delay of two days having been occasioned by the French taking guns across the river, which swept the trenches, and rendered work impossible, until a division was sent round to drive in the French guns and invest the fortress on that side. The Picurina was strong, and desperately defended, but it was captured after a furious assault, which lasted one hour, and cost nineteen officers and three hundred men. It was not, however, until next evening that the fort could be occupied, for the guns of the town poured such a hail of shot and shell into it, that a permanent footing could not be obtained in it. Gradually, day by day, the trenches were driven nearer to the doomed city, and the cannon of the batteries worked day and night to establish a breach. Soult was known to be approaching, but he wanted to gather up all his available forces, as he believed the town capable of holding out for another month, at least. Still he was approaching, and, although the three breaches were scarcely yet practicable, and the fire of the town by no means overpowered, Wellington determined upon an instant assault, and on the night of the 6th of April the troops prepared for what turned out to be the most terrible and bloody assault in the annals of the British army. There were no less than six columns of attack, comprising in all eighteen thousand men. Picton, on the right with the third division was to cross the Rivillas and storm the castle. Wilson, with the troops in the trenches, was to attack San Roque. In the center the fourth and light division, under Colville and Barnard, were to assault the breaches; and on the left Leith, with the fifth division, was to make a false attack upon the fort of Pardaleras, and a real attack upon the bastion of San Vincente by the river side. Across the river the Portugese division, under Power, was to attack the works at the head of the bridge. The night was dark and clouded, and all was as still as death outside the town, when a lighted carcass, that is a large iron canister filled with tar and combustibles, fell close to the third division, and, exposing their ranks, forced them to commence the attack before the hour appointed. Crossing the Rivillas by a narrow bridge, under a tremendous fire, the third division assaulted the castle, and, although their

scaling-ladders were over and over again hurled down, the stormers at last obtained a footing, and the rest of the troops poured in and the castle was won. A similar and more rapid success attended the assault on San Roque, which was attacked so suddenly and violently, that it was taken with scarce any resistance. In the mean time the assaults upon the breaches had commenced, and it is best to give the account of this terrible scene in the words of its eloquent and graphic historian, as the picture is one of the most vivid that was ever drawn.

"All this time the tumult at the breaches was such as if the very earth had been rent asunder, and its central fires bursting upwards uncontrolled. The two divisions had reached the glacis just as the firing at the castle commenced, and the flash of a single musket, discharged from the covered-way as a signal, showed them that the French were ready; yet no stir was heard and darkness covered the breaches. Some hay-packs were thrown, some ladders placed, and the forlorn hopes and storming parties of the light division, five hundred in all, descended into the ditch without opposition; but then a bright flame shooting upwards displayed all the terrors of the scene. The ramparts, crowded with dark figures and glittering arms were on one side, on the other the red columns of the British, deep and broad, were coming on like streams of burning lava. It was the touch of the magician's wand, for a crash of thunder followed, and with incredible violence the storming parties were dashed to pieces by the explosion of hundreds of shells and powder-barrels. For an instant the light division stood on the brink of the ditch, amazed at the terrific sight; but then, with a shout that matched even the sound of the explosion, the men flew down the ladders, or, disdaining their aid, leaped, reckless of the depth, into the gulf below—and at the same moment, amidst a blaze of musketry that dazzled the eyes, the fourth division came running in, and descended with a like fury. There were only five ladders for the two columns, which were close together; and a deep cut, made in the bottom of the ditch as far as the counter-guard of the Trinidad, was filled with water from the inundation. Into that watery snare the head of the fourth division fell,

and it is said above a hundred of the fusiliers, the men of Albuera, were there smothered. Those who followed checked not, but, as if such a disaster had been expected, turned to the left, and thus came upon the face of the unfinished ravelin, which, being rough and broken, was mistaken for the breach, and instantly covered with men; yet a wide and deep chasm was still between them and the ramparts, from whence came a deadly fire, wasting their ranks. Thus baffled, they also commenced a rapid discharge of musketry and disorder ensued; for the men of the light division, whose conducting engineer had been disabled early and whose flank was confined by an unfinished ditch intended to cut off the bastion of Santa Maria, rushed towards the breaches of the curtain and the Trinidad, which were, indeed, before them, but which the fourth division had been destined to storm. Great was the confusion, for the ravelin was quite crowded with men of both divisions; and while some continued to fire, others jumped down and ran towards the breach; many also passed between the ravelin and the counterguard of the Trinidad, the two divisions got mixed, the reserves, which should have remained at the quarries, also came pouring in, until the ditch was quite filled, the rear still crowding forward, and all cheering vehemently. The enemy's shouts also were loud and terrible, and the bursting of shells, and of grenades, and the roaring of guns from the flanks, answered by the iron howitzers from the battery of the parallel, the heavy roll, and horrid explosion of the powder-barrels, the whizzing flight of the blazing splinters, the loud exhortations of the officers, and the continual clatter of the muskets, made a maddening din. Now a multitude bounded up the great breach, as if driven by a whirlwind, but across the top glittered a range of sword-blades, sharp-pointed, keen-edged on both sides, and firmly fixed in ponderous beams chained together, and set deep in the ruins; and for ten feet in front the ascent was covered with loose planks, studded with sharp iron points, on which, feet being set, the planks moved, and the unhappy soldiers, falling forward on the spikes, rolled down upon the ranks behind. Then the Frenchmen, shouting at the success of their stratagem, and, leaping forward, plied their shot with

terrible rapidity, for every man had several muskets, and each musket, in addition to its ordinary charge, contained a small cylinder of wood, stuck full of wooden slugs, which scattered like hail when they were discharged. Once and again the assailants rushed up the breaches, but always the sword-blades, immovable and impassable, stopped their charge, and the hissing shells and thundering powder-barrels exploded unceasingly. Hundreds of men had fallen, hundreds more were dropping, still, the heroic officers called aloud for new trials, and sometimes followed by many, sometimes by a few, ascended the ruins; and so furious were the men themselves, that, in one of these charges, the rear strove to push the foremost on to the sword-blades, willing even to make a bridge of their writhing bodies, but the others frustrated the attempt by dropping down; and men fell so fast from the shot, it was hard to know who went down voluntarily, who were stricken and many stooped unhurt that never rose again. Vain also would it have been to break through the sword-blades, for the trench and parapet behind the breach were finished, and the assailants, crowded into even a narrower space than the ditch was, would still have been separated from their enemies, and the slaughter would have continued. At the beginning of this dreadful conflict Andrew Barnard had, with prodigious efforts, separated his division from the other, and preserved some degree of military array; but now the tumult was such, no command would be heard distinctly except by those close at hand, and the mutilated carcasses heaped on each other, and the wounded struggling to avoid being trampled upon, broke the formations; order was impossible! Officers of all ranks, followed more or less numerously by the men, were seen to start out as if struck by sudden madness, and rash into the breach, which, yawning and glittering with steel, seemed like the mouth of a huge dragon belching forth smoke and flame. In one of these attempts, Colonel Macleod, of the 43rd, a young man whose feeble body would have been quite unfit for war if it had not been sustained by an unconquerable spirit, was killed; wherever his voice was heard his soldiers had gathered, and with such a strong resolution did he lead them

up the fatal ruins that, when one behind him, in falling, plunged a bayonet into his back, he complained, not; but, continuing his course, was shot dead within a yard of the sword-blades. Yet there was no want of gallant leaders, or desperate followers, until two hours passed in these vain efforts had convinced the troops the breach of the Trinidad was impregnable; and, as the opening in the curtain, although less strong, was retired, and the approach to it impeded by deep holes and cuts made in the ditch, the soldiers did not much notice it after the partial failure of one attack which had been made early. Gathering in dark groups, and leaning on their muskets, they looked up with sullen desperation at the Trinidad, while the enemy, stepping out on the ramparts, and aiming their shots by the light of the fire-balls which they threw over, asked, as their victims fell, 'Why they did not come into Badajos?' In this dreadful situation, while the dead were lying in heaps, and others continually falling, the wounded crawling about to get some shelter from the merciless shower above, and withal a sickening stench from the burnt flesh of the slain, Captain Nicholas, of the engineers, was observed by Lieutenant Shaw, of the 43rd, making incredible efforts to force his way with a few men into the Santa Maria Bastion. Shaw immediately collected fifty soldiers, of all regiments, and joined him, and although there was a deep cut along the foot of that breach also, it was instantly passed, and these two young officers led their gallant band, with a rush, up the ruins; but when they had gained two-thirds of the ascent, a concentrated fire of musketry and grape dashed nearly the whole dead to the earth. Nicholas was mortally wounded, and the intrepid Shaw stood alone! With inexpressible coolness he looked at his watch, and saying it was too late to carry the reaches, rejoined the masses at the other attack. After this no further effort was made at any point, and the troops remained passive but unflinching beneath the enemy's shot, which streamed without intermission; for, of the riflemen on the glacis many leaped early into the ditch and joined in the assault, and the rest, raked by a cross-fire of grape from the distant bastions, baffled in their aim by the smoke and flames from the explosions, and too

few in number, entirely failed to quell the French musketry. About midnight, when two thousand brave men had fallen, Wellington, who was on a height close to the quarries, ordered the remainder to retire and re-form for a second assault; he had heard the castle was taken, but thinking the enemy would still resist in the town, was resolved to assail the breaches again. This retreat from the ditch was not effected without further carnage and confusion. The French fire never slackened. A cry arose that the enemy was making a sally from the distant flanks, and there was a rush towards the ladders. Then the groans and lamentations of the wounded, who could not move and expected to be slain, increased, and many officers who had not heard of the order, endeavored to stop the soldiers from going back; some would even have removed the ladders but were unable to break the crowd."

While this terrible scene was passing, the victory had been decided elsewhere. The capture of the castle by Picton would, in itself, have caused the fall of the town upon the following day, but Leith, with the fifth division, after hard fighting, scaled the St. Vincente bastion, and came up through the town and took the defenders of the breaches in the rear. Then the French gave way, the British poured in, and the dreadful scenes which had marked the fall of Ciudad Rodrigo were repeated, and even surpassed. Up to the present day the name of an Englishman is coupled with a curse in the town of Badajos. At this siege, as at the last, the Scudamores acted the part of lookers on, and although they bitterly regretted it, it was well for them that it was so. The capture of Badajos cost the allied army five thousand men, of whom three thousand five hundred fell on the night of the assault. Each of the divisions which attacked the breaches lost over twelve hundred men, and the 52nd Regiment, who formed part of the light division, lost their full share. Among the ranks of the officers the slaughter was particularly great, and scarce one escaped without a wound. The Scudamores would fain have volunteered to join their regiment in the assault, but it was well known that Lord Wellington would not allow staff officers to go outside their own work. Therefore they had looked on with beating hearts and

pale faces, and with tears in their eyes, at that terrible fight at the Triudad, and had determined that when morning came they would resign their staff appointments and ask leave to join their regiment. But when morning came, and the list of the killed and wounded was sent in, and they went down with a party to the breach to collect the wounded, they could not but feel that they had in all probability escaped death, or what a soldier fears more, mutilation. "After all, Tom," Peter said, "we have done some active service, and our promotion shows that we are not cowards; there can be no reason why we should not do our duty as the chief has marked it out for us, especially when it is quite as likely to lead to rapid promotion as is such a murderous business as this." After this no more was said about resigning the staff appointment, which gave them plenty of hard work, and constant change of scene, whereas had they remained with the regiment they would often have been stationed for months in one place without a move.

CHAPTER XVI. — SALAMANCA.

The great triumphs of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajos did not lead to the rapid successes which Wellington had hoped. The French generals, on hearing of the loss of the latter fortress, again fell back, and Wellington was so much hampered by shortness of money, by the inefficiency, obstinacy, and intrigues of the Portuguese Government, and by want of transport, that it was nearly three months before he could get everything in readiness for an advance into Spain. At last all was prepared, and on the 13th of June the army once more crossed the Agueda and marched towards the Tamar in four columns. On the 17th it was within six miles of Salamanca, and Marshal Marmont, unable for the moment to stem the tide of invasion, evacuated the city, which that evening blazed with illuminations, the people being half wild with joy at their approaching deliverance. The French, however, had not entirely departed, for eight hundred men still held some very

strong forts overlooking and guarding the city.

These forts held out desperately; the British battering train was weak, and upon the 23d Marmont, having received considerable reinforcements, advanced to raise the siege. Wellington, however, refused to be tempted to leave his trenches to deliver a general battle, but faced the enemy with a portion of his army while he continued the siege.

Marmont, upon his part, believing that the forts could hold out for fifteen days, put off the attack, as he knew that large reinforcements were coming up. His calculations were frustrated by one of the forts taking fire on the 27th, when an assault was delivered, and the whole of the forts surrendered; Marmont at once fell back across the Douro, there to await the arrival of his reinforcements.

Wellington, on his part, followed slowly, and his army took up a position between Canizal and Castrejon, thereby covering the roads from Toro and Tordesillas, the only points at which the French could cross the river. The reports of the spies all agreed that the former was the place at which the crossing would be made.

On the 16th of July an officer rode into Canizal, at headlong pace, with the news that a reconnoitering party had crossed the Douro that morning near Tordesillas, and had found that place deserted, except by a garrison; and an hour later the news came in that three divisions of the enemy were already across the river at Toro. Five minutes later the Scudamores were on horseback, carrying orders that the whole of the army, with the exception of the fourth and light divisions, which were on the Trabancos, under General Cotton, were to concentrate at Canizal that night. By the morning the movement was accomplished.

The day wore on in somewhat anxious expectation, and towards afternoon Wellington, accompanied by Lord Beresford, and escorted by Alten's, Bock's and Le Marchant's brigades of cavalry, started to make a reconnaissance of the enemy's movements. Caution was needed for the advance, as it was quite uncertain whether

the French were pushing on through the open country towards Canizal, or whether they were following the direct road from Toro to Salamanca. Evening closed in, but no signs of the French army were seen, and the party halted about six miles from Toro, and small parties of cavalry were despatched right and left to scour the country, and find out where the enemy had gone.

"It's very strange where the French can have got to," was the remark made, for the fiftieth time among the staff.

The detached parties returned, bringing no news whatever, and Lord Wellington again advanced slowly and cautiously towards Toro. Small parties were pushed on ahead, and presently an officer rode back with the news that he had been as far as the river, and that not a Frenchman was to be seen. It was too late to do any more, and they remained in uncertainty whether the enemy had recrossed the river after making a demonstration, or whether they had marched to their right, so as to make a circuit, and throw themselves between Ciudad Rodrigo and Salamanca, upon the line of communication of the British army.

Lord Wellington, with his staff, took possession of a deserted farm-house, the cavalry picketed their horses round it, and the Scudamores, who had been more than twenty-four hours in the saddle, wrapped themselves in their cloaks, and stretching themselves on the floor, were soon asleep. Just at midnight the sound of a horse's footfall approaching at a gallop was heard, and an officer, who had ridden, without drawing rein, from Canizal, dashed up to the farm.

Five minutes later the whole party were in the saddle again. The news was important, indeed. Marmont had drawn his whole army back across the Toro on the night of the 16th, had marched to Tordesillas, crossed there, and in the afternoon, after a march of fifty miles, had fallen upon Cotton's outposts, and driven them across the Trabancos.

Not a moment's time was lost by Wellington after he received the news; but,

unfortunately, six precious hours had already been wasted, owing to the despatches not having reached him at Canizal. With the three brigades of cavalry he set off at once towards Alaejos, while an officer was despatched to Canizal, to order the fifth division to march with all speed to Torrecilla de la Orden, six miles in the rear of Cotton's position at Castrejon.

Four hours' riding brought them to Alaejos, where a halt for two or three hours was ordered, to rest the weary horses and men. Soon after daybreak, however, all thought of sleep was banished by the roar of artillery, which told that Marmont was pressing hard upon Cotton's troops. "To horse!" was the cry, and Lords Wellington and Beresford, with their staff, rode off at full speed towards the scene of action, with the cavalry following hard upon their heels. An hour's ride brought them to the ground. Not much could be seen, for the country was undulating and bare, like the Brighton Downs, and each depression was full of the white morning mist, which wreathed and tossed fantastically from the effects of the discharges of firearms, the movements of masses of men, and the charges of cavalry hidden within it. Upon a crest near at hand were a couple of British guns, with a small escort of horse.

Suddenly, from the mist below, a party of some fifty French horsemen dashed out and made for the guns. The supporting squadron, surprised by the suddenness of the attack, broke and fled; the French followed hard upon them, and just as Lord Wellington, with his staff, gained the crest, pursuers and pursued came upon them, and in pell-mell confusion the whole were borne down to the bottom of the hill. For a few minutes it was a wild mélée. Lords Wellington, Beresford, and their staff, with their swords drawn, were in the midst of the fight, and friends and foes were mingled together, when the leading squadrons of the cavalry from Alaejos came thundering down, and very few of the Frenchmen who had made that gallant charge escaped to tell the tale.

The mists were now rapidly clearing up, and in a short time the whole French army

could be seen advancing. They moved towards the British left, and Wellington ordered the troops at once to retire. The British fell back in three columns, and marched for the Guarena, through Torrecilla de la Orden. The French also marched straight for the river, and now one of the most singular sights ever presented in warfare was to be seen.

The hostile armies were marching abreast, the columns being but a few hundred yards apart, the officers on either side waving their hands to each other. For ten miles the armies thus pressed forward the officers urging the men, and these straining every nerve to get first to the river. From time to time the artillery of either side, finding a convenient elevation, would pour a few volleys of grape into the opposing columns, but the position of the two armies, did not often admit of this. Gradually Cotton's men, fresher than the French, who had, in the two previous days, marched fifty miles, gained ground, and, reaching the river, marched across by the ford, the winners of the great race by so little that one division, which halted for a moment to drink, was swept by forty pieces of French artillery, which arrived on the spot almost simultaneously with it.

On the Guarena the British found the remaining divisions of the army, which had been brought up from Canizal. These checked Marmont in an attempt to cross at Vallesa, while the 29th and 40th Regiments, with a desperate bayonet charge, drove Carier's French division back as it attempted to push forward beyond Castrillo. Thus the two armies faced each other on the Guarena, and Marmont had gained absolutely nothing by his false movement at Toro, and his long and skillful detour by Tordesillas.

Quickly the rest of the day passed, as did the one which followed, the troops on both sides resting after their fatigues. Wellington expected to be attacked on the next morning and his army was arranged in two lines ready for the combat. At daybreak, however, Marmont moved his army up the river, crossed at a ford there, and

marched straight for Salamanca, thus turning Wellington's right, and threatening his communications. The British at once fell back, and the scene of the previous day was repeated the armies marching along the crest of two parallel hills within musket shot distance of each other.

This time however, the French troops, although they had marched considerably farther than the English proved themselves the best marchers, and when night fell Wellington had the mortification of seeing them in possession of the ford of Huerta on the Tormes, thus securing for Marmont the junction with an army which was approaching under King Joseph, and also the option of either fighting or refusing battle. Wellington felt his position seriously threatened, and sent off a despatch to the Spanish General Castanos, stating his inability to hold his ground, and the probability that he should be obliged to fall back upon Portugal. This letter proved the cause of the victory of Salamanca for it was intercepted by the French, and Marmont, fearing that Wellington would escape him, prepared at once to throw himself upon the road to Ciudad Rodrigo, and thus cut the British line of retreat, in spite of the positive order which he had received from King Joseph not to fight until he himself arrived with his army.

Upon the 21st both armies crossed the Tormes, the French at Alba and Huerta, the British at Aldea Lengua, and San Marta. Upon that day the news reached Wellington that General Chauvel, with 2000 cavalry, and 20 guns, would reach Marmont on the evening of the 22d, or the morning of the 23d, and the English general therefore resolved to retreat, unless Marmont should, by some mistake, give him a chance of fighting to advantage.

Close to the British right, and the French left, were two steep and rugged hills, called the Hermanitos, or Brothers, and soon after daybreak on the 22d, the French seized upon the one nearest to them, while the British took possession of the other. Then, watching each other, the two armies remained until noon, for Wellington could not

commence his retreat by daylight; but a long cloud of dust along the road to Ciudad Rodrigo showed that the baggage of the army was already en route for Portugal. Marmont now determined to make a bold stroke to cut off Wellington's retreat, and, although all his troops had not yet arrived, he ordered Maucune, with two divisions, to march round by the left and menace the Ciudad road. It was at three o'clock in the afternoon, and Wellington, who had been up all night, thinking that Marmont would make no move that day, had gone to lie down for an hour or two, when Tom Scudamore who, from an elevated point, was watching the movements of the enemy, hurried in with the news that the French were pushing their left round towards the Ciudad Road.

Wellington leaped to his feet, and hurried to the high ground, where he beheld, with stern satisfaction, that Marmont, in his eagerness to prevent the British escape, had committed the flagrant error of detaching his wing from his main body. Instantly he issued orders for an attack, and the great mass of men upon the British Hermanito moved down upon the plain to attack Maucune in flank, while the third division was ordered to throw itself across his line of march, and to attack him in front. As the advance across the plain would be taken in flank by the fire from the French Hermanito, General Pack was ordered to assail that position directly the British line had passed it.

Marmont, standing on the French Hermanito, was thunder-struck at beholding the plain suddenly covered with enemies, and a tremendous fire was at once opened upon the advancing British. Officer after officer was despatched to hurry up the French troops still upon the march, and when Marmont saw the third division dash across Maucune's path, he was upon the point of hurrying himself to the spot, when a shell burst close to him, and he was dashed to the earth with a broken arm, and two deep wounds in his side.

Thus, at the critical point of the battle, the French army was left without a head.

It was just five o'clock when Pakenham, with the third division, fell like a thunderbolt upon the head of Maucune's troops. These, taken by surprise by this attack, on the part of an enemy whom they had thought to see in full flight, yet fought gallantly, and strove to gain time to open out into order of battle. Bearing onwards, however, with irresistible force, the third division broke the head of the column, and drove it back upon its supports. Meanwhile, the battle raged all along the line; in the plain the fourth division carried the village of Arapiles, and drove back Bonnet's division with the bayonet, and the fifth division attacked Maucune's command in flank, while Pakenham was destroying its front.

Marmont was succeeded in his command by Bonnet, who was also wounded, and Clausel, an able general, took the command. He reinforced Maucune with his own divisions, which had just arrived, and, for a while, restored the battle. Then, past the right and left of Pakenham's division, the British cavalry, under Le Marchant, Anson, and D'Urban, burst through the smoke and dust, rode down twelve hundred of the French infantry, and then dashed on at the line behind. Nobly the charge was pressed, the third division following at a run, and the charge ceased not until the French left was entirely broken and five guns, and two thousand prisoners taken.

But forty minutes had passed since the first gun was fired, and the French defeat was already all but irretrievable, and the third, fourth, and fifth divisions now in line, swept forward as to assured victory. Clausel, however, proved equal to the emergency. He reinforced Bonnet's division with that of Fereij, as yet fresh and unbroken, and, at the same moment, Sarrut's and Brennier's divisions issued from the forest, and formed in the line of battle. Behind them the broken troops of Maucune's two divisions re-formed, and the battle was renewed with terrible force.

Pack, at the same moment, attempted unsuccessfully to carry the French Hermanito by assault with his Portuguese division, and the fate of the battle was again in the balance; the British divisions outnumbered, and outflanked, began to fall back,

Generals Cole, Leith, and Spry, were all wounded, and the French cavalry threatened the flank of the line. Wellington, however, had still plenty of reserves in hand, and at this critical moment he launched them at the enemy. The sixth division was brought up from the second line, and hurled at the center of the enemy in a fierce and prolonged charge, while the light and first divisions were directed against the French divisions which were descending from the French Hermanito, and against that of Foy, while the seventh division and the Spaniards were brought up behind the first line. Against so tremendous an assault as this the French could make no stand, and were pushed back in ever increasing disorder to the edge of the forest, where Foy's and Maucune's divisions stood at bay, and covered their retreat in the fast gathering darkness.

Wellington believed that he should capture a great portion of the beaten army, for he relied upon the Castle of Alba de Formes, commanding the ford at that place, being held by the Spaniards, but these had evacuated the place on the preceding day, and had not even informed Wellington that they had done so.

Thus, hidden by the night, the French retreated with but slight loss from the pursuing columns. In the battle the French had forty-two thousand men and seventy-four guns; the Allies forty-six thousand and sixty guns, but of the infantry a division were composed of Spaniards, and these could not be relied upon in any way. It was probably the most rapidly fought action ever known, and a French officer described it as the defeat of forty thousand men in forty minutes. The French loss was over twelve thousand in killed, wounded, and prisoners, and so completely were they dispersed that Clausel a week afterwards could only collect twenty thousand to their standards. It was a great victory, and celebrated as the first which Wellington had gained over the French, for although at Talavera and Busaco he had repulsed the French attack, he was not in either case in a position to do more than hold his ground.

Throughout this short and desperate fight the Scudamores had been fully engaged in conveying orders from one part of the field to another. Shot and shell flew around them in all directions, and yet when they met at the end of the action they found that they had escaped without a scratch. The day following the battle the pursuit began. Had King Joseph's advancing army united with Clausel's broken troops, he could have opposed Wellington's advance with a force far superior in numbers to that defeated at Salamanca. But Joseph, after hesitating, fell back in one direction, Clausel retreated in another, the opportunity for concentration was lost, and Wellington found no foe to bar his way on his triumphant march upon Madrid.

Joseph fell back from the capital as the English approached, leaving some thousands of men in the strong place known as the Retiro, together with an immense amount of arms, ammunition, and military stores of all kinds, all of which, including the troops, fell into the hands of the English within a few days of their arrival at Madrid.

It was a proud moment for the Scudamores, as riding behind Lord Wellington they entered Madrid on the 14th August.

The city was half mad with joy. Crowds lined the streets, while every window and balcony along the route was filled with ladies, who waved their scarves, clapped their hands, and showered flowers upon the heads of their deliverers. Those below, haggard and half-starved, for the distress in Madrid was intense, thronged round the general's horse, a shouting, weeping throng, kissing his cloak, his horse, any portion of his equipments which they could touch. Altogether it was one of the most glorious, most moving, most enthusiastic welcomes ever offered to a general.

The next fortnight was spent in a round of fêtes, bull fights, and balls, succeeding each other rapidly, but these rejoicings were but a thin veil over the distress which was general throughout the town. The people were starving, and many deaths occurred daily from hunger. The British could do but little to relieve the suffering which they saw around them, for they themselves were—owing to the utter

breakdown of all the arrangements undertaken by the Portuguese government, and to the indecision and incapacity of the Home Government—badly fed, and much in arrears of their pay. Nevertheless, the officers did what they could, got up soup kitchens, and fed daily many hundreds of starving wretches.

The heat was excessive and a very great deal of illness took place among the troops. The French were gathering strength in the South, and Wellington determined upon marching north and seizing Burgos, an important place, but poorly fortified. Leaving General Hill with two divisions at Madrid, he marched with the rest of the army upon Burgos.

CHAPTER XVII. — CAUGHT IN A TRAP.

So much had passed between the first visit of the Scudamores to Madrid as Spanish peasant boys, and their second entry as captains upon Lord Wellington's staff, that they had scarcely given a thought to the dangers they had at that time run, or to the deadly hatred with which they had inspired the guerilla chief Nunez. When they first rode into the town, indeed, they had spoken of it one to the other, and had agreed that it would be pleasant to be able to walk through the streets without fear of assassination; for even, as Tom said, if the scoundrel had any of his band there, they would not be likely to recognize them in their uniforms.

One evening, however, when they had been in Madrid about a fortnight, an incident happened which caused them to doubt whether their security from the hatred of the guerilla was as complete as they had fancied. They were sitting with a number of other officers in a large café in the Puerta del Sol, the principal square in Madrid, when a girl came round begging; instead of holding out her hand silently with a murmur for charity in the name of the holy Virgin, she began a long story, poured out in rapid language.

Several of the officers present knew more or less Spanish, but they were unable to

follow her quick utterances, and one of them said laughingly, "Scudamore, this is a case for you, she is beyond us altogether."

The girl followed the direction of the speaker's eye, and moved across to the brothers, who happened to be sitting next to each other, and began her story again. It was a complicated tale of French oppression, and the boys, interrupting her here and there to ask for details, talked with her for some minutes.

"I believe she is lying," Tom said, in English, "she tells her story as if she had learned it by heart, and gets confused whenever we cross-question her; there, give her a few coppers, I am out of change."

As Peter put his hand into his pocket for the money, Tom glanced up sharply at the girl. She was not, as might have been expected, watching Peter's movements with interest, but was looking inquiringly at some one in the crowd of promenaders. Tom followed her glance, and saw a peasant, standing half-hidden behind a group of passers, nod to her, and motion her to come to him. She waited until Peter put the coins into her hand; then, with a brief word of thanks, she moved away into the crowd.

"Peter, I believe those scoundrels are up to their old game, and that we are watched. Once or twice since we have been sitting here I have noticed a heavy-looking fellow glance at us very closely as he passed, and I just saw the same fellow, who was evidently hiding from observation, nod to that girl, and beckon her away."

"Her story was a lie from beginning to end," Peter said, "and it is quite possible that it was a got-up thing, on purpose to see whether we could talk Spanish well. I don't think any one could swear to us who only saw us then; but the fact of our speaking Spanish so well would go a long way towards settling the point in the mind of any one who suspected us!"

"We must be careful in future, Peter, and avoid quiet streets after dark, and keep a sharp look-out at all times, or we shall get a knife between our ribs, as sure as fate."

Time, however, passed on without anything occurring to give any support to their suspicion, they could not discover that they were being watched, or their footsteps dogged. They, nevertheless, continued to be, to a certain extent, upon their guard after dark; in the daytime the number of English soldiers about the streets was so large that there was very little danger of any attack.

On the evening before the army marched for Burgos, Tom, whose turn it was for duty at head-quarters, received a despatch, to carry to one of the generals of division encamped a mile or two out of the town. He did not need to go round to his quarters, as his horse was standing saddled in readiness in the courtyard. He was but an hour away, and, as he knew that he would not be farther required, he rode round to the house where he was quartered. His orderly came forward at his shout, and took his horse, and he mounted the broad stairs of the house, which was a very handsome one, and rang at the door on the second floor; for in Spain, as indeed almost all over the Continent, each floor is a separate dwelling.

Sam opened it.

"Nothing new, Sam?"

"No, sar, nothing new."

Tom passed through the sitting-room, and entered Peter's bedroom. It was in darkness.

"Asleep, old man?" he asked.

There was no answer. He came back into the sitting room, where two lamps were burning, and looked at his watch. "Half-past eleven. He is off to bed early. Sam, bring me some supper if you have got anything, I am hungry."

Sam came in, in a minute, with a small tray.

"How long has my brother been gone to bed?"

"Me did not know he gone to bed at all," Sam said, in surprise. "Me thought Massa

Peter been reading book."

Tom took up a light, and went into the bedroom, it was empty. "Sam, there's something wrong here!" Tom said sharply, for a sudden sensation of alarm seized him. "Peter is not here."

Sam came into the bedroom, and looked round in astonishment. "What become of him?" he said. "Where de debil he got to?"

"That's what I want to know, Sam. Now, then, just give all your attention. What time did he come in?"

"He came in at about nine o'clock, sar, with three other officers, Captain Farquharson, Major Heriot, and Captain Brown. Dey have bottle wine, and sit here and smoke. Well, Massa Tom, Sam sit in his room, and smoke him pipe, and he doze off a little; after a bit, may be ten o'clock, Sam hear dem move, and go to door; they were saying good-night, when Massa Peter said, 'I will just go down to see that the horses are all right.' Den dey all go down togeder."

"Did they shut the door?" Tom asked.

"No, Massa Tom, dey did not shut de door, because, a little while after, Sam, he wake up wid little start; he hear de door bang, and 'spose Massa Peter come back. Sam go off to sleep again till you ring bell."

Tom looked very grave. "What can Peter have gone off with Farquharson at this time of night for?"

Then he looked round the room, and said, almost with a cry, "Sam, look there, there are his cap and sword. He has not gone out with the others at all. What can have happened?"

Tom first glanced into his own room, and then ran downstairs in haste, followed by Sam, who was now also thoroughly alarmed. The orderly had just made the horse comfortable for the night, and was leaving the stable.

"Johnstone, when did you see my brother?"

"Well, it may be an hour, or an hour and a half back, sir. He came down with some other officers; I did not see them, but I heard them talking for a minute or two before he came in to look at the horses, and he asked if they were all right, and said they must be saddled by half-past five, and then he went up again—at least, I suppose he went up, for he had not got his cap on. Is anything wrong, sir?"

"I don't know, I am afraid to think," Tom said, in a dazed way. "He is not upstairs; he has not gone out; what can have become of him?"

He stood quiet for a minute or two, and then, with a great effort, brought his thoughts within control again. "The first thing is to assure ourselves whether he returned upstairs. Sam, fetch a lamp, the stairs are not lighted, and I want to examine them."

Sam soon returned with the lamp, and Tom, beginning at the street door, examined every step carefully all the way up, Sam and the soldier following him.

"There has been no scuffle on the stairs," he said; then he went through the little hall into the sitting-room again. Nothing appeared to have been disturbed. Then he looked at the floor, which was of polished oak, and knelt down to examine it more closely. "There have been men with dirty shoes standing here," he cried. "Do you see the marks on each side of the door, and there, do you see that scratch and that? There has been a scuffle. Good heavens! what has taken place here?"

Sam's face was pale with apprehension that something had happened to Peter; but, he said, "How dat be, Massa Tom, with Sam in the next room all the time?"

Tom made no reply; but was closely examining the floor—back across the hall. "There is a mark; there is another," he said, "not made by boots, but by their native sandals." Then he went out from the door, and up the next flight of stairs.

"There," he said, "just as I thought." Just round the angle of the stairs two steps were dirty and stained, as if dirty feet had been trampling upon them for some time. "I

suppose they knew I was out, and watched here, for hours, perhaps. Then, when Peter went down, they slipped in through the open door, and then"—without completing the sentence, Tom went back into the room, and threw himself into a chair in tearless despair.

Sam sobbed loudly. For some time there was silence. "There is no blood, sir, that I can see, not a speck," the orderly said. "They can't have killed Captain Scudamore, and, if they had, why should they have carried his body away?"

This was the question Tom had been asking himself. Assassinations were, in Madrid, every-day occurrences, and that Peter and he were especially liable to be murdered, owing to the hatred of Nunez and his gang, was clear; but, so far as he could see, not a drop of blood had been shed here. Presently Sam began to sob more loudly. "Dis break my heart, Massa Tom, to tink dat Sam be next door all de time, and, instead of watching, he sleep so sound dat Massa Peter carried straight away."

"You are not to blame, Sam, there was, probably, no noise whatever. But, what can it all mean? Johnstone, you had better go to bed, you can do no good now. Sam, give me my pistols; take that big stick of yours, and come round with me to head-quarters, we will call in at Captain Farquharson's on the way."

That officer, on being roused, and made to understand what was the matter, confirmed the account given by the orderly; he and his companions had parted at the street door, and Peter had gone down the yard to the stable.

"It is clear that Peter has been carried off," Tom said, "and I have not the least doubt that it has been done by some of the band of Nunez. As you have heard me say, they owe us a grudge, and have, no doubt, been on the look-out ever since we came here. We have been on guard, and never gave them a chance, and, I suppose, they got desperate when they found the army was moving again, and so carried out this audacious plan."

"If your brother had been found murdered I should understand it," Captain

Farquharson said; "but, what on earth did they carry him off for?"

Tom was silent for a minute.

"That fiend, Nunez, would have had us stabbed if he could do nothing else; but he would, if I judge him rightly, be really contented with nothing short of putting us to death himself in some horrible manner. My own idea is, that Peter is hidden away somewhere near, will be kept in concealment until the road is clear, and will then be taken to Nunez. I must go off and try and save him at all hazards."

Captain Farquharson was silent, while Tom walked up and down the room thoughtfully.

"I don't suppose the chief would refuse me leave," Tom said. "If he does, I must throw up my commission."

"No, no; you are sure to get leave for such a thing as this, but the difficulty of the affair will be to know how to proceed. The country will swarm with French, the guerillas are sure to keep a sharp look-out, and if you find him, how are you going to rescue him?"

"I don't know," Tom said, "but it's got to be done; that's clear. I can't set out as a Spanish peasant," he went on after a pause. "They know me as that now. At least, if I do I must get up as an old man and change my appearance. I might go as a woman, but I am too tall in the first place, and then women don't go wandering over the country in such times as this. But there, I have time to think it over before morning. I suppose the general will be moving about five o'clock; I will see him the first thing, and tell him the whole story. Good-night."

And so Tom went back to his quarters, and sat thinking deeply until morning, while Sam sat gloomily in his little room, sometimes with tears rolling down his cheeks, sometimes muttering terrible threats against the guerillas, at other times cursing himself for having been asleep instead of watching over his young master's safety. Tom had briefly told him that he intended to get leave in order to search for Peter.

At daybreak, when he heard Tom moving, he went into the sitting-room.

"Look here, Massa Tom, Sam only one word to say. He going to look for Massa Peter. Sam know dat him color berry spicuous, dat people look at him and tink he de debil. Sam don't spect he going wid you. Dat wouldn't do. Dese fellows watch him, know dat black fellow here. Only Sam go somehow. He trabel night, hide up at day time. He join you de last ting when you go to mash up dem guerillas like squash. Anyhow, Sam must go. If can get leave, berry well, if not he desert. Anyhow he go, dat sartin. Sam kill himself if he stay behind."

Tom had already thought over this. He was sure that the faithful negro would not remain behind, but he had seen that his companionship would be fatal. He had, therefore, formed some plan in his head similar to that which Sam proposed, and he knew that when the moment for action came his courage, strength, and devotion would be invaluable.

"You shall go, Sam," he said, holding out his hand to his attached follower. "As you say, you can't go with me, but you shall go somehow."

"Thank you, Massa Tom," the negro said gratefully, "You berry sure if Massa Peter die Sam die too."

Tom now went to head-quarters, and found that Lord Wellington was just up. Sending in to say that he wished to speak with him for a few minutes on a matter of urgent personal importance, he was admitted, and related as concisely as he could Peter's disappearance, and told the story of the affair with the guerillas, which accounted for the intense desire for vengeance on the part of Nunez. He ended by asking for leave of absence.

The general heard him to the end, asking a brief question here and there.

"You can have the leave certainly, Captain Scudamore, I know that it is needless for me to point out the risks that you will run, both from the French and guerillas. I think that it might be an advantage if I give you a note which you can, in case of

absolute necessity, show to any French officer."

So saying, the general sat down and wrote as follows:—

"To the French officer commanding.—The Earl of Wellington, commander-in-chief of His Britannic Majesty's forces in Spain, gives his assurance that the bearer of this, Captain Scudamore, although not in English uniform, is not engaged upon any mission connected with the army, or to obtain information respecting the strength and position of the French forces. His business is entirely private, and he is engaged in an attempt to discover and rescue a brother who has been carried off by the guerilla chief Nunez in order to gratify private vengeance. The Earl of Wellington, confiding in the natural courtesy of the French nation, trusts that officers of that service will, if applied to, assist Captain Scudamore in any way in their power, and he will feel personally obliged to them by their so doing."

Tom expressed his deep gratitude for this, which might, he foresaw, be of inestimable advantage to him.

"I am taking my servant with me, sir—the negro; he will not travel with me by day, but will join me wherever I tell him; he is very strong and brave, and is deeply attached to us."

"Yes, I remember," the general said; "that is the man whose life you saved. Do you leave at once?"

"No, sir; I am thinking of riding with you to-morrow at any rate. The route lies on the way I have to go, and I am sure to be watched here."

"Very well," the general said; "I wish you good fortune; but you have a difficult, almost a desperate, service before you."

Upon leaving head-quarters, Tom again called on Captain Farquharson.

"Farquharson, I hear that it will be eleven before the chief leaves. I wish you would go to that little shop opposite the opera-house; they have got wigs and all that sort of

thing there. Please get me two old men's wigs and beards, and one set of those mutton-chop shaped whiskers, and a woman's wig. I haven't made up my mind yet what I am going to wear, but I want these things to choose from. I am sure to be watched, and if I were to go there they would find out, five minutes afterwards, what I had bought. In the meantime I am going to the head of the police to give notice of Peter's disappearance, and to ask him to have the carts leaving the town for the next few days searched. I have no doubt the fellows will outwit the police, but it's no use throwing away a chance."

It was six days after this that an old man, with long white hair and gray beard, and with a box containing cheap trinkets, beads, necklaces, earrings, knives, scissors, and other like articles, was sitting at the junction of two roads near the lower slopes of the Pyrenees, some twenty miles north of Vittoria. He had one of his sandals off, and appeared to have just risen from a bed of leaves in the forest behind him. The dawn had broken, but it was still twilight. Presently he heard a footstep coming along the road, and at once applied himself to wrapping the bandages, which serve for stockings to the Spanish peasant, round his leg, looking eagerly from under his wide sombrero to see who was approaching. As the new-comer came in sight, the pedlar at once ceased his employment and rose to meet him. He had recognized the figure, but the face was hidden, the Spanish cloak, worn as is usual by peasant and noble alike, with one end thrown over the shoulder, hiding the chin and lower part of the face, while the wide felt hat, pressed well down in front, allowed scarcely a glimpse even of the nose. That, however, would have been sufficient in the present case, for the man was a negro.

Upon seeing the pedlar rise, he ran forward to meet him.

"Ah, Massa Tom, tank de Lord me find you safe and sound. I always keep on tinking you taken prisoner or killed eider by de French or de robbers—one as bad as de oder."

"I have thought the same of you, Sam, for your risk has been far greater than mine. Well, thank God, it is all right thus far. But come back into the wood, I have got some food there, and here any one might come along."

They were soon deep in the wood, where, by a pile of grass and leaves which had evidently been used as a bed, was an open wallet, with some bread, cheese, cold meat and a small skin of wine.

"Are you hungry, Sam?"

"Downright starving, sar; dis chile eat noting for two days."

"Why, how is that, Sam; you had six days' provision with you when you started?"

"Dat true enough, sar, but Sam's appetite bigger than usual, noting to do all day sitting in de woods, waiting for night to come so as to go on again; so had to eat, and de food all went before Sam thought dat dere was two more days before he meet you."

"Well, sit down now, Sam, and eat away; we have plenty of time."

They had much to tell each other. They had traveled by the same road, one by night, the other by day—Sam passing the days sleeping in the woods, his master traveling by day and at night sleeping in wretched village posadas. He, too, would far rather have slept in the woods, for the insects and filth made sleep almost impossible in these places, besides which he ran a good deal of risk as to the discovery of his disguise. He had, however, chosen the inns in hopes of hearing something which might give him a clue as to the object of his search. The only information, which he had gained was to the effect that Nunez still had his quarters at the old place. He had been driven out of it, and the village had been burned by the French, but the position was a convenient one, and the houses had been cleared and roughly roofed with boughs of trees and straw, and the band was still there. This much was satisfactory, and he could hardly have expected to learn more, unless he had happened to meet some of the members of the band itself. They had not traveled by the main road, as

upon that large forces of the French were collected; and even if Tom could have passed through, boldly, Sam could not have made his way. Even by the road they had chosen Tom had met several bodies of French, while at Vittoria a very large force was assembling, destined for the relief of Burgos.

Sam had but few incidents to relate. He had been carefully instructed by Tom before starting as to the road he should take, and the position and distances apart of the towns and villages upon it. He had traveled only at night, and had but once or twice exchanged a word with passers by. People did not travel much at night in so disturbed a country, and when Sam heard a foot-passenger approaching, or, as was more frequently the case, a party of French cavalry, he left the road and lay down, until they had passed. The one or two foot-passengers he had met suddenly he had passed with the usual Spanish muttered salutation, and the darkness and the disguise prevented any recognition of his color.

"Now, sar," Sam said, when they had finished breakfast, "what am to be done next?"

"I do not think, Sam, that the party who have got Peter have arrived yet. They could only have started on the day that we did; they have as long a road to go, and most likely they have got a bullock-cart, which won't travel more than fifteen miles a day at the outside. They have got Peter in a cart covered up with something, we may be sure. I don't think they will be here for another day or so at the earliest. If we knew what sort of cart it was, we could attack them on the way if there are not too many of them; but unfortunately we don't know that; and as there are three or four roads up to the village, and they are sure to make a detour, we don't know which they will come by. I hope to learn at the village. We will stay where we are till dark, then we will push on; it is only a couple of miles or so from here. I will steal into the place after dark, and try and overhear what is going on. You shall remain at a point where you can see down into the village and can hear a shout. I will give you this letter of Lord Wellington, and if you hear a pistol shot and hear me shout 'Sam!' you will know I

am caught, and must make off as hard as you can to that small town in the plain, where there is a French garrison; ask for the commanding-officer, show this letter, and offer to guide them so as to surprise Nunez and his band. That is our sole chance. But I don't think there is much risk of being caught. I shall be very careful, you may rely upon it; and as I know the position of the house, I shall be able to make my way about. Once night has fallen they go off to bed; and even if I walked boldly about the place I should likely enough meet no one all night."

That evening Tom entered the village as soon as it was fairly dark. He knew, from his former experience, that sentries were always placed at points whence they could get a view of the roads, and he made his way so as to avoid any risk of observation by them; but when he reached a place whence he could in turn view the posts of the watchers, he found that they were deserted, and concluded that the brigands had become careless, from the belief that, now the French had once destroyed the village, they would not be likely to come up to search for them there a second time; besides which, they might reckon that the French had their hands much too full with the advance of the Allied Army to spare either men or time in raids upon the guerillas. In this particular, indeed, they would have argued wrongly, for the French during the whole war, however much they were pressed by Wellington, always kept sufficient forces in hand to scatter the guerillas as fast as they become formidable.

Tom had now taken off his beard and wig, and had put on the small whisker, which is the general fashion of wearing the hair throughout Spain. Thus he trusted, if surprised in the dark, to pass as one of the band. So quiet was the village when he entered, that he at first thought it was deserted; at last, however, he saw a light in one of the houses in the center of the village. Approaching carefully and noiselessly he saw a group of five men sitting and drinking round a fire made on the ground, in the center of one of the windowless rooms, the smoke finding its way out through the roof.

"I tell you," one said, "I am getting sick of this life; I am ready to go and kill the French, but to be left up here, where there is nothing to do, no one to talk to, not a roof to cover one; bah! I am sick of it. But Nunez will be back in three days, and we shall be merry enough then."

"Not we," another said, "this was a pleasant village in the old days, what is it now? There are no women, not even old mother Morena, who used to cook well, if she was free of her tongue. There is not even a priest now to shrive us if one is brought in to die."

"Nunez will come back in a good temper if it is true what Lope said yesterday when he came through, that the lads at Madrid had got one of those English boys who made a fool of him two years ago. That was a go. Demonio! but it was a fine thing. If it is true that they have got him and are bringing him here I would not be in his skin for all the treasures of King Joseph. Yes, Nunez was always a devil, but he is worse now. Somehow we always have bad luck, and the band gets smaller and smaller, I don't suppose there's above fifty with him now. I expect we shall have them pretty well all here this week."

"No fear of a visit from the French?"

"None; Reynier at Vittoria is busy now in sending every man he can spare forward to the army that's gathering near Burgos."

This was enough for Tom, who stole silently away to the spot where Sam was anxiously awaiting him.

CHAPTER XVIII. — JUST IN TIME.

"I shall go straight back to Vittoria, Sam. By what they say, General Reynier is in command there, and as it was through his wife that all this terrible business has come about, we have a right to expect him to do his best to get us out of it. I will start at once. Now look here, Sam. You must put yourself where you can keep watch

over the village. If you see any party come in, either to-night or to-morrow, you must try and discover if Peter is among them. If he is, light a fire down in that hollow where it can't be seen from above, but where we can see it on that road. It's twenty miles to Vittoria; if I can get to see General Reynier to-morrow, I may be back here with cavalry by night; if he is out or anything prevents it, I will be here next night, as soon after dusk as it will be safe. I will dismount the men and take them over the hill, so as to avoid the sentinel who is sure to be posted on the road when Nunez arrives. If they come in the afternoon, Sam, and you find that anything is going to be done at once, do everything you can to delay matters."

"All right, Massa Tom, if, when you come back you find Massa Peter dead, you be berry sure you find dis chile gone down too."

It was seven o'clock next morning when Tom entered Vittoria, and a few cautious inquiries proved the fact that General Reynier was really in command of the French division there. He at once sought his head-quarters, and after some talk with a woman selling fruit near the house, heard that the general and his staff had started at daybreak, but whither of course she knew not. Tom hesitated for some time, and then, seeing an officer standing at the door, went up to him and asked if the general would be back soon.

"He will be back in an hour or two," the officer replied in Spanish, "but it is no use your waiting to see him. He has his hands full and can't be bothered with petitions as to cattle stolen or orchards robbed. Wait till we have driven the English back, and then we shall have time to talk to you."

"Your pardon," Tom said humbly. "It is not a complaint that I have to make, it is something of real importance which I have to communicate to him."

"You can tell me, I am Colonel Decamps; it will be all the same thing if your news is really important."

"Thank you very kindly, señor, it must be the general himself; I will wait here."

Thereupon Tom sat down with his back to the wall a short distance off, pulled out some bread and fruit he had bought in the town, and began quietly to eat his breakfast. An hour later a pretty carriage with two fine horses drew up to the door. It was empty, and was evidently intended for some one in the house. Suddenly, the thought flashed across his mind, perhaps Madame Reynier and her child were there. It was curious that the thought had not occurred to him before, but it had not, and he drew near, when a sentry at the door roughly ordered him to stand further back. Presently a lady came to the door, accompanied by a little girl. There she stood for a minute talking with the officer with whom Tom had spoken. At the moment a young officer passed Tom on his way to the house.

"Monsieur," Tom said, in French, "do me the favor to place that ring in the hands of Madame Reynier. It is a matter of life and death. She will recognize the ring, it is her own," he added, as the young officer in surprise hesitated. He was a bright handsome young fellow, and after a moment's, pause, he went up to the lady. "My dear aunt," he said, "here is a mystery. An old Spanish beggar speaks French, not very good French, but enough to make out, and he begs me to give you this ring, which he says is yours, and which, by the way, looks a valuable one." Madame Reynier, in some surprise, held out her hand for the ring. "It is not mine," she began, when a sudden thought struck her, and turning it round she saw "a Louise Reynier, tumors reconnaissance," which she had had engraved on it, before giving it to Tom. "Who gave it to you, Jules?" she asked eagerly.

"That old pedler," Jules said.

"Bring him in," Madame Reynier said, "the carriage must wait; I must speak to him and alone."

"My dear aunt," began her nephew.

"Don't be afraid, Jules, I am not going to run away with him, and if you are a good boy you shall know all about it afterwards, wait here, Louise, with your cousin;" and

beckoning to Tom to follow her, she went into the house, the two officers looking astounded at each other as the supposed Spanish pedler followed her into her sitting-room.

"What is your message?" she asked.

Tom's answer was to remove his wide hat, wig, and beard.

"Himself!" Madame Reynier exclaimed, "my preserver," and she held out both her hands to him. "How glad I am, but oh! how foolish to come here again, and—and"—she hesitated at the thought that he, an English spy, ought not to come to her, the wife of a French general.

Tom guessed her thought. "Even General Reynier might succor us without betraying the interests of his country. Read that, madame; it is an open letter," and he handed her Lord Wellington's letter.

She glanced through it and turned pale. "Your brother! is he in the hands of the guerillas? Where? How?"

"He is in the hands of that scoundrel Nunez; he swore he would be revenged for that day's work, and he has had Peter carried off. No doubt to kill him with torture."

"Oh! and it is through me," Madame Reynier exclaimed, greatly distressed. "What can we do! Please let me consult with my friends, every soldier shall be at your service," and she opened the door. "Colonel Deschamps, Jules, come here directly, and bring Louise with you." These officers, on entering, were struck dumb with astonishment on finding a young peasant instead of an old pedler, and at seeing tears standing in Madame Reynier's eyes. "Louise," she said to her daughter, "look at this gentleman, who is he?"

The child looked hard at Tom; he was dressed nearly as when she first saw him—and as he smiled she recognized him. "Oh, it is the good boy!" she cried, and leaped into Tom's arms, and kissed him heartily.

"Do you think we have gone mad, Jules, Louise and I? This is one of the young English officers who saved our lives, as you have often heard me tell you."

Jules stepped forward, and shook Tom's hand heartily, but Colonel Deschamps looked very serious. "But, madame," he began, "you are wrong to tell me this."

"No, Colonel;" Madame Reynier said, "here is a letter, of which this gentleman is the bearer, from Lord Wellington himself, vouching for him, and asking for the help of every Frenchman."

Colonel Deschamps read it, and his brow cleared, and he held out his hand to Tom. "Pardon my hesitation, sir," he said in Spanish; "but I feared that I was placed in a painful position, between what I owe to my country, and what all French soldiers owe to you, for what you did for Madame Reynier. I am, indeed, glad to find that this letter absolves me from the former duty, and leaves me free to do all I can to discharge the latter debt. Where is your brother, and why has he been carried off? I have known hundreds of our officers assassinated by these Spanish wolves, but never one carried away. An English officer, too, it makes it the more strange!"

Tom now related the story of Peter's abduction; the previous attempts of members of Nunez's band to assassinate them, and the reasons he had for believing that Peter was close to, if not already at, the headquarters of that desperado.

"Is he still there?" Jules asked. "We routed him out directly the general came up here. My aunt declared herself bound by a promise, and would give us no clue as to the position of the village, but he had made himself such a scourge, that there were plenty of others ready to tell; if we had known the roads, we would have killed the whole band, but unfortunately they took the alarm and made off. So he has gone back there again. Ah! there is the general."

Madame Reynier went out to meet her husband, and drawing him aside into another room, explained the whole circumstance to him, with difficulty detaining him long enough to tell her story, as the moment he found that his wife and child's deliverer

was in the next room, he desired to rush off to see him. The story over, he rushed impetuously into the room, where Tom was explaining his plans to his French friends, seized him in his arms, and kissed him on both cheeks, as if he had been his son.

"I have longed for this day!" he said, wiping his eyes. "I have prayed that I might some day meet you, to thank you for my wife and child, who would have been lost to me, but for you. And now I hear your gallant brother is paying with his life for that good deed. Tell me what to do, and if necessary I will put the whole division at your orders."

"I do not think that he will have above fifty men with him, general; say eighty, at the outside. Two squadrons of cavalry will be sufficient. They must dismount at the bottom of the hill, and I will lead them up. We must not get within sight of the hill till it is too dark for their look-out to see us, or the alarm would be given, and we should catch no one. We shall know if they have arrived, by a fire my man is to light. If they have not come, then I would put sentries on guard upon every road leading there, and search every cart that comes up; they are sure to have got him hid under some hay, or something of that sort, and there are not likely to be more than two or three men actually with it, so as not to attract attention. It will be all right if they do not arrive there to-day."

"It is about five hours' ride for cavalry," the general said, "that is at an easy pace; it will not be dark enough to approach the hill without being seen till eight o'clock. Two squadrons shall be paraded here at three o'clock. I will go with you myself; yes, and you shall go too, Jules," he said, in answer to an anxious look from his nephew. "In the mean time you can lend our friend some clothes; you are about the same size."

"Come along," Jules said laughing; "I think we can improve your appearance," and, indeed, he did so, for in half an hour Tom returned looking all over a dashing young

French hussar, and little Louise clapped her hands and said—

"He does look nice, mamma, don't he? Why can't he stay with us always, and dress like that? and we know he's brave, and he would help papa and Jules to kill the wicked English."

There was a hearty laugh, and Jules was about to tell her that Tom was himself one of the wicked English, but Madame Reynier shook her head, for, as she told him afterwards, it was as well not to tell her, for little mouths would talk, and there was no occasion to set everyone wondering and talking about the visit of an English officer to General Reynier. "There is no treason in it, Jules, still one does not want to be suspected of treason, even by fools."

Sam watched all night, without hearing any sound of vehicles, but in the morning he saw that several more guerillas had come in during the night. In the morning parties of twos and threes began to come in from the direction of Vittoria, and it was evident from the shouting and noise in the village that these brought satisfactory news of some kind. In the afternoon most of them went out again in a body to the wood at the foot of the hill, and soon afterwards Sam saw a cart coming along across the plain. Two men walked beside it, and Sam could see one, if not two more perched upon the top of the load. Three others walked along at a distance of some fifty yards ahead, and as many more at about the same distance behind. He could see others making their way through the fields. "Dis berry bad job," Sam said to himself; "me berry much afraid dat Massa Tom he not get back in time. Der's too many for Sam to fight all by himself, but he must do someting." Whereupon Sam set to to think with all his might, and presently burst into a broad grin. "Sure enough dat do," he said; "now let me arrange all about what dey call de pamerphernalia." First, he emptied out the contents of a couple of dozen pistol cartridges; he wetted the powder and rolled it up in six cartridges, like squibs, three short ones and three much longer. Then he opened Tom's kit, and took out a small box of paints, which Tom had

carried with him for making dark lines on his face, and in other ways to assist his disguise. Taking some white paint, Sam painted his eyelids up to his eyebrows, and a circle on his cheeks, giving the eyes at a short distance the appearance of ghastly saucers.

"Dat will do for de present," he said; "now for business. If dey wait till it get dark, all right; if not, Sam do for Nunez and two or three more, and den go down with Massa Peter!"

Then carefully examining the priming of the pair of pistols, which he carried—the very pistols given to Peter by the passengers of the Marlborough coach—he prepared to set out.

It was now six o'clock, and he calculated that the waggon would by this time have mounted the hill, and reached the village; he had already collected a large heap of dry sticks and some logs, at the point Tom had pointed out, these he now lit, and then started for the top of the hill. Looking back, just as he reached the crest, he could see, knowing where it was, a very light smoke curling up over a clump of trees which intervened between him and the fire, but it was so slight that he was convinced that it would not be noticed by an ordinary observer. Sam saw at once, on reaching the top of the hill, that the guerillas were crowded round the waggon, which stood at the edge of a small clump of trees in the middle of the village. The moment was favourable, and he at once started forward, sometimes making a detour, so as to have the shelter of a tree, sometimes stooping behind a low stone wall, until he reached the first house in the village. It was now comparatively easy work, for there were enclosures and walls, the patches of garden-ground were breast-high with weeds, and, stooping and crawling, Sam soon reached a house close to the waggon. It was a mere hut, and had not been repaired. The roof was gone, but the charred shutters and doors still hung on their hinges. It was the very place from which to see without being seen. Sam entered by a door from behind, and found that, through a

slight opening in the window-shutter, he could see all that was going on. Some fifty guerillas were standing or sitting in groups at a distance of twenty yards.

In the centre of the groups, lying on the ground, was a figure which he at once recognized as Peter. It was wound round and round with ropes; beside it stood, or rather danced, Nunez pouring forth strings of abuse, of threats, and of curses, and enforcing them with repeated kicks at the motionless figure.

"De debil!" muttered Sam, "me neber able to stand dis. If you not stop dat, Massa Nunez, me put a bullet through dat ugly head of yours, as sure as you stand dere. But me mustn't do it till last ting; for, whether I kill him or not, it's all up with Massa Peter and me if I once fire."

Fortunately Nunez was tired, and in a short time he desisted, and threw himself down on the ground. "Take off his ropes, one of you," he said: "there would be no fear of his running away had he three or four days to live, instead of as many hours. Take the gag out of his mouth, throw some water over him to bring him round, and pour some wine down his throat. I want him to be fresh, so as to be able to enjoy the pleasure we have in store for him. And now let's have dinner."

Sam felt that for another hour at least Peter was safe, and therefore, with the same precaution as before, he crept away from his hiding-place, through the village, and over the hill-crest, to the place where he had made his fire. The logs were burning well, but gave out but little smoke. Sam looked at the sky. "Dusk cum on berry fast," he said; "another hour Massa Tom come on with soldiers. If he see fire, he hurry up sharp." So saying, Sam heaped on a pile of wood, and then made his way back. He knew that Tom would not approach until it was too dark for the movements of the troops to be seen by the look-outs, and that he could not be expected to reach the village until fully an hour after dark. "Just another hour and a half," he said to himself; "ebery thing depend upon what happen before dat time." It was quite dusk before he regained the shelter of the cottage. He had gone round by the wagon, and

had taken from it a large stable-fork, muttering as he did so. "Golly! dis de berry ting." Close by he saw the carcase of a bullock which the guerillas had just slaughtered, and from this he cut off the horns and tail.

When Sam peeped out through the shutter he saw that something was going to be done. Nunez was sitting smoking a cigarette, with a look of savage pleasure in his face, while the men heaped up a large fire in front of the trees.

"I don't like dat gentleman's look," Sam said to himself. "It's time dis chile begin to dress for de pantomime, dat quite plain. Massa Tom get here too late." Thus saying, Sam began to deliberately undress.

Peter, his arms and feet still bound, was sitting with his back against a tree, watching what were, he was convinced, the preparations for his death. For the last ten days he had lived in a sort of confused and painful dream. From the moment, when, upon entering his room two hands suddenly gripped his throat, others thrust a gag in the mouth, and then blindfolded him, while some one from behind lashed his arms to his side, and then altogether, lifting him like a log, carried him downstairs and threw him into a cart, he had not till now seen anything. The bandage had never been removed from his eyes, or the cords from his limbs. Sometimes he had been made to sit up, and soup and wine had been poured down his throat, or a piece of bread thrust into his mouth; then he had been again gagged and thrown into a cart. Over him brushwood and fagots had been piled, and there he had lain, until at night a stop was made, when he was taken out, fed, and then thrust back again and covered over.

From the first he had never doubted who were his captors, or what was his destination, and he therefore experienced no surprise whatever, when, on his arrival at the village, on the bandage being taken off his eyes, he saw where he was. That it was useless to beg for mercy of the savages into whose power he had fallen he knew well enough, and he looked as calm and indifferent, as if he did not hear a word of the threats and imprecations which Nunez was heaping on him.

"You see that fire," the enraged guerilla said, "there you shall be roasted! English pig that you are! But not yet. That were too quick a death! Here," he said to his followers, "make a little fire by the side of the big one—there under the arm of that tree; and put on plenty of green leaves: we will smoke our pig a bit before we roast him!"

Peter still eyed him unflinchingly. He was determined that no pain should wring a complaint or prayer for mercy. Even now he did not quite despair, for he thought that he had just one chance of life. He was sure that Tom would move heaven and earth to save him. He reckoned that he would at once guess who had carried him off, and with what object; and he felt that Tom would be certain to set off to his rescue. All this he had reflected over in his long days of weary suffering, and from the moment that he was unbandaged, and propped against the tree, he had listened attentively for any unusual sound. How Tom could rescue him he did not see. He was so utterly crippled, from his long confinement, that he knew that it would be hours, perhaps days, before he could walk a step; yet, still he thought it possible that Tom might try; and he feared more than he hoped, for he trembled lest, if Tom were really there, that he would do some rash thing, which would involve him in his fate. "Whether Tom is here or not," Peter thought as he looked unflinchingly at Nunez, "one thing is certain, if I know my brother, you will not have many days to live after me, for Tom will follow you all over Spain, but he will avenge me at last!" Such were Peter's thoughts, and so likely did he think it that Tom was present, that he was scarcely surprised when he heard, as from the ground behind him, a well-known voice.

"Massa Peter, you keep up your heart. Sam here, Massa Tom he be here in another half hour with French soldiers. If dey go to kill you before dat, Sam play dem trick. Can you run, Massa Peter, if I cut de cord?"

"No, Sam."

"Dat bad job. Neber mind, Massa Peter, you keep up your heart. Sam keep quiet as long as he can, but when de worst come Sam do de trick all right."

"Don't show yourself, Sam. It would only cost you your life, and couldn't help me; besides, it would put them on their guard. They won't kill me yet. They will smoke me, and so on, but they will make it last as long as they can."

Peter was able to say this, for at the moment Nunez was occupied in rolling and lighting a second cigarette. Peter received no answer, for Sam, seeing some guerillas bringing sticks and leaves to make a fire, as Nunez, had ordered, crept back again into the deep shadow behind. The fire was now giving out volumes of smoke, a guerilla climbed up the tree and slung a rope over it, and three others approached Peter. His heart beat rapidly; but it was with hope, not fear. He knew, from the words of Nunez, that at present he was not going to be burned, but, as he guessed, to be hung over the smoke until he was insensible, and then brought to life again with buckets of water, only to have the suffocation repeated, until it pleased Nunez to try some fresh mode of torture.

It was as he imagined. The rope was attached to his legs, and amid the cheers of the guerillas, two men hauled upon the other end until Peter swung, head downwards, over the fire. There was no flame, but dense volumes of pungent smoke rose in his face. For a moment his eyes smarted with agony, then a choking sensation seized him, his blood seemed to rush into his head, and his veins to be bursting: and there was a confused din in his ears and a last throb of pain, and then he was insensible.

"That's enough for the present," Nunez said; "cut him down."

The men advanced to do so, but paused, with astonishment, for from behind the great fire was a loud yell—"Yah, yah, yah!"—each louder than the last, and then, leaping through the flames appeared, as they supposed, the devil. Sam's appearance was indeed amply sufficient to strike horror in the minds of a band of intensely superstitious men. He had entirely stripped himself, with the exception of his

sandals, which he had retained in order to be able to run freely; on his head were two great horns; in one hand he held a fork, and in the other what appeared to be his tail, but which really belonged to the slaughtered bullock. From his month, his horns, and the end of his tail poured volumes of fire, arising, it needs not to say, from the squibs he had prepared. The great white circles round the eyes added to the ghastliness of his appearance, and seeing the terrible figure leap apparently from the flames, it is no wonder that a scream of terror rose from the guerillas. Whatever a Spanish peasant may believe about saints and angels, he believes yet more implicitly in a devil. Black, with horns, and a tail—and here he was—with these appendages tipped with fire! Those who were able turned and fled in terror, those who were too frightened to run fell on their knees and screamed for mercy, while one or two fell insensible from fear. Taking the squibs from his mouth, and giving one more startling yell, to quicken the fugitives, Sam made two strides to where Peter was hanging, cut the rope, and lowered him down.

Nunez had at first joined in the flight, but looking over his shoulder he saw what Sam was doing. His rage and frenzy, at the thought of being cheated of his victim, even by the evil one himself, overcame his fear, and he rushed back, shouting, "He is mine! He is mine! I won't give him to you!" and fired a pistol almost in Sam's face. The ball carried away a portion of one of Sam's ears, and with a yell, even more thrilling than those he had given before, he plunged his pitchfork into the body of the guerilla, then, exerting all his immense strength, he lifted him upon it, as if he had been a truss of straw, took three steps to the great bonfire and cast the brigand into it.

There was a volume of sparks, a tumbling together of big logs, and the most cruel of the Spanish guerillas had ceased to exist.

This awful sight completed the discomfiture of the guerillas—some hearing their chief's shouts and the sound o his pistol had looked round, but the sight of the

gigantic fiend casting him into the fire was too much for them. With cries of horror and fear they continued their flight; a few of them, who had fallen on their knees, gained strength enough, from fear, to rise and fly; the rest lay on their faces. Sam saw that for the present all was clear, and lifting up Peter's still insensible body, as if it had no weight whatever, he turned and went at a brisk trot out of the village, then over the crest and down towards the fire.

Then he heard a ring of metal in front of him, and a voice said, "Qui vive!" while another voice said, "Is that you, Sam?"

"Bress de Lord! Massa Tom, dis is me sure enough: and what is much better, here is Massa Peter."

"Thank God!" Tom said fervently. "Is he hurt? Why don't you speak, Peter?"

"He all right, Massa Tom. He talk in a minute or two. Now smoke choke him, he better presently. Here, massa, you take him down to fire, pour a little brandy down his throat. Now, massa officer, I lead de way back to village."

As Tom took Peter in his arms a sudden fire of musketry was heard down on the road.

"Our fellows have got them," Jules said. "I don't know what has alarmed them, but they are running away!"

"Push forward," General Reynier said, "and give no quarter! Jules, keep by the negro, and see that he comes to no harm. The men might mistake him for a guerilla."

The night was pitch dark, and the extraordinary appearance of Sam could not be perceived until after scouring the village and shooting the few wretches whom they found there, they gathered round the fire. Before reaching it, however, Sam had slipped away for a moment into the hut where he had stripped; here he quickly dressed himself, removed the paint from his face, and rejoined the group, who were not a little surprised at seeing his black face.

In a short time the parties who had been posted on all the various roads came in, and it was found that they had between them killed some thirty or forty of the brigands, and had brought in two or three prisoners.

"Have you killed or taken Nunez?" General Reynier asked. "Our work is only half done if that scoundrel has escaped."

"I have asked the prisoners," one of the officers said, "and they tell an extraordinary story, that the devil has just thrown him into the fire!"

"What do they mean by such folly as that," the general asked angrily. "Were they making fun of you?"

"No, sir, they were certainly serious enough over it, and they were all running for their lives when they fell into our hands; they had been horribly frightened at something."

"Ask that fellow there," the general said, pointing to a prisoner who had been brought in by another detachment, "he cannot have spoken to the others."

The man was brought forward, and then Jules asked him in Spanish: "What were you all running away for?"

The man gave a glance of horror at the fire. "The devil came with his pitchfork, fire came out of his mouth, his tail and his horns were tipped with sparks, the captain fired at him, of course the bullet did no good, and the devil put his fork into him, carried him to the fire, and threw him in."

Jules and some of the other young officers burst out laughing, but the general said:—

"Humph! We can easily prove a portion of the story. See if there are any human remains in that fire."

The wind was blowing the other way, but as a sergeant went up to the fire in obedience to the general's order, he said:—

"There is a great smell of burnt flesh here, and, sapristi, yes," as he tossed over the logs with his foot "there is a body here, sir, pretty well burnt up."

"It's a curious story," the general said. "Where is that negro, perhaps he can enlighten us?"

But Sam had already left to look after Peter.

"Jules, put these fellows against that wall and give them a volley, then march the men down to the wood where their horses are. We will bivouac here for the night."

A party now brought up Peter, who had quite come round, but was unable to stand, or indeed to move his arms, so injured was he by the ropes, which had completely cut their way into his flesh. However, he was cheerful and bright, and able really to enjoy the supper which was soon prepared. That done, General Reynier said:—

"Captain Scudamore, will you call your black man when he has finished his supper, which, no doubt, he needs? I want him to tell me what took place before we arrived. The prisoners were full of some cock-and-bull story, that the devil had stuck his fork into their captain and pitched him into the fire, and the story is corroborated, at least to the extent of the fact that, on turning the fire over, we found a body there."

Sam, called and questioned, told the whole story, which Tom translated as he went on to the French officers, and it was received with a chorus of laughter at the thought of the oddity of Sam's appearance, and of the brigands' terror, and with warm admiration for the able stratagem and courage shown by the black.

Tom was delighted, and Peter, who had until now been entirely ignorant of the manner in which he had been saved, feebly pressed Sam's hand and said a few words of gratitude and thanks, which so delighted Sam that he retired to cry quietly.

The next day they moved down to Vittoria, where Peter was tenderly nursed by Madame Reynier. A week later he was fit to sit on horseback, and the next day, after a hearty and affectionate parting, they started to rejoin their own army. Both were now dressed as Spanish gentlemen, and Jules, with four troopers accompanied them

as an escort.

They made a long detour to avoid the French army in the field under Clausel, and at last came within sight of the British outposts. Here Jules and his escort halted, and after a warm embrace with the merry young Frenchman, they rode forward, and, after the usual parleying with the pickets, were passed forward to the officer commanding the post. He happened to be well known to them, and after the first surprise, and a few words of explanation, they rode on towards the head-quarters of the army besieging Burgos.

CHAPTER XIX. — VITTORIA.

General Clausel fell back as Wellington advanced to Burgos, and the British laid siege to the castle of that place. Like all Wellington's sieges this was commenced with a wholly insufficient train of artillery, and without the time necessary to carry out regular siege operations. A considerable portion of the army were posted so as to watch Clausel. The place was badly fortified, but the French under Governor Dubreton defended themselves with immense skill and courage, the English assaults were repulsed, successful sorties were made by the garrison, and at last, after the failure of the fourth assault, the siege was given up, and the allied armies turned their faces once more towards Portugal.

It was time; the operations in the south upon which Wellington had relied to keep at least a portion of the French forces engaged, had failed signally, and the French generals were bringing up their troops from all parts of Spain, and General Souham, having under him Generals Clausel, Maucune, and Foy, with a force far superior to that of the British, advanced to give battle. Then Wellington, whose Anglo-Portuguese troops were much weakened by sickness, fell back rapidly, sending orders to General Hill, who commanded the troops left behind in Madrid, to evacuate that city, and to fall back and unite with him on the Tormes.

It was only by some masterly maneuvering and some stiff fighting at Venta de Pozo, on the Carrion, and on the Huebra, that Wellington drew off his army to Ciudad Rodrigo.

During the retreat the British suffered very severely, and the discipline of the army became greatly impaired, so much so that Lord Wellington issued a general order rebuking the army, saying that "discipline had deteriorated during the campaign in a greater degree than he had ever witnessed or read of in any army, and this without any unusual privation or hardship, or any long marches."

The number of stragglers may be imagined by the fact that the loss of the allied army was upwards of nine thousand, of whom not more than two thousand were killed and wounded at Burgos, and in the combats during the retreat. This number includes the Spanish as well as the Anglo-Portuguese loss.

It was the beginning of December when the allied army reached their winter quarters around Ciudad Rodrigo. It was fortunate that the season of the year, and the necessity which the French had to refill their magazines, and collect food, gave breathing time and rest to the British. Although strengthened by his junction with Hill, and by the arrival of reinforcements from the coast, Wellington was not in a position to have made a stand against such a force as the French could have brought against him.

Tom and Peter Scudamore had rejoined the army at the hottest part of the siege of Burgos, and had taken up their work at once. Lord Wellington heard from Tom a brief account of what had taken place, and said a few kind words expressive of his pleasure at their both having escaped from so great a peril, and, grave and preoccupied as he was with the position of his army, he yet laughed at the account of the scare Sam had given the guerillas. Among their friends nothing was talked of for a day or two but their adventure. The times were stirring, however, and one event rapidly drove out another. Sam became a greater favorite than ever among the

officers of the staff, while the orderlies were never tired of hearing how he pretty nearly frightened a band of guerillas to death by pretending to be the evil one in person.

The next four months were passed in preparations for the grand attack with which Wellington confidently hoped to drive the French out of Spain. The news of the defeat of Napoleon in Russia had cheered the hearts of the enemies of France, and excited them to make a great effort to strike a decisive blow. The French army was weakened by the withdrawal of several corps to strengthen the armies which Napoleon was raising for his campaign in Germany, and British gold had been so freely spent, that the Portuguese army was now in a really efficient state; a portion of the Spanish army had been handed over to Wellington, and were now in a far more trustworthy condition than they had been heretofore, while the whole of the north of Spain was in a state of insurrection, which the French, in spite of all their efforts, were unable to repress.

The invasion was delayed until the end of May, in order that the crops might be in a fit state for the subsistence of the cavalry and baggage animals; but in the last week in that month all was ready, and, in several columns, the allied army poured into Spain nearly a hundred thousand strong. The French, ignorant alike of Wellington's intentions and preparations, were in no position to stem effectually this mighty wave of war, and were driven headlong before it, with many fierce skirmishes, until their scattered forces were, for the most part, united on the Ebro.

Here Joseph occupied a strong position, which he thought to hold until the whole of his troops could come up; but Wellington made a detour, swept round his right, and the French fell back in haste, and took up their position in the basin of Vittoria, where all the stores and baggage which had been carried off as the army retreated from Madrid, Valladolid, Burgos, and other towns, were collected. At Vittoria were gathered the Court, and an enormous mass of fugitives, as all the Spaniards who had

adhered to the cause of Joseph had, with their wives and families, accompanied the French in their retreat. Hence the accumulation of baggage animals, and carts, of stores of all descriptions, of magazines, of food and artillery, of helpless, frightened people, was enormous, and, for the retreat of the army in case of defeat, there was but one good road, already encumbered with baggage and fugitives!

This terrible accumulation arose partly from the fault of Joseph, who was wholly unequal to the supreme command in an emergency like the present. Confused and bewildered by the urgency of the danger, he had hesitated, wavered, and lost precious time. By resistance at any of the rivers, which Wellington had passed unopposed, he might easily have gained a few days, and thus have allowed time for the great mass of fugitives to reach the French frontier, and for Foy and Clausel, each of whom were within a day's march upon the day of the battle, to have arrived with a reinforcement of 20,000 good fighting men. Instead of this, he had suffered himself to be outflanked day after day, and his army forced into retreat, without an effort at resistance—a course of action irritating and disheartening to all troops, but especially to the French, who, admirable in attack, are easily dispirited, and are ill suited to defensive warfare.

The position which he had now chosen for the battle, on which his kingdom was to be staked, was badly selected for the action. The front was, indeed, covered by the river Zadora, but this was crossed by seven available bridges, none of which had been broken down, while there was but the one good line of retreat, and this, besides being already encumbered with baggage-wagons, could be easily turned by the allies. The French army, weakened by 5000 men, who had marched upon the preceding days, in charge of convoys for France, were still about 70,000 strong, the allies—British, Portuguese, and Spanish—about 80,000. The French were the strongest in artillery.

Wellington, seeing that Joseph had determined to stand at bay, made his

arrangements for the battle. On the left, Graham, with 20,000 men, was to attempt to cross the Zadora at Gamara Mayor, when he would find himself on the main road, behind Vittoria, and so cut the French line of retreat. Hill, with a like force, was to attack on the right, through the defile of Puebla, and so, entering the basin of Vittoria, to threaten the French right, and obtain possession of the bridge of Nanclares. In the center, Wellington himself, with 30,000 troops, would force the four bridges in front of the French center, and attack their main position.

At daybreak on the 21st of June, 1813, the weather being rainy with some mist, the troops moved from their quarters on the Bayas, passed in columns over the bridges in front, and slowly approached the Zadora. About ten o'clock, Hill seized the village of Puebla, and commenced the passage of the defile, while one of the Portuguese battalions scaled the heights above. Here the French met them, and a fierce fight ensued; the French were reinforced on their side, while the 71st Regiment and a battalion of light infantry joined the Portuguese.

Villette's division was sent from the French center to join the fray, while Hill sent up reinforcements. While the fight on the heights still raged, the troops in the defile made their way through, and, driving the French back, won the village of Subijano de Alava, in front of the French main position.

Meanwhile, far to the left, Graham came into action with Reille's division at Gamara Mayor. The French here, knowing the vital importance of the position, fought desperately, and the village of Gamara was taken and retaken several times, but no effort upon the part of the allies sufficed to carry either the bridge at this place or that by which the main road crossed the river higher up. A force, however, was pushed still farther to the left, and there took up a position on the road at Durana, drove back a Franco-Spanish force which occupied it, and thus effectively cut the main line of retreat to France for Joseph's army. The main force under Wellington himself was later in coming into action, the various columns being delayed by the

difficulties of making their way through the defiles.

While waiting, however, for the third and seventh divisions, which were the last to arrive, a peasant informed Wellington that the bridge of Tres Puentes was unbroken and unguarded. Kempt's brigade of the light division were immediately ordered to cross, and, being concealed by the inequalities of the ground, they reached it and passed over unobserved, taking their place under shelter of a crest within a few hundred yards of the French main line of battle, and actually in rear of his advanced posts.

Some French cavalry now advanced, but no attack was made upon this isolated body of British troops, for the French were virtually without a commander.

Joseph, finding his flank menaced by the movements of Graham and Hill, now ordered the army to fall back to a crest two miles in the rear, but at this moment the third and seventh divisions advanced at a run towards the bridge of Mendoza, the French artillery opened upon them, the British guns replied, a heavy musketry fire broke out on both sides, and the battle commenced in earnest. Now the advantage gained by the passage of Kempt's brigade became manifest, for the riflemen of his division advanced and took the French advanced cavalry and artillery in flank. These, thus unexpectedly attacked, fell back hastily, and a brigade of the third division took advantage of the moment and crossed the bridge of Mendoza. The other brigade forded the river a little higher up, the seventh division and Vandeleur's brigade of the light division followed, Hill pushed the enemy farther back, and the fourth division crossed by the bridge of Nanclares; other troops forded the river, and the battle became general all along the line.

Seeing that the hill in front of Arinez was nearly denuded of troops by the withdrawal of Villette's division earlier in the day to oppose Hill, Wellington launched Picton with the third division and Kempt's brigade against it, and the French, thus attacked with great strength and fury, and dispirited by the order to

retreat, began to fall back. Fifty pieces of artillery and a cloud of skirmishers covered the movement, and the British guns answering, the whole basin became filled with a heavy smoke, under cover of which the French retired to the heights in front of Gomecha, upon which their reserves were posted. Picton and Kempt carried the village of Arinez with the bayonet, Vandeleur captured the village of Margarita, and the 87th Regiment won that of Hermandad.

This advance turned the flank of the French troops near Subijana de Alava, and of those on the Puebla mountain, and both fell back in disorder for two miles, until they made a junction with the main body of their army. Still the British troops pressed forward, the French again fell back, and for six miles a running fight of musketry and artillery was kept up, the ground being very broken, and preventing the concerted action of large bodies of troops. At six o'clock in the afternoon the French stood at bay on the last heights before Vittoria, upon which stood the villages of Ali and Armentia. Behind them was the plain upon which the city stood, and beyond the city thousands of carriages, animals, and non-combatants, women, and children, were crowded together in the extremity of terror as the British shots rang menacingly over their heads.

The French here defended themselves desperately, and for a while the allied advance was checked by the terrible fire of shot and shell. Then the fourth division with a rush carried a hill on the left, and the French again commenced their retreat. Joseph, finding the great road absolutely blocked up, gave orders for a retreat by the road to Salvatierra, and the army, leaving the town of Vittoria on its left, moved off in a compact mass towards the indicated road. This, however, like the other, was choked with carriages. It led through a swamp, and had deep ditches on each side; the artillery, therefore, had to cut their traces and leave their guns behind them, the infantry and cavalry thrust aside the encumbrances and continued their march. Reille, who had defended the upper bridges nobly until the last moment, now came up, and his division acting as a rear guard, covered the retreat, and the French retired

with little further loss.

They had lost the battle solely and entirely from the utter incapacity of their general, for their loss had been but little greater than that of the allies, and they fell back in perfect order and full of fighting. The French loss, including prisoners, was not more than 6000, and that of the allies exceeded 5000. The French loss, however, in material was enormous. They carried off two guns only, and 143 fell into the hands of the British. They lost all their parks of ammunition, all their baggage, all their stores, all their treasures, all their booty. Last of all, they lost Spain.

The British pursued the French army for some days, and then invested the two fortresses of San Sebastian and Pampeluna.

Ten days after the battle of Vittoria, Napoleon despatched Soult, one of the best of his generals, to displace Joseph and assume the supreme command of the French troops. Traveling with great speed, he reached the frontier upon the 11th of July and took command. He soon collected together the divisions which had retired beaten but not routed from Vittoria, drew together the troops from Bayonne and the surrounding towns, and in a few days found himself at the head of an army, including the garrisons, of 114,000 men. Besides these there were the armies of Aragon and Catalonia, numbering 60,000 men.

After spending a few days in organizing the army, Soult moved forward to relieve Pampeluna, and then in the heart of the Pyrenees were fought those desperate combats at Maya, Roncevalles, Buenza, Sauroren, and Dona Maria, which are known in history as the battles of the Pyrenees. In these terrible nine days' fighting there were ten serious combats, in which the allies lost 7300 men, the French, including prisoners, over 15,000, and Soult fell back baffled and beaten across the frontier.

Throughout this account of the short and sanguinary campaign by which in two short months Wellington shattered the power of the French and drove them headlong

from the Peninsula, but little has been said respecting the doings of the Scudamores. Their duties had been heavy, but devoid of any personal achievements or events. Wellington, the incarnation of activity himself, spared no one around him, and from early dawn until late at night they were on horseback, carrying orders and bringing back reports. At night their quarters were sometimes in a village hut, sometimes in a straggling château, which afforded accommodation to the commander-in-chief and his whole staff.

Sam, a good horseman now, was in the highest of spirits at being able to accompany his masters, and, although the Spanish women crossed themselves in horror when they first saw his black face, the boys would hear shouts of laughter arising before they had been a quarter of an hour in fresh quarters. He was a capital cook, and a wonderful hand at hunting up provisions.

There might not be a sign of a feathered creature in a village when the staff came in, but in half an hour Sam would be sure to return from foraging with a couple of fowls and his handkerchief full of eggs. These were, of course, paid for, as the orders against pillaging were of the strictest character, and the army paid, and paid handsomely for everything it ate.

It was, however, difficult to persuade the peasants that payment was intended, and they would hide everything away with vigilant care at the approach of the troops. When by the display of money they were really persuaded that payment was intended, they would produce all that they had willingly enough, but the number of officers wanting to purchase was so great and the amount of live stock so small in the war-ravaged country, that few indeed could obtain even for money anything beside the tough rations of freshly-killed beef issued by the commissariat.

Let the supply be ever so short, however, Sam never returned empty-handed, and the fowls were quickly plucked and on the fire before any one else had succeeded in discovering that there was a bird in the village.

Sam's foraging powers passed into a joke with the staff, and the Scudamores became so curious to discover the reason of his success, that after repeated questioning they persuaded him to tell them.

"Well, massa, de matter berry simple—just easy as fallin' off log. Sam go along, look into yard ob de cottages, presently see feather here, feather there. Dat sign ob fowl. Den knock at door. Woman open always, gib little squeak when she see dis gentleman's colored face. Den she say, 'What you want? Dis house full. Quarter-master take him up for three, four officer.' Den Sam say, 'Illustrious madam, me want to buy two fowls and eggs for master,' and Sam show money in hand. Den she hesitate a little, and not believe Sam mean to pay. Den she say, 'No fowls here.' Den Sam point to de feathers. Den she get in rage and tell lie and say, 'Dem birds all stole yesterday.' Den Sam see it time to talk to de birds—he know dem shut up somewhere in de dark, and Sam he begin to crow berry loud; Sam berry good at dat. He crow for all de world like de cock. Dis wake dem up, and a minute one, two, three, half a dozen cock begin to answer eider from a loft ober house, or from shed, or from somewhere. Den de woman in terrible fright, she say, 'Me sell you two quick, if you will go away and swear you tell no one.' Den Sam swear. Den she run away, come back wid de fowls and some eggs, and always berry much astonished when Sam pay for dem. After dat she lose her fear, she see me pay, and she sells de chickens to oders when they come till all gone. Dat how dis chile manage de affairs, Massa Tom."

The Scudamores had a hearty laugh, and were well pleased to find that Sam's method was one to which not even the strictest disciplinarian could object, a matter concerning which they had previously had grave doubts.

While the battles of the Pyrenees were being fought, the siege of St. Sebastian had continued, and once again the British troops had suffered a terrible loss, from the attempt to carry a fortress with an insufficient siege-train, and without the time

necessary to drive the trenches forward in regular form. St. Sebastian stood upon a peninsula. In front of the neck of this peninsula was the hill of San Bartholomeo, on which stood the convent of that name. At the narrowest part of the neck stood a redoubt, which was called the Cask Redoubt, because it was constructed of casks filled with stand. Behind this came the horn-work and other fortifications. Then came the town, while at the end of the peninsula rose a steep rock, called Mount Orgullo, on which stood the citadel. Upon its left side this neck of land was separated from the mainland by the River Urumea; and upon the heights of Mount Olia and the Chofres, across the Urumea, were placed the British batteries, which breached the fortifications facing the river.

General Graham commanded the allied forces, which were detached to undertake the siege, and on the 10th of July batteries were commenced against the convent of San Bartholomeo, which had been fortified by the French. On the 17th the convent was in ruins, and an assault was made upon the position. The 9th Regiment took the place in gallant style, but an attempt being made to carry the cask redoubt, with a rush, the assault was repulsed, the British remaining possessors of San Bartholomeo.

On the 24th the batteries on Mount Olia, having effected what was believed to be a practicable breach, 2000 men of the fifth division, consisting of the 3d battalion of the Royals, the 38th, and the 9th, made an assault at night. To arrive at the breach they had to make their way along the slippery rocks on the bed of the Urumea, exposed to a flank-fire from the river-wall of the town. The breachers had been isolated from the town, and guns placed to take the stormers in flank. The confusion and slaughter were terrible, and at daybreak the survivors fell back, with a loss of forty-nine officers and 520 men.

The whole arrangement of the siege was bad. The plan of Major Smith, of the engineers, a most excellent officer, which had been approved by Wellington, was not followed, and the assault, contrary to Wellington's explicit order, took place at

night, instead of by day, the consequence being confusion, delay, and defeat. The total loss to the allies of this first siege of St. Sebastian was 1300 men.

Neither of the Scudamores were present at the first siege, but both witnessed the second assault, of the 31st of August, as Wellington himself was present on the 30th, to see to the execution of the preparation for attack, and they obtained leave to remain for the next day to witness the assault. The siege had been resumed on the 5th of that month, and on the 23d the batteries had opened fire in earnest, and immense damage was done to the defenses and garrison. But upon this occasion, as upon the former one, the proper precautions were not taken; no lodgment had been effected in the horn-work, and, worst of all, the blockade had been so negligently conducted by the fleet, that large bodies of fresh troops, guns, and ammunition had been passed in, and the defense was even stronger than it had been when the first assault was delivered.

General Graham took up his position on the heights of the Chofres to view the assault, and the Scudamores stationed themselves near him. A dense mist hid the fortress from view, and it was not until eight o'clock that the batteries were able to open. Then for three hours they poured a storm of shot and shell upon the defences. The Scudamores sat down in one of the trenches, where they were a little sheltered from the blazing heat of the sun, and Sam took his place at a short distance from them.

As the clock struck eleven the fire slackened, and at that moment Sam exclaimed, "Grolly, Massa Tom, dere dey go." As he spoke Robinson's brigade poured out from the trenches, and, passing through the openings in the sea-wall, began to form on the beach.

It was known that the French had mined the angle of the wall overhanging the beach, and a sergeant, followed by twelve men, dashed gallantly forward to try to cut the train leading to the mine. He was unsuccessful, but the suddenness of the

rush startled the French, who at once fired the mine, which exploded, destroying the brave sergeant and his party, and thirty of the leading men of the column, but not doing a tithe of the damage which it would have inflicted had the column been fairly under it.

"Hurrah! dere dey go," Sam exclaimed as the column clambered over the ruins and pursued its way unchecked along the beach. They had, however, to make their way under a storm of fire.

The French, as before, lined the wall, and poured a tremendous musketry fire into their flank, and the batteries of Mount Orgullo and St. Elmo plied them with shot and shell, while two pieces of cannon on the cavalier and one on the horn-work raked them with grape.

Still the column neither halted nor faltered, but dashed, like a wave, up the breach. When, however, they reached the top they could go no farther. A deep gulf separated them from the town, while from every loop-hole and wall behind, the French musketry swept the breach. The troops could not advance and would not retreat, but sullenly stood their ground, heaping the breach with their dead. Fresh bodies of men came up, and each time a crowd of brave men mounted the breach, only to sink down beneath the storm of fire.

"This is awful, horrible, Tom!" Peter said in a choked voice. "Come away, I can't look at this slaughter, it is a thousand times worse than any battle."

Tom made no reply, his own eyes were dim with tears, and he rose to go, taking one more look at the deadly breach, at whose foot the survivors of the last attempt had sunk down, and whence the mass of soldiers were keeping up a musketry fire against the guns and unseen foes who were sweeping them away, when an officer ran up from General Graham's side, and in a minute fifty guns from the Chofres batteries opened a storm of fire upon the curtain and the traverses behind the breach.

It was a terrible trial to the nerves of the assaulting columns when this terrific fire

was poured upon a spot only twenty feet above them; but they were not men to shrink, and the men of the light division seized the opportunity to pull up the broken masonry and make a breastwork, known in military terms as a lodgment.

For half an hour the iron storm poured overhead unchecked, smashing the traverse, knocking down the loop-holed walls, and killing numbers of the defenders. Then it ceased, and the troops leapt to their feet, and again rushed up the breach, while the 13th Portuguese Regiment, followed by a detachment of the 24th, waded across the Urumea under a heavy fire from the castle, and attacked the third breach.

But still no entry could be effected. The French fire was as heavy as ever, and the stormers again sank baffled to the foot of the great breach. The assault seemed hopeless, the tide was rising, the reserves were all engaged, and the men had done all that the most desperate courage could do. For five hours the battle had raged, when, just as all appeared lost, one of those circumstances occurred which upset all calculations and decide the fate of battles.

Behind the traverses the French had accumulated a great store of powder barrels, shells, and other combustibles. Just at this moment these caught fire. A bright flame wrapped the whole wall, followed by a succession of loud explosions; hundreds of French grenadiers were destroyed, and before the smoke had cleared away, the British burst like a flood through the first traverse.

Although bewildered by this sudden disaster, the French rallied, and fought desperately; but the British, desperate with the long agony of the last five hours, would not be denied; the light division penetrated on the left, the Portuguese on the right. The French, still resisting obstinately, were driven through the town to the line of defense at the foot of Mount Orgullo, and the town of St. Sebastian was won.

"Will you go across, Peter, and enter the town?"

"No, no, Tom; the sight of that horrible breach is enough for me. Let us mount, and ride off at once. I am quite sick after this awful suspense."

It was as well that the Scudamores did not enter the town, as, had they done so, they might have shared the fate of several other officers, who were shot down while trying to stop the troops in their wild excesses. No more disgraceful atrocities were ever committed by the most barbarous nations of antiquity than those which disgraced the British name at the storming of St. Sebastian. Shameful, monstrous as had been the conduct of the troops at the storming of Ciudad Rodrigo and at Badajos, it was infinitely worse at St. Sebastian. As Rapin says, hell seemed to have broken loose.

The castle held out until the 9th, when it surrendered, and the governor and his heroic garrison marched out with the honors of war. The British loss in the second siege exceeded 2500 men and officers.

There was a pause of two months after the fall of St. Sebastian, and it was not until the 10th of November that Wellington hurled his forces against the lines which, in imitation of those of Torres Vedras, Soult had formed and fortified on the river Nivelle to withstand the invasion of France. After a few hours' desperate fighting the French were turned out of their position with a loss of killed, wounded, and prisoners, of 4265 men and officers, the loss of the allies being 2694.

Now the army of invasion poured into France. The French people, disheartened by Napoleon's misfortunes in Germany, and by the long and mighty sacrifices which they had for years been compelled to make, in order to enable Napoleon to carry out his gigantic wars, showed but slight hostility to the invaders.

Wellington enforced the severest discipline, paid for everything required for the troops, hanging marauders without mercy, and, finding that it was impossible to keep the Spanish troops in order, he sent the whole Spanish contingent, 20,000 strong, back across the Pyrenees.

He then with the Anglo-Portuguese army moved on towards Bayonne, and took up a position on both sides of the river Nive, driving the French from their position on the

right bank on December 9th. On the 13th, however, Soult attacked that portion of the army on the right of the river, and one of the most desperate conflicts of the war took place, known as the battle of St. Pierre. General Hill commanded at this battle, and with 14,000 Anglo-Portuguese, with 14 guns, repulsed the furious and repeated attacks of 16,000 French, with 22 guns.

In five days' fighting on the river the French lost more than as many thousand men.

The weather now for a time interrupted operations, but Wellington was preparing for the passage of the Adour. Soult guarded the passages of the river above Bayonne, and never dreamed that an attempt would be made to bridge so wide and rough a river as is the Adour below the town. With the assistance of the sailors of the fleet the great enterprise was accomplished on the 13th of February, and leaving General Hope to contain the force in the entrenched camp at Bayonne, Wellington marched the rest of the army to the Gave.

Behind this river Soult had massed his army. The British crossed by pontoon bridges, and before the operation was concluded, and the troops united, Soult fell upon them near Orthes.

At first the French had the best of the fight, driving back both wings of the allied forces, but Wellington threw the third and sixth divisions upon the left flank of the attacking column and sent the 52nd Regiment to make a detour through a marsh and fall upon their other flank. Taken suddenly between two fires the French wavered, the British pressed forward again, and the French fell back fighting obstinately, and in good order. The allies lost 2300 men, and the French 4000. Soult fell back towards Toulouse, laying Bordeaux open to the British.

CHAPTER XX. — TOULOUSE.

Promotion for those who have the good fortune to have a post upon the commander-in-chief's staff is rapid. They run far less risk than do the regimental

officers, and they have a tenfold better chance of having their names mentioned in despatches. The Scudamores were so mentioned for their conduct at Vittoria, the Pyrenees, and Orthes, and shortly after the last-named battle the Gazette from England announced their promotion to majorities. This put an end to their service as aides-de-camp, and they were attached to the quarter-master's branch of the staff of Lord Beresford, who was upon the point of starting with a small force to Bordeaux, where the authorities, thinking more of party than of patriotism, had invited the English to enter and take possession, intending to proclaim their adhesion to the Bourbon dynasty.

The boys were sorry at the exchange, as they feared that they should lose the crowning battle of the campaign. It was evident that the resistance of France was nearly at an end, the allies were approaching Paris in spite of the almost superhuman efforts of Napoleon; the people, sick of the war, refused all assistance to the military authorities, and were longing for peace, and the end of the struggle was rapidly approaching.

Lord Beresford, however, divining their thoughts, assured them that his stay at Bordeaux would be but short, and that they might rely upon being present at the great battle which would probably be fought somewhere near Toulouse, towards which town Soult had retreated after the battle of Orthes.

Upon the 8th of March, Beresford marched with 12,000 men for Bordeaux, and meeting with no opposition by the way, entered that city on the 12th. The mayor, a royalist, came out to meet them, and by the upper classes of the town they were received as friends rather than foes. Handsome quarters were assigned to Lord Beresford and his staff, and the Scudamores for a day or two enjoyed the luxury of comfortable apartments and of good food after their hard fare for nine months.

The day after they entered Bordeaux Tom had occasion to call at the office of a banker in order to get a government draft cashed, to pay for a number of wagons

which had been purchased for the quarter-master's department. The banker's name was Weale, an American, said to be the richest man in Bordeaux. His fortune had been made, it was said, by large government contracts.

When Tom returned, Peter was surprised to see him looking pale and excited.

"What is the matter, Tom?"

"Do you know, Peter, I am convinced that that American banker I have been to see to-day is neither more nor less than that scoundrel, Walsh, who bolted with all the bank funds, and was the cause of our father's death."

"You don't say so, Tom."

"It is a fact, Peter, I could swear to him."

"What shall we do, Tom?"

"I only cashed one of the two drafts I had with me this morning; Peter, you go this afternoon with the other, and, if you are as certain as I feel about it, we will speak to Beresford at dinner."

Peter returned in the afternoon satisfied that his brother's surmises were correct, and that in the supposed American Weale they had really discovered the English swindler Walsh.

After dinner they asked Lord Beresford to speak to them for a few minutes alone.

The general was greatly surprised and interested at their communication.

"Of how much did this fellow rob your father's bank?" he asked.

"The total defalcation, including money borrowed on title-deeds deposited in the bank, which had to be made good, was, I heard, from 75,000l. to 80,000l.," Tom said.

"Very well," said Lord Beresford, "we will make the scoundrel pay up with interest. Order out thirty men of the 13th."

While the men were mustering, the general returned to the dining-room and begged

the officers who were dining with him to excuse him for half an hour, as he had some unexpected business to perform. Then he walked across with the Scudamores to the banker's house, which was only in the next street.

Twenty of the men were then ordered to form a cordon round the house and to watch the various entrances. The other ten, together with the officer in command, the general told to follow him into the house. The arrangements completed, he rang at the bell, and the porter at once opened the gate.

He started and would have tried to shut it again, on seeing the armed party. But Lord Beresford said, "I am the general commanding the British troops here. Make no noise, but show me directly to your master."

The man hesitated, but seeing that the force was too great to be resisted, led the way through the courtyard into the house itself.

Some servants in the hall started up with amazement, and would have run off, but Lord Beresford cried, "Stay quiet for your lives. No one will be hurt; but if any one moves from the hall, he will be shot." Then, followed by Tom and Peter only, he opened the door which the porter pointed out to him as that of the room where the banker was sitting.

He was alone, and started to his feet upon beholding three British officers enter unannounced. "What means this?" he demanded angrily. "I am a citizen of the United States, and for any outrage upon me satisfaction will be demanded by my Government."

"I am Lord Beresford," the general said quietly, "and quite know what I am doing. I do not quite agree with you that the Government of the United States will make any demand for satisfaction for any outrage upon your person, nor, if they do so, will it benefit you greatly; for I am about, in five minutes' time, to order you to be shot, Mr. Walsh."

As the name was uttered the banker, who had listened with increasing pallor to the

stern words of the general, started violently, and turned ghastly white. For a minute or so he was too surprised and confounded to speak. Then he said, in a husky tone, "It is false; I am an American citizen. I know nothing whatever about James Walsh."

"James Walsh!" the general said; "I said nothing about James. It is you who have told us his Christian name, which is, I have no doubt, the correct one."

He looked to Tom, who nodded assent.

"I know nothing about any Walsh," the banker said doggedly. "Who says I do?"

"We do, James Walsh," Tom said, stepping forward. "Tom and Peter Scudamore, the sons of the man you robbed and ruined."

The banker stared at them wildly, and then, with a hoarse cry, dropped into his chair.

"James Walsh," the general said sternly, "your life is doubly forfeit. As a thief and a swindler, the courts of law will punish you with death;" for in those days death was the penalty of a crime of this kind. "In the second place, as a traitor. As a man who has given aid and assistance to the enemies of your country, your life is forfeit, and I, as the general in command here, doom you to death. In five minutes you will be shot in your courtyard as a thief and a traitor."

"Spare me!" the wretched man said, slipping off his chair on to his knees. "Spare my life, and take all that I have. I am rich, and can restore much of that which I took. I will pay 50,000l."

"Fifty thousand pounds!" the general said; "you stole 80,000l., which, with interest, comes up to 100,000l., besides which you must pay for acting as a traitor. The military chest is empty, and we want money. I will value your wretched life at 25,000l. If you make that sum a present to our military chest, and pay Major Scudamore the 100,000l. of which you swindled his father, I will spare you."

"One hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds!" the banker said fiercely. "Never, I will die first."

"Very well," Lord Beresford said quietly. "Major Scudamore, please call in the officer and four men." Tom did as requested, and Lord Beresford then addressed the officer. "You will take this man, who is an Englishman, who has been acting as a traitor, and giving assistance to the French army, you will take a firing party, place him against the wall of the yard, give him five minutes to make his peace with God, and when the five minutes are up, unless he tells you before that that he wishes to see me, shoot him."

Pale and desperate, the banker was led out.

"He will give way, I hope," Tom said, as the door closed behind him.

"He will give way before the time is up," Lord Beresford said. "He is a coward; I saw it in his face."

Four minutes passed on, the door opened again, and the officer returned with his prisoner. "He says he agrees to your terms, sir"

"Very well" Lord Beresford answered; "remain outside with your men; they may be wanted yet."

The prisoner, without a word, led the way into an adjoining room, which communicated with the public office. This was his private parlor, and in a corner stood a safe. He unlocked it, and, taking out some books and papers, sat down to the table.

His mood had evidently changed. "I was a fool to hold out," he said, "for I had my name for wealth against me, and might have known you would not give way. After all, I do not know that I am altogether sorry, for I have always had an idea that some day or other the thing would come out, and now I can go back and be comfortable for the rest of my life. How will you have the money, gentlemen? I have 50,000l. in cash, and can give you a draft on the Bank of England for the rest. You look surprised, but I have always been prepared to cut and run from this country at the shortest notice, and every penny I have beyond the cash absolutely required is in

England or America."

"I will take 25,000l. in cash for the use of the army," Lord Beresford said. "I will send an officer of the commissariat to-morrow for it. The 100,000l. you may pay these gentlemen in drafts on England. Until I hear that these drafts are honored, I shall keep you under surveillance, and you will not be suffered to leave your house."

"It will be all right," Walsh said. "There—is my Bank of England pass-book; you will see that I have 120,000l. standing to the credit of J. Weale there. I have as much in America. I should not tell you this did I not know that you are a gentleman, and therefore will not raise terms now that you see I can pay higher. There, Mr. Scudamore, is the draft, and, believe me or not, I am glad to repay it, and to feel, for the first time for many years, a free man. Please to give me a receipt for the 80,000l. due by me to the Bank, and for 20,000l., five years' interest on the same."

Tom did as he was desired without speaking. There was a tone of effrontery mingled with the half-earnestness of this successful swindler that disgusted him.

"There," the general said, as the receipts were handed over; "come along, lads, the business is over, and I do not think that we have any more to say to Mr. Weale."

So saying, without further word, the three went out.

Upon rejoining the officer without, Lord Beresford directed that a sergeant and ten men were to be quartered in the house, and that a sentry was to be placed at each entrance night and day, and that the banker was not to be permitted to stir out under any pretence whatever until further orders.

"There, lads, I congratulate you heartily," he said as they issued from the gate, in answer to the warm thanks in which the boys expressed their gratitude to him; "it is a stroke of luck indeed that you came with me to Bordeaux. It was rough-and-ready justice, and I don't suppose a court of law in England would approve of it; but we are under martial law, so even were that fellow disposed to question the matter, which you may be very sure he will not, we are safe enough. They say 'ill-gotten gains fly

fast' but the scamp has prospered on the money he stole. He owned to having another hundred thousand safe in the States, and no doubt he has at least as much more in securities of one sort or other here. I daresay he was in earnest when he said that he did not mind paying the money to get rid of the chance of detection and punishment, which must have been ever in his mind. The best thing you can do, Scudamore, is to write to James Pearson—he's my solicitor in London—and give him authority to present this draft, and invest the sum in your joint names in good securities. Inclose the draft. I shall be sending off an orderly with despatches and letters at daybreak, and if you give me your letter to-night, I will inclose it in a note of my own to Pearson."

Five days later an order arrived for Lord Beresford to leave the seventh division under Lord Dalhousie, in Bordeaux, and to march with the fourth division to join the Commander-in-Chief, who was gradually drawing near to Toulouse, beneath whose walls Soult was reorganizing his army. The position was a very strong one, and had been rendered almost impregnable by fortifications thrown upon the heights. Wellington had, too, the disadvantage of having to separate his army, as the town lay upon both sides of the Garonne.

On the 10th of April the allied army attacked. Hill attacked the defences of the town on the left bank, while Freyre's Spaniards, Picton, with the third and light divisions, and Beresford with the fourth and the sixth divisions, assaulted a French position. The entrenchments in front of Picton were too strong to be more than menaced. Freyre's Spaniards were repulsed with great loss, and the brunt of the battle fell upon Beresford's division, which nobly sustained the character of the British soldier for stubborn valor in this the last battle of the war. The French fought stubbornly and well, but fort by fort the British drove them from their strong positions, and at five in the afternoon Soult withdrew the last of his troops in good order across the canal which separated the position they had defended from the town itself. The French lost five generals and 3000 killed and wounded; the allies four generals and 4659 killed

and wounded, of which 2000 were Spaniards, for they upon this occasion fought bravely, though unsuccessfully.

On the 11th all was quiet, Wellington preparing for an attack upon the city on the following day. Soult, however, finding that the British cavalry had been sent off so as to menace his line of retreat, evacuated the city in the night, drew off his army with great order and ability, and by a march of twenty-two miles placed it in safety. Upon the morning of the 12th Wellington entered Toulouse, and the same afternoon two officers, one British, the other French, arrived together from Paris, with the news of the abdication of Napoleon, and the termination of the war.

These officers had been detained for two days at Blois by the officials there, and this delay had cost the blood of 8000 men, among whom was Tom Scudamore, who had his left arm carried away by a cannon ball. Sam, in the act of carrying his master from the field, was also severely wounded in the head with a musket ball.

Before the battle was fought they had received news from England that the draft had been paid at the Bank of England, and that their future was in consequence secure. The war being over, officers unattached to regiments had little difficulty in getting leave of absence, as the troops were to be embarked for England as soon as possible. Peter's application, therefore, to accompany his brother was acceded to without hesitation, and ten days after the battle of Toulouse he was on board ship with Tom and Sam, both of whom were doing well. Three days afterwards they landed in England.

Rhoda met them, with Miss Scudamore, at Portsmith, having received a letter telling them of Tom's wound, and of their being upon the point of sailing. There was a great reduction of the army at the end of the war, and the Scudamores were both placed upon half pay. This was a matter of delight to Rhoda, and of satisfaction to themselves. They had had enough of adventure to last for a life-time; and with the prospect of a long peace the army no longer offered them any strong attraction.

When they returned to Miss Scudamore's their old friend Dr. Jarvis came to visit them, and a happier party could not have been found in England. The will of Mr. Scudamore, made before he was aware of his ruin, was now acted upon. He had left 20,000l. to Rhoda, and the rest of his fortune in equal parts between his boys. Both Tom and Peter were fond of a country life, and they bought two adjoining estates near Oxford, Rhoda agreeing to stop with them and Miss Scudamore alternately.

For a brief time there was a break in their happiness, Napoleon escaped from Elba, and Europe was in a flame again. All the officers on half pay were ordered to present themselves for duty, and the Scudamores crossed with the army to Belgium, and fought at Waterloo. Neither were hurt, nor was Sam, who had of course accompanied them. Waterloo gave them another step in rank, and the Scudamores returned as colonels to England.

It was their last war. A few years afterwards they married sisters, and Rhoda having the year previous married a gentleman whose estate was in the same county, they remained as united as ever. Sambo held for many a year the important position of butler to Tom, then he found that one of the housemaids did not regard his color as any insuperable obstacle, and they were accordingly married. It was difficult to say after this exactly the position which Sam held. He lived at a cottage on the edge of the estate, where it joined that of Peter, and his time was spent in generally looking after things at both houses, and as years went on his great delight was, above all things, to relate to numerous young Scudamores the adventures of their father and uncle when he first knew them as the Young Buglers.

THE END.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE YOUNG BUGLERS ***

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