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TSUSHIMA: GRAVE OF A FLOATING CITY

TSUSHIMA :

Grave of a
Floating City

By A. Novikoff-Priboy

Translated by Eden and Cedar Paul

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HOW THIS BOOK CAME TO BE WRITTEN

SINCE warships first appeared in the world, there have been many naval engagements. Only three of them, however, can rank with the Battle of Tsushima in respect of magnitude, importance, and far-reaching consequences. The first of these was the Battle of Salamis, in 480 B.C., when the fleet of Xerxes was destroyed by the Greeks. The Persian navy was enormous, whereas that of the Greeks, under the command of Themistocles, was relatively small. The second of the outstanding naval actions to which I have just referred was the Battle of Lepanto, fought in the Adriatic in the year 1571. On this occasion the united fleets of the Christian powers of Europe, under Don John of Austria, inflicted a crushing defeat upon the Turkish navy, and made an end of Mahommedan sea-power in the Mediterranean. Then, at a much more recent date, in 1805, came the Battle of Trafalgar, where Admiral Nelson (who in previous sea-fights had lost an eye and an arm, and was now to lose his life) signally defeated the united French and Spanish naval forces under the French admiral Villeneuve and the Spanish admirals Gravina and Alava. Gravina perished as well as Nelson, the victor, and Villeneuve was taken prisoner. The allies lost nineteen ships to the English, the prisoners numbering twelve thousand.

The fourth naval action of supreme importance, the one with which this book is concerned, was fought in the Far East, near the island of Tsushima, during the Russo-Japanese war, on May 14th (O.S.) or May 27th (N.S.), 1905. To its world-wide significance I shall return in due course. For the moment I wish to explain to the reader how my narrative came into being, and why it was not published until wellnigh thirty years after the events with which it deals.

I myself took part in this dramatic conflict as a seaman (my actual rating was that of paymaster's steward) on board the ironclad "Oryol." The enemy shells spared my life, and I was taken prisoner. With my comrades I spent some days in sheds at a Japanese seaport; after which we were removed to Kumamoto in the island of Kiushiu. We endured a long internment at the camp in the suburbs of this town, until, in the end, we were sent back to Russia.

Aware of the importance of what had happened at Tsushima, I immediately began to record my personal observations during the battle. Then I went on to collect material relating to the whole squadron. But no one individual could cope with a task so extensive. I enlisted in the scheme a dozen or so of the most intelligent among my intimates. They proved zealous assistants. It was a great convenience that our camp contained the crews of nearly all the ships which had taken part in the Battle of Tsushima. When giving an account of what had happened on board of this, that, or the other vessel, we were mainly concerned to describe how the service was organised on board, what sort of relations existed between officers and men, and only after this did we consider what part the ship had played in the action. The battleships of 1905 were already so large and intricate, that the men in one compartment were often unaware of what was going on in another. We had, therefore, in questioning the participants as to their experiences, to deal separately with the crew of each compartment of an ironclad or cruiser. For instance, we had to enquire what occurred on the morning of May 14th in the conning-tower, in this turret or that, in one casemate or another, upon the armoured deck, in the torpedo-rooms, the engine-room, the stoke-hole, the sick-bay, etc. What orders were given in this place, that place, or the other; and how were they carried out? What was the outward aspect, and what was the character, of each person who played a part? What general impressions had been formed about the battle by those who had witnessed it from one ship or another? And so on, and so forth, down to the minutest details.

The men were freely communicative, since they were being questioned by their own shipmates of equal grade, and not by the members of an official commission of enquiry composed (as happened later) of admirals and general-staff officers. If one of the narrators made a misstatement, the others, who had seen things from the same angle, were prompt to correct it. After a while, some of the men began to bring me notebooks containing descriptions of various episodes. Thus in the course of a few months I had gathered a whole trunkful of manuscripts relating to the Battle of Tsushima, material of extraordinary value. I can unhesitatingly affirm that about no other battle have such multifarious first-hand accounts ever been collected. Studying the assembled documents, I secured as vivid an impression of the combat, witnessed from each ship, as if I had myself

been on board of her. I need hardly say that our notes by no means tally with the official reports of this famous battle.

Unfortunately, it was a case of "love's labour's lost," for this extensive material was destroyed by a stupid mischance.

The incident is triumphantly described in his memoirs by Lieutenant Dmitrieff, an artillery officer who had been attached to the ironclad "Uskakoff." The memoirs appeared in the periodical *More*, no. 2, for the year 1908, under the title "A Prisoner in Japan." True, the writer was interned at Sendai, far to the north, but he quotes letters written to him from Kumamoto by members of the "Ushakoff's" crew. In one of these letters, a man named Philippoff, a petty officer, wrote as follows:

"Men belonging to the crews of the 'Oryol,' the 'Bedovyi,' and other ships that surrendered to the Japanese, are trying to raise a revolt among the prisoners here. They have found ardent supporters, and with the aid of these they are circulating books having a political trend, together with lying reports about what is going on in Russia. Above all, they endeavour to poison the minds of the men against the officers. Fortunately among the prisoners there are cooler-headed persons, who were able to give timely warning, and thus ensure that the evil should be nipped in the bud.

"On November 9th (22nd), the loyalists, losing patience, resorted to force against the agitators. Two among the latter barely escaped with their lives. The others were arrested by the Japanese. Their books and manuscripts were consigned to the flames, and their typewriter was broken to pieces" (pp. 72-73).

Another seaman opens his letter with the words "Gracious Sir and Your Excellency," and proceeds to give an account of the machinations of the revolutionists:

"Although they got to work secretly, what they were doing soon became known.

"On November 8th an army officer told us that the Japanese had begun to send the prisoners back to Vladivostock, and that some were in revolt against this.

"He begged us to go quietly when the order came for us to leave.

"Thereupon the political corrupters shouted: 'Down with him! Down with him!' The officer, seeing that a riot was imminent, went away; but some of us took note of the names of the disorderly fellows who had shouted.

"Next day, November 9th, all those of us who were unwilling that

the enemies of our country should bring it to shame, rose against the apostles of disorder to overthrow them, to get the better of the men who (among us prisoners) had entered into an alliance against our sovereign and our government.

"We got together near the headquarters of the camp, and close to the shed where these depraved wretches were quartered. But when we demanded that they should hand over certain political books and manuscripts, they drew their knives and defied us" (p. 74).

Farther on, in the same lickspittle letter, we are informed how the "loyal" prisoners burned my "books and notes."

Now I will give my own version of the affair.

When a very large number of prisoners of war had been interned in Japan, there arrived Dr. Russell, Hawaiian senator—a Russian refugee who had been an active member of the organisation known as the "People's Will." He began to publish for circulation among the prisoners a periodical entitled "Japan and Russia," to which I was an occasional contributor. For prudential reasons, the first issues were moderate in tone, but by degrees it became extremely revolutionary. Furthermore, Dr. Russell was engaged in circulating among the prisoners "underground literature" having a subversive trend. At Kumamoto this literature arrived in packets addressed to me. Men came to me from the various barracks in search of pamphlets and successive numbers of the periodical. The army reservists among us were cautious in this matter, but the naval men made no secret of what they were doing.

The consequent spread of revolutionary ideas among those who had belonged, and would again belong, to the armed forces of the Russian empire, aroused disquiet in the officers' camp, which was situated in a different part of Kumamoto. The officers began to make it known that the names of those who read and passed on "seditious" literature would not be forgotten, and that the offenders would be punished after repatriation.

Autumn arrived. In August a treaty of peace between Russia and Japan was signed, but no move was made to send us home. Many of the prisoners of war were growing restless and uneasy. On the evening of November 8th (21st), two Russian officers, a staff-captain in the army and a Cossack captain, came to our camp, and entered into conversation with some of the prisoners, about two hundred soldiers and a few dozen bluejackets, who were grouped round headquarters. The officers stood on the steps, regarding their audience with dis-

trust. The Cossack, an elderly, grey-headed man with a big beard, did most of the talking. He enquired how we were getting on. One of us asked:

“Is it true, Sir, that freedom has now been established in Russia?”

The captain smiled sourly, and answered:

“What do you want freedom for? You’ve always been free to make damned nuisances of yourselves.”

Hereupon another soldier, a man of about forty, his upper lip hidden by a heavy moustache, interposed with the question we had most at heart:

“But, Sir, why are we not being sent home? Peace was made a long time ago, and we’re still cooling our heels here.”

The company awaited the answer in dead silence.

The Cossack captain, still smiling, replied:

“That’s what you want, is it—to get home? Well, you’ll never see home again.”

“What do you mean, Sir?” persisted the private with the moustache, open-mouthed, and drawing nearer to the steps.

A wave of uneasiness swept across the faces of the other prisoners, as, in breathless silence, they stared at the captain.

He, smiling no longer, rejoined:

“Easy to explain, Little Brothers. There are among you some political agitators, unquestionably paid by the Japanese. They are disseminating seditious books, published at the cost of our enemies, and filled with such abominable suggestions as that we have no further use for tsar, government, or religion. Why do the Japanese do this? They want to foment a spirit of fratricide, to spread anarchy, in the ranks of us children of the Orthodox Church of Holy Russia. All sorts of evil things, God knows what, are going on at home—riots and other disorders. Those of you who have any brains must realise what that will lead to. Do you fancy the tsar does not know that you have been led astray by these sordid agitators? Can you suppose that His Majesty will be so stupid as to pay the Japanese good Russian money in order to send home a lot of scallawags who will only make trouble when they get there? No one would succour his enemies in misfortune if he knew beforehand that they would stab him in the back for his pains. No, you’ll never see Russia again. You’ll jolly well have to stay where you are, and make the best of it.”

The Cossack captain had hit the nail on the head. What he said seemed so plausible that almost all his hearers believed it. There

must surely be some special reason why the prisoners of war were not sent home now that peace had been made.

One of the bluejackets shouted:

"We're not such damned fools as to believe you. Brothers, the man's a liar!"

There were murmurs among the prisoners, some of agreement, but more of dissent.

The captain, seizing his chance, raised his voice:

"Do you think that I, an officer in the Cossacks, a faithful servant of my country, am capable of lying? Let me tell you, I've been wounded three times on the forehead."

Probably it was the first time he had ever heard such plain speaking from a rank-and-file. His pride was bitterly mortified. To the general stupefaction he began to sob, then pulled off his cap and pointed to his head, saying:

"If you don't believe my words, believe my grey hairs. Every one of you has, or has had, a mother. What is dearer to you than the name of mother? Well, I swear to you in my mother's name that your fate will be to die in Japan and to be buried there. I tell you this because I pity you from the bottom of my heart."

Carried away by his own eloquence, he really seemed to believe what he was saying. His peroration had an overwhelming effect on the soldiers; especially on the reservists, whose hearts had long been gnawed by anxiety about their forsaken homes and families. Shouts of distress and anger were raised:

"What wretches, these agitators! They've been our ruin."

"My poor little kiddies at home!"

"We shall never see Russia again."

The chance of answering the Cossack captain had been lost. A single word of protest from us "agitators" would only have roused the soldiers to an explosion of wrath. Wounded and blinded, they were ready to avenge themselves on the first comer for severance from their families and the prospect of interminable captivity.

One of the prisoners shouted despairingly:

"But, Sir, what do you advise us to do?"

The answer came short and sharp as a rifle-shot:

"Give a good lesson to the agitators. After that you can write a letter to implore the clemency of our Little Father the tsar. Then, perhaps, he'll forgive you."

The officers departed, but the idea they had given vent to sped like

a night-bird from barrack to barrack, and aroused a ferment among the prisoners.

Next day, after the mid-day meal, the soldiers began to assemble in front of barrack no. 2, in which I was quartered. As soon as a few dozen of them had got together, they began to shout for me and my closest intimate, Konstantin Stepanovich Boltysheff, a torpedo-hand from the "Oslyabya" to come out, for they were going to give us a good hiding. There were a hundred and fifty of us seamen in no. 2, so we had no difficulty in keeping off the assailants. But in the camp as a whole there were twice as many soldiers as seamen. The crowd of besiegers increased, and blocked all the exits. Several of the soldiers were armed with axes taken from the kitchens, others with staves and stones. They shouted:

"Hand over Novikoff."

"Yes, and Boltysheff as well."

"Deliver up the two rascals for judgment by the people."

In view of the great number of the attacking force, the seamen began to slip away one by one, until at length there remained no more than a dozen trusty comrades. It seemed to me that we should be lynched. What could we do against three thousand men? I tried argument, but one might as well have argued with the waves that beat against a ship in a storm. We were faced by an elemental force. A crowd of raging maniacs blocked every door and every window, becoming more infuriated from moment to moment. I was terrified when I looked at their contorted faces, their flashing eyes. I felt sure that we should be killed, and our bodies rent to pieces. It was hard, when luck had brought me safely through the hell of Tsushima, that a few months later, still thousands of miles from Russia, I should be butchered by my fellow-countrymen. For the first time I understood what a mob was. These same men had regarded me as a leader, had looked on me with respect and admiration; now their one desire was to tear me limb from limb, animated by the notion that this would improve their own lot.

The shed was filling with soldiers, but not one of them had the courage to attack. It seems the word had gone round that we had revolvers, hand-grenades, infernal machines. This belief saved us for the moment. In reality we were armed only with Japanese knives, hidden beneath our overcoats.

A soldier facing us held in his right hand a bottle filled with sand. His plan evidently was to break it over my head. Blinded by the sand,

I should not be able to aim the revolver with which he fancied me to be armed. At the last moment he lacked courage to come to close quarters, and flung the bottle from a distance. It hit my comrade Golubeff, wounding him on the cheek.

The end seemed near.

Boatswain Vasily Chernovenko, headman of the barrack, warned us at this juncture :

“They intend to fire this old shed of ours, and have sent for a torch. We shall be roasted alive.”

The shed was made of planking and thatched with rice-straw. It would burn like tinder.

Chernovenko's words made me feel myself back in the Middle Ages, when witches and wizards and heretics were burned at the stake. I winced as if the flames were already scorching me. Three thousand frenzied lunatics surrounded the place, and, an accompaniment to their yells of rage, there ran through my mind as refrain the words so often heard : “The voice of the people is the voice of God.” I exchanged glances with Boltysheff. He was a broad-shouldered, deep-chested fellow, with muscles as strong as ropes of Manila hemp. Leaning a little forward, he breathed quickly, keeping sharp watch with his hazel eyes on what was going on. I had a brain-wave, mad enough no doubt, and, addressing Boltysheff, I said:

“Konstantin, we must take the offensive.”

He seemed to have been awaiting the proposal, for he instantly replied:

“I'm ready, old chap, if you are. Give the word.”

The others agreed.

Boltysheff rushed for the exit, with the rest of us hard on his heels. As we emerged it appeared to me that the whole world consisted of these furious soldiers who were thirsting for our blood. Something bestial surged up within me, as if I had never read any books exhorting men to love one another. I became as primitive as a beast of prey in the jungle. My muscles tensed at the mere thought—cold and clear as a ray of morning sunlight—that I must not muff the affair, but must unhesitatingly get the better of my assailants. The instant Boltysheff was seen on the steps, the shouting of the soldiers grew much louder, and hundreds of hands were stretched out to grasp him. But almost at the same moment I heard a scream, so shrill and ear-piercing that it drowned the shouts:

“Help! Help! He's killing me!”

Suddenly the ranks of the soldiers thinned, and silence prevailed. I saw a wounded face, twisted with pain, mouth wide, and eyes staring, while blood streamed down it. Then I caught sight of Boltysheff, who had rushed to the attack, and was now triumphantly brandishing his reddened knife. Throwing aside our overcoats, we, too, drew our daggers, and hurled ourselves into the fray. Thereupon the unexpected happened. Our three thousand assailants gave way before us, and fled in all directions. Seized with panic, they ran down between the rows of sheds, jostling one another and tumbling over one another in their fear, as if they had never faced fire at the front. Some of them actually crawled under the steps to hide. We did not pursue the fugitives far, for, recovering our senses, we realised that there was no one left to fight. Then the twelve of us left the camp and entered the town of Kumamoto, where, shortly afterwards, the Japanese police arrested us and took us to the lock-up.

Two days later, the Japanese interpreter told me that the soldiers, who were especially enraged against me, had returned to our shed, had laid hands on all my possessions, including the trunks containing my manuscripts, and, taking them out into the open, had set fire to the lot.

The interpreter, his black eyes twinkling maliciously, went on:

“You fellows seem to have had a regular civil war. Some of the seamen were badly cut about; and as for the soldiers, two are so seriously wounded that they’re not likely to recover.”

Thus I lost all my notes concerning the Battle of Tsushima.

It was such a shock to me, that for a week I did not sleep a wink. In fact I had a nervous collapse, and I shall always be grateful to the Japanese doctor, whose kind and skilful treatment saved me from a lunatic asylum.

The Japanese authorities held an enquiry, and decided that our flight from the internment camp had been justified by circumstances. They wanted to send us back there, but we begged them to keep us safe in prison as long as possible. A fortnight later, they transferred us to a camp which had been specially prepared for us in the grounds of Kumamoto hospital. Here we had ample liberty, for no sentries were on guard, and we could go into the town of Kumamoto whenever we wanted to. Seamen from the camp came to visit us, and told us that, after the riot, many of the soldiers were sorry for what they had done and tried to do. I may take this opportunity of mentioning that similar outbreaks of ill-feeling, some of them more serious

than the one at Kumamoto, took place in all the Russian concentration camps in Japan.

There were also disturbances among the Russian officers, even before the promulgation of democratic freedom in Russia (what is called the revolution of 1905). Immediately after the crushing defeat at Tsushima, it became plain to many officers how badly organized and equipped our fleet was, and how absurd the tsarist regime. Consequently, not a few became revolutionists. The number of such revolutionary-minded officers was greatly on the increase at the time when the above-described outbreak occurred at Kumamoto. Several of them, including a number who had belonged to our own "Oryol," came to visit us. They summoned a camp meeting, and explained to the prisoners the significance of the tsar's proclamation of democratic freedom.

"The whole Trans-Siberian Railway is in the hands of the revolutionists," said one of the speakers, without mincing his words, addressing an audience of two thousand men. "If they know that you are enemies of liberty, what will they think of you, what will they do to you? Do you suppose for a moment that they will be instrumental in sending back to Russia a crowd of hopeless reactionaries? You'll have to pad the hoof all the way across Siberia. Nay more, I believe that as soon as you are embarked for Vladivostock, and have got out of Japanese territorial waters, the sailors will chuck you overboard."

No one doubted any longer that a regime of democratic freedom had been established in Russia. Otherwise this officer, and men of his kidney, would not have dared to speak so openly as they did. A ferment was renewed among the soldiers, but this time they began to molest the ringleaders in the attack on us. From every prison-camp memorials were sent to the Japanese authorities describing us as the best men in the world, declaring that there had been a mistake, asking for us to be sent back to the Kumamoto camp, where we should now be perfectly safe.

Actually, we were a month away from the camp. When we returned to barrack no. 2 I was still afraid of the fickle mob, as variable as the sea-breezes. The prisoners, however, gave us a great reception, waving red flags and singing revolutionary songs. I was carried in triumph on dozens of vigorous arms, amid shouts of rejoicing—but all the while I was in a cold sweat, and felt as a kitten might feel in the claws of a tiger.

While still in Kumamoto prison, I began to rewrite what I could remember of my lost notes concerning the Battle of Tsushima. After returning to the camp, I went on with this work. Again my comrades helped me, again the men from the other ships related their experiences. We pressed on with the work, but our period of internment came to an end before we had collected the requisite information about all the units of the squadron. I had no description of the fate of a good many of the warships.

Our train, crammed with seamen, left Vladivostock, and, at a leisurely pace, traversed the long, long route of the Trans-Siberian Railway. Sometimes we were held up for two or three days in a blocked station, awaiting our turn on the next stretch of the single line. How vast seemed this Siberia, with its virgin forests, its mountain ranges, its unending steppes, its scattered population. In each heated luggage-van were forty men, not looking in the least like seamen, for they were clad in sheepskin coats, big fur-caps, and long fur-lined boots. February cold had succeeded the heavy snowfall of early winter. The little stove was kept constantly alight, but it warmed us inefficiently. On the benches, our bodies were insufferably hot, but our feet, on the floor, were damnably cold. We never washed, were covered with a crust of dirt, and devoured by fleas. The food supplied at the revictualling stations was abominable, and the bread was frozen so hard that we had to saw it or to chop it up with an axe. The men mutinied several times, and pillaged the revictualling stations. At this time, the detachments of Generals Rennenkamb and Meller-Zakomelsky were stationed in Siberia to repress disorder. Some of our crowd were arrested by these troops, and were executed under martial law as soon as they had crossed the frontier of European Russia.

I was most uneasy about my Tsushima material. The generals might think of having our van searched. What would happen to me if these "seditious" documents were discovered? But all passed off without mishap, and at length I reached my native village, Matveevsky, in the government of Tambov—where the most distressing news awaited me, for my dear mother had died a fortnight before my arrival.

The revolutionary storm, which began in the capital cities, had spread to the lesser towns and the villages, making an end of the patriarchal life hitherto prevailing throughout the countryside. No one inspired with revolutionary sentiments could help espousing

the cause of the revolution, and playing an active part. Leaving my native province, I spent some time in St. Petersburg, then in Finland, and at length, becoming a marked man, I had to take refuge in foreign parts, for the reaction was dominant.

In 1913, with a forged passport, I returned home for a few weeks, living in strict seclusion.

My brother Silvestr, sixteen years older than myself, who had been the first to arouse in me a passion for letters, explained the situation to me:

“If you knew what has been going on here! Daily visits from inspectors, ordinary policemen, foresters. Sometimes they search the house; sometimes they hold enquiries. Again and again they ask what has become of you, and where you have hidden your manuscripts. For two years I didn’t know what on earth to do with your papers. Had I hidden them in the barn, they might have been discovered; and of course I didn’t want to burn them. At length, I wrapped up the manuscript books in newspapers, and put them in tin cases, which I soldered to keep out the damp, and buried, but—for the life of me—I can’t remember where!”

Imagine my stupefaction! I felt as miserable as if I had lost a child. Then I told Silvestr how my manuscripts had been burned in Japan, and then partially rewritten. It had been so difficult, I said, to get them safely to Russia.

“You can understand that this is a terrible blow,” I said, with a groan.

He clapped his hands to his head, and tore at his huge, curly, black beard, saying:

“You can skin me alive, but I can’t recall where I stowed away those papers. They’re safe and sound, somewhere. But you know what devils the police are, with their cross-questioning; they drive one crazy, and one forgets. Besides, if I’d been caught with the goods on the premises—Siberia for me!”

Silvestr rummaged everywhere, and racked his brains, but the papers remained undiscoverable. I abandoned hope. My nephew Georgy, with the help of the secretary of the commune, managed to get me a passport in due form. I went to St. Petersburg, and thence to Moscow, where I lived in a semi-legal position.

Years passed. My brother died. His place at home was filled by his eldest son and my nephew Ivan Silvestrovich, who had now returned from service in the Red Army.

While the tsarist regime was still in being, the censorship made any kind of literary career difficult for me. Consequently, though I felt I had plenty to say, I wrote little and printed even less. Not until after the March and November revolutions was I able to devote myself whole-heartedly to literary occupations.

The only tie I retained with the region of my birth was that once a year I went there for a shooting expedition, which gave me a thorough change and freshened up my ideas. This happened once more ten years after the revolution, in 1928, when I was accompanied by the writers Pavel Nizovoy, Aleksandr Peregudoff, Pyotr Shiraeff, and Leonid Zavadovsky. We spent nearly a fortnight in the forests and among the swamps; and, before returning to Moscow, paid a visit to my nephew at the village of Matveevsky. After tea, Ivan Silvestrovich placed before me on the table a huge bundle of papers tied up with string.

"I think you'll be glad to have those," he said with a smile, drawing back a little to watch me.

Instantly I recognised the missing documents, and exclaimed:

"Where on earth did you find them?"

"You remember the beehives made out of hollowed tree-stumps, in the shed near the bathroom? They were there before you were called up for service. Well, the shed was falling to pieces, and I had the old hives replaced by some of a modern type. I determined to sort them, sell the good ones for what they would fetch, and burn those that had gone rotten. I opened them one after another, to see in what condition they were inside. In one of them I found a bundle of papers. 'What can these be?' I wondered, remembering Dad had told me of the loss of a lot of documents of yours about which you had been worrying for years.

"With trembling fingers I untied the string, and then said to my friends who were helping me:

"'We've found the Tsushima memoirs, which disappeared two-and-twenty years ago. If only they can be got to Moscow!'"

A glance at the papers was enough to remind me of what these manuscript books, and so on, contained. The ink was faded, but still decipherable. Vanished memories were stimulated, and pictures began to unroll themselves before my memory like those seen at the movies. Clearly I could now recall many forgotten details of the Battle of Tsushima.

After my return to Moscow, I got into touch with the survivors

of the battle, some by word of mouth, others by letter, reminding them of that distant past, and discussing every detail. In this way I renovated my material, and must make special mention here of those who were most helpful in the matter.

First of all comes V. P. Kostenko, one of my shipmates on the "Oryol." Many of the names that appear in the following narrative are genuine; but some, for obvious reasons at the time when I made my notes, were fictitious. There is no longer any ground for hiding the fact that he whom I have called Engineer Vasilieff was Kostenko, who now occupies an important post in the naval dockyards of the U.S.S.R. In this connexion I may disclose the identity of "Commander Sidoroff," who was really K. L. Shvede, senior officer of the "Oryol," and died in Leningrad, at the age of 70, in 1933.

Two others who have helped me enormously in checking and collating the material are conspicuous characters in my book: Boatswain M. I. Voevodin and Chief Look-out Man Zefiroff.

There is not a chapter which has not been closely scrutinised by those who were personally concerned in the events related. Still, substantially my book is a personal narrative, and would never have been written had not I myself participated in, and been an eyewitness of, a tragedy unique in history—the Battle of Tsushima.

A. NOVIKOFF-PRIBOY.

BOOK ONE
THE VOYAGE

*Cold death awaits us. There's no escape.
For he who, ruthless, sends us to death,
Has no heart at all in his iron breast.
Victims are we, by Fate's hand marked.
But soon the hour of atonement will strike,
And the pillars and arches of this sad world,
Which you try to uphold, will crumble and break.
The dear day of freedom will come at last,
Though we shall not see that splendid dawn.
So take our lives if you must and will.
March forth to death! March forth to death!*

P. Y.

CHAPTER ONE

UNDER THE ST. ANDREW'S FLAG

I

SEPTEMBER 1904. Days drawing in rapidly; mornings pleasantly crisp. From where we lay in the Gulf of Finland, the coast appeared as a long thin line silhouetted against the horizon. A day earlier we had been under steam for target practice; now the squadron was anchored in the roads at Kronstadt. I was serving as paymaster's steward on the first-class cruiser "Minin." Duties finished, I went forward where some of the men lay at full length, while others sat reading newspapers in which the chief topic of interest was the war with Japan.

In spite of the strict censorship, we knew that things looked queer for Russia in the Far East. Our rulers were dazzled by past glories. They had expected a signal victory, after which terms of peace would be dictated in Tokyo. Matters took a very different course. The Russian army was in full retreat from Korea into Manchuria. Port Arthur was besieged. The first Pacific squadron lay blockaded there by the Japanese fleet.

But to-day we read that on July 28th the first Pacific squadron had made an unsuccessful attempt to break through the Japanese naval forces and reach Vladivostock. Our fleet sailed at dawn. It encountered the enemy about forty miles from Port Arthur. An exchange of shots began at long range. The "Tsesarevich," flying the flag of Admiral Vitheft, led five other ironclads into action. Four enemy battleships and three cruisers, one of the former being Admiral Togo's flagship, the "Mikaza," steamed to the attack. Soon the two fleets drew away from one another without serious damage on either side. This skirmish took place at noon. At four o'clock the engagement re-opened, now between two opposing lines. For a couple of hours nothing important happened. At six o'clock, however, a large Japanese shell struck the "Tsesarevich" close to the conning-tower. Admiral Vitheft was killed outright, while the flag-captain and several other officers were seriously wounded. The steering-gear had been put out of action, so that the boat could only steam in a circle, and broke the line, thus approaching the enemy. To cover the flagship,

the "Retvizan" spontaneously advanced in the same direction. The Japanese, disconcerted by this bold manoeuvre, retreated. Night was falling. The way to Vladivostock seemed to be open, but confusion prevailed in the Russian fleet. Some of our craft made for neutral ports. The remainder, considerably battered, were now under the irresolute command of Admiral Utomsky, and returned to Port Arthur.

No better success attended the sortie of the three cruisers "Rossiya," "Gromoboy," and "Ryurik," which left Vladivostock, hoping to effect a junction with the main body of the first Pacific squadron. On August 1st they encountered Admiral Kamimura's fleet, and joined battle. The "Ryurik" was sunk, and her companions had no choice but to put back into Vladivostock harbour.

"Now it's all up with them," said Artificer Sycheff, with a sigh. He was a man used to thinking for himself.

Several voices enquired:

"All up with whom?"

Sycheff was lying on his back, eyes closed because the sun shone brightly. He was pale, and the hair was thin over his temples. A few seconds elapsed before he answered, in a tired voice:

"All up with the ships of the first Pacific squadron. Not one of them will ever get away from Port Arthur. Our naval force has been disastrously weakened, while there have been no losses on the Japanese side."

Bobkoff, master-gunner, a lively, rosy-cheeked fellow, exclaimed:

"The second Pacific squadron will soon be ready. That will settle their hash."

Sycheff answered gloomily:

"You don't know what you're talking about, my lad. Even when your second squadron is ready, how many months do you suppose it will take to reach Port Arthur? The fort will probably be in the hands of the Japs long before then, and our ships out there at the bottom of the sea."

Earlier, when the second Pacific squadron was being hastily equipped, few of us believed there was any intention to send it to the Far East. Now there could be no doubt. Only ten days before, many of the ships belonging to this squadron were transferred from Kronstadt to Reval. We had seen this with our own eyes. The vessels concerned were: the battleships "Suvoroff," "Alexander III," "Borodino," "Oslyabya," "Sisoy Veliky," "Navarin," and "Admiral

Nakhimoff;" the first-class cruisers "Aurora," "Dmitri Donskoy," and "Svetlana;" the second-class cruiser "Almaz;" the torpedo-boat destroyers "Bedovyi," "Bezuprechnyi," "Blestyashchy," "Bodryi," "Buinyi," "Bystryi," and "Bravyi." The commander of the squadron was Admiral Rozhestvensky, on the flagship "Suvoroff." The battleship "Oryol" and the cruisers "Oleg" and "Izumrud" were to join up later, being still in dock at Kronstadt.

One of the newspapers contained a boastful article which I read aloud to my messmates. The writer described the second Pacific squadron, and put all his hopes in it. In conjunction with what remained of the first squadron, it would blow the Japanese fleet out of the water. Then the land forces of the enemy on the Asiatic continent, cut off from home and their base of supplies, would be forced to capitulate. In a word, Russia was certain to win the war.

"This chap swears that our fleet is three times as strong as the Japanese," said one man, addressing Sycheff. "Yet you think they can lick us?"

"None so blind as those who won't see," retorted the artificer. "That penny-a-liner is saying what he is told to say, and is talking through his hat. The first Pacific squadron was stronger than the second will be, and had already been on active service. Well, what happened to it? The same thing will happen to the second squadron. They're leading us up the garden."

Several agreed with him.

"Yes, there's been too much hurry-scurry over the fitting-out of this second squadron. Riding for a fall! What about the men?"

"Some of them will be spoiling for a fight, but the others won't be so keen about it."

The conversation turned upon war aims. It was plain that the war was becoming more and more unpopular.

A whistle sounded on deck, followed by a shout:

"Paymaster's Steward Novikoff, the captain wants you."

This must be something important. Throwing down my newspaper, I hastened to obey, adjusting my uniform as I ran. I reached the open door and saluted:

"Here I am, Your Honour."

The captain was of German type, tall and broad-shouldered, looking more like a lawyer than a naval officer. He was rummaging among some books on a shelf. He turned towards me and stared vacantly. I went up to him, and waited to be told why he had sent

for me. Silence. Then he turned to his desk, fumbled among the papers once more, and said:

"Here is an order from the naval staff on shore. I don't want to lose you as paymaster's steward, but I have no choice. You are transferred. Get your kit together, and be off as quick as you can."

"May I ask Your Honour where I am to go?"

"To the battleship 'Oryol.'"

He spoke quietly enough, but to me the words sounded like a knell. I had no desire to go to the fighting front in the Far East, for my interests were of a different kind. My concern was with the great political changes which I knew to be imminent in Russia. I was ready to play an active part in bringing them about, having, to the best of my ability, educated myself with that end in view. I read the latest books on the subject whenever I got a chance. Now, fate was switching me in a different direction.

"The voyage will be full of interest," said the captain. "You will see a lot of new places, and will have a brush with the Japanese. But, most important of all, you will enlarge our education, get fresh lights . . ."

This, I fancy, was a hint that, politically, I was suspect.

After a pause, the captain went on:

"I presume that you are delighted with this new berth?"

I answered promptly:

"Of course, Your Honour."

I spoke heartily, and with a smile, so he did not penetrate the mask.

"I knew you would be. Good-bye, then."

"Thanks, Sir," I replied, taking leave in due form.

I had spent five years at Kronstadt, and the place seemed like a second home to me. Though I was sorry to quit, I was left no choice, and joined the "Oryol."

II

The battleship "Oryol" seemed to me a giant in comparison with the cruiser "Minin." The first thing that struck me was its enormous size. It was painted black, not only the armour-plate that invested the hull, but the superstructure as well. There were twin turrets fore and aft, armed with 12-inch guns, and three turrets on either beam, carrying 6-inch guns. The muzzles of these guns gave

an impression of formidable strength. Two stages higher was a battery deck furnished with 75-millimetre quick-firing guns to deal with torpedo boats. Upon the upper deck were the bridges, the fore-bridge having three storeys and in its middle the conning-tower, and the after-bridge two storeys. At either end of the bridges were smaller (47-millimetre) quick-firing guns, and electric searchlights. Two huge funnels, painted yellow, towered amidships. Between these were boats, steam-pinnaces, and torpedo tubes. The antenna of the wireless outfit ran from main-top to mizen-top. Both these tops were railed and screened for use as look-out stations.

When I came aboard there was a great bustle throughout the "Oryol." From barges moored alongside, the sailors were hoisting ammunition, cases, crates, and barrels. One heard shouts, boatswains' whistles, the clank of iron, the rattle of cranes.

I mounted to the upper deck, amid the tumult, and made my way to the paymaster's office. There I found an elderly ship's clerk. Solnyshkoff was a brisk and cheerful fellow. From him I learned who were to be my immediate chiefs: the senior paymaster's steward, Paymaster or Conductor Pyatovsky, and the inspector, Lieutenant Burnasheff.

"He's not a bad sort Pyatovsky. No angel, but no devil either. Mean though; likes to put money in his pocket. Not very bright. Well, you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear."

"What about the inspector?"

"Bone-idle. Never does a hand's turn more than he can help. Signs papers without reading 'em. Looks upon the ship as his furnished digs, that's all."

The clerk rubbed an eyebrow and grinned. He was very talkative, not to say loose-tongued. About every one whose name came up, whether commissioned or petty officer, he had a characterisation ready.

"Commander Sidoroff is our particular Grand Panjandrum. Comes from St. Petersburg. Dances well, and is fond of the ladies. Looks rather fierce, but likes a joke, and there's no need to be afraid of him. What's that you say? Want to know about the boatswains? Young chaps, Voevodin and Pavlikoff. You'll get on well with them. But the first boatswain, Saem, he's a caution. Less you have to do with him the better. He's a favourite with the officers, for he knows his job. Commander Sidoroff drives the three boatswains as neatly as the horses harnessed to a troika . . ."

Solnyshkoff broke off as a man wearing silver epaulets came into the office. There was nothing noteworthy about his face, except that his expression was grave and that he had a reddish beard and moustache. It instantly flashed into my mind that this must be the senior paymaster's steward, Pyatovsky. The clerk told him who I was, and he promptly got to business.

"I'm glad you've arrived. There's a frightful lot to clear up, and I'm pretty well fagged out."

Pyatovsky sent me to report myself to the inspector. Lieutenant Burnasheff was seated at the writing-table in his cabin. He had a sleepy expression, was thin-lipped, and his round, pimply face looked as if it might have been better for a wash. Glancing at me meditatively, he said:

"All right. Go to the head of our department. Take him these papers."

I had a long hunt for Commander Sidoroff, since none of the men had seen him on the battery deck. At length I ran him to earth. He glanced at the papers I gave him, and read while inspecting his new subordinate. He was, as Solnyshkoff had told me, rather a fierce-looking man with a bristling beard. Handing the sheaf back to me, he scrutinised me from top to toe, closing his eyes alternately, while his heavy moustache on either side wagged in time with the movements of his face like a semaphore.

"Well, get to work. You'll have plenty to do. All your store-rooms must be properly supplied."

"Yes, Your Honour."

"Mustn't be too much elbow-lifting. If there is, and I get to know about it, you'll be given short shrift. Are you fond of vodka?"

"Never tasted it, Sir."

"So much the better. But there's one thing I'm doubtful about, whether you're as strong as you ought to be."

"I'm as my mother made me, Sir."

Without showing temper, and simply as if to emphasise his superior rank, he turned his back and departed.

The audience was concluded.

After five years of service I had become too much accustomed to the manners of my superior officers to take offence readily. In the evening I was allotted a canvas hammock and a mattress stuffed with cork shavings. I promptly settled down as a member of the great family which formed the ship's company—nine hundred men,

assembled from all over Russia. Day after day the feverish agitation I had noticed on arrival was resumed. At an accelerated rhythm, barrels of salt meat, boxes of biscuits, tins of butter, sacks of meal, salt, and other stores were packed away in the hold. Simultaneously, from the lighters that surrounded the "Oryol," her magazines were being filled with shells, torpedoes, and spare parts for the engine-room. This went on so long that I began to think our giant's stomach would never be filled.

In my leisure time, of which I had none too much, I studied the internal construction of the ironclad. The first thing that struck me was the distribution of the ship's company. The stern half of the ship comprised the officers' quarters, some of the cabins being unoccupied, so that, in case of need, the "Oryol" could accommodate an admiral and his staff, and transform herself into a flagship. There were thirty officers on board. The other half of the ship, the whole of the bow in front of the engine-room and other vital quarters, had to accommodate a complement of about nine hundred : deckhands, gunners, stokers, artificers, petty officers, etc. The master-gunners and boatswains had cabins of their own. But we common fry were herded together, incredibly crowded.

I was even more interested in another aspect of this battleship. It was of the latest design. Ferreting about from one tier to another, I scrutinised all the arrangements, looking (except for the sacred precinct of the officers) into every corner of the iron labyrinth. Apart from the main engines and boilers, the turrets, guns, torpedo-tubes, and wireless apparatus, I made myself fully acquainted with the titanic warship which was to be my home for so many months and might well be my tomb.

III

A philosopher once said: "Learn to be a good listener, for that is better than to be a good talker." I did my utmost to be guided by this principle. I guessed that I was being kept under observation. My immediate chief instantly recognised me, and whenever we met he scanned my face suspiciously. What I wanted to know was, whether anyone had been specially told off to keep an eye on me.

This did not hinder my attempts to discover the spirit of the command, the peculiarities of the officers, and the organisation of the service, not only on the "Oryol," but throughout the squadron.

Of course it was much easier for me to find out what my mess-mates were thinking. Many of the men had come from shore service, in the naval commissariat department, and so on, or were reservists. They were well up in years, had almost forgotten the tang of the sea and the discomforts of fore-castle life, had for years been living between four walls, married men with families. To them the war seemed an infernal nuisance, breaking up old habits and inflicting distasteful and unfamiliar tasks. Among the officers, too, there were a good many raw hands. Paradoxically enough, on shipboard they were like fish out of water, afraid of the sea and its unknown perils, and still more afraid of what might happen to them in the Far East. Even the younger men who had recently been through a proper naval training were a cheerless lot. Only under duress were they participating in this voyage to distant waters and in the life-or-death struggle that would ensue. The Admiralty, wishing to rid itself of slackers and dangerous (supposedly revolutionary) elements in the navy, had conceived the happy expedient of sending them to man this second Pacific squadron—which was really a forlorn hope. The more nervous among us consoled themselves by saying that whether they were heroes or poltroons made not the slightest difference to their chances of being hit or missed.

One evening I went to a small cabin on the starboard beam, where two of the junior boatswains were quartered. A healthy tan spread over the cheeks of these thick-set, sturdy men. I liked Maxim Ivanovich Voevodin better than his stable-companion Ivan Epifanyevich Pavlikoff, for the former was the more thoughtful, practical, and serious-minded of the pair.

I found it easy to make friends with the boatswains. Cupboard love, of course, for I was the dispenser of vodka, and few of them were strong-minded enough to be content with the regulation tot. That made them, in a sense, dependent on me.

It was on this occasion that I first heard some remarkable details concerning the history of our ironclad. The boatswains knew all about it. Pavlikoff told the story in a hoarse baritone.

“When the ‘Oryol’ was on the stocks, she only just escaped destruction during a fire that took place in the naval dockyard at St. Petersburg. She’s been an unlucky bitch from the very start. Launched in 1903, when the Neva was in flood, she nearly foundered as soon as she took the water. Then she was towed to Kronstadt through the ship-canal (that was in the spring of the same year), and was made

fast to the wall of the dock. The cables were not strong enough, and by evening she had listed 30° to port. During that same night, when every one on board was asleep, the hawsers parted, and the battleship settled quietly on her side, since the water was not deep enough for her to turn turtle. It rose as high as the battery deck, though. The ship's company made for the dry part of the upper bridge, in a fine panic, as if they'd been torpedoed. However, when they recovered their wits they found, as I have told you, that she was only lying down, quite comfortable, and could'nt really sink. Still, it took a fortnight to get her on an even keel again."

"What on earth had happened?" I asked.

Pavlikoff shrugged his shoulders. Voevodin answered instead :

"I think the reason's plain enough. The designers had not allowed for the fact that the ship-canal from St. Petersburg to Kronstadt is too shallow for the 'Oryol's' draught. They had to lighten her by taking off the armour-plate. Naturally that made her top-heavy, but she kept her end up all right, and the rivet-holes were plugged with wood. Some one drew out the plugs from one side, so that the old tin-kettle leaked horribly."

"Some one. But who?"

"Oh, they talk of Jap spies! We weren't at war with Japan then, though of course relations were strained, and every one knew that war would come soon. To me, it's all a bloody hoax, and you may tell the tale to the horse-marines. Most likely the plugs were drawn by some of our own men—revolutionists maybe, or lily-livered fellows who couldn't stomach a rumpus in the Far East. It was just the same on other ships."

"So the 'Oryol' has a bad record. Is that the end of it?"

"Well, for the end we must wait till we get to Japanese waters. But here . . ."

He paused.

"Go on," I said.

"She put to sea for a trial trip. There was a grating noise in one of the low-pressure cylinders, so they took the head off to have a look. Grooved and scratched inside. Seems that some pieces of scrap-steel had got loose in there. How could scrap-steel get into a closed cylinder? Sabotage at the dockyard, I expect."

"Or, men who funk'd a fight?"

Voevodin stroked his flaxen moustache, and looked at me pensively.

"I don't know about that," he said; "but what I do know is that

a lot of our men really are in a blue funk. Some of them have reported sick, though there's nothing much the matter with them, hoping to get into hospital until after the 'Oryol' has sailed. One of the stokers shammed something the other day. The chief surgeon saw he was malingering and told him he had the pox and must go to the Lock Hospital. That worked like a charm! We're not all of the same kidney, but few of us, if truth be told, fancy an exchange of shots with the Japanese."

Talk went on in this fashion for some time, and I was by no means in a cheerful mood when I bade good-night to the boatswains.

IV

Our "Oryol" was of the same type as the "Borodino," the "Alexander III," and the "Suvoroff." They were as like as peas. These four ironclads, recently built and extremely powerful, constituted the nucleus of the squadron. It could not sail without us. Naturally, Admiral Rozhdestvensky was in a hurry for us to complete our preparations.

At length the "Oryol" was so fully laden with stores of food and fuel and ammunition that her main deck was almost awash. True, in respect of certain details of outfit the ship was still unfinished, but the authorities decided that she was to start, taking with her about a hundred skilled workmen to finish her off. She left Kronstadt for her distant goal on September 17, 1904, at four o'clock in the afternoon.

Two tugs bravely pulled the ironclad out through the roads. A light breeze ruffled the surface of the Gulf of Finland. The weather was somewhat hazy. The sun, through the veil of mist, was wan, as if shining from under the sea. We waved farewell to those on shore, who responded heartily to our greetings.

A couple of hours after we had weighed anchor, excited cries came from the bridge. (Our captain, Nicolai Victorovich Yung was, I should explain, a highly strung man.) Captain Yung waved his arms in despair. Instantly we all realised what had happened. While still in tow, we had grounded on a sandbank.

The sailors grinned.

"The cruise is finished."

"Yes, we may as well pack our kit-bags for home."

There was a bustle on the bridge. Since our own engines had steam

up, orders were given to go full-speed ahead, then full-speed astern. The tugs were directed to pull us to starboard, and subsequently to port. But the "Oryol" would not budge.

"Take soundings" shouted the captain—though why, since there were shoals about, the leadsmen had not been at work ever since we started, the devil and our Old Man or the navigating lieutenant alone knew.

"Mark four and a half," twenty-seven feet, was the report. Overloaded as was the "Oryol," she drew twenty-eight feet six inches. What more natural than that she should run aground?

Persons of importance began to arrive in steam pinnaces; the notables of the harbour, not excepting Vice-Admiral Birilioff, commander of the Baltic fleet.

Every one on board the "Oryol" had often seen this thick-set, wily-looking old chap; was familiar with his bronzed and weather-beaten face, his pointed beard, trim moustache, piercing dark eyes, huge ears, and resolute gait. Scion of a titled and wealthy family, owner of vast landed estates, the admiral, in accordance with ancient naval tradition, paid out of his own pocket for the living expenses of his staff and experts. He gave excellent dinners, cooked by a noted chef, and washed down by the best vintages—though Birilioff himself was no soaker. Hospitable to a fault, he was strict where service matters were concerned, and kept a tight hand over his subordinates. He was fond of holding naval reviews, and on these occasions he seldom missed an opportunity of chaffing the captains and junior officers, though courteously enough, and without showing temper. He would also play cat-and-mouse with the rank and file. Having occasion to reprimand, he would say:

"What am I to do with a fellow like you? Stringing you up to the yard-arm might be a little too harsh, and yet prison's too light a punishment. It's not easy to decide . . ."

The terrified bluejacket would look imploringly at the admiral, who, having enjoyed his fun, would relax, and continue:

"It's lucky for you I can see by your phiz that you've the makings of a good sailorman. Not guilty, but don't do it again. That's the verdict. Here, pocket this rouble. Remember that if I catch you a second time, I shall hang you. No use hoping for mercy then!"

Martial ardour was far more important to Birilioff than were the latest developments of naval technique. The spirit of the navy was what counted. He was always glad to accept an invitation to the

officers' mess. On these occasions he would spin yarns about his own naval experiences, and his clashes with Admiral Makaroff and Admiral Verkhovsky, sometimes splurging a little to make the most of his own knowledge and skill. A phrase often in his mouth was:

"I am a fighting admiral."

Once, hearing this, a pert midshipman ventured to say:

"Will you be good enough, Admiral, to tell us a little about the sea-fights in which you have taken part?"

Biriloeff flushed, and answered curtly:

"I have never been in action, Mr. Midshipman Roshchakovsky, but it has been my consistent endeavour to keep the fleet ready for immediate action. That is why, in my opinion, I am entitled to style myself a fighting admiral."

Another of Biriloeff's salient characteristics was a passion for foreign decorations. He had scoured the courts of Europe on the hunt for them, securing trophies from Victor Emmanuel II, the bey of Tunis, the sultan of Turkey (Abdul Hamid), Ferdinand of Bavaria, Alexander of Serbia, Alphonso XIII of Spain, the Cross of the Legion of Honour from the president of the French Republic. This was when he was rear-admiral in our Mediterranean fleet. On his return to Russia the word went round:

"His Excellency has finished his crusade!"

I have myself often seen Biriloeff in gala uniform, when the stars, crosses, and what not, were more than his broad chest could carry; they invaded his belly. With all these splendours he looked more like a Christmas tree than a human being. But our "Oryol" is grounded on a sandbank while I digress to describe the man who came to the rescue.

Biriloeff had little hope of winning either kudos or decorations from the second Pacific squadron, which had given him a lot of trouble. He wanted to get it away from the Baltic as soon as possible, though it might be ill-provendered and badly manned. Now here was this infernal "Oryol" stuck fast in the mud, and looking as if she would never get out of sight of Kronstadt. He was furious, and reprimanded Captain Yung. Then he shouted:

"All hands on deck, to shake up the vessel!"

Some additional tugs had arrived, and while these hauled to the best of their power, four hundred men, under orders from the bridge, raced again and again from one side of the deck to the other. What was

the use of this manoeuvre? It might have "shaken up" a fishing-smack; but how could the movements of men weighing in all no more than 30 tons be expected to make any serious difference to an ironclad displacing 15,000 tons? The men themselves saw the futility, and laughed as they ran, saying to one another:

"Take care, boys. We may capsize the old tub if we don't look out!"

At length one of the port officers hazarded a suggestion to Birilioff.

"I'm afraid, Your Excellency, that neither tugs nor bluejackets can get the 'Oryol' out of this fix. Hadn't we better send for dredgers, to deepen the channel?"

The cloud of anxiety cleared from the admiral's face as he answered:

"Why, that's just what I was thinking. The very thing! You're absolutely right. Send for dredgers."

The officers of the Kronstadt contingent lost no time. They started off at once in steam-pinnaces.

Boatswain Voevodin, chancing to meet me, murmured:

"What did I tell you? There's a curse upon this ship!"

From various remarks, I gathered that the men in general shared his opinion.

The night was uneventful.

Next morning three dredgers were at work, and their clatter never ceased for twenty-four hours. By dawn on September 19th the "Oryol" was able to continue her course for Reval, where she joined the other units of the squadron, and anchored in the roads.

V

Reval. Days and nights followed one another like the flapping of a bat's wings. Every one busily engaged in making ready for the voyage, and for the naval campaign that was to follow. Measures taken for defence against surprise attacks by the enemy, though the enemy was so far away. Nets rigged to ward off torpedoes. After nightfall, some of the ships in the roads kept searchlights uninterruptedly at work. The sea-front was patrolled by torpedo-boats and destroyers.

On our ironclad, to the great delight of the captain, the workmen from shore were dismissed. There was a good deal of hesitation before the authorities decided on this step, since speed in completing equipment was essential; but the workmen were a nuisance because even without them the ship was overcrowded, and they got in our

way. Besides, there was a fear lest some of them might be revolutionists, who would foster sedition. I myself had a talk with one of these men. He looked at me through half-shut eyes, scratched his head, and said:

“So you’re being sent out to fight?”

“Yes.”

“With God on your side, eh?”

“Why bring God into it?”

“Well, the devil then.”

“I didn’t say so.”

“You don’t deny it, anyhow.”

“Oh, as you please.”

I thought it wiser to break off the conversation, for I didn’t know the man, and he might have been a stool-pigeon of the Okhrana.

But when I stumbled upon him again, he began to talk politics. He spoke cautiously, but I understood his drift. He said that a victory over the Japanese would strengthen the position of the Government. I heard the same story on shore when talking with some of the intelligentsia. Persons of advanced opinions hoped for a defeat. It seemed that never before had revolutionary ideas been so widespread in Russia as during this war, which had shown up the rottenness of our Government. We unfortunate sailors were in a cleft stick. If we gained a victory over the Japanese we should hinder the revolution, which was the only hope of our country. Were we, on the other hand, tamely to sacrifice our lives? We should be reviled as cowards if we did not put up a good fight.

Still, I do not doubt that many of the workmen were spreading a defeatist spirit among the crew. Captain Yung knew it, and that was partly why he was so glad to be rid of them.

Drills during our stay at Reval revealed the fact that officers and crew were inadequately prepared for an active engagement. The flagship “Suvoroff” was no better served than the other craft. Let me quote order no. 69 issued by Admiral Rozhestvensky:

“To-day at 2 a.m. I instructed the officer of the watch to issue the signal for defence against a torpedo-attack.

“Eight minutes afterwards nothing had been done. Every one was sound asleep except the officers and men of the watch, and even they were not sufficiently alert. Not one of the search-lights was ready. The men told off for torpedo-duty were not at their

posts. No steps had been taken to light the deck, though it is impossible to work guns in the dark."

This referred to the "Suvoroff," but the admiral instructed his staff to have similar trials made in other ships of the fleet, and to report immediately.

Soon the "Oryol," in conjunction with other units, was expected to defend herself against a hypothetical torpedo-attack. The night was calm. A signal sounded. Search-lights flashed out upon the waters, to disclose the floating targets towed by our torpedo-boats. While the other vessels, though tardily, were firing at these targets, disorder prevailed on board the "Oryol." Some of the younger men, who had been frightened by bugaboo stories about the proximity of the Japanese, believed that a genuine torpedo-attack was in progress. Discordant cries were raised. The officers shouted at the petty officers, and these, in turn, shouted at the men. It was several minutes before order was restored, and our 75-millimetre guns opened fire.

My impression was that if the Japs had really been attacking, our sluggishness and muddle would have made us an easy prey, and the "Oryol" would inevitably have been sunk.

Severe reprimand from the admiral.

Next day, troubles of a different kind. Had to prepare for full-dress review, since His Majesty Tsar Nicholas was expected. A fury of cleaning and polishing took possession of the ship. Again and again we washed the gangways with soap and water; we scrubbed the bridges; touched up the paint; scoured the brasswork. Engines and stoke-hole were not forgotten, though it was most unlikely that the visitor's exalted feet would tread the narrow ladders giving access to the bowels of the ironclad. Sidoroff, the second in command, though a man well up in years, rushed about in a frenzy, shouting and swearing. The other officers were equally busy, each in his own department. When all seemed ready, Captain Yung made a tour of inspection, found a few places that were not yet in apple-pie order, and insisted on more washing or scouring. Cleanliness became a mania.

The review took place on September 26th. At eight o'clock we "dressed ship," hoisting multi-coloured flags strung to a line running from stem to stern over the tops of the two masts. The day was fine and clear, with a light breeze, rather chilly. We wore new blue jumpers and black trousers; officers in full dress, with cocked hats. The bands struck up on the flagships.

His Majesty kept us waiting, and we wanted our dinners. Hurrahs reached us from other ships, but the imperial pinnace did not come alongside the "Oryol" until three o'clock.

Received by the officers, Nicholas mounted to the deck, escorted by his suite and the admirals. He was pale and expressionless, unable to rise to the sublimity of the occasion. Looking at us listlessly, he saluted. As we had been commanded, we all shouted:

"Long live Your Imperial Majesty!"

Having climbed to the fore-bridge, the tsar made a short speech, telling us to take vengeance on the insolent Japanese, who had troubled the peace of Holy Russia; and to maintain the glory of the Russian navy. He spoke with little fire, naturally enough, having pattered the same phrases on half a dozen ships or more.

As I looked at him, I thought:

"Does he really believe we shall be victorious? So many Russian lives have already been squandered in the Far East. Does he realise that with this second Pacific squadron we are playing our last card? Can he hope that our admiral will save Russia from imminent defeat?"

This same admiral, Zinovy Petrovich Rozhestvensky, was standing, in gala uniform, beside Tsar Nicholas. His broad shoulders were decorated with epaulets bearing monograms and black eagles. Medals and stars glittered on his chest. His trousers were beautified by a broad stripe of silver braid. The scarlet ribbon of the Order of St. Anne and the silver cords of a staff-officer were supplementary adornments. His stalwart figure dominated not only the tsar but all the members of the suite. His stern visage was set off by a well-trimmed pepper-and-salt beard, and his piercing black eyes seemed to indicate a dauntless will. Though it was his way to hang his head, he now stood straight as a ramrod, looking so resolutely at Nicholas that it seemed as if nothing could stop him.

He was supported by two rear-admirals: one of them von Felkerzam, and the other Enkvist, commander of the cruiser squadron.

I had seen Felkerzam often enough. It was generally believed that he was a more efficient officer than Rozhestvensky, but a rather comical appearance had hindered his advancement. He was extremely obese, and walked with short, trotting steps. He ran to fat, and his face was beardless, so that he looked like a eunuch. When he was angry, his tiny mouth became as round as the opening of a thimble; and his treble voice was quite unsuited to his sex and station.

Enkvist, of Swedish extraction, was a man whom I now saw for the first time, but of whom the reader will hear more. He had a most undependable memory, and one of his staff officers was commissioned to make notes of everything he ought to bear in mind. His great stand-by was his big white beard, which aroused confidence in every beholder.

As my eyes lingered on the tsar and his train, the admirals and their staffs, I remembered the proverb: "All is not gold that glitters."

His Majesty's closing words were:

"I wish you a victorious campaign and a happy return to your native land."

The review ended with a hurrah from nine hundred mouths.

VI

I could not but call to mind the ceremony which had taken place at Reval in the year 1902—the famous meeting of Tsar Nicholas II and Emperor William II. At that time were laid the foundations of the brilliant career of Admiral Rozhestvensky, then an inconspicuous admiral in command of the gun-practice squadron which was to make a display before the German emperor. The "Minin" was his flagship. Here were spun the invisible threads of the coming Russo-Japanese war.

July 24, 1902, was a lovely day. There were fourteen ironclads and cruisers and fifteen torpedo-boats, large and small, in Reval harbour. Nearly all these vessels were painted black, but two white ones, the "Varyag" and the "Retvizan," which had been built in America, stood out in sharp contrast. Close by the fleet were anchored the imperial yachts, "Shtandart" and "Polyarnaya Zvezda," which had arrived overnight. Grandees of the Baltic fleet were coming in force to Reval. The shore was thronged with sightseers.

From early morning, Emperor William's arrival was eagerly expected. At length the smoke of the Germans was seen behind the Isle of Nargen. Immediately the imperial yachts, escorted by the cruiser "Svetlana," set out to meet them. In their wake steamed vessels conveying a distinguished cargo of visitors.

By eight o'clock our ships had been gaily dressed with flags. We heard salutes when the Russians and the Germans sighted one another. Two hours later our guests were in the roads. The German contingent was formed by the armoured cruiser "Prinz

Heinrich," the cruiser "Nymph," and Emperor William's yacht, the "Hohenzollern." They were painted white. William came across to the tsar's yacht, so that the two emperors were together on the bridge of the "Shtandart."

All our ships simultaneously fired a thirty-one salute in honour of the Kaiser, with the result that the fleet was veiled in smoke, and there was such a racket that one might have supposed a naval action to be in progress. On flagships and yachts the bands were hard at it. We played the German national anthem, and the Germans replied with the Russian. The bridges were crowded with officers in full-dress uniform, and the ratings were all spick-and-span. The shrouds were manned; so were the yards of the "Perveniets" and the "Kreml"—old-style wind-jammers. Of course there was no lack of cheering, which is part of the prescribed ceremonial on such occasions.

After dinner, at 3 p.m., the ships that were to make a display of target-practice cleared for action, their officers having changed into service uniform. The two emperors came on board the "Minin," accompanied by Prince Henry Frederick, by our admiral-in-chief Grand Duke Alexis, Tyrtoff the Russian and Tirpitz the German ministers of marine, various admirals, and members of the imperial suites. Never before had so many notables been assembled upon our cruiser. Now the allotted vessels put out to sea.

The "Minin's" bridge was crowded with exalted visitors, the press being further thickened by Admiral Rozhestvensky and his staff. I, too, was there, inconspicuous in a corner, but entrusted with the important duty of keeping a record of misses and hits.

Nicholas II wore the uniform of a German admiral; William II that of a Russian admiral, his breast being decorated with the blue ribbon of the Order of St. Andrew. Our tsar, though he ruled so much larger an empire, was dwarfed by his colleague. The kaiser was the cynosure of all eyes. Tall and well-made, he held himself soldierly, and walked with such martial assurance, that people scarcely noticed his withered arm. A scar on the cheek, upturned moustaches beneath the big, straight nose, and steely eyes that shone from under the cocked hat, were thoroughly in keeping. His was a warlike figure.

Among these big pots I felt as a man might feel who had been flung into the top of a tall tree and was clinging to some slender branches. If I blundered, I should fall headlong. Cold chills ran up

my spine. A hundred times I made sure that my uniform was in perfect order; yet I could not rid myself of the notion that some button or other might be hanging by a thread, that a seam might gape, or what not. Then I should be publicly disgraced.

The warships, exchanging signals, began their evolutions. They made a fine picture, as they followed one another in line of battle; floating fortresses that were manipulated with as much ease as a company of soldiers on dry land.

Gunfire began. The first shots were directed at fixed targets which had been set up on Carlos Island; the later ones at targets towed by destroyers.

Rozhestvensky seemed to ignore both the tsar and the German emperor, and to concentrate his attention upon the work in hand. From time to time he would shout:

“Quicken fire!”

Noticing that one of the ships was manœuvring badly, he lost his temper (being of a choleric habit) and flung his binoculars overboard. Commander Clapier de Colongue instantly offered his glasses to the admiral.

The tsar watched this with a smile.

Target-practice went on for three hours, and the marksmanship was better than usual—so much better that I was puzzled, for I had witnessed many target-practices, and had never before seen the targets so speedily demolished.

When it was over, William congratulated the tsar, saying—in front of Tirpitz:

“I wish I had such splendid admirals as your Rozhestvensky in my fleet!”

Nicholas, taking this flattery at its face value, smiled like a child with a new toy, and embraced, first Grand Duke Alexis, then Admiral Rozhestvensky. The admiral kissed His Majesty's hand, saying:

“If only we could fight now, Sire!”

That evening, however, when the petty officers of the destroyers came to supper at our mess we heard some interesting news. The floating targets and the targets on Carlos Island had, they said, been so constructed as to fall to pieces at the mere wind from a shell, without a direct hit.

Next day there were landing parties; and, the day after, there was a sham naval engagement, part of the fleet being told off to represent the enemy.

Thus the whole business lasted three days, ending with illuminations both at sea and on shore. The flagship "Minin" displayed the fiery initials W and N surmounted by red crowns.

The monarchs exchanged costly presents, oriental fashion, and decorations were lavishly distributed.

At four o'clock in the afternoon of July 26th, the German vessels weighed anchor, and steamed out of the roads, amid cheers and salutes, under the escort of the "Shtandart." When the "Hohenzollern" was off the Isle of Nargen, she hoisted the signal:

"The Admiral of the Atlantic bids farewell to the Admiral of the Pacific."

On board the "Shtandart" the significance was not instantly grasped; so the conventional reply was hoisted:

"Message noted."

Then, by the tsar's orders, flags signalled:

"Farewell. Pleasant journey."

William must have been a little disappointed that Nicholas was so slow in the uptake, or had thought it injudicious to reply in the same vein. For the German ruler meant to announce his determination (in despite of the British) to rule the Atlantic, and to urge his imperial colleague to pursue the same aim in the Pacific. Nicholas, in truth, understood perfectly well, and believed William to be sincere. Thenceforward the Russian authorities were feverishly active with their preparations for war in the Far East. During those days at Reval the idea of making war on Japan took firm root in the tsar's mind. William, in his turn, gained Nicholas's endorsement for the German occupation of Kiao-chow which had occurred four years earlier.

This meeting of the two emperors at Reval gave Rozhestvensky a jog forward in his career. He was appointed chief of the naval staff, and held the post until he became commander of the second Pacific squadron.

VII

We set sail from Reval immediately after the review and anchored at Libau on September 29th. There we spent three days. On October 2nd the squadron reached the northernmost point of Denmark, the Skaw or Cape Skagen, where we coaled on October 7th.

Before leaving the Baltic, Rozhestvensky received a telegram

informing him that he had been gazetted vice-admiral, with the rank of lieutenant-general on the staff. Thirty-six hours later were to come the events which dimmed his reputation while making a great noise in the world.

On the very day of our arrival off the Skaw, the flagship signalled that the fleet was to stop coaling and revictualling, and to make ready for instant departure. Alarming rumours began to circulate among officers and men. It was generally supposed that this hasty change of plans must have been determined by secret news of the approach of Japanese destroyers.

The admiral made special provisions for defence, the squadron being divided into six detachments, each under separate command. The sixth detachment comprised our four best ironclads, convoying the transport "Anadyr." The "Oryol" was the last to weigh anchor, at 8 p.m., when night had already fallen.

Shortly afterwards the "Navarin" reported that she had sighted two balloons. On the "Oryol" the alarm was sounded, and the men hurried to their stations. The ship was cleared for action. Then, with all lights out, we continued on our course.

It was a lovely night, and the peaceful waters of the Skager Rack shone like silver beneath the moonbeams. In the circumstances, however, there could be no thought of rest, and we kept on the alert. Hundreds of eyes scanned the seas in search of the enemy.

I was standing on the upper deck, my head whirling as I wondered whether there could possibly be any danger of the Japanese attacking us so many thousands of miles from their base. This seemed incredible; but so panicky an atmosphere prevailed throughout the ship that I found it hard not to be infected. Doubtless, things were no better on the "Navarin," and it occurred to me that the look-out men there might easily have mistaken seagulls for enemy balloons or dirigibles.

At this moment Boatswain Voevodin came to me and said gloomily:

"It was a fool's trick to send those destroyers and swift cruisers ahead. They'd much better have kept to the original formation. Only show the enemy, if there are any about, where the main fleet is. Why can't our admiral see that much?"

Bluejackets were standing on the starboard bow. With them was Stoker Baklanoff. They were discussing the situation in low tones. Some were obviously frightened, and all were talking about submarines. Baklanoff put in jeeringly:

"No good looking for submarines. They're under water, those chaps. Maybe there's one firing a torpedo at us just now. You'd better say your prayers, those of you that believe in God!"

"You don't mean that they can finish us off in a moment?" enquired a raw hand, in a tremulous voice; and, notwithstanding what Baklanoff had said about the invisibility of submarines, he looked anxiously over the bows.

At this moment Baklanoff, also leaning over the side, shouted:

"Hullo!"

The bluejackets crowded round him, and followed the direction of his gaze. But the raw hand, yelling with fright, crumpled up on the deck and wrung his hands.

Baklanoff chuckled, and exclaimed:

"Lily-livered swine! Better send him home to his mammy."

Taking no further notice of the poor devil, the stoker went on:

"All the same, it's a fact, Brothers, that not one of us knows how soon he may become food for the fishes."

Shortly afterwards, to port, on the horizon, a column of fire appeared. We believed it to be a burning ship, and that our scouting cruisers had come into action against the Japanese.

Half of us went to bed, very late; the others remained at their stations.

On October 8th, going on deck, I found that the weather had changed during the night. A breeze had risen from the south-west, bringing thick fog. Neither the "Borodino" ahead of us nor the "Anadyr" astern could be made out, even with the aid of our search-lights. Binoculars and telescopes were useless. We were groping our way at reduced speed. The world had become nothing but an infinite envelope of mist. Even on board, the most familiar objects were unrecognisable. Men looked like phantoms. The impression of mystery was intensified by the noise of sirens, for the five vessels of our detachment were wailing almost incessantly. Far ahead of us could be heard the giant voice of the "Suvoroff," rising to a climax and then dying away. As soon as it ceased the "Alexander" bellowed; next the "Borodino"; and after that our own "Oryol." These titans seemed to be trying to outdo one another in the loudness of their stentorian halloos. As a wind-up to each bar of the performance, the "Anadyr" uttered shrieks of agony, as if to announce some terrible misfortune.

The mist gradually cleared. The North Sea was calm. We were

making for the Straits of Dover, and should have had no disquiet but for certain alarming messages we received from the advance-guard.

That same evening the wind freshened and the waters became choppy. Night fell cloudy, and a chill rain augmented the darkness. Soon after eight bells (8 p.m.), the repairing-ship "Kamchatka" reported an attack by Japanese torpedo-boats. This vessel was a member of Rear-Admiral Enkvist's detachment, and should have been at least fifty nautical miles ahead. But one of her twin-engines got out of order for a time, and she was held up. Only now could she steam ahead once more, alone, in front of our detachment of battleships.

As was subsequently disclosed, the wireless dialogue between the "Kamchatka" and the "Suvoroff" ran as follows:

"Kamchatka": "Chased by torpedo-boats."

"Suvoroff": "Anxious. How many? From which side?"

"K.": "From all directions."

"S.": "How many torpedo-boats? Give details."

"K.": "About eight torpedo-boats."

"S.": "What distance from you?"

"K.": "A cable length."

"S.": "Have they discharged any torpedoes?"

"K.": "We haven't seen any."

"S.": "What course are you steering?"

"K.": "S. 70° E. Please give us position of squadron."

"S.": "Are torpedo-boats still chasing you? Evade the danger. Change your course. Indicate your position and we will send further instructions."

"K.": "Fear messages will be intercepted."

At 11 p.m. the "Suvoroff" wirelessly:

"Admiral wishes to know whether torpedo-boats still in sight."

Twenty minutes later came the reply:

"We cannot see any."

At 9 in the evening the flagship signalled our detachment:

"Be ready for torpedo-boat attack from stern."

The "Oryol" sounded the alarm:

"Prepare for action."

Guns were loaded; ammunition hoists opened. All the men stood at their posts. No enemy appeared.

We longed for the moon to show itself, but it was hidden behind

clouds. The weather thickened, fog returned, the sea moaned. Hours passed on leaden feet. This waiting for invisible dangers oppressed us.

Midnight came, and some of the hands were given leave to turn in, but few profited by the opportunity. Fires were still discernible on the horizon.

"If only this night were over," sighed the remaining bluejackets.

"Yes, it seems as if day would never dawn!"

Dread of a Japanese torpedo-attack had so thoroughly demoralised our ship's company that the power of reason had fled. No one criticised the preposterous messages from the "Kamchatka." She was an ancient transport, now fitted out as a repairing-ship; she carried no more than a few small-bore guns, and her loss would have made little difference to our fighting strength. Why should the Japanese single her out for attack? Why, above all, should they surround her with a flotilla of eight destroyers, when one torpedo would suffice to send the old tub to the bottom? Were our enemies fools? Nothing but the morbid imagination of the commander of the "Kamchatka" had conjured these eight destroyers out of the void, to attack him "from all directions." Nor was Admiral Rozhstvensky any wiser. He accepted the messages at their face value. Instead of sending a cruiser to verify the "Kamchatka's" story, and succour the repairing-ship in case of need, he spread panic through the fleet.

Soon after midnight we were passing the Dogger Bank, a shoal in the North Sea much frequented by fishing-smacks. At a little distance from the squadron some tricolor flares showed up. The "Suvoroff," believing these to be enemy signals, turned her search-lights on the fishing-smacks which were thus indicating their whereabouts, and opened fire on them. Her example was followed by other ironclads of our detachment. Thus we received a "baptism of fire"—or, rather, it was the harmless fishermen who received ours!

The "Oryol" was humming like a hive of angry bees. Bugles blared; drums rumbled; rails rattled under the weight of hand-trucks laden with shells; heavy guns were fired from the starboard and port turrets, lighting the darkness with flashes as they discharged and stirring the night with echoing thunder. Men swarmed onto shrouds and bridges. Discipline went west. Men yelled:

"Destroyers! The destroyers!"

"Where are they? How many?"

"A dozen at least."

"No, more than that."

"We're done for."

"It's all up with us."

Some seized life-belts. Others, running to their hammocks, took out the cork mattresses. Some crossed themselves, while others mouthed curses. The sea roughened a little, and spray scattered into the lower-deck batteries. Terrified gunners fired at random, now at flames which were still visible on the horizon, now at vacant waters on which the rays of searchlights were falling. Some bunglers were trying to reload guns which had not yet been fired. Mingled with the noise of heavy discharges was a crepitation of machine-guns, that added to the infernal din. Amid this turmoil angry officers were shouting:

"What are you doing, idiots. What are you shooting at?"

"Why the hell don't you aim at those torpedo-boats when the search-lights show 'em up?"

A midshipman, despairingly waved an empty shell-case, as he ran from the after-bridge on to the main deck.

"They've fired away my shells," he shrieked. "Give me more ammunition."

Our line of battle had been broken. Some of our search-lights did, indeed, disclose the boats at which we were supposed to be firing, but others projected their rays into void space, causing much disorder by their glare. Far away on the starboard bow, at a distance of several miles, flash-signals could be discerned. Afterwards we learned that they came from Admiral Felkerzam's detachment, but to our confused senses at the moment they appeared to be enemy signals. Great was our surprise when, from close at hand on the port beam, came the dazzling rays of a search-light from a vessel that was scrutinising us. We believed our squadron to be surrounded by the enemy.

Blue funk prevailed among the men.

"Japanese cruisers," said one.

"They're attacking us in force," whispered another.

Our detachment opened fire upon the search-lights; response was prompt. Shells whistled above the "Oryol." Luckily for us, they were aimed too high! From a neighbouring ironclad, probably the "Borodino," came the deafening roar of a 12-inch gun.

"That was the explosion of a torpedo!" exclaimed some one on the "Oryol."

"We've not been struck."

"No, I expect the 'Borodino' has been sunk. It will be our turn next."

This news, exaggerated after the manner of what the English (I have been told) call "Russian scandal," ran from mouth to ear all over the battleship, until, as the belief spread that the whole squadron had been or was about to be destroyed, our battleship became little better than a floating lunatic asylum.

Soon, however, the vessels on our port beam, at which we were firing so madly, let us know by flash signals that they were the "Aurora" and the "Dmitri Donsky," belonging to Rear-Admiral Enkvist's detachment.

Beyond question, when passing the Dogger Bank, we had sighted the North Sea fishing fleet from Hull. Our officers (who were as panicky as the men) had mistaken these little steam-tractors with one funnel, distinguished by numbers, for Japanese destroyers. It need hardly be said that none but destroyers were in question, since small torpedo-boats, intended only for coast defence, could not possibly have made their way from the Far East into European waters. The flagship had been the first to open fire upon the unhappy fishermen and had communicated its delusion to the rest of our detachment. Calm being restored, a pitiful spectacle presented itself. At a distance of about five cable lengths, in the glare of the search-lights, we saw a red-funnelled boat whose bridge and mast had been shot away. She was showing a strong list. Four similar boats had been hit. Some of them were on fire, and the crews were running about the decks in despair, vainly seeking shelter from the flames. As far as we could see, their only chance was to take to the water.

The "Suvoroff," having extinguished her fighting search-lights, left only one light in action, projecting its rays skyward. This signified "cease fire." On the bridge of the "Oryol" our captain shouted: "Cease fire."

The officers, cursing the men and belabouring them, dragged them from the guns, but the gunners broke away, and continued shooting. On the upper deck, Bugler Balesta tried to sound the "cease fire," but his hands were shaking and his lips trembled so that his instrument only emitted irrecognisable gurgles. Boatswain Saem, who was standing beside him, thereupon struck him in the face with clenched fist:

"Sound the 'cease fire,' you damned idiot, or I'll knock you down."

The bugler, with bleeding lips, managed to obey orders.

The "action" had lasted twelve minutes. In that short time the "Oryol" had fired seventeen 6-inch shells, and five hundred shells of small calibre. As we afterwards learned, the guns on the other ironclads had been no less busy. The flagship had behaved just as badly. There the admiral was compelled to intervene personally before the gunners could be brought to their senses.

The muzzle of our 75-millimetre gun had been blown off.

Five of the "Oryol's" shells had hit the "Aurora," damaging her side and her funnels. Master-Gunner Shatilo and Chaplain Afanasy were wounded, the latter mortally. Still, we might consider ourselves lucky, for if we had been able to shoot as well as the Japs, we should certainly have sunk a few of our own ships.

Meeting Engineer Vasiliieff, I said:

"This will make a fine yarn, Sir."

He looked at me askance. Then waving his arms, he said despairingly:

"The noise of it will echo round the world!"

This first "sea-fight," came to be known officially as the "Hull incident," since Hull was the port of registration of the trawlers on which we had fired. The English, however, usually refer to it as the "Dogger Bank affair."

CHAPTER TWO

ROUND THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE

I

THE succeeding days were uneventful, but for another, less serious, encounter with fishing-smacks. This time we merely fouled their nets, which happily did no harm to our propellers. Soon we passed through the Straits of Dover, having to starboard the magnificent white cliffs of which Victor Hugo sang. Sixty or seventy miles separated us from London, that huge, foggy metropolis whence issue hidden threads that influence political life throughout the world.

This centre of intrigue once behind us, we directed our course into the Bay of Biscay, whose waters are almost perpetually troubled by the Atlantic rollers and by frequent changes of weather, so that it might as well be called the Bay of Storms. Beyond the ordinary routine of naval life there was little to do. During the day we often threw scraps of bread into the water, and watched the gulls swoop into our wake to seize them. At night we had plenty of time to think over recent happenings. I could not but wonder why, when everything had gone off so well during naval reviews, we made such a frightful mess of it on the Dogger Bank.

Older elements of the fleet had been refitted before leaving the naval dockyards. The best craft were of the latest type, but had been built at a cost at least twice the proper sum. Before laying down the hull of an ironclad or a cruiser, projects and counter-projects had been considered, the experts racking their brains to get the best possible results. Despite this trouble and expense, the ships were unstable, answered their helms badly, and suffered from various other defects.

How could it have been otherwise? Too much red tape! Admirals, grave of mien, extremely self-important, issued orders; staff officers filled in countless forms which were duly pigeon-holed, under appropriate docketts. Huge piles of reports and specifications accumulated in offices. Reviews without number. Big pots, responsible for these inspections, asked the little pots that did the work how matters were going, and were repeatedly assured that every-

thing was for the best in the best of all possible navies. Big pots and little pots bade farewell with mutual complacency.

The supreme chief of the navy, Grand Duke Alexis Alexandrovich, the tsar's uncle, sometimes visited the fleet. Glancing at the ships, made spick and span for his coming, he declared himself well satisfied. He never realised that organisation for active service was practically non-existent, that everything was, so to say, gangrenous. He only differed from other exalted personages in respect of his huge bulk and cheerful countenance. In the fleet he was known by the nickname: "Twenty stone of august meat."

At a casual glance one might think that all was going well in the navy; but anyone who took the trouble to look beneath the surface got a very different impression. With few exceptions, the chiefs were thick-headed bureaucrats and confirmed routinists, who regarded the rank and file as a flock of sheep, as potential cannon-fodder, as persons having no rights and lacking the capacity for independent thought. The crew must, for its part, be content to regard itself as of no account. The officers believed themselves to be beast-tamers. A bluejacket must obey orders smartly, without reflection, like a well-trained dog. For many of the admirals and captains, such subserviency to the effects of drill was the only thing necessary to the making of a good foremast hand, the only indispensable requisite to success in war. Yet our officers failed to perceive that the mechanical toys, the automata, thus produced were unfitted to handle efficiently the highly complicated instruments of a modern warship, and made very poor marksmen.

The root of the trouble extended far back into Russian history. Peter the Great founded the Russian imperial fleet (consisting in those days, naturally, of sailing ships). Within a few decades this force developed rapidly, and its flags flew in many and distant seas. A climax was reached at the opening of the nineteenth century. The Russian fleet then ranked with the fleets of other great naval powers. Many of the most distinguished Russians of that day were naval men—noted explorers and scientists.

Krusenstern (1770-1846), an Esthonian by birth, was a Russian admiral. He circumnavigated the globe 1803-06, and his writings became famous. I need mention only three of them: *Journey round the World*, 1810-12; *Atlas of the Pacific Ocean*, 1824-27; and *Collection of Hydrographic Memoirs*, 1824-27. His ship was the "Nadezhda" (Hope). He was, for that epoch, a competent zoologist, botanist, and

ethnologist. A strait, an island, a gulf, and a sandbank in the Pacific bear his name.

Faddei Faddeivich Bellinshausen, a pioneer of South Polar navigation, sailed on board the "Vostok" as far south as the 70th parallel, beyond the parallels subsequently reached by James and Cook. No less than seven times he crossed the Antarctic Circle. The world owes much to his explorations in this mysterious region. He discovered many hitherto unvisited Pacific islands.

For four years Fedor Petrovich Litke cruised between Archangel and Nova Zembla, throwing light on the arctic world as Bellinshausen had upon the antarctic. In 1826, having been appointed captain of the "Senyavin," he circumnavigated the globe, visiting the Sea of Okhotsk and the Sea of Japan, besides touching at the Caroline, the Marianne, and the Philippine Islands.

Other noted Russian naval officers of those days were Vasily Mikhailovich Golovin, Otto Kotzebu, and Hennady Ivanovich Nevelsky.

Nor were fighting admirals lacking. In the history of naval warfare, Ushakoff rivals Nelson; and experts will not forget the names of Senyavin (after whom Litke's corvette was christened), Lazareff, and Heidin.

This period of blossoming in the Russian navy lasted until the Crimean War. It created officers and men whose feet were as firmly planted on the decks of their ships as a tree is rooted in the ground. But the Crimean War showed that the sturdiness of a ship's complement cannot make up for lack of acquaintance with the latest developments of modern technique. The Russians were tardy in adapting themselves to steam propulsion and to ironclads. Besides, the conditions of shipboard life were wholly out of date in the Russian navy. Naval discipline was based on the serfdom which prevailed on shore. The disastrous consequences were all too evident during the Crimean campaign.

Simultaneously with the abolition of serfdom by Tsar Alexander II in 1863, the use of steam was first introduced into the Russian navy. For a long time, however, the steam-engine played no more than an auxiliary rôle, and even the earlier ironclads were still fully rigged with sails. As late as the period from 1882 to 1890, the armoured frigates "Dmitri Donskoy," "Vladimir Monomakh," "Admiral Nakhimoff," "Pamiat Azova," and "Ryurik" were built; while the comparatively modernised ironclads "Nicholas I" and "Alexander II"

had a supplementary equipment of sails. These vessels kept afloat for two decades, and were still in use when the Russo-Japanese war broke out in 1904. Some of them were then laid up at Kronstadt; others formed part of the second Pacific squadron; and one, the "Ryurik," had already been sunk in the Far East.

Such old-fashioned hulks formed the training school of our navy. Every admiral in the Russian service won his sea-experience aboard of them; so had most of the captains and other senior officers who took part in the naval campaign of 1904-05. Conspicuous representatives of the school were Admirals Alexeieff, Dubasoff, Chughnin, Skrydloff, Birilioff, Rozhestvensky, and notably Makaroff. The last-named, son of a boatswain from Vladivostock, was the only man of the lower orders whom favourable circumstances had enabled to force his way into the fenced precinct of the officers' caste. Yet even he, though a progressive and talented man, whose rise was representative of the dawn of a new era of highly skilled technique, could not shake off the habits and traditions of the days of wind-jammers. As for the other admirals, they were hidebound by obsolete habits and traditions, as was manifest whenever they opened their mouths to give orders. They commanded and took into battle new mechanisms, but their whole outlook derived from ancient times.

II

In a few days we sighted the rocky coasts of Spain, and made for Vigo, which was our next port of call. There, five German colliers awaited us. From the deep indentation in the coast where Vigo lies, we could see, overtopping the nearer sierras, the loftier crests of the Pyrenees. The harbour provided ample room for a hundred ocean-going vessels.

None of us, either officers or men, were allowed shore leave, and coaling was not to be effected without difficulty. No sooner had we anchored than port officials boarded us. These men informed our admiral that, since Spain was a neutral, supplies for the Russian war-fleet could not be obtained in Spanish waters. Rozhestvensky explained that the position was very serious. We had not coaled since leaving the Skaw, had steamed 1312 miles at an average speed of from 8 to 9 knots, while burning 125 tons of coal a day. The bunkers were almost empty, and the ironclads had only enough fuel for a two days' voyage. What was to be done?

Telegrams to Madrid, telegrams to St. Petersburg. A brisk exchange of messages between the Spanish and Russian capitals. Day followed day. Our officers were greatly excited by what they read in French and English newspapers. Reports of their conversations trickled down below decks. We learned that the "Hull incident" or "Dogger Bank affair" had become a matter of international importance.

"The foreign press says we're spoiling for a fight."

"What I heard was that all the Governments mean to declare war on us."

"No, it wasn't so bad as that, but our squadron will have to turn back."

"Turn back? Impossible!"

"Well, that's what they said. And Rozhstvensky will be put on trial."

"Jolly well have to pull his own chestnuts out of the fire. We merely obeyed orders. If we can get home to Russia . . ."

At length the Spanish authorities informed us we might coal to the extent of 400 tons per ironclad, smaller vessels in proportion. This news came in the afternoon, and every one lent a hand: blue-jackets, stokers, artificers, petty officers, clerks, officers, and all. The men were told that two extra tots of vodka would be served out if work was well and quickly done. We turned to with a will (not that I was interested in vodka); and speedily the "Oryol," like the other ships, was wrapped in a black cloud. Coaling ship is a filthy job. Everything gets begrimed. We worked the night through, and until ten o'clock next morning. By that time we had shipped twice the specified allowance!

Now we thought we had only to up-anchor and continue our southward voyage, but the admiral deferred orders to stoke the fires. Evidently we were to wait awhile at Vigo. The atmosphere throughout the fleet was uneasy. We did not know what was amiss, but supposed that the Dogger Bank affair was giving trouble. Meanwhile, since time hung heavy on my hands, I bethought me of something that had happened the day before we sailed from Libau.

Having gone ashore there on leave, I entered a bookshop, and was fluttering the leaves of some of the latest publications, when a voice from behind said:

"Are you choosing books?"

I turned, with a start, to see that the man who had spoken was an

engineer officer, Vasilieff by name, his cloak dripping from the rain. The bluejackets and especially the artificers had pointed him out to me as one of the best officers in the ship. He was young, about twenty-six at a guess, and smiled at me approvingly.

“Yes, Sir, I want books for the voyage.”

“Excellent. You’re fond of reading?”

“It’s my chief delight, Sir.”

Vasilieff asked me a question or two about my literary tastes, and, before departing, said:

“When we’re at sea, look me up. I can lend you some books.”

Now, at Vigo, meeting Vasilieff on deck, I reminded him of his promise.

“Come with me.”

We entered his cabin. He took off his cap, and, looking in the glass, tugged at his silky moustache. A prepossessing appearance with his brown, intelligent eyes. Sinewy rather than stocky. A man of middle height. Hair cut short, “en brosse.” Pleasant voice; clear tones like those of a man who neither smokes nor drinks; and his thoughts were no less clear. His good manners to an inferior, his gentleness, and his affability, distinguished him from his fellow-officers.

He asked me what sort of books I was fond of, and we discussed various authors: Leo Tolstoy, Turgenieff, Chekhoff, Korolenko, and above all Maxim Gorky, then the centre of interest in the literary world. I expressed my views honestly, not only about books, but about the need for and likelihood of political reform. Vasilieff watched me, and seemed to be drawing conclusions. He handed me Ethel Lillian Voinich’s book *Ovod* (The Gadfly), and said:

“When you’ve done with it, come and have a talk.”

I had read *Ovod* before, but it was worth reading again. I stayed awhile, for I wanted to know what he thought would happen to our squadron.

“What do they say about us in the foreign press, Sir?”

“A great deal, and what they say is very unpleasant. The English are furious with us about the Dogger Bank affair. They declare that we behaved like mad dogs, and regard us as no better than pirates. They’re especially angry with us because, having fired on the trawlers by mistake, we did not stop to rescue the fishermen. Some demand that we should return and surrender the admiral for trial; others threaten war. The French papers state that Britain is mobilising her fleet. In a word, there’s a hell of a mess.”

"But what would have happened if those vessels on the Dogger Bank had not been trawlers; if they had really been Japanese destroyers?"

"Well, what do you yourself think?"

After a moment's hesitation, I decided to answer with frankness tempered with caution.

"I may be mistaken, but I think that they would have busted up the second Pacific squadron! We couldn't shoot for nuts. I may be talking through my hat, but. . . ."

Vasilieff smiled bitterly.

"Talking through your hat? No, very much to the point, I'm afraid. Had the Japs been there, not one of our boats would have floated for an hour. What is mainly lacking to this squadron is intelligent organisation. Where were our scouts that night? Why were the elements of the fleet scattered? When we come to grips with the enemy, you'll see. . . ."

Vasilieff suddenly pulled himself up, as if feeling that he had let his tongue wag too freely. I knew that it was time for me to take leave. As I was opening the door, he said:

"This talk is between ourselves, of course. The less you say to your shipmates about such matters the better. No good going out to meet trouble."

"Very well, Sir; I quite understand. Good-night, and thank you."

"Good-night, Novikoff."

I thought a great deal about this conversation with Vasilieff. What sort of man was he? Why had he spoken to me so openly about the defects of our squadron? Why had he lent me a book which no other officer would have recommended to a man in my subordinate position? My impressions of him were very favourable. It seemed impossible that he could be a provocative agent, or had spied out the land in order to denounce me to the authorities. Eyes, voice, his whole appearance, conflicted with such a supposition. I found it hard to believe that an officer's uniform might clothe a revolutionist. Still, men more highly placed than Vasilieff were devoted to the popular cause. . . .

There was a British cruiser at Vigo, presumably in wireless communication with consorts out at sea. She came in only for a few hours, and her captain did not visit Rozhestvensky. Report ran that a British squadron was in a neighbouring harbour, to await our departure. Next day the cruiser returned, and formal visits

were exchanged. This politeness, we feared, might mask an intrigue.

From our officers we learned that the second Pacific squadron was in some sort under arrest—an arrest which would last until the “Hull incident” had been settled. Should we have to give up the expedition to the Far East, and return to Russia? ’Twould have suited our ticket to perfection.

Duty called me to the “Suvoroff,” where I met my friend Ustinoff.

“Well, what’s up?” I asked him.

“There’s the devil to pay,” he replied. “That Dogger Bank ‘biz,’ you know . . .”

“Will it keep us long at Vigo?”

“No, I think the squadron will soon continue its voyage. But one officer from every ship has been sent to Hull for the enquiry. They’ll have to account for our firing on the fishing-smacks. Commander Klado left the ‘Suvoroff’ yesterday.”

Ustinoff gave me some interesting details about Rozhestvensky’s staff.

The chief of staff was Flag-Captain Clapier de Colongue, a long, thin man, with fair hair. Couldn’t be more than forty-five years old. The passage of time had tonsured his head, grizzled his beard, and wrinkled his forehead; bushy eyebrows overhung his piercing eyes. He gave thought to his appearance, and dressed smartly, thus counteracting the signs of approaching age. A typical French aristocrat, distinguished, courteous, and polished of speech; civil to his subordinates, of whatever grade. No one could deny that he had brains, that he was erudite, that he was unusually well-informed regarding naval matters—but he lacked one of the first essentials: strength of character. In other circumstances, he might have proved the salvation of our fleet; but under so authoritarian and incompetent a man as Rozhdestvensky he was useless, for he was afraid to contradict his superior.

The artillery chief, Lieutenant-Colonel Bersenieff, was a tall and bony man, as competent at his job and as skilled a technician as Russian conditions allowed. But useful though his advice often was, the admiral generally ignored it.

At the head of the torpedo department was Flag-Lieutenant Leontieff, with grey eyes, a prominent nose, well-shaped but rather too conspicuous teeth, and light nondescript hair carefully parted. His position on the staff was far from agreeable. By no means lacking

in intelligence, he was lamentably servile. From the time of his appointment, his one thought had been to suck up to Rozhestvensky. He was not always successful in pleasing the admiral, cringe as he might, and frequently reaped abuse instead of commendation.

Commander Semenoff, author of *Rasplata* (The Reckoning), was chief of marines. This post did not necessarily make him (in Russia) a member of the fighting staff. Nevertheless, he was high in the counsels of Rozhestvensky, and had long been numbered among the admiral's closest friends. Tubby, with a face puffed and ruddy, straggly wisps in place of a beard, he looked thoroughly self-satisfied—as if he had just discovered a new law of gravitation! The bluejackets nicknamed him “the perambulating bladder.” He usually occupied a position as aide-de-camp or staff officer, for he was well informed and a good linguist. His novels and short stories about sea-life could not compare in quality with the nautical tales of Stanyukovich. Semenoff was disliked by his fellow-officers, who considered him an intriguer. On the other hand, he was the darling of the admirals' wives. These ladies found him gallant and witty, and an ideal squire. Rozhestvensky looked upon him as a sort of court-scribe, who would recount the glorious deeds of the second Pacific squadron and its commander. Being of an ill-natured disposition, he often took advantage of the admiral's favour to play a bad turn upon the captains of the various vessels in the fleet and upon other officers.

Additional members of the general staff were Colonel Filippovsky, and an engineer officer named Politovsky. Commander Kurosh had been cashiered at Kronstadt.

Among the lot of them, there was only one outstanding personality, Flag-Lieutenant Sventorzhetsky, a brilliant artilleryist. Strongly built, corpulent, with a rounded visage, black moustache, and close-cropped hair, he was a man of vigorous character. One felt it in his clear, concise, and categorical way of speaking whenever he was sure of his ground. Still, though dignified and independent, he was never self-assertive. He held aloof from such officers as Semenoff and Leontieff, to whom he rarely vouchsafed a word. Clapier de Colongue, his immediate chief, was for the most part content to carry his decisions into effect. Even Rozhestvensky, though violent-tempered, never so far forgot himself as to reprimand Sventorzhetsky.

“Well, what does the admiral think of himself?” I asked Ustinoff, as we paced the deck.

“He's done the mischief, and is peeved with the whole world,”

answered my friend. "Only Semenoff and Sventorzhetsky dare to say a word to him. The others tremble before him like thieves before the constable. He treats 'em worse than a bad master treats servants. The flag-captain is no better off in this respect than the rest of the officers. When Rozhestvensky comes on deck the men hide from him as if he had the evil eye. The very signalmen, in the course of their duty, are afraid to speak to him. I think the old devil is going off his chump. The other day he banged one of them about the head with a telescope, and the poor chap had to be sent to the sick-bay."

As I returned to the "Oryol," I thanked my stars that it was not the flagship!

Early in the morning of October 19th the first detachment of ironclads and the transport "Anadyr" weighed anchor to leave Vigo. As we steamed down the bay we were escorted by small Spanish craft, whose crews shouted farewells and waved their hats. Once in the open, the squadron formed up in two lines, and headed for Tangier.

Four British cruisers, which had been lying in the next harbour, shepherded us on our way. Within twenty-four hours they were reinforced to ten, and became more and more provocative in their behaviour. At night they steamed abreast of us, only two or three cable lengths away, following by day a couple of miles in our wake. Not always thus, however. Sometimes they put on speed, passing to starboard or port, and got in front of us, or spread out to surround us, as if convoying prizes of war.

Midshipman Vorobeichik, eyeing the English vessels, angrily exclaimed:

"It's disgusting to treat us like this. Follow us about, shadow us like criminals. What insolence!"

I myself was thinking that Rozhestvensky must be in a fine stew.

Our guns were loaded, and the men were kept constantly on the alert. There were frequent night-alarms, for fire-drill, and so on.

The cruisers did not leave us until we sighted the coast of Africa. Then they made for Gibraltar.

III

We anchored off Tangier, on the southern shore of the Straits of Gibraltar, at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon of October 21st. Here we found most of our squadron, which had reached the harbour

four days earlier. The destroyers, however, convoying some of the transports, had gone on to Algiers. There were two French cruisers and one British cruiser anchored in the roads.

Tangier gave us a friendly reception, and we were told we could stay as long as we liked. The British, being pro-Japanese, protested in vain.

On the evening of the "Oryol's" arrival, the ironclads "Sisoy Veliky" and "Navarin," with the cruisers "Svetlana," "Zhemchug," and "Almaz," steamed eastward into the Mediterranean under command of Rear-Admiral Felkerzam. This detachment was to go through the Suez Canal en route for Madagascar, where the second Pacific squadron was to reassemble, after we others had rounded the Cape of Good Hope. At Madagascar we were also to be joined by the men-of-war still being fitted out in Russia: the "Oleg," the "Izumrud," the "Smolensk," the "Petersburg," the "Terek," the "Don," the "Ural," and a number of destroyers.

Was it wise for Rozhestvensky to divide his fleet?

Our officers were in two minds. Some thought it a mistake to split the squadron, for the Japanese could send an expeditionary force powerful enough to sink Felkerzam's detachment, and thus force the remainder to sail home. Others held that the enemy would not venture into the Indian Ocean, so far from their base. But of course no one discussed the matter within earshot of the high command.

The repairing-ship "Kamchatka," whose wireless messages were the main cause of the Dogger Bank affair, was now safe and sound with the main part of the fleet. From her crew of bluejackets and skilled artisans we learned that they had been as completely flustered as the rest of us on the night of October 9th, and that their gunners fired three hundred shells at the supposed enemy. They also told us that Admiral Felkerzam with his detachment had passed through the Dogger Bank fishing fleet. Turning his search-lights on the trawlers, he recognised them for what they were, and left them unmolested.

At Tangier our detachment was reinforced by two vessels: the first of these was another "Oryol," a hospital ship, painted white, with a big red cross on each side of her two funnels; the other was a French ship, the "Espérance," fitted out for cold storage, and freighted with a cargo of frozen meat.

Coaling at Tangier was effected under difficult conditions, for the weather was stormy. On the 23rd the flagship signalled

instructions to weigh anchor. Our next port was (as I afterwards learned) to be Dakar, the capital of Senegal, in French West Africa.

IV

We voyaged through deserted waters, where the fleet, formed in double columns, made a fine showing. The ironclad "Oryol" was the fourth vessel of the starboard column, which was led by the flagship. The other "Oryol," the hospital-ship, followed in the wake. On board, besides the surgeons, were a number of ladies of high station, who had volunteered as nurses. It was the dream of the common sailors to be transferred to this boat, which they looked upon as a floating palace and a haven of rest.

We did not speak any ships on our way, but from time to time the British cruisers, which were still escorting us, showed up on the horizon. After we had passed the Canary Islands they did not appear again.

Tropic of Cancer. Intense heat, pallid sky, the atmosphere that of a steam-bath. Our clothing was drenched with sweat. Shower-baths were rigged on deck.

Vasilieff, the engineer officer, continued to provide me with books, mostly such as described the struggle of the enslaved and oppressed to better their condition: a Russian translation of Giovagnoli's *Spartacus*, for instance, and kindred books, which I had already read, but was glad to read again. I racked my brains to discover why he lent me literature of this sort. At length, when he offered me a volume about the march of the Marseillais in the days of the French revolution, I ventured to say:

"I've read it before, Sir."

He answered quietly, addressing me for the first time as "you" instead of "thou," and thus treating me as an equal:

"It won't do you any harm to have another look at so excellent a book. Besides, some of your messmates might like to read it."

Obviously Vasilieff had his own peculiar method of approach, one he must have employed with other revolutionists. But I was perplexed by such an attitude in a man who wore epaulets. In the depths of my mind there lurked a feeling of distrust.

Suddenly he asked me:

"Ever been in prison?"

I answered, somewhat reluctantly: "Yes, Sir."

"As a political?"

"Of course."

Vasilieff contemplated me with a friendly expression, whereupon I, looking him straight in the eyes, enquired:

"Did one of the senior officers tell you so, Sir?"

He nodded.

"What did this senior think of me?"

"Gave you a good character. He wasn't a hide-bound conservative, anyhow. Besides, he thought you'd been led astray."

"Glad to hear it! The only thing that troubles me is, I fancy one of my messmates has been told to keep an eye on me."

"Well, you'd better watch out; and if a trap is set for you, be sure you don't blunder into it."

When I left Vasilieff it was with a sense of great relief, for I was now sure that one of the officers, knowing my record, was cordially disposed towards me.

On the sixth night after leaving from Tangier, the engines were slowed down, so that I supposed we were nearing port, and would stand off till dawn.

I was close to the bow with Boatswain Voevodin. We leaned over, watching the phosphorescence as the stem cut through the waters. Nearby was the ship's carpenter, a petty officer named Sinelnikoff.

"It's damnably dark," he said, in the hoarse, ill-tempered voice which was customary to him.

"Um, ra—ther," I agreed, with a smile.

He was a sturdy fellow, fiddle-faced, goggle-eyed, with a sparse, clipped moustache. For a long time, I was sure, he had regarded me with suspicion. Often he had tried to enter into conversation with me. He said he would like to know what we were fighting for, and who would get the best of it in the impending struggle. Sometimes he asked me to read aloud to him. I was on the alert, because he abused the officers for their injustice and their overbearing ways. Yet in his own dealings with young sailors he was prone to use his fists.

The other ships began to blink at us with red and white signal lights.

"I wish I knew why we've slowed down, and what they're signalling about," said Sinelnikoff to me.

"Better ask the officer of the watch," I replied, sarcastically.

"Not likely—a poor devil like me. Still, what on earth do those red

and white flash-lights mean? Well, after all, it's none of our business, and I'm tired of watching them."

He turned on his heel and departed.

Boatswain Voevodin remarked:

"I don't like that chap Sinelnikoff, not one little bit."

"Why not?"

"Too long in the tongue. I've been told that he's soon to be promoted boatswain."

I should have been glad to ask for more information about Sinelnikoff, but Voevodin cut me short with:

"Time to turn in. Good-night."

The boatswain gave me the impression that he knew something about me, and wanted to warn me against Sinelnikoff.

Next morning we were close to the land—always a welcome sight after a long cruise, though we could see nothing beyond a narrow strip of grey coast-line, with the Atlantic rollers breaking on it. Soon we could make out Cape Verde, the westernmost point of Africa. After we had rounded it there was disclosed the little town of Dakar, with white houses enshrined in palm-trees and oleanders. Eleven German colliers awaited our arrival, in addition to the cold-storage ship "Espérance" (which had outstripped the fleet), and the tugboat "Rousse," direct from Brest. In the bunkers of the "Oryol" and her sister ironclads there remained 400 tons of coal each. The admiral ordered us to take on board an additional 1700 tons per ship. The full capacity of the bunkers was only 1100 tons. That meant that each ironclad had to stow 1000 tons more than the bunkers would hold, disposing of them here and there as directed by the admiral's staff. Sidoroff, our second in command, hearing this, tore his grey hair, and exclaimed:

"What on earth are we to do? I never heard of such a thing. How can I possibly keep the ship clean with a thousand tons of coal lying about in odd corners?"

Lieutenant Slavinsky, a phlegmatic individual, answered quietly:

"The coal mania has begun, Sir. As far as I can see, it will go from bad to worse."

The French local authorities, to begin with, gave us permission to coal ship. Then, afraid of protests from the Japanese and the British, they revoked their consent. Nothing could be done, they said, until authorisation was cabled from Paris. However, Rozhestvensky took the law into his own hands, and started the job forthwith. We

were divided into two special watches for the arduous task, this being the first time of coaling in the tropics. Even at night, the temperature never fell below 77°. During the day it was like working in a furnace. The men in the holds of the colliers and in the bunkers of the ironclads stripped to the buff. To avoid being choked by coal-dust, some stuffed oakum between their teeth, while others wrapped cloths round mouth and nostrils. We toiled thus for thirty-six hours. Some fainted from exhaustion. They were put under the douche, and, as soon as they came to, resumed their labours. There were several cases of heat-stroke, but happily none proved fatal.

At length a cablegram came from Paris forbidding the Russian warships to coal within French territorial waters. But the prohibition arrived too late, for all the ships had taken their assigned quantity on board. Not only were the bunkers crammed to repletion, but from stem to stern, on the various decks, coal had been shot into every available corner.

The vessels were cleaned as well as circumstances permitted—which was not very well! Then, after the men had enjoyed a short rest, the fleet put to sea once more.

V

Our boats were like homeless vagabonds. No one was willing to offer us shelter. Even France treated us like poor relations. The reason was, not only the Dogger Bank affair (which concerned chiefly the British), but that, in the Far East, Russia had sustained one defeat after another at the hands of the Japanese. The foreign world had come to the conclusion that the power of the Russian empire, with its population of one hundred and fifty millions, was a mirage. Apart from this, the difficulties of our present position were largely the fault of Rozhstvensky, who had taken no diplomatic measures to facilitate our voyage. How were we to continue when there was not a single port on our route where we could coal or revictual unmolested?

After leaving Dakar, we steered for the Gaboon estuary, in French Congo, almost on the Line. The weather was favourable, but we were repeatedly delayed by little mishaps on one ship or another. During repairs, the rest of the squadron marked time, or advanced dead slow, at five or six knots per hour.

The men were exhausted with the heat, and sickened by the black

dust given off from the coal lying scattered about. But the stokers suffered most, and looked pale and haggard so that one wondered if they would hold out. Discipline lapsed and punishment was of no avail, for a few days in the lock-up came to be regarded as a few days rest!

Some of the officers grasped the situation, and ceased to drive the men so hard. Midshipman Vorobeichik was an exception, however, and showed himself to be a tyrant in the making. One day I witnessed a singularly unpleasant scene. On the upper deck, a tot of rum was being served, the bluejackets and stokers forming a queue behind the cask. Coming down from the bridge, and passing along the line, Vorobeichik, without provocation, raised his hand and struck Artificer Shmit (the most inoffensive and peaceable man in the world).

"What's that for, Your Honour?" asked the astonished Shmit.

"For nothing, except that I choose. Here's another, if you're not satisfied with one"—and again the midshipman struck the artificer, grinning as he did so.

Then, tearing a leaf from his note-book, Vorobeichik wrote an order for two glasses of vodka, to be charged up to himself, and handed it to Shmit.

The latter did not dare to say another word, but Stoker Baklanoff, a hardy fellow, exclaimed, by no means under his breath:

"Well, brothers, I'm fond of my bay gelding. No matter whether I lash him or harness him to a heavy cart, he does his work even though he's out of breath."

The midshipman, adjusting his eyeglasses, looked up and said:

"What are you talking about, you damned fool?"

Baklanoff, stepping forward a pace and clenching his fists, replied:

"About my bay gelding, Sir."

The two men glared at one another, and it was the midshipman whose eyes fell. In spotless white drill, and adorned with epaulets, he could not face the brawny stoker in soiled overalls open at the neck to reveal a hairy chest. Baklanoff was a man weighing at least sixteen stone, and his eyes blazed with wrath.

The onlookers held their breath, wondering what would happen. In the end, Vorobeichik quailed, and hastily made off for the quarter-deck, followed by the jeers of the men:

"I say, ain't he in a hurry?"

"Yes, he's afraid his soup will get cold!"

By the admiral's orders, during this part of the voyage, there was daily practice of steering control by supplementary methods, on the assumption that there had been a breakdown of the ordinary control of the helm from the bridge. As events were to show, this was a wise precaution; but for the time being, through lack of experience, the results were poor. The ships reeled out of line like drunken men, and once the "Suvoroff" narrowly missed ramming the "Oryol." As may be imagined, there was a fine row on the flagship.

Sometimes the squadron had to advance in line of battle. Owing to want of training, and since the units of the squadron were extremely ill-assorted, these manœuvres were badly executed. Thereupon the flagship would signal to the captain of the offending vessel:

"You don't know how to command your ship." As a sign of disgrace, the incompetent vessels (like children sent into the corner) were told to break line and steam for a while to starboard of the "Suvoroff." This happened especially often to the "Borodino" and the "Oryol."

That was when we were entering the Gulf of Guinea. In a few days we should reach Gaboon.

From time to time I had a friendly talk with Engineer Vasilieff, and continued to borrow books, being for the moment, naturally enough, especially interested in the story of naval campaigns and sea-fights.

Besides Vasilieff, one of our officers whom I got to like very much was the young gunnery lieutenant Hirs. He was a tall man with large grey eyes, energetic, sporting red side-whiskers; in all respects radiating vigour. Though a strict disciplinarian, at bottom he was a well-meaning and efficient officer. When off duty, he conversed freely with the men. From him, too, I was able to borrow books dealing with various aspects of nautical life, and above all with gunnery.

I also hobnobbed with the signalmen, since the nature of their work made them peculiarly well acquainted with what was happening in the fleet.

On the evening of November 13th we anchored in neutral waters, a little to the south of the Gaboon estuary, four miles off-shore, and twenty miles from Libreville, the capital of French Equatorial Africa.

Two days later arrived the German colliers we were expecting, and the accursed task of coaling ship began once more. Although

we were outside the limits of French jurisdiction, the governor ordered us to remove to another bay even wilder than the one we were in. Admiral Rozhstvensky, however, would not allow himself to be bluffed, and insisted that the work should be continued in defiance of local authorities.

Six weeks before, the cannibal blacks had slain and devoured four French elephant-hunters in the forest just behind the coast off which we were lying. The news of this made a great impression on our men. They scanned the shore unceasingly in the hope of catching sight of these formidable savages.

VI

On the evening of November 18th, the squadron resumed its voyage. We were now in the South Atlantic. The complement of the "Oryol" had no information as to what was to be our next port of call.

Various incidents of note occurred during our stay in the Gaboon estuary.

There had been trouble on the repairing-ship "Kamchatka," the civilian workers and the naval engineers having come to blows. On the transports, too, where the crews were not composed of naval men, some of the stokers refused duty. In like circumstances such disturbances might very well be renewed.

Then there was the affair of the cruiser "Dmitri Donskoy." Though orders had been issued from the flagship that communication between the various elements of the squadron was to be suspended during the dark hours, the search-lights detected one of her boats on the water at 10 p.m. Immediately the officer of the watch was placed under arrest for three days; but the same night, at 2 a.m., another of her boats was afloat containing (as order of the day no. 158 expressed it) "three dissolute officers, Lieutenant Veselago, Midshipman Varzar, and Midshipman Selitrennikoff." We learned later that they were caught taking back to the hospital-ship "Oryol" one of the nurses who had come to pay them a visit. Without further enquiry the three young men were sent home to Russia for court-martial. Captain Lebedeff, in command of the cruiser, was severely reprimanded.

On November 16th Rozhstvensky issued order of the day no. 159, reminding us of the disasters sustained by the first Pacific squadron

at Port Arthur, and declaring that the army would have to pay in blood for the defects of the fleet.

The order continued as follows:

"The second squadron, like the first, bids fair to make a mess of things.

"Yesterday the first-class cruiser 'Dmitri Donskoy' set an example of profound depravity; to-morrow we may reap the consequences.

"Must we not draw a lesson from the past?"

"The cruiser will be placed under the immediate and continuous supervision of Rear-Admiral Enkvist, whom I beg to take all needful measures to put an end to the moral rot which is going on."

Our officers were outraged by the issue of this order of the day. Engineer Vasilieff told me that the remarks made in the mess-room would have turned Rozhestvensky blue in the face if he had heard them.

"He blames us for what he'd be glad enough to do himself."

"Yes, and then holds us up to the reprobation of the squadron."

"Besides, fancy talking like that about the Port Arthur fleet. Will he do any better d'you think?"

"Rozhestvensky is the only man with cheek enough to talk in that way about his fellow-officers!"

Five days after leaving Gaboon, we anchored in Great Fish Bay, Portuguese territory to the south of Angola. Although the commander of a Portuguese gunboat entered a formal protest, we coaled from German colliers which were awaiting us there, and then set sail for Angra Pequena, in German South-West Africa. On the way, we crossed the Tropic of Capricorn and entered the southern temperate zone. The sun was still extremely powerful, and rose high in the heavens, but the heat was moderated by cool sea-currents from the south. The weather was variable—light breezes alternating with flurries and heavy showers. The flagship persisted in hoisting signals which worried the commanders of other vessels. It was evident that Rozhestvensky's nerves were "jumpy." Even before we left Gaboon, he had notified the "Kamchatka":

"If there is any further windlass trouble when you are weighing anchor, your chief mechanic will be degraded and transferred to an ironclad."

Then:

"Having nine times issued instructions to you without receiving an answer, I put the officer of the watch under arrest for nine days."

Again, to the "Nakhimoff":

"I have signalled you four times without response. Four days' arrest for the officer of the watch."

Our men felt they would like to know whether similar disorders prevailed in the Japanese fleet.

VII

On November 28th we sighted the hills that surround the Bay of Angra Pequena, but it was difficult to make out our exact position, for the weather was thick. A cold wind blew from the south, and a thick mist veiled the shores. It would have been well to send destroyers of light draught to reconnoitre this rocky harbour, which, in any case, afforded inadequate shelter from wind and waves.

Bad luck awaited the "Oryol." There was still way on her when we cast anchor, and the huge mass of 15,000 tons broke the starboard anchor-chain. There was great agitation on the bridge, Captain Yung being afraid of a reprimand. He shouted:

"Reverse engines! Stop! Lower the port anchor."

But the starboard anchor, lying somewhere at the bottom of the sea, had carried away with it about forty-five fathoms of chain.

It was plain alike to officers and men that our captain, though a fairly competent sailor, did not know how to handle a modern ironclad.

The authorities of this port made us heartily welcome, and it was obvious that Germany did not care a rap about British or Japanese opinion.

Since there was not sufficient accommodation in the harbour, the transports and cruisers were forced to ride out the storm in the open. They had a bad time of it, for rough weather lasted three days, interfering much with coaling and revictualling. At length the sea calmed, and we were able to finish our job without more ado. Each ironclad had 1400 tons of coal in store and we took an additional 900 tons on board. It was necessary to be well supplied both with food and fuel, for, fearing trouble with the British at Cape Town, the admiral planned to round the Cape of Good Hope without touching there, and to make Madagascar in one stage.

While we were at Angra Pequena, one of the bluejackets on the transport "Korea" went off his head. Sub-lieutenant T. suffered the same fate on the "Oryol." He was a man of forty, and one would have

expected him to be a tough nut, since he had passed the greater part of his life at sea, beginning as a foremast hand in the foreign merchant service, and making his way up to become captain of a sailing-ship. He had voyaged in many waters before being enrolled as an officer of the Russian navy, and was the last man, one would have thought, likely to wilt under the strain to which he was now exposed. Nevertheless, he went balmy, beginning to talk incoherently and alternately cursing and sobbing. Repeatedly he would shout:

"The Japs are waiting for us. We shall all be sunk! We shall all be sunk! We shall all be sunk!"

His face was livid, he foamed at the mouth, and his eyes were horror-stricken as if he actually contemplated the disaster he prophesied. We could not transfer him to the hospital-ship "Oryol," which was already on its way to the Cape and was expected to rejoin the squadron in Madagascan waters. He was confined to his cabin under the care of a male attendant. The presence of this lunatic, whose ravings and forebodings of disaster were audible to those who passed near his place of detention, had an extremely demoralising effect on the crew.

During the voyage I had ample opportunity to observe and reflect on the profound cleavage in the command of the Russian fleet—a cleavage which was to lead to disastrous results. As previously said, the older officers, the admirals and senior captains, had been trained, almost without exception, under an earlier regime, that in which sailing-ships prevailed in our navy, or sailing-ships with no more than auxiliary steam. They knew nothing about, or were unsympathetic towards, the mechanical and electrical devices which had completely transformed naval warfare, and which the Japanese, a far less conservative people than the Russians, had so heartily and so intelligently adopted. The younger Russian officers were men of the new school, but the hide-bound traditions of naval service kept them in leading strings. I frequently discussed this matter with my friend Vasilieff—for I am entitled to say that, though an officer, he now (in private) treated me as an equal.

On the second day out from Angra Pequena, though only a light breeze was blowing, there was a heavy swell, the relic of previous storms. The night passed, and the weather continued unchanged. To ride the waves more easily, we altered our course a few points to the west.

It was December 6th, the feast of St. Nicholas, the tsar's name-

day, so a banquet was served on every ship. Also a salute was fired in honour of our sovereign.

After dinner I lounged near the 6-inch gun-turret on the port bow, contemplating the distant coast-line. We were off Cape Town, which has more than a hundred thousand inhabitants. The town was invisible, but we could see Table Mountain, a flat-topped elevation rising to a height of 3500 feet. A little farther south was the Cape of Good Hope, which marks the boundary between Atlantic and Indian Oceans. The whole region was British; yet I could not but think how, more than four centuries earlier (in 1486), it had been taken possession of by Bartholomeu Diaz, the Portuguese navigator, in the name of his master, King John II.

I did not notice that Senior Officer Sidoff had come on deck, and was standing beside me.

“Good morning, Paymaster’s Steward Novikoff.”

“Good morning, Sir.”

“How do you like Africa?”

“Not so bad, Sir.”

He was scrutinising me closely, and with a rather hostile expression. Evidently he had received an unfavourable report of me from the boat-swain who acted as spy. Still, a trifle like that did not trouble me.

The squadron rounded the Cape of Good Hope, and advanced into the Indian Ocean. We steered north-east towards Madagascar, through a terrific storm.

CHAPTER THREE

MADAGASCAR

I

AT dawn on December 16th we sighted the coast of Madagascar. The squadron steamed up the eastern shore, and not along the Mozambique Channel between the island and the mainland. The sea was calm, and we watched the sunrise with pleasure. It was not many years since the French had completed the occupation of this huge island, perhaps of volcanic origin, perhaps detached long since from the African continent. Its area exceeds that of the mother country. So big is it, indeed, that the inhabitants of neighbouring islands call it Tantibe, which signifies "the great land." We had got a good way northward along the coast, to where it is confronted by an island known as Sainte Marie. Since the straits here are more than 10 miles wide, we passed through them without entering French territorial waters.

Officers and men of the "Oryol" assembled on deck to admire the view. Beneath a burning sun, the mountain ranges stood out sharply. Their slopes were covered with tropical forests. The white dwellings of European residents were conspicuous on Sainte Marie. It was a scene of perfect tranquillity, the only movement being that of a few native boats.

We looked at everything with delight, but it was not long before our rapture became tinged with gloom. Vainly did we scrutinise the horizon for the smoke of other ships, or in the hope of discovering the familiar contours of Admiral Felkerzam's detachment. Nor could we see the hospital-boat "Oryol," or the cruisers that comprised her escort. The only other steamers in the harbour were two German colliers that had come to meet us.

At about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, the "Oryol" arrived from Cape Town, her safe coming being a satisfaction, though she brought tidings of ill omen. One of our officers paid a visit to the flagship to report. The sailors pricked up their ears, each of them turning for information to one of the officers who had a kindly feeling for him. I applied to Engineer Vasilieff.

"The rumour is running all over the ship," I began.

Ordinarily a reserved, not to say phlegmatic man, he was now greatly excited, and snatched the words out of my mouth.

"I am sure that this will interest you. Unfortunately, there is no doubt about the facts. The Russian squadron at Port Arthur has been wiped out of existence. The Japanese sunk the ships by heavy gunfire after occupying the highest of the fortresses at Port Arthur. We were sent to support the first Pacific squadron, but it has been destroyed before we are half way to the Far East. The strategists in St. Petersburg have blundered in their calculations. Now we can consider ourselves an independent squadron, whose business it will be to annihilate the enemy and establish itself as master of the Sea of Japan. We shall have about as much chance as a game-cock would have in a battle with a vulture. The Japanese have shown themselves so surprisingly efficient that . . ."

I was profoundly dejected. The same mood prevailed throughout the vessel. It was like a cemetery. No laughter, no smiles. The officers continued to issue the necessary orders, which the men glumly obeyed; their faces, their gestures, their voices, might have led anyone to suppose that the ship was plague-stricken.

From that day a complete change became evident in the spirit of the fleet.

The admiral's one thought, thenceforward, must be to reunite the scattered elements of his squadron. What could have happened to Felkerzam's detachment? It was difficult to get news in the remote and savage spot which had been chosen for the rendezvous. There was no cable communication with Sainte Marie, a sort of French Saghalien, a second "Devil's Island," used as a penal settlement. Next day, therefore, Rozhestvensky dispatched to Tamatave, which was seventy miles south of our present position, the tugboat "Rousse."

Meanwhile we devoted ourselves to the task of coaling. Since there were only two colliers, we could not all coal simultaneously. The transport "Korea" and our "Oryol" had the colliers brought alongside first. This led to grumbling in the officers' mess.

"I suppose we represent the last hope?"

"Oh, no, the admiral's crazy. He doesn't like our ironclad, and wants us to have a bad time."

After dinner, the "Malaya" turned up. Every one looked at her with as much astonishment as if she'd been fished from the bottom of the sea, instead of merely rejoining the squadron. We learned

afterwards that some of her ventilating shafts had been damaged during the storm, and that setting these to rights had delayed her.

By the admiral's orders a general process of tinkering was undertaken in all the engine-rooms. Towards evening the wireless outfits were able to get into touch with two other posts, at different distances. This aroused great excitement, being the first communication since the storm.

The "Rousse" returned at about noon on December 18th. She brought grave news from the Ministry for Marine, though I was not to hear it for several days, when I met my friend Ustinoff, who was clerk on the flagship. The position of the second Pacific squadron was extremely serious.

According to the original plan we were to effect a junction with Admiral Felkerzam's detachment at the strongly fortified harbour and military station of Diego Suarez, in the extreme north of Madagascar. There Felkerzam's ships were to coal. But, under British and Japanese pressure, the French authorities had selected for us a much less convenient spot. Felkerzam's detachment had not been allowed to enter Diego Suarez, but had been diverted westward into the Mozambique Channel, where it had been anchored off Nossi-Bé since December 15th.

Rozhestvensky's plan was so much waste-paper. Our forces were still divided.

A report became current in the squadron that two enemy cruisers were lurking in the Mozambique Channel; and also that a much stronger Japanese force, having passed Singapore on December 6th, had steered south-westward into the Indian Ocean. They might by now be close to Madagascar. These stories leaked out of the flagship; but, according to Ustinoff, their original source was the Russian Ministry for Marine.

Despair prevailed on the "Oryol"; and when some British vessels showed in the offing, it may be imagined that this did not make the men more cheerful.

We had to abandon repairs, and devote the nights to reconnaissances, showing no lights.

A south-easterly gale sprang up, accompanied by heavy rain, which stopped the work of revictualling and coaling. Our anchorage being rough in this weather, we removed to a quieter spot, the Bay of Tang-Tang, where a long sandbank forms a natural breakwater.

But the complement of the "Oryol" were growing more and more

down-hearted. They had come to consider that the plan of sending our squadron to the Far East could only have been formed by the authorities when these were stricken with lunacy, and had become utterly callous to the loss of lives and ships it would entail. The spread of these feelings among the men proved disastrous to discipline. A lieutenant, having sworn at a bluejacket, was answered in his own coin. At ordinary times the offender would have been struck in the face; but, for fear of starting a mutiny, the lieutenant was content with reporting the matter to Senior Officer Sidoroff—who inflicted no punishment!

Not long afterwards, Sidoroff had direct evidence of the length to which things were going. We were taking in coal from the "Harson." Osip Fedoroff, who was in charge of a gang, having had enough of it, flung down his shovel, and departed for a rest in his own quarters. Sidoroff blocked the gangway, and shouted:

"Here you, where are you off to?"

"Spell-O, Sir. I'm tired."

"Who said 'Spell-O'? Anyone in command?"

"I gave the order to myself."

The Senior Officer was dumbfounded for a moment. Then, seizing the fellow by the shoulders, he shook him.

"Don't you know, idiot, what I could have done to you for this prank?"

Fedoroff's face flushed and he glared at his superior with bloodshot eyes (he had been drinking heavily).

"I'm not afraid of you, Sir. I'm not afraid of anything now. We shall all be dead soon, and you'll drown as easy as the rest. We'll make a fine pair of stiffs. The Japs will send every man Jack of us to hell. D'ye think I care a tinker's curse if you draw that pistol of yours and put a bullet through my head? I'm fed up, I tell you."

Sidoroff got out of the way, saying:

"Go to hell if you like. It's all the same to me."

In this case, too, insubordination remained unpunished.

II

We weighed anchor on the morning of Christmas Eve, and coasted along the northern extremity of Madagascar. The weather was magnificent, but our hearts did not thrill joyfully in response. On the return of the "Rousse" from Tamatave, we learned about the

fall of Port Arthur. The fortress, upon which hundreds of millions had been spent, did not hold out against the enemy. A garrison of 40,000 men, with guns and stores of ammunition, had fallen into the hands of the Japanese. Such was the upshot of a struggle carried on for ten months in a distant country which we did not need. But the blood of Russian soldiers watered every inch of soil; they had sacrificed their lives in blind obedience to orders from St. Petersburg.

The destruction of the first Pacific squadron and the fall of Port Arthur undermined the confidence, not only of the rank and file (who had little left anyhow), but also that of the officers. These latter were losing faith in the invincibility of Russian arms. Some of them were beginning to talk to us sarcastically about our prowess in the Far East. Others, discussing events among themselves but within the hearing of the bluejackets, did not hesitate to speak harshly about the "saviours of the country."

Towards noon we met two destroyers, the "Bedovyi" and the "Bodryi," and the cruiser "Svetlana." These belonged to Admiral Felkerzam's detachment. At sight of them we were as happy as children, for we knew that the whole squadron was about to be reunited. We slowed down, and a boat with officers on board was sent by the "Svetlana" to the flagship. The destroyer "Bodryi" could steam only seven knots, for something had gone wrong in her engine-room. The "Rousse" took her in tow.

Next day the ships were gaily decorated for Christmas. But in half an hour the engines were stopped, and we drifted in the open sea-way. This was when we were about thirty miles from Diego Suarez. All the morning we marked time, until at length came the summons to Mass.

After the ceremony, when the sun was at the zenith, the fires were restoked, and the funnels emitted volumes of black smoke.

"Anyhow, that will give the fishes a good fright!" exclaimed the sailors, as the screws began turning once more.

There was a good deal more drinking than usual in the officers' mess that day, and the liquors were mixed freely.

One of the midshipmen, losing control, exclaimed in maudlin tones:

"They are sending us to Golgotha. But if I don't want to be crucified, what then? Will they drag me to the cross?"

The senior officers tried to make him shut up; but he, disregarding their admonitions, went on:

"It's my first year in the service. I, who am only a boy, have been sent to join this rotten fleet. We see the work of its admirals, who are as stupid and as inflated with pride as turkey-cocks. There's no way of getting even with them, and our lives aren't worth a row of pins."

In the evening, the squadron slowed down to six knots. The reason was that a steam-pipe had burst in the "Oryol's" engine-room. The cruiser "Svetlana," however, was sent ahead at full speed, to inform Felkerzam of our approach.

Smoke was visible on the horizon, and soon the "Borodino" signalled by semaphore that her look-out men could see four big warships. Unfortunately we had no swift cruiser to send as scout and ascertain their nationality. Three of them drew aside, and vanished in the gathering gloom, while the fourth occasionally lighted flares. Soon, however, this vessel likewise disappeared into the darkness. The sky was not completely overcast. A few stars twinkled. Still, we were uneasy. Dreading an attack, officers and men slept by their guns.

Our fears proved ungrounded, and next morning we reached Nossi-Bé. The name signifies "the big island," and Nossi-Bé and a number of minor islets form a magnificent harbour, sheltered from the wind on all sides: from the east, by the fine conical mountain Nossi-Comba; from the south-east by a Madagascan peninsula named Angaboka; and from the west by a barrier of reefs. The bay is large enough for several fleets to anchor.

Those among our ship's complement who had been in the Mediterranean declared that the beauty of this harbour rivalled that of the Bay of Naples. To port we could see, amid tropical vegetation, the white houses of European residents, interspersed among the squalid huts of indigenes, built of red clay. The town is called Hellville, in honour of Admiral Hell, who hoisted the French flag on the island in 1841. At length, near the end of the bay, beneath high wooded mountains, we saw the vessels which had left us at Tangier. There, likewise, amid colliers, transports, and ships of the Russian Volunteer Fleet, were the cruisers of Rear-Admiral Enkvist's detachment.

A small and swift French torpedo-boat, flying the signal "Welcome," waited to pilot us into safety. We followed her to our anchorage, being ourselves followed by Rozhestvensky's ship, the "Suvoroff." Bands played on all the flagships; brass instruments sparkled in the sunlight; martial strains re-echoed from the shore.

Overjoyed at being once more united, the crews burst into loud hurrahs. The men appeared so cheerful you might have thought their anxieties had been magically dispelled.

III

Day followed day, like the links of an anchor-chain. All the time I was keenly interested in the details of the life of our squadron.

Some of my acquaintances in Felkerzam's detachment told me about their voyage. They had had better luck than we, touching at more hospitable ports, making their way first through the Mediterranean from Tangier to Crete. They spent ten days in Cretan waters, and the men were given shore leave. Unfortunately they behaved so riotously in the streets that the local papers commented unfavourably upon the matter. Thence they steamed to Port Said, down the Canal to Suez, and southward through the Red Sea. Then they whiled away ten days at Jibuti. After touching at Cape Guardafui, they set their course for Nossi-Bé. At none of the ports named had there been any bones made about their coaling or revictualling, and they had even been allowed to dock for repairs.

Rear-Admiral Felkerzam treated his men with far more consideration than Rozhdestvensky. On entering the tropics, he distributed sun-helmets among the crew; whereas we protected ourselves as best we might by wrapping wet cloths round our heads. Hard work was stopped from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. We had never been cosseted like this. While at Nossi-Bé the crews were given ample time for shore leave. But after the arrival of the main part of the squadron, these indulgences were cut off, save as concerned a few favourites and those on the sick-list.

It was rumoured that Russia had bought six armoured cruisers, which were on the way from South America to join us. Since the destruction of the first Pacific squadron, a good many gave credence to this myth. Felkerzam's forces actually expected to find the ships from Latin America incorporated as part of the fleet they joined at Madagascar. It transpired, however, that the negotiations with Argentina had struck a snag, and had been definitely broken off. Soon there came more vitally important news, to the effect that a third squadron was being got together with all speed at Libau. It was to consist of: the line-of-battle-ship "Nicholas I," the armoured coast-defence vessels "Admiral Senyavin," "Admiral

Apraksin," and "Admiral Ushakoff," and the first-class cruiser "Vladimir Monomakh." This squadron was to put to sea in the middle of January under the flag of Rear-Admiral Nebogatoff.

The men sharpened their wits on these tidings:

"They're sending us whatever they can comb out of the Baltic fleet."

"Even multiplied fivefold, they would still be too few."

"Hope the old tubs will come quickly."

"More probably they'll sink on the way."

Though many scoffed, the majority looked upon Nebogatoff's squadron as a desirable reinforcement. The great question was, whether we were to hang on at Nossi-Bé until the third squadron arrived. If so, why were we taking so much coal on board when we had more than sufficient?

For four days, now, we had inhaled Cardiff coal dust instead of fresh air. When darkness came the men flopped down with weariness, and slept amid the coal, indifferent to the perils of the night. By day they were oppressed with heat. Never had we endured such a furnace, such thirst. The vast quantity of distilled and filtered seawater we drank was lukewarm and nauseating. Citric acid livened it up a bit. Tropical disorders began to spread, and sores afflicted many of the men. To add to these troubles our boots were worn out, and it was impossible to walk bare-foot on decks encumbered with coal. Bast shoes were distributed. The sailors, hitherto trim enough, now looked like tramps.

"Curse this country," they growled. "We're going to our deaths, and can't even go there with a decent pair of boots."

Instead of footgear, we received from Jerusalem (!), through the kindness of the chairwoman of the Ladies' Aid Committee, some little crosses which, as one of the admiral's orders of the day informed us, had been blessed at the Holy Sepulchre. Thrift decided, however, that the whole complement of the "Oryol" were to have no more than thirty-one crosses; six for the officers, and twenty-five for the men.

The latter commented ironically upon the "handsome gift" bestowed by the Ladies' Committee.

"They're pulling our legs. Each of those crosses costs a terrible lot; at the lowest reckoning, a farthing. Might have bust the bank if we'd got one-apiece. There's nine hundred of us."

"How are we to share 'em out?"

"Let's draw lots."

"T wouldn't do. Better wear 'em turn and turn about; then we'll share in the luck they'll bring."

Three auxiliary cruisers joined us at Nossi-Bé: the "Kuban," the "Ural," and the "Terek." We had only to wait for Captain Dobrotvorsky's detachment, which was probably passing through the Red Sea. Rozhestvensky formed two new divisions of the fleet, in view of these reinforcements: one containing the "Suvoroff," the "Alexander III," the "Borodino" and the "Oryol"; and the other, the "Oslyabya" (which was to be Rear-Admiral Felkerzam's flagship), the "Sisoy Veliky," the "Navarin," and the armoured cruiser "Admiral Nakhimoff." Two cruisers, the "Izumrud" and the "Zhemchug," with four destroyers, the "Bedovyi," the "Buinyi," the "Bystryi," and the "Bravyyi," were to be attached to this main force. The cruiser detachment would consist of: the "Almaz" (Rear-Admiral Enkvist's flagship), the "Oleg," the "Aurora," the "Dmitri Donskoy," the auxiliary cruisers "Rion" and "Dnieper," and the destroyers "Blestyashchy," "Bezuprechnyi," and "Bodryi." In the scouting detachment would be the cruiser "Svetlana" (Captain Sheina), and the auxiliary cruisers "Kuban," "Terek," and "Ural." The remaining boats would serve as transports: the "Kieff" (Captain Radloff), the "Voronezh," the "Kamchatka," the "Anadyr," the "Meteor," the "Júpiter," the "Mercury," the "Yaroslavl," the "Korea," the "Tamboff," the "Kitai," the "Vladimir," and the "Rousse." Then there was the hospital-ship "Oryol."

Including the third Pacific squadron expected from Libau under the command of Admiral Nebogatoff, our fleet would comprise more than fifty units, and might seem to be a formidable fighting force. But the numbers were swelled by transports, indispensable indeed, and yet an incumbrance, for we should have no base until we got to Vladivostok after running the gauntlet of the Japanese.

What would be the effective strength of the enemy, when we came to grips? We could not guess; but we knew this much, that our foes were able and intelligent, and must presumably be well-equipped, since they had been able to annihilate the Port Arthur squadron with very little damage on their side.

At Nossi-Bé precautions against enemy attack were more energetic than they had been at Sainte Marie. A cruiser reconnoitred daily, and two destroyers patrolled the entrance to the harbour. At sunset anti-torpedo nets were lowered, and no communication between

ships or shore was allowed. For a steam pinnace to circulate, a special permit from the admiral was required. Night after night, every ironclad sent her lesser steam-craft out to sea, boats furnished with search-lights and small-calibre guns. While the nets were lowered, drums beat to quarters, an inspection was held to see that the gunners were at their posts, and all search-lights were tested. Guns were loaded, ready for instant use. Then lights were extinguished, and the squadron was plunged in darkness and silence, broken only from time to time by the calls of the men on watch. Far out at sea, the search-lights of our scouting vessels shone like the tails of comets.

At such times, everything seemed in apple-pie order, and confidence in our commander reawakened. He knew what he was about, and would never let the enemy take us by surprise.

Still, the New Year opened gloomily, with frequent reminders of the frail tenure of our lives. On the auxiliary cruiser "Ural," Lieutenant Evdokimoff was seriously wounded and Machinist Popoff was killed outright in an accident during gun-practice; and a bluejacket died of sunstroke. On the "Borodino" two men were fatally gassed by coal emanations. Other men succumbed to tuberculosis or what not. Funerals were frequent. A destroyer steamed alongside the vessel on which death had occurred, and, taking the corpse, would make for the open sea. Gunfire; flags half-masted; bands wailed forth a dirge; officers and men marshalled on deck. Out at sea, one more dead body making its melancholy plunge into the waters. Next morning a brief phrase in an order of the day announced that the name of so-and-so had been erased from the roll of the ship concerned.

Two transports, the "Prince Gorchakoff" and the "Malaya" were sent back to Russia because they proved thoroughly unseaworthy. The "Malaya" took on board a number of men no longer fit for service: criminals, confirmed invalids, lunatics, and the mutilated.

IV

We received a heavy mail at Nossi-Bé—letters and newspapers. Our correspondence was mainly concerned with personal matters. But the articles contributed to the *Novoe Vremya* by Commander Klado—who, it will be remembered, had been sent back to Hull from the "Suvoroff" in order to give evidence at the enquiry into

the Dogger Bank affair, were eagerly read in the officers' mess, where there was a great deal of talk about them, and the author was looked upon as a hero. At length some copies of the journal filtered down to our quarters. I was asked to read Klado's articles aloud, and my messmates listened with the solemnity appropriate to a religious service. Here is a passage word for word:

"The outstanding importance of sea-power in this, as in most wars, and the extent to which we in Russia have embarked our hopes upon the squadron now sailing for the Far East under the command of Admiral Rozhstvensky, lead us to ask ourselves the searching question: Can we count on success in the naval action which must shortly take place? Well, we must not shrink from looking facts in the face, and that is what I shall try to do in the ensuing articles."

The writer went on to enumerate the strength of the opposing forces, about which we of the rank and file had hitherto known precious little. The Japanese had eleven very powerful vessels: the ironclads "Mikaza," "Shikishima," and "Fuji;" the armoured cruisers "Ivate," "Idzumo," "Adzuma," "Yakumos," "Asama," "Tokiva," "Nisin," and "Kasuga." There were also two somewhat obsolete ironclads, one of which, the "Chin-Yen," had four 12-inch guns. In addition our enemies possessed from twelve to fifteen first and second class cruisers. They were all speedy vessels, and their guns were of modern type. Further, there were about fifteen gunboats. As to the torpedo flotilla, Klado believed it to consist of at least fifty boats, some of these being destroyers, and the rest smaller craft.

We could oppose this formidable fleet with five ironclads of the most recent type; two obsolete ironclads, one refitted with new guns, but the other in every respect out of date. There was only one venerable armoured cruiser, the "Admiral Nakhimoff." The "Oleg" was a good cruiser, but not fully armoured. Of our five armoured-deck first and second class cruisers, one, the "Dmitri Donskoy" was out of date. For the rest, there were about ten destroyers.

From a comparison of the fighting strength of the respective fleets, Klado drew the inference that the Japanese outclassed the Russians by about two to one.

I had read thus far, when a man broke in with:

"We're done for, that's plain enough;" and it was obvious that he echoed the thoughts of his mates.

Another voice, that of Electrician Golubeff, was raised:

"Besides, Klado has mainly compared the larger elements. If

you take the small craft into consideration as well, our position is worse than he makes out."

To which Stoker Baklanoff added:

"Wait a jiff. There's something else to think about. Our case is like this. The three brothers Lupigoreff began a fight with the three brothers Lokhmotnikoff. At first they seemed fairly well matched. After a time, the Lupigoreffs invaded their enemies' house to carry on the struggle there. That's where they made a big mistake, for the Lokhmotnikoffs had wives and a lot of children. The whole family took part in the fray, and things turned out badly for the Lupigoreffs, who were fighting on strange ground. Even if our main fleet were as strong as the Japanese, we've got to tackle them in Japanese waters, where they're at home; and we shall be at the end of a long voyage, with no bases at which to refit. As for the 'wives and children' I spoke of, the Japs have lots of coast-defence craft to throw into the scale."

Quartermaster Gromoff, a tall and burly fellow, interjected:

"This is what they call 'defeatism.' I think we'd better write home, and say it's too early to spread a panic."

I went on reading Klado's articles. His arguments seemed irrefutable. As early as November he had prophesied that Port Arthur would fall before our arrival, and that the first Pacific squadron could do nothing to avert its fate. Well, Port Arthur had surrendered, and the first Pacific squadron lay at the bottom of the sea. There was no ground for hoping that the cruisers "Gromoboy" and "Rossiya," which were safe enough at Vladivostock, would be able to render us any aid in our fight with the Japanese. If they should attempt a sortie, they would undoubtedly be sunk.

Commander Klado's voice came to us like a knell.

The officers were in no more cheerful mood than we. Here is an extract from a letter sent home to his father by one of the junior lieutenants on the "Suvoroff," and ultimately disinterred from the war archives:

"More power to Klado's elbow. The Ministry for Marine ought to have had such a lashing long ago. Besides, he does not disclose the hundredth part of the blunders of this department, which has ruined our ill-fated fleet. If, by God's grace, I ever see you again, I shall have things to tell you past belief and imagining."

I felt inclined for another talk with Engineer Vasilieff. Of course he had read the articles in the *Novoe Vremya*. I told him

how strong an impression Klado's words had made on the rank and file.

"They're discussing the matter all over the ship," I said; "in the stoke-hole, the engine-room, both watches, the torpedo-sections, the forecabin. . . . They've read the papers until the print has almost been rubbed off. Some of the men have been copying the articles into notebooks. In fact, there's general excitement. They say that Klado must be a revolutionist; or, anyhow, that he's not been afraid to tell the truth, and that the authorities will clap him in gaol."

Vasilieff answered:

"The officers, too, are delighted with him for his courage. He has proved how difficult it will be for us to get the better of the Japanese. The fact that the censorship has allowed his articles to appear signifies that the Government is considering what line it will have to take in the event of defeat. Klado has shown himself to be a merciless critic. So much the better. But what we're waiting for is criticism still more daring. We want a criticism of our whole social system. All that Klado has told us is that the Japanese fleet in the Far East is twice as strong as the Russian fleet will be when Rozhdestvensky gets there. He advises our sending out the old tubs left in the Baltic and the Black Sea. Do you think that, even with those reinforcements, we should have a fighting chance against the Japanese? Not a bit of it! Klado has not fully taken the circumstances into account. The Japanese, who will fight in their own waters, have an abundance of docks, first-class harbours, outfitting stations, slipways, and so on. We have only Vladivostock—and we can't get there till we have outfought the Japanese. Then we've got to bear in mind their martial ardour, their admirable discipline, their united spirit. They're putting their whole soul into this fight, and we cannot. You tell me yourself that the men's hearts are in their boots—what's left of 'em."

"It seems to me the best tactics would be to 'bout ship. Let the squadron make for home, and the Government arrange terms of peace as soon as possible."

"No such thing will happen," he rejoined. "We shall continue the voyage. The Government daren't back down now for fear of revolution."

This conversation depressed me even more than Klado's articles. The commander no longer seemed to me a man of strong character. Noticing how unhappy I was, Vasilieff remarked:

“Cheerio, friend. Perhaps it will all turn out better than you expect.”

Then, changing the subject, he went on:

“You see that ikon of St. Nicholas hanging in the corner? You’d never guess what I use it for. I had it fitted up in a peculiar way before we left Reval. St. Nicholas is of great use to me, though I don’t believe in his saintly virtues. He keeps a prophet in a sort of little cupboard behind him.”

Taking down the ikon, he laid it face downward on the table, opened the cupboard of which he had spoken, and produced a copy of Karl Marx’s *Capital*. I was amazed. Here was a Russian naval officer on active service, going out to fight in the Far East, and he had with him, as a hidden part of his kit, Marx’s famous work!

At this moment some one knocked at the door. Quickly thrusting the volume under a cushion, Vasilieff called out:

“Come in!”

When Lieutenant Vredny entered, I was standing at the salute.

Vasilieff said to me in an official tone:

“Well, let those two artificers have three extra tots of vodka each, and charge it up to me. Dismiss!”

Klado’s articles in the *Novoe Vremya* made most persons in the fleet realise how serious was the position; and, indirectly, they led to a grave outbreak on the first-class cruiser “Admiral Nakhimoff.” This is how it happened. Whereas on most of the other big vessels fresh bread was baked every day, or was procured from shore when we were in port, the crew of the “Admiral Nakhimoff” had to put up with mouldy biscuits, not only when voyaging, but when in harbour. The men repeatedly complained, but the officers paid no heed. At length, on January 10th, one of the artificers exclaimed to his mates:

“They’re sending us to our deaths, and all they give us to eat is this muck. Are we men or dogs?”

The others:

“Decent folks’ dogs are better fed than we are.”

“To-day we’ll force ’em to give us bread fit to eat. So that’s that!”

A spirit of revolt spread throughout the ship. If the officers had been less unobservant, they would have noticed the angry sentiment that prevailed. They were taken by surprise when, that evening, the biscuit distributed for supper was flung overboard. After prayers,

when ordered to dismiss, the bluejackets did not budge. In the gathering darkness, the swiftly coming night of the tropics, their two lines looked like insurmountable barriers. Such an act of insubordination had not hitherto occurred in the fleet. The officers were the more astonished because the men, now on the verge of mutiny, had been regarded as peculiarly well disciplined, and as the pick of the squadron. Once more the officer of the watch gave the order "Dismiss!" No movement. The men might have been stone-deaf. For a few seconds there was profound silence. At length from the rear rank of the men of the first watch came a voice, like the rumble of an approaching storm:

"Give us fresh bread."

This was the signal for savage cries, complaints, and curses.

The deck lights were switched on. Captain Rodionoff, a little man with a round back and a grizzled beard, was seen on the bridge. Looking first at one watch and then at the other, he murmured:

"What's the matter, my lads? Is it a mutiny?"

He spoke so calmly that for a moment the men were dumbfounded. Then the shouts for fresh bread broke out anew. Again the captain spoke, but no one listened to him. He walked up and down the bridge, looking quietly at the mutineers, as if wondering how to restore good humour. They were in a mood to "rush" the officers. Mishandling the situation might result in massacre. Imperturbably, Rodionoff addressed the ten men at one end of the starboard line, calling each by name with the order:

"Right turn, forward, march!"

His scheme was psychologically sound. The ten men obeyed. Singled out from their shipmates, they became automata once more, and made for the bow as bidden. Then another ten, and another, received the same command. The remainder, silent at first, as they watched what was going on, perceived that the game was up, dispersed of their own accord, and hurried off to sling their hammocks as if trying to make up for lost time.

Two days afterwards, Admiral Rozhestvensky came aboard the cruiser, which he had never before visited. The ship's complement was marshalled on the upper deck. The men were expecting to be asked what they had to complain of. Instead, what they heard was:

"I knew that you were riff-raff, but I did not realise that you were such absolute scum."

He volleyed abuse, his voice choking, and his face pale with anger.

Then, turning on his heel, he went down the gangway to get back into his boat and return to the flagship. The impression he left was that the object of his visit had been to discharge an insult at the men under his command.

On January 12th, Admiral Rozhestvensky issued order of the day no. 34, which was read to us on the "Oryol," before evening prayers, by Senior Officer Sidoroff:

"In the first-class cruiser 'Admiral Nakhimoff,' among the faithful servants of His Majesty the Tsar, there are some pro-Japanese who foment indiscipline among the foolish and hide behind those whom they thus lead astray. They will be discovered, and will be punished with the utmost severity. Until the ringleaders are known, the following officers [the names of four lieutenants were mentioned] are to consider themselves under arrest, and the following quartermasters [also specified by name] will have their pay reduced to that of ordinary seamen—as from January 1st."

After prayers, while the men swung their hammocks, I heard the following conversation:

"Now they'll find the culprits!"

"Yes, those four lieutenants and four quartermasters will be agog to do so."

"They'll find some ringleaders whether or not there be any."

"What's the Old Man mean by talking about pro-Japanese?"

"Seems to me, he's only licking the tsar's boots."

Meanwhile signals were flashing across the waters from the flagship.

V

The rainy season began. Still, the sky was seldom completely overcast. White clouds flitted across the sun, never quite veiling it. Though they looked "no bigger than a man's hand," they discharged abundant tepid douches. It seemed as if the atmosphere were being transformed into water. Such showers fell every few minutes, beginning and stopping as suddenly as if a tap had been turned on and off in the heavens. Frequently there were rainbows.

The squadron was instructed to collect the rainfall. Spreading sails above the deck, we guided the streams into our water-tanks.

Simultaneously it was wet, hot, and steamy.

On the "Espérance," the cold-storage transport, there was a breakdown in the frigorific machinery. We were convinced that there

must have been sabotage on the part of the French crew, for these fellows, who had no concern with the Russo-Japanese quarrel, were naturally unwilling to share our deadly risk in the Far East. The frozen meat on board began to putrefy, and was dumped out at sea, but the winds and the waves carried it back into harbour, where it gave off the intolerable stench of carrion.

When the fleet had been revictualled, and we expected to continue our voyage, the colliers of the Hamburg-America Line refused to accompany us, on the ground that the Japanese intended to sink them for infringement of neutrality. There ensued a brisk exchange of cablegrams between the admiral and St. Petersburg.

This hitch stimulated the seditious hopes of our ships' complements. Here is a sample of the talk in the forecabin:

"What will come of it all?"

"If the German colliers refuse to steam any farther, we shall have to go back home."

"Of course, a modern warship can't get along without fuel, any more than a man can walk without legs."

It was one of the more sober-minded men who put in here:

"A little thing like that won't stop our admiral. He's gone balmy!"

"But suppose Rozhestvensky recovers his senses, as a sea-fog will disperse?"

"Suppose that a 'shark will say 'Our Father,' though the beast has never heard the prayer; 'bout as likely!"

Meanwhile the Ministry for Marine was negotiating with the Hamburg-America Line. The question wasn't settled until February. Under pressure from the German Government, the colliers agreed to go on supplying us with fuel until we were through the Straits of Malacca.

This was not the only hitch which kept Rozhestvensky in irons. He would have left Nossi-Bé long ago for Sunda Strait instead of the Straits of Malacca, in the confident hope of being able to coal in the Dutch Indies, had not another hindrance been placed in his path.

The Ministry for Marine felt unwilling to take the risk of sending the squadron beyond Madagascar until reinforcements had arrived. Rozhestvensky therefore received orders to await the coming of Nebogatoff's detachment. Fuming with rage, he broke one of the arm-chairs in his cabin. For the next few days not a member of his staff ventured into his presence to report, regarding him as no less

dangerous than an angry tiger. Indeed, whereas a beast-tamer can daunt a tiger with a red-hot iron bar or a revolver, there were no means of controlling this satrap, whose powers were unrestricted.

Meanwhile, we took in stores, cleaned boilers, repaired machinery. There were target-practice, torpedo-drill, torpedo-defence work, laying mines and mine-catching, search-light practice, etc. Two or three times we put far out to sea for large-scale manœuvres.

The first of these excursions was on January 13th. Only the "Sisoy Veliky," which had something wrong in her engine-room, rode at anchor. All the others steamed away at sunrise, led by the "Alexander III," the "Oryol," the "Navarin," and the "Admiral Nakhimoff," towing pyramidal targets. The remainder, in line of battle, were expected to destroy these targets.

The sea was calm.

The "Oslyabya" signalled the range, and we fired. Unsatisfactory results. Our gunners were very imperfectly trained. On each ship there were only two Barr-Stroud range-finders, which had been procured from England since the outbreak of war. On the "Oryol" I myself heard two gunners, using these range-finders on the same target at the same moment, give totally different results:

"Twenty cable lengths," cried one.

"Twenty-eight cable lengths," cried the other.

It is not surprising that, under such conditions, the marksmanship was bad.

The range-finder used in the starboard stern turret (armed with 6-inch guns) was said to show a range of eleven cable lengths. The guns were therefore trained for that range, though the actual distance of the target was twenty-four cable lengths. In the port bow turret, the ammunition hoist jammed immediately after target-practice began, and shells had to be brought by hand from the starboard turret. The gunners' nerves were in an extremely jumpy condition. One man was aiming his piece for forty minutes before he ventured to fire. Orders from the conning-tower were carried out slowly; nothing was ready, nothing "clicked."

That evening, when we got back to our moorings, I furtively scrutinised the captain, gunner officers, and navigating officers. They all looked sheepish, like boys whose ears have been tweaked. Nor was the "Oryol" exceptional in this matter. Every vessel in the squadron had shown itself incapable of shooting straight or manœuvring properly.

Rozhestvensky delivered his judgment on this general ineptness in his order of the day no. 42:

“When the ironclads and cruisers weighed anchor yesterday, it was plain that nothing had been learned from our four months’ cruise.

“Nearly an hour elapsed before the ‘Suvoroff’ could up-anchor, the reason for this preposterous delay being that the windlass, clogged with rust and mud, would not work. In an hour, ten ships did not succeed in forming line, although the leading vessel went dead-slow.

“Every one had been notified early in the morning that towards noon the signal would be given to stop the engines without breaking line while targets were being placed, but the various captains and commanders failed to follow instructions, with the result that the whole movement was thrown into disorder. The ‘Borodino’ and the ‘Oryol’ were the only ships to manœuvre correctly; in the second detachment, the ‘Navarin’ manœuvred fairly well; but the ‘Oslyabya’ and the ‘Admiral Nakhimoff’ made a hopeless mess of things. The cruisers did not even try to keep in line of battle; while the ‘Dmitri Donskoy’ was a whole mile in the rear.

“When in line for target-practice, the ships were much too far apart, there being about fifty-five cable lengths between the ‘Donskoy’ and the ‘Suvoroff.’

“Obviously, in such conditions, the fire of one vessel could not effectively reinforce that of the vessel ahead or astern.

“If, after four months’ cruising, we have not learned the principles of concerted action, what likelihood is there that we shall have mastered them by the date God has chosen for our encounter with the enemy?

“The shooting yesterday lacked vim and liveliness. With the solitary exception of the ‘Aurora,’ not one of the ships showed that she had profited by the lessons of earlier target-practices.

“The costly projectiles of 12-inch guns were used for trial shots, when small-calibre weapons would have given the requisite information. Sometimes, after several minutes of absolute silence, the fire of 12-inch guns would be resumed, without any rectification of aim, although in the interim there had been marked changes in the wind, the direction, and the range.

“There is little better to be said about the work of the 75-millimetre guns. The sights were ineffectively used. As for the fire of the

47-millimetre guns, it was disgraceful. Night after night the gunners are posted by these guns to guard against a possible torpedo attack, which would be delivered in the dark, by swiftly moving Japanese destroyers; and yet yesterday, in full daylight, the torpedo-defence guns, firing at what was tantamount to a stationary target, did not register a single hit."

This order of the day, of which I have given no more than extracts, aroused much comment among the officers. On the fore-bridge, Lieutenant Pavlanoff discussed it with Lieutenant Hirs. The former said:

"Who is really to blame except Admiral Rozhstvensky himself? He supervised the equipment of the squadron. The defects from which we suffer were plain enough before we left Reval. Why then does he charge it all up to our account?"

Lieutenant Hirs replied:

"The admiral counts every shell that is uselessly discharged. Better do that than have our ammunition and the ships that carry it lying at the bottom of the sea."

"Well, what about Admiral Birilioff? It's largely owing to him that we're in such a pickle. He should have sent with us a transport laden with shells for target-practice."

"Yes, no doubt he's to blame for want of foresight; and so is the Ministry for Marine; and so are a good many other people in high places."

"This much is certain, that the squadron is not fit to go into action."

On January 18th and 19th we put out to sea once more, in the attempt to manœuvre and shoot better. We didn't. Fifteen of the elements of the fleet participated. Each evolution was badly performed, so that the ships, when trying to form lines, looked like a lot of raw recruits. Marksmanship was exceedingly faulty. So wild was the fire that one shell took the water close to the "Dmitri Donskoy," and another (luckily a "dud") carried away part of her bridge. This unwanted hit was one of the triumphs of the flagship.

Order of the day no. 50 gave further evidence of the admiral's spleen.

Our next attempt was made nearly a week later, on January 25th, when the ironclads and cruisers were accompanied by seven destroyers.

No one was surprised by order of the day no 71:

"The admiral has been greatly dissatisfied by the last manœuvres.

"The ships could not keep line, although the sea was calm, and there was very little wind.

"The heavy guns wasted ammunition, some of them, after firing twice in quick succession, waiting as long as a quarter of an hour before discharging a third shot. Other guns went on firing wildly, without rectifying their aim for direction, range, or windage."

This business of target-practice now came to an end, lest we should fire away every shell before the day of the expected fight.

Throughout the trials, the "Oryol" towed the same target, on which all the guns of the rest of the squadron were trained, small-bore quick-firers included. Shots were discharged at long and at short range, some of them from as short a distance as six cable lengths. When the target was hoisted on board for the last time, it had not even been splintered.

What inference was to be drawn?

Boatswain Voevodin exclaimed:

"This old squadron of ours isn't worth a row of pins."

Stoker Baklanoff added:

"You're right; and, as I've said before, every man Jack of us will be food for fishes before long."

Indeed, none doubted the fate in store for us.

The only sane thing would have been to send the "second Pacific squadron" back to Russia.

VI

A fortnight before the "Malaya's" departure, mutiny broke out on board of her. This was quelled by an armed force sent from other ships in the squadron. Four ringleaders were arrested, and placed in the lock-up on various vessels. Soon afterwards they fell ill, and were transferred to the hospital-ship "Oryol." It was said that Rozhstvensky threatened to maroon them on a desert island.

The lock-ups were unventilated wells deep in the hold. Imprisonment in them was equivalent to torture, to confinement in the "little-ease" of the barbarous Middle Ages. Naturally the offenders could not endure being penned in these stifling holes, and sometimes died of exhaustion or suffocation before the surgeon arrived. Nevertheless, though the men knew what terrible punishment awaited them, acts of insubordination became more and more frequent throughout the fleet.

On the morning of February 1st, fifteen units of the squadron weighed anchor and put out to sea. Overnight a wireless message had been received to the effect that the detachment under the command of Captain Dobrotvorsky was approaching Madagascar. As we steamed out of Nossi-Bé, we caught sight of smoke-trails on the northern horizon. The men rejoiced, exclaiming:

“There they are, at last.”

“Bustling along, Brothers!”

“Six of them.”

We made full speed to meet them, and soon distinguished the vessels: first-class cruiser “Oleg”; second-class cruiser “Izumrud”; the auxiliary cruisers “Riona” and “Dniepr”; and two destroyers, the “Gromky” and the “Groznyi.” In accordance with signals from the flagship, the new arrivals formed up with us in line of battle, and we proceeded to carry out various evolutions—as clumsily as usual. By four in the afternoon we were back at Nossi-Bé.

The arrival of this reinforcement encouraged us a little, but could not effect a radical change in our outlook. We knew that the first Pacific squadron, though much stronger than ours, had been annihilated. Assuredly the same fate was in store for us.

Would Rozhestvensky wait for the third squadron?

The general opinion among the officers was that we should be recalled to Russia.

Russian newspapers, brought by the new detachment, were extraordinarily outspoken. The successive defeats sustained by our forces both at sea and on land had aroused an unwontedly frank spirit of criticism. An unprecedented state of mind was rife. From foreign papers we learned that strange things were happening in Russia; and the news was such as actually to quench, for a time, our immediate and most personal interest in the war.

At St. Petersburg, students had been demonstrating on the Nevsky Prospect, waving red flags and singing revolutionary songs. At Baku a general strike had been declared. In Sebastopol the workers had downed tools. Rugs freely provided for the soldiers by Morozoff, a wealthy manufacturer, were (to the indignation of the Moscow traders) being sold at knock-down prices in Nijni-Novgorod market. The Moscow municipal council was demanding reforms. At St. Petersburg there had been a huge strike, in which no less than two hundred thousand men had participated. Discontent with the war and with the authorities was widespread throughout the Russian populace.

Naturally such tidings aroused much excitement in the men of the second Pacific squadron. Then came news that made us all tremble with indignation. It leaked through from the officers' mess. The bluejackets turned pale and their eyes glittered. The foreign journals contained full accounts of the events of January 9, 1905.

When we got together in the evening, where the officers could not hear our talk, we discussed these momentous happenings, and pieced them together from what each had heard or read. The fact was that three hundred thousand men, under the leadership of Father Gapon, had marched to the Winter Palace in order to demand reforms. Though the demonstrators carried ikons and portraits of the tsar, they had been fired on and dispersed by a cavalry charge, no heed being paid to the safety of the women and children by whom they were accompanied. It was reported that two thousand persons had been massacred.

We decided to prepare for future events by forming an organisation which should keep the most advanced persons in the various elements of the squadron in close touch with one another.

It soon became plain that the incidents of January 9th had caused a ferment in the fleet, undermining the men's confidence in the goodness of the tsar. Even the loyalty of the officers was shaken.

VII

Nossi-Bé is a lovely spot, but most unhealthy for Europeans. Many of the whites who settle there perish within three years. During our comparatively brief stay, sickness was rife among the ships' complements. Malaria, dysentery, tuberculosis, boils, mental derangement, prickly heat, fungoid infections of the ear, wrought havoc among us. I suffered much from prickly heat, my whole body being covered with irritable, itching, and smarting vesicles. It was not bad enough to lay me up, but it interfered greatly with rest—and, as it did not actually put a man on the sick-list, the surgeon paid no heed to it.

Sickness apart, the squadron was becoming thoroughly demoralised. Since we believed ourselves to be going to an inevitable doom, officers and men lost interest in the service. Unable to forget their impending fate, they showed their worst side.

The admiral thought that the best way of stopping this dry-rot would be to make the ships' complements work so hard that there

remained no time to think about what was going on in Russia, or of what was awaiting us in the Far East. Coaling and revictualling, sham fights and the repulse of supposed nocturnal attacks, boat-drill, scraping the hulls (which were fouled by our long spell at sea), followed one another unremittingly by day and by night. We also had to fetch supplies of fresh water from the shore every twenty-four hours; and, very often, to row round the fleet.

We never got a full night's rest. Some of the men were so fagged out that they could scarcely drag one leg after another. Nevertheless, Rozhestvensky's policy proved unsound, for acts of insubordination became more and more frequent.

Drunkness increased. The officers ordered whatever they wanted at their own canteen. The men got liquor clandestinely when they went ashore, or bought strong drink from bum-boats. Crazed by their potations they behaved like lunatics. On the repairing-ship "Kamchatka," one day, the officers, being (as they themselves said) "thoroughly screwed," performed a savage dance, amid wild yells, having as master of the ceremonies a lieutenant clad only in a pair of drawers and mounted on a chair. At the same time a midshipman, crouching under the table, barked like a dog. These drunken swabs seemed bent on outdoing one another in frenzied pranks. The limit was reached by an elderly officer who proposed a toast to the Japanese admiral Yuriyu. Artisans and sailormen alike watched and listened while the orgy went on, but it is doubtful whether Rozhestvensky got wind of it. On the auxiliary cruiser "Ural" officers came to fisticuffs with their captain. The latter was nearly beaten to death. Thereafter, Lieutenant Kolokoltseff wrote his commanding officer so insolent a letter that he was court-martialled. Things were no better on the flagship. One of the "Suvoroff's" officers got so tipsy that he fell overboard, and narrowly escaped drowning. Cases of champagne disappeared. One of them was found in the stoke-hole—the bottles empty. The suspected stokers were given a sound drubbing, but the theft was not reported to the admiral. It was on the "Suvoroff" likewise that the officers, bored to distraction, conceived the bright idea of making a monkey and some dogs drink champagne, and then inciting the poor beasts to fight one another. Similar wild scenes took place on all the ships, as if a wind of lunacy had blown across the squadron.

A thriving trade went on in the town of Hellville. New shops were opened flying Russian colours, and sporting such legends as:

“Purveyor to the Russian Fleet”; “Exceptional Bargains”; “Russian Buyers Specially Welcome.” Among these professedly neutral merchants were numerous Japanese agents, who, “in the ordinary way of business,” visited our ships, the flagship not excepted. Among those in pursuit of gain, prostitutes naturally abounded, flocking to the place from all directions, as blow-flies come to a corpse. They were of divers nationalities: French, British, German, and Dutch. They thronged the gambling-hells, which were much frequented by our officers, who played for high stakes. Prices soared. A bottle of beer cost three francs, and a bottle of champagne from forty to sixty. Nobody bothered about the cost. Our men despaired of escaping from the war with their lives, so they drowned thought in drink, dicing, and drabbing.

The officers, who usually went ashore in mufti, turned a blind eye upon the misconduct of their inferiors, being afraid lest reprimands would provoke insolent replies. The bluejackets openly disregarded the voice of authority. They reeled through the streets, or lay dead-drunk where they fell. Others crawled about on all fours. The patrols sent ashore were powerless to maintain order.

The men of the destroyer “Grosnyi” knocked a native hut to flinders, regardless of the cries and protests of the inhabitants. This time some of the offenders were arrested, and the matter came to the ears of the admiral, who had the culprits brought to the flagship. Having cuffed them soundly, he ordered them to be court-martialled. But this did not prevent similar occurrences in the sequel. Brawls and fights were frequent among the men on shore-leave, and sometimes officers got a drubbing. Now on one ship, now on another, court-martials took place, and the sentences were severe.

On the ironclad “Oryol,” for instance, a court-martial was held under the presidency of Captain Yung. The accused were the bread mutineers of the “Admiral Nakhimoff.” Two got four years’ hard labour, and a third, three years in a disciplinary battalion.

Disciplinary measures proved vain. Demoralisation progressed, while Admiral Rozhstvensky continued to fulminate invectives in his orders of the day, writing them with his own hand, breaking pens and tearing paper as he did so.

But February was drawing to a close, and feverish preparations for our departure from Nossi-Bé began.

VIII

On March 2nd S.S. "Regina" arrived, bringing supplies of sweet biscuits, butter, tea, and salt meat, with much needed spare parts for the engines, etc.

Four days earlier, the collier "Irtysh" had brought some more fuel.

Talking matters over with his fellow-officers, Engineer Vasilieff said:

"I can't make out what the admiral is up to. You know that the 'Oryol' has a displacement of 17,000 tons. She's already loaded to the limit of her stability, and to put these fresh stores on board is preposterous. Her speed will be reduced to fourteen knots. In a storm, or even in moderately rough weather, there's risk of her turning turtle."

"Oh, well," was the reply, "in that case the drowning that awaits us will come the sooner!"

On March 3rd, at about 1 p.m., the squadron began to weigh anchor, in order to quit a harbour which none of us expected to see again.

With what feelings did we leave the Madagascan waters that had sheltered us for two months and a half?

Port Arthur had fallen. The first Pacific squadron had been sunk without inflicting any serious damage on the enemy. Klado had proved that the second squadron was only half as strong as the Japanese fleet. Our target-practice off Madagascar had shown that we did not know how to shoot. In St. Petersburg the tsarist Government had been slaughtering the workers in cold blood. During the last few days, Reuter had been sending terrible news from the Far Eastern front.

On the day of our departure, the local French papers contained a fairly full account of the opening phases of the battle of Mukden. But I may as well summarise here what happened down to the evacuation of Mukden on March 10, 1905. After a struggle that lasted nearly a month, the Russian forces retired northward in disorder. Our losses were terrific: 30,000 killed, 90,000 wounded, 40,000 prisoners. The Japanese took hundreds of pieces of artillery, hundreds of thousands of rifles, tens of millions of cartridges, with horses and fodder, carts, locomotives, trucks, coal, and clothing. General Kuropatkin was recalled, being replaced by General Linevich.

Since we sailed from Nossi-Bé on March 3rd, and Mukden was

not evacuated until a week later, we did not yet know the full extent of the disaster; but it was plain that the Russian land-forces in Manchuria were outgeneralled, and that their last hope was—our squadron.

We wondered whether our comrades out there knew that the Russian fleet was also under the curse of bureaucracy and absolutism which had been the ruin of the Russian army. We were chilled by the thought that the soldiers were dependent for salvation upon a naval prowess which we knew ourselves to be incapable of showing. An immediate recall of our squadron to Russia alone might save us from putting the finishing touch to the disasters in the Far East. But how could our soldier brethren be expected to realise this?

The sun shone fiercely as we cleared the harbour. For a time two French destroyers, painted a dazzling white, escorted us, flying the signal "Bon Voyage." The band on the flagship replied to this courtesy by playing the *Marseillaise*. The natives, in their pirogues, shouted farewell to the squadron.

I studied the faces of men and officers. How much had they aged during the voyage and our sojourn at Nossi-Bé! Terrible anxiety was written on every countenance.

Before us, beneath the blazing sun, stretched the ocean, sparkling magnificently—a splendid road along which we were travelling to our doom.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE VOYAGE CONTINUES

I

WE took twenty days to cross the Indian Ocean, never sighting land the whole time. The weather was calm, save for occasional flurries. Fine rain fell now and again, but the tropical skies and seas soon recovered their customary resplendence. The nights were variable, now clear and bright, now dark and misty, but beautiful whenever moon and stars were shining.

Our course was set for the Sunda Islands. Some of us were disappointed at not returning to Russia; others, weary and dispirited, felt glad that an end of any sort was approaching.

On the first day of the voyage, a bluejacket jumped overboard from the "Kieff." Boats were lowered, but when the admiral learned what was afoot he signalled: "Make no further search." The man, of course, was drowned. Next day, one of the hands of the "Zhemchug" threw himself overboard. With the fear of death on him, he began to swim strongly, and was at length fished up by the hospital ship "Oryol." What was passing in the minds of these unfortunates? Could they be regarded as sane? Can dread of death impel a man to suicide?

Every day something went wrong on board one ship or another; in the engine-room, in the stoke-hole, with the steering-gear. When this happened, the ship at fault broke line, or went dead-slow, using only one of her engines. Destroyers were taken in tow by transports, but the tow-ropes frequently parted. Naturally our progress was much delayed by these mishaps, so that the average speed of the squadron was only one hundred and forty miles in twenty-four hours.

Why had we left Nossi-Bé without awaiting Rear-Admiral Nebogatoff's detachment? Several times I overheard the officers discussing the matter, but obviously they were as much in the dark as we.

"It seems to me," said one, "that Rozhestvensky thinks the third squadron will be more of a hindrance than a help. Why else should he have left without it?"

"You're talking through your hat, old man," rejoined another. "No doubt the admiral has arranged a meeting with Nebogatoff. Perhaps somewhere in the open sea—latitude so-and-so, longitude so-and-so. Simple enough."

"But why should Rozhstvensky risk dispersing his forces? The danger of enemy attacks increases from day to day as we near Japanese waters."

Even though no one put great hopes in the third squadron, we should certainly have liked this reinforcement.

Hitherto we had coaled ship in various harbours. Now we had to do the needful at sea. That happened every four or five days. In the morning, when signalled by the flagship, the units of the squadron stopped their engines, without attempting to anchor, since we were in deep waters. The warships lowered their bigger row-boats and steam pinnaces, while the colliers had on board barges specially devised for this job. From each vessel a hundred men were sent to one of the colliers. There they filled sacks which they loaded into the boats. The "Dniepr," "Riona," and "Kuban," whose huge bunkers were still sufficiently stored, kept guard, scouted, and signalled to the flagship from the horizon.

As when we had been coaling in harbour, so now, every one, officers not excepted, had to take turns in the work. The methods were extremely primitive. Sacks were filled from the colliers' bunkers and holds by one group of men, and conveyed by boat to their respective ships by another. Here they were hoisted on board and emptied into the appropriate receptacles. Hour by hour the flagship expected us to report progress. Each contingent vied with the others, not wishing to appear sluggish. On the "Oryol" our senior officer, Sidoroff, to set a good example, took his turn with the rest. His face, his white uniform coat, his gilt epaulets, and his small grizzled beard were thickly covered with coal-dust. From moment to moment he shouted:

"Stick to it, lads. Don't let us be the last!"

The men, in their torn bast shoes, laboured with a will. When their feet were torn too, they tied them up in rags. To spare their caps, they wrapped their heads in clouts. They looked like ragged stevedores instead of the smart sailormen they had been when they left Reval. The cloud of black dust which enveloped the ships was pierced by the shouts of coaling parties and the rattle of crank-chains. Steam pinnaces, blowing their whistles incessantly and

having boats and barges in tow, scurried from colliers to warships and back again.

The work went on from sunrise till five in the evening, with a brief spell for dinner. At last came the welcome signal from the "Suvoroff." We hoisted our pinnaces and row-boats on board, the colliers did the same with their barges, the units of the fleet got into line, and the squadron resumed its voyage.

Naval circles throughout the world wondered how a large squadron could undertake so long a voyage without regular coaling stations. The matter was simple enough. Our admiral and his staff did not invent anything new. They had merely gone back to the crude use of brawn and muscle furnished by men under discipline.

The sacks were our main difficulty. On the "Oryol," indeed, there were three thousand of them, but they were flour-sacks—too long for the job. A couple of men would hold a sack open shoulder high, while a third man filled it. But this was a slow business; and the sacks, being frail, were continually tearing. A lot of time was wasted in mending them. We were delighted, therefore, when the transport "Korea" brought us seventy sacks of German manufacture, specially made for transshipping coal. They consisted of double layers of sail-cloth, edged with cord, standing open like baskets when placed on end. Each of them held three hundredweight, and three men could shovel coal into them simultaneously.

To coal ship in this way was utterly exhausting. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the lives of galley-slaves were less arduous than ours. We were continually inhaling coal-dust, until our lungs were choked. Our teeth were gritty with it. We swallowed it with our food. It blocked the pores of our skin. We slept upon heaps of coal, which occupied our usual resting-places between decks—for, in the tropics, we slept in the open. Coal had developed into an idol, to which we sacrificed strength, health, and comfort. We thought only in terms of coal, which had become a sort of black veil hiding all else, as if the business of the squadron had been, not to fight, but simply to get to Japan. The batteries were so much encumbered with coal that in case of torpedo-attack we could not have brought our 75-millimetre guns into action. Rozhdestvensky himself had fallen victim to the coal mania. Report ran that even during sleep he would shout:

"Coal! Coal! Ship more coal, and ship it faster!"

The number of live sheep and cattle we had brought with us being

greatly diminished, we were rationed with salt meat instead of fresh. But this salt meat, badly prepared, had for the most part gone putrid during the journey through the tropics. When a cask of it was hoisted on deck and broached by the cook, he had to flee precipitately, so abominable was the stench emitted by the outflowing pickle-juice. Then, after a minute or two, he could draw near, and open the cask fully. Still, soak the meat as long as he pleased, he could not rid it of the odour of carrion.

Under such abominable conditions we might have been expected to perish. Yet we did not merely keep alive, but at times could even laugh. When off duty we played the concertina or the balalaika. We sang songs, solo or in chorus. Some of the bluejackets, throwing off their fatigue, would dance. We told one another entertaining stories, distracting our minds to the best of our ability.

Sometimes Rozhestvensky amused us with his vagaries. Thus, the flagship would signal that the Japanese fleet was approaching. How the devil did he know? No foreign craft had been sighted, and we were two thousand miles from land. Of course, all necessary precautions were taken at night, and the gunners slept by their guns. The cruisers sometimes reported lights on the flanks of the squadron, or far ahead. For instance, the "Izumrud" signalled:

"Ship seen on the horizon."

Admiral: "What bearings?"

"Izumrud": "Nothing visible, after all."

Admiral: "Idiots!"

I was most eager to learn more about Vasileff: how his present opinions had been formed; what stratum of society he sprang from; and what were now his aims in life. Yet I hesitated to question him, notwithstanding the close friendship we had formed. Only when we were approaching the seat of war, and I was confident of having won his affection, did I venture.

By degrees he told me about his childhood and youth, his schooling; gave me a word-portrait of his parents and the other members of his family. He had been sent to the Kronstadt Naval Engineering College to finish his education. Strange, indeed, had been the course of his life! He discussed matters with me quite openly, and I exclaimed:

"Like you, I underwent a sort of transformation."

He had been born far inland, and nothing in his circumstances seemed to point to a life at sea. Nothing had brought him into contact

with mariners. Fate played a hand in the game, for him as for me. The son of a district doctor who practised in the Voronezh government, Vasilieff had never seen the sea until he was twenty-four years of age. No member of his family had been a seaman, and his father knew nothing about sea-life. None the less, sea stories fascinated the lad. At the age of five he began to copy drawings of ships from the newspapers, and soon became familiar with every detail of the Russian fleet. Within two or three years he paid a visit to his uncle's farm, close to which was a river of moderate size. Grown-ups used to bathe in it. What a pleasure to sit on the bank and watch them. Not so difficult to swim, after all; one had only to make the proper movements with one's arms and legs. He looked covetously at the shining surface of the water, and at length came the day when, unguarded and unwatched, he tried his luck in the stream. Before he was fortunately seen and fished out again, he had lost consciousness. But, once having ventured into the water, he soon learned to swim. In the fourth class at the high school, he chose his future occupation, deciding to become a naval engineer, though this was by no means accordant with his father's wishes.

On leaving high school, he entered the Kronstadt Naval Engineering College. At the same time he flung himself into the revolutionary movement. But, though he read quantities of "underground" literature, he decided to combine his love for the sea with his determination to help in the re-organisation of society and to improve the human lot. His main thought was that the navy might become a leading factor in the struggle against autocracy. During his second year at Kronstadt he was enrolled among the revolutionists and organised revolutionary circles. Henceforward he was on the lookout for chances of combining the subversive elements in the various units of the fleet, to constitute an effective force of officers and men. He knew that modern ironclads might play a dominant part in the struggle that was at hand. The school of Kropotkin, the story of the populists involved in the affair of Lieutenant Sukhanoff (1882), the revolutionary working-class movement—these were the influences that formed his mind in youth.

II

At dawn, on March 23rd, we saw to port three large islands. By four in the afternoon, there was also land to starboard. It was twenty

days since we had left Nossi-Bé. The squadron entered the Straits of Malacca. In the evening, the destroyers cast off the tow-ropes and advanced under their own steam.

While crossing the Indian Ocean, we had coaled five times.

On entering the Straits of Malacca, the squadron adopted a new formation: the first division of ironclads was posted to starboard; the second division, to port; between them came the transports and the destroyers; the scouting cruisers occupied the van; the other cruisers formed up in lines astern of the ironclads; and the cruiser "Oleg" brought up the rear.

We were once more in frequented waters, and encountered many merchantmen. Precautionary measures were redoubled. We showed as few lights as possible. On the "Oryol" there were look-out men in the tops as well as on the bridges. Gunner-officers and men slept beside their pieces. The magazines were kept open, and there were always bluejackets on duty to work the ammunition hoists at a moment's notice. Dead-lights and water-tight doors were closed. The result was that, since we were in the tropics, it was fearfully hot between decks.

In the engine-room of the "Oryol" one day a steam-pipe burst. No one was injured; but we had to stop the engines, blow off steam, and undertake the necessary repairs. Meanwhile several cruisers surrounded us as a guard. We were held up for an hour and a half. Captain Yung tramped to and fro on the bridge, and interfered with work by shouting through the speaking-tube every other minute to ask if we were ready. It was most exasperating for the engineers, who were doing their utmost. At length we were able to resume our place in the line.

As we made our way southward through the Straits of Malacca, with the island of Sumatra to starboard and the Malay Peninsula to port, we continued to receive alarming news from our scouting cruisers, to which every vessel they encountered was a possible enemy. There seemed no end to these futile alarms of impending battle.

One night there was a tropical rain-storm. At such a moment a torpedo attack would have been especially dangerous, for the destroyers could have approached unperceived. It did not require much intelligence to know what would have happened to our squadron of forty-five units, advancing in six columns so closely packed that every torpedo would have hit its mark. The inefficacy of the

admiral's means of defence was obvious. Four modern ironclads were our only mainstay, the nucleus of the fleet. Their protection should have come before everything. Yet their flanks were entirely unguarded, whether by destroyers or by swift cruisers. The loss of one of these secondary elements would not have been a very grave matter, whereas the sinking of one of the ironclads would have given the deathblow to war plans. Yet, failing to recognise this, Rozhdestvensky was using his most important vessels to safeguard the others—to defend transports and destroyers. As luck would have it, we met nothing worse than three merchantmen. We kept our search-lights glaring on them until they disappeared.

Another day and another night went by while we steamed through the Straits of Malacca. Next morning the squadron resumed its earlier formation, the transports being sent to the rear. By the afternoon we were close to Singapore. Through binoculars we could make out some merchantmen and two warships lying in the roads; also several large tankers and other steamers made fast to the quay.

A steam launch flying Russian colours put out to meet us. She hoisted the signal:

“The Russian consul is on board, and would like an interview with the admiral.”

However, we continued on our course, only the destroyer “Bedovyi” being detached to speak the launch. As we afterwards learned, Consul Rudanovsky handed the commander of the “Bedovyi” some dispatches for Admiral Rozhdestvensky. Then the destroyer steamed ahead past the vessels of the first detachment, shouting news through a megaphone. We could catch but a phrase or two:

“The Japanese fleet is waiting at the north of Borneo. Kuropatkin has been recalled, and replaced by Linevich.”

That evening the “Suvoroff” communicated by semaphore the following information to Admiral Felkerzam on the “Oslyabya”:

“On March 5th the major part of the Japanese fleet, comprising twenty-two warships, under the command of Admiral Togo, passed in sight of Singapore. It is now at Labuan, on the north-west coast of Borneo. The cruisers and destroyers are in hiding at Natuna. Yesterday they must have been informed of our coming. Nebogatoff has left Jibuti.”

None of us doubted that the Japanese warships were within a few hundred miles of us. The consul must know what he was talking about. How could there be a mistake when he said that twenty-two

Japanese warships had been sighted from Singapore? The enemy was preparing to attack us without awaiting our arrival in their home waters. (As a matter of fact, Consul Rudanovsky was misinformed. The Japanese fleet had never been near Singapore!)

We quickly prepared for the encounter. Superfluous wooden fittings were pitilessly removed, and stored in the hold. Nets were tied over everything which seemed capable of protection in this way. No one slept a wink that night. Next morning the squadron waited a few hours while the destroyers were being coaled. Then we steamed north-eastward into the South China Sea. The scouting cruisers led the way, in the following order: "Svetlana," "Kuban," "Terek," "Ural," "Dniepr," and "Riona."

In four days we raised the coast of Annam—four days of intense anxiety. Nothing happened. Our scouting cruisers repeatedly signalled that the Japanese were in sight; but these invariably proved to be false alarms.

On March 31st high crags loomed through the morning mist. We were entering the Bay of Camramh, two hundred miles north of Saigon. The destroyers went in advance to seek the best anchorages.

From Nossi-Bé to Camramh we had steamed 4500 nautical miles without touching land. This took twenty-eight days, full of troubles. The squadron had halted one hundred and twelve times—apart from the stoppages for coaling. Thirty-nine of these halts had been caused by breakages of tow-ropes, and seventy-three by defects in the engine-room or steering-gear.

III

The squadron spent more than a week at Camramh coaling; and the admiral would have liked to stay longer, pending reinforcement by Nebogatoff's detachment. The days were intensely hot, but at night we were refreshed by the sea-breeze. In the evening, it grew very quiet, and remained so till morning. Though the stars shone brightly overhead, on the sea-level there was a thin haze, sometimes thickening to a fog.

The "Oryol" coaled, like the other ships, though she already had fourteen hundred tons on board. In view of the imminence of a Japanese attack, the battery deck had to be kept clear, so that nothing should interfere with the working of the guns. But fuel was heaped on the poop and the main deck, also in the mess-room and the fore-

castle. The officers took their meals in the admiral's saloon, whither they had transported their piano.

Still, we soon had notice to quit, as far as Camramh was concerned. On April 2nd, only two days after our arrival, the French cruiser "Descartes," flying the flag of Rear-Admiral Jonquières, put in to the bay. Formal visits were exchanged, and then the cruiser left, saying she would soon be back. Was she going to make some reconnaissances in our behalf? Not a bit of it! When she returned on April 8th, Admiral Jonquières came with a demand to Admiral Rozhdestvensky that the Russian fleet should leave French territorial waters within twenty-four hours. After the collapse of the Russian army in Manchuria, French friendship for Russia had cooled; and France, in compliance with Japanese demands, was expelling us even from this most distant of her possessions.

Next day the squadron put to sea, leaving only the "Almaz," which was still coaling, and the transports. These vessels were under the command of Captain Radloff, Rear-Admiral Enkvist having transferred his flag to the cruiser "Oleg." We remained close at hand, however, in full view of Camramh. This hanging-about seemed extremely foolish. All the time, Rozhestvensky was in wireless communication with Saigon, and thence by cable with St. Petersburg. Arrangements were being made to join forces with Nebogatoff. We also had to stand by till the "Eva," the "Dagmara," and the "No. 3" (which had brought stores from Saigon), had finished discharging.

At length, on the morning of April 13th, our transports and the cruiser "Almaz" steamed out of the Bay of Camramh. Under instructions, we formed into lines and proceeded northward, keeping in sight of the coast of Annam. In a few hours we reached an inlet bordered by hills even higher than those of Camramh. This was the Bay of Van Fong. The first to enter was the "Almaz," followed by the transports; then came the destroyers, cruisers, and ironclads. By nightfall we were at anchor. The squadron was arranged in five parallel lines: the ironclads, nearest to the mouth of the harbour; farther in, the cruisers; next, the scouting detachment; and, finally, the transports and the destroyers.

Within a day or two of our arrival I was distressed at having to bid farewell to my friend Engineer Vasilieff. While coaling was in progress he injured his left foot so seriously as to be unable to walk, and was sent to the hospital-ship "Oryol" for an operation.

Meanwhile we pushed on with coaling and revictualling in the endeavour to finish the work by Saturday, April 16th, the day before Easter Sunday.

That Saturday, on the "Oryol," there occurred an incident, trifling in itself, but one which aroused much subversive comment among the crew. We had a cattle-pen on the upper deck, containing beasts purchased from the Annamites and bullocks from Madagascar, the latter in excellent condition. But one of the Annamite cattle was a cow, fearfully thin, and presumably diseased. In any case, she had gone off her feed, and grew worse from day to day. On the morning in question, she sprawled on the deck, unable to rise.

The bluejacket in charge, the ship's butcher, reported this to Senior Officer Sidoroff.

"Slaughter her at once," he ordered. "She'll do for the men's dinner to-morrow."

Sidoroff, one may presume, gave this order without calculating the consequences. Anyhow, the order being given had to be carried out. The sick beast, already in the death agony, was taken to the slaughter-house. When its throat was cut, the blood came in droplets, instead of the usual gush.

The men were watching, and made angry comments, such as:

"They're going to give us a fine piece of carrion for our Easter feast!"

These remarks were all the more pungent because in the officers' galley, the door of which was open, the head-cook was preparing roast fowls, cakes, and other dainties for mess on the morrow.

"They only think of lining their own bellies, the selfish pigs!"

Night fell swiftly. After a brief glow, the hills and forests suddenly grew dusky. Golden lights began to twinkle from the native huts ashore.

A drum beat for muster. The men who were not on watch assembled on the upper deck. Evening prayers were read, and we dispersed quietly.

I encountered my great friend the torpedo-hand Vasya Drozd. Clapping me on the shoulder, he whispered:

"We've a special supper prepared. Come and join us."

"Where?"

"In the main-top. As near heaven as we'll ever get. An hour from now."

"Alright."

“So long!”

Supper and talk among intimates in the main-top occupied us until the summons to the upper deck for midnight mass. After the ceremony, the lights were turned on, and Captain Yung, with shining epaulets, stepped forward to greet the crew. But, instead of the hearty response he expected, and which is customary on such occasions, there came only scattered and hesitating voices:

“Thank you, Sir.”

Most of the men maintained a stubborn silence.

Yung was taken aback, and seemed half inclined to ask what was amiss. But only for a moment. Then, shrugging his shoulders, he withdrew, followed by the officers. Probably he did not guess why the crew was out of humour, or grasp the seriousness of the situation.

The men made for the admiral's quarters. (As previously explained, the “Oryol” was fitted up for possible use as a flagship, but at present we had no admiral on board.) Each bluejacket or stoker was given two Easter eggs and a roll of white bread. This comprised their “feast.” But some had bought victuals and strong drink from the Annamites or from bum-boats. As is the custom in Russia, they shared out these dainties.

Even at this late hour of the night some of the Annamite traders, aware that we were holding festival, put off to the warships in the hope of turning an honest penny. One of our men on the “Oryol” wanted to buy a duck, and was refused permission to do so. Being half-seas-over, he complained loudly, saying:

“Look here, Brothers, are we going to put up with such lousy treatment? It's my own money, and I'm not allowed to spend it. Are we men or dogs?”

“We're no better'n cattle to them blokes!”

First bluejacket:

“Officers! Pah! They give us carrion to eat, while they gorge themselves on chicken. Look here, Comrades . . .”

The noise attracted the attention of the officer of the watch, and he summoned the complainant to the bridge.

“What are you making such a row about?”

“Only speaking the truth, Sir,” said the man, eyeing the officer insolently.

“Silence! I put you under arrest.”

To which the sailor replied, ironically:

“Christ is risen, Your Honour.”

Within five minutes he was in the lock-up. I was rather pleased than otherwise. The authorities had not been so greatly at fault in the case of the drunken and insubordinate sailor that it was necessary to make a song about the matter. The main thing was that they had provided us with carrion for our Easter Sunday dinner. This was so manifestly unfair as to arouse a mutinous spirit among the men. Then the arrest of the tipsy fellow spilt the fat into the fire. Next morning there was a fine palaver on all the decks, and even talk of raiding the officers' wine-room. However, our chiefs had grown anxious, and sentinels were posted.

From the bridge came the order:

"The company to have a tot, and go to dinner."

I went to the upper deck carrying a small cask of rum, my youthful assistant bringing along a second. The bluejackets formed a queue, and each in turn, having given his number, gulped down his allowance of the fiery liquor. But as for the dinner, they wouldn't touch it. Some of the petty officers tried to do so, but the men dragged the bowls out of their hands and flung the broth overboard. Cries were raised:

"Form front. We insist on seeing the senior officer."

The men lined up, all of them, the news having spread like lightning through the ship. The general shout was:

"The second in command!"

"We insist on seeing the second in command!"

At this time hilarity prevailed in the officers' mess. They had been dining and wining, not wisely, but too well. Some one was at the piano, and the rest were singing a bawdy song to this accompaniment. Suddenly a spectre appeared at the feast, the news that the men were practically in a state of mutiny. The effect was like that of an earthquake. Silence ensued, while the officers looked at one another, pale of visage and temporarily sobered. The terror in their eyes was as great as if the ironclad were about to founder. But their stupefaction soon gave place to febrile activity. Some hastened to barricade their cabins; others armed themselves with revolvers, though they had little hope of saving their skins.

Captain Yung, at this moment, was in the deck-cabin.

At length Commander Sidoroff appeared.

He was in the white uniform reserved for gala occasions. But neither his gilt epaulets, nor the decorations he wore, impressed the mutineers; and the commander's short uniform-sword would have

been useless as a weapon against hundreds of infuriated men. The face that showed beneath the peak of his cap was so much discomposed that neither his pointed beard nor his thick upturned moustaches could sustain his customary air of bluster. In a faint voice, as if he had not eaten for a long time, he asked:

“What’s up, my lads?”

There was a general roar:

“To hell with the carrion!”

“Chuck the dinner overboard!”

“Down with the war!”

“Set free the man who was arrested last night!”

“Why should one who has done no wrong be sent to the lock-up?”

“Feed us on carrion, would you?”

“Set the prisoner free.”

Shifting from one leg to the other, and waving his hands for silence, Commander Sidoroff replied:

“I can’t liberate anyone on my own authority. That’s a matter for the captain. I will instantly communicate to him your demand.”

He hastily made for the deck-cabin, followed by shouts of:

“Bring the captain back with you.”

“We won’t budge till the prisoner has been freed.”

Captain Yung removed from the deck-cabin to the conning-tower. The discussion between him and Commander Sidoroff lasted a long time. A solution was not easy to find. On the one hand, to comply with the men’s demands would mean nothing short of an abdication of authority. On the other hand, it was difficult to refuse. Here were nine hundred men defying discipline, as a river in spate will break its banks. They no longer obeyed orders, but had mutinied on a warship which, at any moment, might be engaged with the enemy. The horrible din they were making—shouts, cat-calls, and howls—could be heard plainly enough in the conning-tower. The lines had become wavy, and fists were clenched. Our mutineers were growing more impatient, so that the appeal of a few bolder spirits might induce the others to “rush” the officers, and massacre every one on board that wore epaulets. Was it possible to look for aid from the other units of the fleet? On these, disorder had been only too common of late.

After prolonged hesitation, Captain Yung gave way.

Commander Sidoroff hastened down from the bridge. He raised his arms imploringly, and cried:

“Just a second, lads; just a second!”

He vanished down one of the hatchways, and reappeared, within two or three minutes, accompanied by the man who had been incarcerated.

“Here he is, my lads. Now then, no more trouble.”

The excitement quickly subsided, and Sidoroff went on:

“I’m going to order you a new dinner. Appoint a few delegates to choose two of the best bullocks, which will immediately be slaughtered.”

The lines of men broke up. As pleased as Punch, they dispersed hither and thither about the deck. They had got their own way.

The sun rose higher, and its light grew more intense. The waves sparkled. The silent hills surrounded the golden-blue watery waste. The grey and arid mountain-tops seemed to be there expressly to shelter the bay from storms.

On the flagship, the band began to play.

IV

Easter Monday we coaled ship once more. A short holiday, but a pleasant one. The men had liberated one of their comrades, and had had a good tuck-in.

On the fore-bridg^e the senior look-out man reported:

The ‘Suvoroff’ has lowered a steam pinnace, Sir.”

The officer replied:

“Keep an eye on her.”

Before long, the look-out man said:

“The admiral’s stepped aboard, Sir.”

The pinnace headed in our direction. Considerable agitation spread among the officers on the “Oryol.” What was to be done? The principal gangway-ladder was out of commission. It had been dismantled a good while ago for convenience in coaling. Other officers who visited the “Oryol” were accustomed to climb an accommodation ladder, and scramble over heaps of coal to reach our officers’ quarters. But it was too much to expect Vice-Admiral Rozhdestvensky, the commander of the squadron, to take so undignified a route. Captain Yung and Commander Sidoroff were ready to tear their hair. Quite otherwise was it with the men. They said:

“Here comes our crazy admiral.”

“First time this voyage.”

"Wonder why he's visiting us at last?"

"An Easter greeting, I expect."

"Pr'aps he wants to stimulate our martial ardour."

The whole ship's complement lined up to receive the admiral.

Rozhestvensky's wrath may be imagined when, coming alongside, he found he was expected to board the "Oryol" in so unceremonious a way. He regarded it as a personal affront. He drew himself up to his full height, clenched his fists, and shouted:

"Abominable! Disgusting state of affairs! It's not a ship but a brothel. Gangway-ladder to be mounted instantly."

Then he steamed off towards the "Oslyabya," to visit Admiral Felkerzam, who was laid up.

It was not generally known on board the "Oryol" that Rozhestvensky had already been informed about the previous day's mutiny. In fact, the officer of the watch had thought the matter too serious to be hushed up, and had sent in a report which could not be ignored. Retributive measures were to be taken.

There was a great hubbub on the "Oryol." The starboard gangway-ladder was mounted with all possible speed. The sailors, urged on by Captain Yung and Commander Sidoroff, fumbled at their work, while the officers cried:

"Quicker! Quicker!"

Before the job was finished, the admiral signalled from the "Oslyabya":

"Mount the port gangway-ladder, too."

This was impossible, for the place where the port ladder should have been was encumbered by a mountain of coal. The officers fretted, and scurried from port to starboard and from starboard to port.

Only the starboard ladder had been mounted when the admiral returned, and made his way to the upper deck, where we had assembled to receive him. Rozhestvensky did not salute us, as was customary, but remained standing, plunged in thought, towering by a head above the members of his staff. His great stature, his rank as Vice-Admiral, his title of chief aide-de-camp to the tsar, and his position as commander of the squadron, seemed to set him apart from the common herd, almost as if he were a god. His face, with a short, square-cut beard, was as dour as the sea in a storm. After his manner when enraged, he made chewing movements, and scrutinised the bluejackets before him as if selecting the culprits. The

men scarcely dared to breathe. Suddenly the silence was broken by a shout:

“Traitors! Rascals! Mutiny would you? Form sections! Petty-officers apart!”

Came the shuffle of a hundred feet. We had executed the same manœuvre often and smartly enough. But this time we jostled one another like sheep threatened by a wolf.

The admiral suffered from kidney trouble, owing to which his rages amounted to frenzy. He now behaved like a madman, stamping, waving his arms, mouthing obscene oaths such as none of the sailors would have ventured to utter, slanging the ship and its crew. He hurled words at us as if they were stones:

“I will not tolerate treason. This scandalous ship’ll be bombarded and sunk by the rest of the squadron.”

He was impowered to carry out the threat. Our lives were in his hands. We funked the issue, and, like all cravens, we dared not answer wrath with wrath.

“Hand over the ringleaders. Where are they, the rascals? Hale them before me,” roared the admiral.

Our officers hurried along the lines. They had not the least idea who had been the ringleaders. What could they do but pick out a few haphazard? Some one with a bad record, or whose looks were displeasing. A critical moment, while each hoped not to be singled out.

Stiff with fear, we wondered:

“Will the victims be shot or hanged?”

A sigh of relief went up when the officers chose eight men at random and dragged them forward.

Now the tragi-comedy began.

The admiral was silent for a little, as if wishing to recover composure before questioning the guilty. Still, his chest heaved. Meanwhile he scrutinised the eight men closely, his eyes passing from face to face. Then, gritting his teeth, he thundered:

“Look at them, these enemies of Russia. They are more like beasts than men. Hang-dog faces. What price did you get for selling your country?”

The eight kept their eyes fixed on our redoubtable admiral. Their knees trembled; they were pale; not a word had they to say.

Turning to the rest of the ship’s complement, Rozhestvensky stretched out his arm, making a comprehensive gesture to include all who had been denounced as ringleaders.

"Take a good look at these traitors—at the men who sold our country to the Japanese."

Then he leaned forward, his head deep-sunken between his shoulders, and, pointing at the culprits, spoke to them in low tones which sounded like the grating of a hinge:

"I see! I see! Their pockets bulge with Japanese gold. Look, all of you, at their pockets, bursting with gold. You see where the enemy money has gone!"

Sometimes approaching them, sometimes drawing away, he continued his invectives, reinforcing these with taunts. His face was dusky with anger; his eyes seemed to start out of the orbits. His features were contorted like those of one possessed. In a word, he behaved like a raging lunatic. Finally he picked out one of the eight, a small, pock-marked man, and yelled:

"You see how God has written a curse upon his face. Own up! How much did you get from the Japanese? What? Not a word to say?"

Seizing the poor devil by the jumper, he shook him as if to shake soul out of body. The victim's head wagged to and fro. It might have been mounted on a spring. At length the admiral released him, and hurled him against the door of the galley where he sprawled and hiccupped violently.

Then came the petty officers' and the officers' turn to be slated. Nor was Captain Yung forgotten.

Finally, Rozhestvensky gave the crew a further dressing-down.

"As for you, only in the sea-fight, and in your own blood can you wash out your sins. If you don't, I'll skin you alive, you dirty dogs."

Having thus delivered himself, he returned to the "Suvoroff."

The eight "ringleaders" were sent under strong guard to the transport "Yaroslavl," which served as prison.

We were left dumbfounded, with grief gnawing at our hearts. We could not exchange a word, but we knew well enough that we had only saved ourselves by sacrificing our comrades.

V

On the evening of April 25th, the squadron got into touch by wireless with Rear-Admiral Nebogatoff's detachment. The comrades who had left Libau four months after us were close at hand. This news cheered us immensely.

Next day, at eight in the morning, the second Pacific squadron left

the Bay of Van Fong. The ships resumed the fighting formation in which they had crossed the Indian Ocean.

In our excitement, we hastened to the fore-deck, and watched the horizon. Unceasing wireless communication was kept up between the "Suvoroff" and the "Nicholas I." About 2 o'clock in the afternoon, masts began to show on the sky-line. Soon afterwards we could make out black funnels and upper bridges.

The detachment was led by the "Nicholas I," flying the flag of Rear-Admiral Nebogatoff. Then came the armoured coast-defence ships, the "Admiral Apraksin," the "Admiral Senyavin," and the "Admiral Ushakoff"; the out-of-date armoured cruiser, "Vladimir Monomakh;" the transports, "Livonia," "Kuronja," "Herman Lerke," and "Count Stroganoff;" the repairing-ship "Ksenia;" and the tug "Svir." There was also a second hospital ship, the "Kostroma." When the reinforcing detachment and the second Pacific squadron were close enough, they fired salutes. It was strange to see these old type vessels with tall funnels and long-muzzled guns at such an immense distance from home waters.

The "Suvoroff" hoisted the signal:

"Welcome. Congratulations on the success of your voyage. Congratulations also to the squadron upon this reinforcement."

The signal was acknowledged by all the ships.

Then the "Nicholas I," followed by the other units of Nebogatoff's detachment, passed the squadron, and took its place as a third line parallel to the other two. It was a solemn moment. The tropical sun blazed down on us out of a cloudless sky. The superheated atmosphere shimmered. The sea sparkled like a silken carpet set with jewels. On each boat the men were ranged on the upper deck, shouting hurrahs. The bands on the flagships played. The "Dmitri Donskoy," to do honour to her comrade the "Vladimir Monomakh," manned the yards in accordance with the old-time custom of these vessels, which belonged to the days of armoured frigates.

Soon a steam pinnace conveyed Nebogatoff to the "Suvoroff." The two admirals, meeting on the flagship's gang-ladder, embraced one another. After an hour's interview with Rozhestvensky, Nebogatoff returned to the "Nicholas I."

It will be interesting in this connexion to read Nebogatoff's account of the conversation. I quote from the *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Causes of the Defeat at Tsushima*:

"On April 26, 1905, in the open sea, near the coast of Annam,

my detachment effected a junction with Admiral Rozhstvensky's squadron. The admiral invited me on board the 'Suvoroff,' and took me to his cabin, where we had a talk in presence of the officers of his staff. This talk . . . had no bearing on the problems of the naval action which was imminent.

"My first idea was that the admiral had no mind to disclose his plans in the presence of his staff, and that soon he would give me a private interview. But, after half an hour's general conversation, he intimated that I could return to my own flagship.

"I told him, among other things, that, in the event of my failing to effect a junction with him, I had planned to make my way to Vladivostock by La Perouse Strait between Yezo (the northernmost of the three main islands of Japan) and the Russian island of Saghalien. He ignored the remark, and did not ask for further details. This was the only time during the campaign when I met Admiral Rozhstvensky. He did not again invite a visit, nor did he come on board the 'Nicholas I.' We never discussed a plan of campaign. He gave me neither instructions nor advice."

We knew well enough that Nebogatoff's ships were no more than a trifling reinforcement, and represented no naval strength worth mentioning. All the same, in defiance of the logic of numbers, on the "Oryol" (at any rate) we were greatly encouraged, and were filled with fresh hope.

One thing was certain, that our stay on the shores of Annam, of which we had had more than enough, was over and done with. We need but embark the munitions and stores brought by the newly arrived transports, and then steer north-east. What was past, was past. There was nothing more to wait for. Russia had done all she could for us. The second Pacific squadron, as now composed, was her last hope. Our country turned its gaze on Rozhstvensky, in the belief that his staring eyes beneath their heavy brows could see into the future—and mould it.

Next day, at dawn, Nebogatoff's detachment, with a few transports, went into the Gulf of Kua-Bé to coal and to overhaul the machinery, while the rest of the fleet marked time out at sea. The admiral issued order of the day no. 229, to the effect that "the reinforcement which has just arrived has made our strength, not merely equal to that of the enemy, but actually superior in respect of battleships." He added: "Even though the Japanese ships are swifter than ours, this is of no importance since we do not intend to run away."

I cannot tell whether Rozhstvensky believed his own words. In any case they did not alter the men's convictions. We knew that we were outclassed by the Japanese. The only result of this order of the day was to make the rank and file scoff at "the mad admiral."

The fighting elements of our squadron have already been sufficiently enumerated. The reader can also consult the comparative table of the Russian and Japanese fleets, printed as an Appendix. Those of the colliers and transports which had become superfluous, now that the sea-fight was imminent, were sent south to Saigon.

This was after four days' hard work trans-shipping what remained of stores and coal and ammunition. Also the funnels of Nebogatoff's detachment were painted yellow instead of black, to render them less conspicuous.

The morning of May 1, 1905, dawned. At a speed of nine knots, the squadron resumed its north-eastward voyage. The first and second divisions of ironclads formed two columns. Then, headed by the "Almaz," came two lines of transports, towing the destroyers. The cruisers flanked the transports in order to protect them. Four swift cruisers took the lead as scouts, while on either side the hospital ships "Kostroma" and "Oryol" followed the cruiser lines. The third division of ironclads, among which was Nebogatoff's flagship, brought up the rear.

On deck I met Boatswain Voevodin.

"Well, we're in for it now," he said.

"Yes, irretrievably."

The squadron, long-drawn-out, covered more than five nautical miles. Volumes of black smoke belched forth from multitudinous funnels, and hung over the sea like a storm-cloud.

"Looks a pretty strong force, don't it?" went on the boatswain.

"Looks are one thing," I replied, "and reality is another."

"In two or three weeks, some of those ships may be safe at Vladivostock."

"Yes, those of them that are not at the bottom of the Sea of Japan!"

The boatswain glanced at me dubiously:

"True enough!" he answered.

The lilac-coloured coast extended parallel with our course, offering us a temporary shelter. The sea was calm.

Captain Yung, scrutinising the seascape from under the peak of his cap, walked up and down the bridge. Hitherto I have said only a few words about this officer. Throughout the voyage he had

controlled our destinies, whether as an individual or as captain of the "Oryol."

He was a seaman who belonged to the old days of sailing ships, and knew about as much as anyone could know of clippers, corvettes, and frigates. Down to the beginning of the war, when he had been appointed to the command of the ironclad "Oryol," he had been captain of our best training ship, which was no more than a wind-jammer, but was always kept in perfect order. Thus he had had ample naval experience—but of an antiquated kind.

On a modern ironclad he felt like a man lost in a forest. Its complicated mechanisms, its electrical apparatus, its heavy guns fired from turrets instead of from the portholes of an old "broadside," were completely outside his ken. The upshot was that he did not know how to handle his ship, and was at the mercy of specialists. He gave up living in his cabin, to spend all his time on the bridge, awaiting signals from the flagships, and personally giving orders to the look-out men and to the engine-room. These duties could just as well have been performed by the officer of the watch. Thus the captain became a mere figure-head, playing no serious part in the life of the ship. Commander Sidoroff was no better. The pair of them were absolutely subservient to the technicians.

The "Oryol" was not peculiar in this respect, for the same remarks apply to many other vessels of the squadron. The commanding officers in general had little knowledge of modern warships, and had been forced, like Yung and Sidoroff, to surrender authority to sub-alterns. On each ship there was, so to say, a governing council of specialists.

In our life on board the "Oryol," these relationships were manifest at the first glance.

Captain Yung was a good fellow, but the difficulties of his task were too much for him. Besides, not merely had he to handle a complicated modern ironclad, but one whose design was faulty, so that it had many serious defects. Even the youngest lieutenants and midshipmen were aware that he was not up to his job, and sarcastic comments on his incompetence were frequent. It was said that he would pick up technical terms like "rheostat," and parrot them in the presence of experts without the ghost of a notion what they really meant.

Yung, like all seamen of sailing-ship days, was a man of rapid decisions. Matters that came within his competence were settled

intuitively, rather than by ratiocination. In the end, however, the admiral's incessant reprimands unnerved him, with the result that he himself began, without just cause, to find fault with the officers who served under him.

His "jumpiness" made us wonder how he would behave when the ship went into action, at a time when the fullest self-command would be indispensable.

The "scenes" which ensued whenever the flagship signalled, and during manœuvres, suggested that he would be useless when the supreme test came. Still, in the end, he grew critical of the admiral, and said of Rozhestvensky's staff:

"After all, what do those fellows know? They're so afraid of their chief that they've lost their senses. It's not worth bothering about 'em."

He came to regard the angry signals from the flagship with indifference.

"Stuff and nonsense! Let 'em rail. Those beggars have got softening of the brain."

By degrees he put himself entirely in the hands of the senior specialists; and, paying no heed to Rozhestvensky's instructions, he began to make independent arrangements for the imminent naval action.

VI

On every ship in the squadron I had friends and acquaintances, some of them from my own part of the country. There were a good many in Nebogatoff's detachment. Under present conditions, however, I could not get into touch with them; and it was not until long after the tragedy of Tsushima that I gleaned some interesting information from the survivors.

The concentration and equipment of the detachment had taken place at Libau, in Port Alexander III. Red tape notwithstanding, matters had gone quickly—too quickly: engines hastily repaired; new and recently acquired apparatus for training the guns, fitted without giving gunners or officers time to make themselves acquainted with these newfangled implements; shells, delivered at Libau by rail, left lying in the snow for a week before being stored in the ships' magazines; shortages in the crew, made good by men sharked up from hither and thither, and little drilled in the work that was expected from them, raw recruits, reservists who had not been to sea

for ages, men with a bad record, of whom the authorities wished to rid themselves. But the Ministry for Marine had to get the detachment away in a hurry, in order to placate public opinion. When the commanding officers made urgent representations to the effect that their ships were not ready for an encounter with the enemy, Rear-Admiral Iretsky, who was supreme at Port Alexander III, replied:

“You don’t really think you’re going to fight? You’re only being sent to make a demonstration, and will soon be home again.”

When the news of the terrible massacre in front of the Winter Palace on November 9th reached Libau, unrest agitated the workers in our ports and munition factories. Numerous strikes and demonstrations delayed Nebogatoff’s departure. The skilled artizans who were making trouble were replaced by bluejackets, but these had been infected with revolutionary sentiments. Thus, the men on the iron-clad “Admiral Senyavin” made frequent complaints as to the quality of the food. One evening at supper there was a formidable rumpus. The officer of the watch, Midshipman Wilhelms, could find nothing better to do than rail against the malcontents, stigmatising them as mutineers who would be severely punished. He completely failed to grasp how dangerous a spirit prevailed among the men, and paid for his blindness with his life, for he was stabbed in the belly. A boat-swain, too, was wounded.

It was in such circumstances that Nebogatoff’s detachment set sail on the morning of February 3rd, when a storm was raging.

Nebogatoff was a very different kind of man from Rozhestvensky. I knew him well, having served under him when he was captain. He was a rather stout man, whose chubby face was disfigured by chronic eczema. He had large, goggly eyes, and a short, grizzled beard. The navy regarded him as efficient. He knew how to get the best out of his subordinates without continual tongue-lashings. As admirals go, he was fairly young, being only fifty-five, but the sailors spoke of him as “Grand-dad.” He treated them as human beings; and it was thanks to this that, in spite of the before-mentioned upheavals, the detachment was got ready so speedily. After setting sail from Libau, there were no further mutinies; and isolated acts of insubordination became rare. Thus his voyage was a great contrast to Rozhestvensky’s.

On his way to the Indian Ocean Nebogatoff followed the same route as Felkerzam, through the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal, and the Red Sea. After passing through the Straits of Bab el Mandeb,

instead of making for Nossi-Bé he steered his course directly towards the Sunda Archipelago, stopping occasionally for target-practice. At night his ships steamed without lights—a measure not adopted by Rozhstvensky.

From Reval until the junction with his main squadron, the journey took eighty-three days. This was a great achievement, when you remember that the detachment contained two utterly obsolete models, the “Nicholas I” and the “Vladimir Monomakh,” and three coast-defence ironclads which were not built for long voyages. Nebogatoff undoubtedly proved himself to be an efficient admiral.

Since the Ministry for Marine was unable (owing to the lack of scattered Russian colonial possessions like the British) to organise a series of ports of call for the second Pacific squadron during its long route to the Far East, it could gain no trustworthy information as to the movements of the enemy fleet. At times, indeed, the general staff sent us some news items bearing on this topic, but they were invariably erroneous, and served only to keep our nerves on the stretch. Admiral Nebogatoff suffered from the same difficulty. He was never properly informed about what was going on in the theatre of war, and did not even know the movements of the squadron with which he was expected to effect a junction. He might telegraph as often as he liked to St. Petersburg, but the answers (when he got any) lacked precision. He was perplexed as to what he should do in these circumstances, and made up his mind to try (as aforesaid) to reach Vladivostock by La Perouse Strait. Chance came to his aid in the person of a man of the rank and file, Vasily Fedorovich Babushkin.

No one who took part in the defence of Port Arthur and survived the fierce combats in that region will ever forget Babushkin. He was extremely popular on the first-class cruiser “Bayan,” where he served as ordinary seaman for some years, eventually rising to the rank of quartermaster.

He came from the far inland government of Vyatka. Of great stature, broad-shouldered and deep-chested, he was a splendid athlete, and on one occasion astonished the French by his prowess in this respect. It was at Toulon, where the “Bayan” was in dock. Babushkin and some of his shipmates were visiting the circus one evening. The “strong man” of the company lifted on his back and carried for a few steps a table on which twenty members of the audience were seated. Babushkin, feeling confident that he could

outdo this, went to the ringmaster and offered to carry the same table with two more persons sitting on it. He was vouchsafed a trial, and succeeded, amid storms of applause. The professional "strong man" retired without attempting to compete, while Babushkin, emerging from beneath the table, was overwhelmed by the plaudits with which he was received, and the flowers thrown to him by the spectators. He stood for a time as if palsied, staring at the public, and confessed afterwards to his shipmates:

"I simply didn't know how to get out of the ring, and my head was still swimming when I found my way back on board."

After this stunt he received, day by day, numbers of admiring letters from French women; and the upshot of the liaisons he entered into was that he soon learned to speak French fluently.

From the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war, Babushkin, being still on board the "Bayan," distinguished himself by feats of exceptional hardihood. Whenever a volunteer was needed for some daring exploit, he was one of the first to step forward—no matter whether it was to unmask Japanese spies or to board enemy fire-ships.

Then came the day when the Japanese, having occupied the highest of the hills surrounding Port Arthur, began to bombard the ships lying in the roads. Fires were continually breaking out on these vessels. The officers and men took refuge in the turrets or the casemates, and Babushkin was one of the few who were always ready to dash out to extinguish the conflagrations. When the ships had at length been sunk, he performed miracles of valour while the defence of the land forts still held by the Russians continued. He was helped in these adventures by the fact that he was not merely a fine animal, but an extremely intelligent man. He was one of those exceptional soldiers or naval subordinates who combine a disciplined character with a marked power for initiative. Besides, he loved danger for its own sake. But his heroism was cut short by disaster. One day, while repairing a trench, a Japanese shell burst close beside him, the splinters inflicting no fewer than eighteen wounds. Babushkin fell to the ground insensible, and reached hospital more dead than alive. Several months elapsed before he could leave his bed.

After the fall of Port Arthur, the Japanese surgeons decided that his fighting days were over, and they sent him back to Russia on board a neutral steamer. At Singapore, he reported to Consul Rudanovsky, who told him that Nebogatoff's detachment was expected to pass through the Straits of Malacca in two or three days.

"I must," said the Consul, "at all costs send dispatches to Admiral Nebogatoff, informing him that the Japanese fleet is lying in wait for him somewhere in the Sunda Archipelago. Very difficult, for the British keep close watch on me."

Babushkin's wounds were not yet fully healed, but the spirit of adventure took possession of him once more. He told the consul he would try to get in touch with Nebogatoff, asking as sole reward permission to return to Japanese waters on one of the vessels of the detachment. A plan of action was promptly excogitated.

The hotel where Babushkin was staying was under police supervision. To evade these attentions, he donned a suit of white drill and a solar topee, which gave him the aspect of a globe-trotter or an ordinary tropical resident. Leaving the hotel early in the morning by the back door, he went to the harbour, where a steam launch awaited him, with two men on board: a big, thick-set Frenchman, who was in the service of the Russian consulate, and a young, yellow-turbaned Hindu, the engineer of the launch. Babushkin took command. In case of need he was, at all hazards, to burn or sink the packet of dispatches.

The British authorities allowed the launch, which was flying French colours, to slip past. Soon the frail craft cleared port and reached the Straits. Within a few hours she was many miles from Singapore, close to the islands near which Nebogatoff's detachment was expected to pass. But no one knew the exact course the detachment would take, nor yet the precise date of its arrival.

Never in his life had Babushkin been so distressed and uneasy. Whenever smoke showed on the horizon, he steered towards it. But again and again disappointment awaited him. Sometimes his excursions were so lengthy that he got almost out of sight of the islands of the Sunda Archipelago. He was scorched by the rays of the equatorial sun. The launch was like a furnace.

When night descended, Babushkin still sat in the stern, his hand on the tiller, but there was no sign of the detachment. Nor was there any better luck the following day. His eyes, wearied by lack of sleep, nervously overstrained and scorched by radiation from the sea, were red and swollen. His wounds, too, imperfectly healed, reopened. Having no dressings, he laved them with sea-water.

The Frenchman soon lost hope and courage. He kept on saying: "What's the use of sticking it out here? We shall never find the detachment. Let's get back to Singapore before the Japanese catch us."

But Babushkin was no quitter, and told his shipmate to shut up. His confidence and persistence bordered on lunacy.

Then came the third day since they had left Singapore. Their store of fuel was nearly exhausted, so that explorations had to be abandoned. The launch marked time. The Frenchman and the Hindu became seriously alarmed. Even if they used the very woodwork of their little craft to stoke the fires, they would not be able to get back to Singapore. Their only chance was help from a passing ship—a most unlikely apparition. Worse still, the supply of drinking-water was exhausted. Babushkin watched his companions licking their cracked lips. He himself, in his invalid condition, suffered from thirst even more than they. His haggard face was disfigured by a three days' stubble of black beard, and his eyes, with lids inflamed, were sunken in black pits.

The Frenchman and the Hindu discussed the situation in whispers. They were ripe for mutiny. At length the former said, with an angry hiss:

“Are we going to stay here much longer?”

“As long as is necessary,” said Babushkin, without deigning so much as a glance.

“And if we refuse to stay, madman?”

“Whether you refuse or not is no concern of mine. We're going to wait for the detachment.”

The Frenchman, waving his arms furiously, replied:

“To hell with your detachment. We're not such fools as to be guided by your wishes. We insist that you make for Singapore at once.”

The Hindu echoed this, shouting:

“Yes, Singapore; back to Singapore.”

The mutiny had begun.

Babushkin stood up, formidable and huge, looking like a two-ton anchor about to be dropped. His iron muscles moved convulsively. Despite his wounds and his agony of thirst, he was more than a match for the other two men put together. They would have been no stronger than little dogs in his terrible grasp. Glaring at them with his suffused eyes, and clenching his fists, he shouted:

“Hold your tongues, or I will break your heads as easy as I'd crack a nut. I can get on as well without you as with you, for I know how to manage the engine of a steam launch.”

The Frenchman crumpled up and made for the bow. The Hindu engineer returned to his duty.

Sometimes a trail of smoke was visible on the horizon, while the launch continued to rock gently on the tranquil waters. The sun rose higher and higher in the heavens, and by noon the air was like liquid fire. The heat was intensified by that radiated from the engine-room. Everything scorched; their shirts, their trousers, their shoes. It seemed as if their very blood were drying up under the fierce rays of the sun. Clouds gathered in the south-west.

Nothing broke the silence. The three men seemed resigned to a dreadful fate.

Babushkin, seated at the tiller, perpetually scanned the horizon through his binoculars. Suddenly he started up as if stung by a wasp, and fixed his glasses on a point to westward. Amid the atmospheric vibration due to the heat, he made out a series of smoke-trails: one, two, three—more, and more, and more. Then masts could be seen. The hands holding the binoculars trembled, and Babushkin could hardly stand, so excited was he. Stammeringly he called to his companions:

“That’s our detachment!”

He ordered the Hindu engineer to throw the last logs of wood into the furnace, and steered so as to head off the vessels.

The Frenchman protested again:

“Much better put about. For all you know, those may be Japanese or British ships. They’ll take us for spies.”

“If you make any trouble,” answered Babushkin, “I’ll open the scuttle, and sink the lot of us.”

The two men looked at him, stupefied with terror, for they knew him well enough to realise that this was no empty threat. The Frenchman did not even mutter; and when the fierce skipper cried “Full speed ahead,” the Hindu engineer hastened to obey.

Within a few minutes, there could be no further doubt that the ships were Russian. They steamed under the St. Andrew’s Cross. There was only one trouble now, how to stop the detachment.

The column was head by the “Nicholas I,” flying the admiral’s flag. The steam launch approached her, Babushkin and his crew shouting and gesticulating. They saw black globes hoisted at the mizen, announcing that the engines had been stopped. The whole detachment stayed its course.

The launch drew up alongside the “Nicholas I,” Babushkin climbed on board, handed the precious packet to Admiral Nebogatoff, briefly told his story, and finished by saying:

"May I stay on the flagship, Sir? I'd like another brush with the Japs."

Permission was given, but the poor fellow's strength gave out, and he was sent to the sick-bay.

The launch, supplied with fuel and water, headed back for Singapore.

From a study of the papers brought by Babushkin, Nebogatoff learned that he would be able to effect a junction with the second Pacific squadron in the South China Sea.

At this moment a tropical rain-storm began. If the detachment had passed an hour later, Babushkin would have missed it, and the detachment would not have known where to find Rozhdestvensky.

VII

At dawn on May 5th we took on board what coal remained in the transports. The usual cloud of black dust enveloped us.

After dinner the transports "Mercury" and "Tambov" set out for Saigon.

That same day my friend Vasilieff, to whom the whole company was greatly attached, returned from hospital. He looked well, and, as always, kindly; but his fractured ankle was not fully consolidated, and he got about with difficulty on crutches. When I met him he asked, with a smile:

"Well, what's the news?"

"There have been some important happenings on board."

"So I've heard. Nothing short of a mutiny. We'll discuss the details as soon as we have a chance."

By evening the squadron headed towards Formosa, but had frequently to stop on account of defects in the machinery, now on one ship, now on another. The men slept badly, being in constant expectation of a torpedo-attack.

We knew that the eight "ringleaders" on the "Oryol" could look for no mercy from the court-martial which had been ordered by Rozhdestvensky. It might have been supposed that their anticipated execution would serve as an example to the rest of us. Nevertheless, fresh acts of collective insubordination were frequent. When the squadron was about to leave Russia, a certain sum of money, amounting to twenty copecks per head, had been allotted for the purchase of books—a library for the crew. Half of the amount had stuck to

somebody's fingers, and had disappeared without leaving a trace. The other half had been spent upon rubbish, except for a few pamphlets by Tolstoy, and these, at the instigation of Father Paisy, were thrown overboard as "anti-Christian." It will readily be understood that the aforesaid trash did not satisfy the sailors. They asked for good literature, penned by classical and contemporary Russian authors; but whenever they made such a request, the librarian, Midshipman Vorobeichik, answered:

"Hold your jaw, and read what's given you."

The scanty supply of inferior reading for the crew was kept in the officers' mess, beside a locked bookcase containing the officers' library. One night, when their chiefs were absent, the men burgled this bookcase, and removed the contents, save for the numerous volumes of the Russian edition of Brockhaus's *Encyclopædia*. The works of Zola, Maupassant, Orzheshko, Turgeneff, Gorky, Korolenko, Chekhoff, and a number of scientific treatises were promptly distributed among the marauders and their messmates. Had such a thing happened at a less critical moment, a search would undoubtedly have been made, and the possessors of the stolen volumes severely punished. Now, however, the bluejackets read the books openly, and with far more fervour than if a general order had been issued to them to devote themselves to literary studies. The officers pretended not to notice.

Our goal was Vladivostock. We could not get there without crossing the Sea of Japan, which might be entered by any one of three alternative routes (the narrow waters of the Inland Sea being out of the question): Korea Strait between Kiushiu and Korea, divided in twain by the large island of Tsushima; the Tsugaru or Sangar Strait between Hondo and Yezo; and, the northernmost of the three, La Perouse Strait, between Yezo and the Russian island of Saghalien.

The whole squadron was interested in the problem which of these ways would be chosen.

Admiral Rozhestvensky was no more likely to take the advice of his captains than of their crews. We should have to obey his orders, however foolish. Still, we were living and reflective creatures, and could not remain indifferent to the fate of the squadron, with which our own was inextricably linked. Imminent death reduced us all to the same level.

The men kept their ears stretched whenever our officers were discussing the advantages of the respective straits. Unfortunately

most of those who overheard scraps of conversation were poorly educated men, who gave us extremely inadequate information.

"The officers are perpetually asking one another which will be the best route. Many of them say that we ought to circumnavigate Japan; and some, even, that it would be best to go round the north of Saghalien and down to Vladivostock by way of the Gulf of Tartary."

Through the skylights of the officers' mess the bluejackets did some eavesdropping.

It appeared that the nearest way, through Korea Strait, was considered the least advantageous. First of all, this entry into the Sea of Japan was the farthest from Vladivostock. Besides, here were the chief enemy bases. We could hardly fail to encounter the Japanese. Were we really going to risk a fight with a force so greatly superior to ours?

I had a talk with Lieutenant Hirs about the matter. He said:

"I fancy that the admiral will choose one of the northern routes, Tsugaru Strait or La Perouse. True, the former offers grave difficulties, being no more than ten miles wide here and there. But that did not prevent Admiral Bezobrazoff, at the head of a cruiser detachment, from making a sortie into the Pacific on July 7th of last year. He got as far south as Yokohama; cruised in these waters for a week, and sank several ships laden with contraband of war that were making for Japanese ports. Then, strange to say, he returned safely to Vladivostock by the same route without having sighted any enemy warships. So successful a sally shows that Tsugaru Strait is worth serious consideration. Still, Bezobrazoff had only three cruisers, whereas ours is a big fleet which would be far more likely to attract attention. If we once get through the strait, we shall be no more than 450 miles from Vladivostock. La Perouse is somewhat farther, and Korea Strait a good deal farther, so that by either of these routes we should be longer exposed to attack in the Sea of Japan."

"In general, however, what do you think of the way through La Perouse Strait?"

"That's our best chance, I believe. It is as wide as the eastern section of Korea Strait (between the Isle of Tsushima and Kiushiu), and much shorter. Nearer Vladivostock, too. Then, on the auxiliary cruiser 'Ural' we have a powerful wireless outfit, which would enable us, in La Perouse Strait, to get into touch with Vladivostock, and summon the remnants of the fleet there to our aid in case of need. The cruisers left at Vladivostock are strong and swift. They

would constitute a notable reinforcement. Besides, while Yezo, the island which bounds La Perouse Strait to the south, is Japanese, the one which bounds it to the north, Saghalien, is Russian territory. The Japs have no naval dockyard so far north, and they could not send their whole fleet to those waters. If they discovered us, they could only send in pursuit of us a detachment consisting of a few units equipped for a first-class naval action."

"But suppose that they are patrolling La Perouse Strait?"

"Even if they are, it does not follow that their scouts would sight us. The strait is about twenty-four miles wide, and a storm would be of great help to us. In thick weather we might pass unnoticed within half a mile of the enemy. Besides, if the scouting cruisers discovered us, what could they do? They would not venture to engage so formidable a force, for they would inevitably be sunk. Their business would be to make all possible speed in order to report our passage to their chief, Admiral Togo. But even though Togo's fleet were able to steam faster than ours, we should be close to Vladivostock before he could make his way into the north of the Sea of Japan, and thereby the situation would be radically modified in our favour. We should be at home, so to say, and, as the phrase goes, the very walls would fight on our side. Togo would not have with him so many destroyers as in Korea Strait, whereas our torpedo flotilla would be augmented by the units sent from Vladivostock to meet us. If we suffered in the sea-fight, the damaged boats could take refuge in that port, whereas the Japanese have no handy base to which they could withdraw and refit. For these reasons I am sure that the admiral will choose the route by La Perouse Strait."

That evening I went to see Engineer Vasilieff. His cabin was brightly lit by electricity; but, in case the enemy should be near, the port-hole was shaded. On the table were blue-prints and a sketch-book; also writing materials. I sat down in a low chair, while Vasilieff leaned back on the couch, with his injured foot resting on it. As always, he was reading. Turning to me, he said:

"I'm just finishing *Nana*, and I'm thinking about Zola. A noteworthy novel. Have you read it?"

"Not *Nana*, but a good many of Zola's other books."

"You should certainly read it."

After some talk about this book, and about Napoleon III and the defeat of France by the Germans in 1870-71, Vasilieff went on to compare the present position of Russia with that of France in those

days. Our fleet, he said, was as completely outclassed by the Japanese as the French army by the German.

We were silent for a space.

On resuming our talk we touched upon the routes to Vladivostock, and I told him Lieutenant Hirs's views.

Vasilieff agreed with the lieutenant.

"It would be absolutely disastrous," he continued, "for us to try Korea Strait."

To this I replied:

"Most of the officers are in favour of the Perouse route, but some contend that it is too foggy at this season. Of course we could pass among the Kurile Islands into the Sea of Okhotsk. But we know very little of those waters, and we should probably run short of coal if we were to make our way through the Pacific along the whole eastern seaboard of Japan. Isn't that so?"

"You mean that so extremely northerly a route would be too risky for us?"

I nodded.

"As for coal," said Vasilieff, "we still have an adequate supply on our colliers, and are used to coaling at sea. Nor will the second objection hold water. We have plenty of officers in the squadron who have often navigated among the Kurile Islands, and know those waters as the palm of their hand. We can rely upon their experience. There remains the question of fog. That is a serious matter. Well, we must bear in mind that our whole expedition to the Far East, undertaken to gain naval supremacy in the Sea of Japan, has been a stupendous venture. We cannot base our decisions upon a reasoned comparison of the strength of the respective forces. To the devil, then, with the rules of the game! What would be counter-considerations in a normal enterprise—thick fog, a starless night, storm—may bring us luck. In other words, we need conditions which will enable us to slip past the enemy unnoticed. Consequently La Perouse Strait, with its frequent misty weather, offers us the best chance of getting to Vladivostock, so that we may refit."

"Maybe you're right, but Rozhestvensky is too opinionated to take anybody's advice; and I fancy he going to try Korea Strait."

"If so, all the worse for us and for him!"

Vasilieff, re-adjusting his injured leg, screwed up his face with pain. This made me realise how difficult it must be for him to get along the deck, even with the aid of crutches; and I knew that he

could not climb the companion-way without the assistance of a friendly arm. He would be disabled for at least another two months. On our ironclad he was superfluous, a mere passenger. Yet I knew that he had written a request to be sent back to our "Oryol" from the hospital ship. Why? Warlike renown was of no interest to him. Bold and resolute in the struggle for the revolution, for popular freedom, he regarded warfare between the nations as an absurd iniquity. He had never concealed his sentiments from me. He was not a nationalist, but an internationalist. He wanted to see the oppressed who were now rigged out in the uniforms of soldiers and sailors of various nationalities, use their strength and their weapons to win freedom on the international plane.

Looking him squarely in the eyes, I asked:

"Why did you leave hospital so soon? Weren't you comfortable there?"

VasiliEFF smiled sardonically.

"On the contrary, I was very well off. The surgeons were most attentive and efficient, and, if they had had their way, I should still be under their care. Comfortable? Yes, extremely comfortable. The food was good. The nurses were kind and skilful. In the event of a naval action, I should have been under the protection of the Red Cross. Yet I could not stay there."

"So you came back to this doomed ship. Why?"

"My feelings were at war with my intelligence. That was why I persuaded the surgeons to send me back. I knew I was taking a step likely to lead to my destruction. But my heart drew me to our 'Oryol.' I wanted to be on my own ship, with my own crew, my comrades; to risk my life where my friends were risking theirs. Besides, it is just possible that, at the critical moment, my advice may help to save the old lady. . . ."

I bade him good-night, taking with me Emile Zola's *Nana*.

VIII

We crossed the Tropic of Cancer and entered the temperate zone. To the east, separating us from the Pacific, lay Formosa, taken by the Japanese from the Chinese after the war of 1894-95. We sighted few ships, and saw nothing of the enemy.

Our long voyage was drawing to a close, the voyage which had

needed an expenditure of so much energy. The most terrible chapter of this futile Odyssey was about to open.

On the morning of May 10th, when we had left Formosa far astern, we began to coal ship once more in the open sea. The waters were calm. Light clouds hung motionless at a great altitude; the sky was lustreless. No ships other than those of our own fleet were visible, nor was there any sign of land bordering the ocean waste.

While at work, the men talked matters over.

“Well, this is our last halt.”

“Why the last?”

“Because any day, now, we shall encounter the enemy.”

“Not if we circumnavigate Japan; and in that case we shall have to stop once more to coal.”

“Which way do you really think the admiral will decide to go?”

“Why d’you suppose we’re coaling to-day. This old tub of ours is fairly deep in the water as it is. Only two days’ voyage from here to Korea Strait, and by then we shall not have used enough fuel to get back to our normal displacement. Surely that should give us a pointer?”

“You’re forgetting the madness of our admiral.”

The officers shared the opinion of most of the men. They thought that taking coal on board now must mean that Rozhestvensky had decided in favour of the longer route up the east coast of Japan.

The “Suvoroff” took advantage of the arrest of the fleet to issue final instructions as to strategy and tactics.

“When the enemy is sighted, the principal strength of the squadron will, on receipt of a signal to that effect, proceed to the attack. This main part of the fleet will be supported by the third division of ironclads and by the cruisers, which may, however, act independently as dictated by the circumstances of the moment. If no signal is made, the ironclads must follow the flagship, concentrating their fire on the enemy’s flagship or leading vessel.”

Instead of a carefully elaborated and detailed plan, we were given vague general indications. Upon which part of the hostile fleet was our main attack to be delivered? What method of attack was to be followed? What was the precise meaning of the phrase “act independently as dictated by circumstances?” What were we to do if the Japanese were led, not by their flagship, but by vessels of minor importance?

Vainly did staff and captains cudgel their brains in an endeavour

to solve these problems. The admiral obviously supposed himself to have told them all that was necessary, and hoped to give additional orders while the battle raged. He did, however, signal a supplementary instruction to the effect that if the "Suvoroff" were sunk or put out of action, the guidance of the squadron (until the admiral's staff had been transferred to another ship) would pass to the next ironclad in the line, the "Alexander III"; then, in case of need, to the "Borodino"; and so on.

That evening our funnels spouted volumes of black smoke. The patent log, ticking off the nautical miles, showed that we must be rapidly approaching the coasts of Japan.

Another day passed, during which the enemy gave no sign of life. Where were the Japanese warships? Their non-appearance increased our disquietude.

As we steamed northward, the temperature fell, and we were chilly after our long sojourn in the tropics. Warmer clothing became necessary.

Instinctively the whole ship's complement was aware that, the death-struggle being imminent, this was no time for dissensions between officers and crew. Relations grew more cordial. Superiors no longer swore at or cuffed their subordinates. The men, forgetting past humiliations, did their duty conscientiously.

The "Oryol" was ready for the fight. We took all possible measures to guard against the risk of fire by ridding the ship as far as we could of combustible material. We flung overboard the wooden fittings of the deck-house, those of the upper bridge, the furniture of the officers' mess, and of the cabins on the battery deck; with the exception of the more valuable articles, which were stowed away in the hold. Engineer Vasilieff advised that nothing should be kept which might feed a fire; but Captain Yung was loth to strip his vessel so completely, all the more since the admiral had issued no orders on the subject, and it was known that the "Suvoroff" was keeping her wooden fittings and furniture intact. Indeed, very few of the vessels in the squadron followed the example of the "Oryol." On our ironclad we also took measures to protect the more delicate apparatus of the guns, etc., from shell-splinters, surrounding them with cables, iron bars, sacks of coal, hammocks, etc. Spare parts were stowed in safe places where they would be handy for use.

To outward seeming the men were calm and cheerful, joking and laughing. Some of them made plans about what they would do when

they reached Vladivostock; others were dreaming of the return home. In reality, however, they were humbugging themselves and one another, for despair gnawed at their hearts. It was more than two hundred days since we had left Russia, and throughout the voyage our inward anguish and apprehension had been steadily increasing. Many terrible pages had been turned in the book of our lives, and now we had nothing to look forward to but a dreadful end.

The morning of May 12th was cold and gloomy. The steel hawsers that stayed the masts whistled in the wind. The grey clouds with which the sky was overcast sank lower and lower. Fine rain, falling aslant, troubled the surface of the sea. The horizon was wrapped in haze, and waves splashed against the sides of the ironclad.

Nothing can be more melancholy than a rainy day at sea. Nevertheless, braving the cold and the penetrating damp, most of the officers remained on the upper deck and the bridges. At nine in the morning, the ship's complement stared at the colliers, which were quitting the squadron and steaming towards Shanghai, about forty miles to the west. They were the "Yaroslavl" (Captain Radloff), the "Vladimir," the "Kuronian," the "Voronezh," the "Livonia," and the "Meteor," convoyed by the cruisers "Riona" and "Dniepr," which had orders, when their charges were safe in Chinese waters, to make a demonstration in the Yellow Sea. Three days before, two other auxiliary cruisers, the "Kuban" and the "Terek," had been detached from the squadron to make a demonstration on the east coast of Japan. The departing vessels hoisted a "Good Luck" signal. We followed them with envious glances till they vanished in a shroud of rain.

Down to this morning of May 12th no one except the admiral knew by which of the three straits we should try to make our way into the Sea of Japan. Now, had we intended to round the south of Kiushiu and make for either Tsugaru Strait or La Perouse Strait, we should have steered due east. Since, however, our course, after parting from the colliers, was set N. 70° E., it was plain that we were making for Tsushima. The officers did not hesitate to show their consternation, while the men cursed Rozhestvensky, saying that he well deserved his nickname of "the mad admiral."

The squadron now adopted a new formation.

There were two columns. The starboard column consisted of the first and second ironclad detachments: the "Suvoroff," the "Alexander III," the "Borodino," the "Oryol," the "Oslyabya," the "Sisoy

Veliky," the "Navarin," and the "Admiral Nakhimoff." The port column consisted of the third ironclad detachment, the "Nicholas I," the "Apraksin," the "Senyavin," and the "Ushakoff;" with the four cruisers, "Oleg," "Aurora," "Dmitri Donskoy," and "Vladimir Monomakh." Between the columns on a level with the two leading ironclads were two destroyers. Five more destroyers steamed farther astern, opposite the gaps between the cruisers of the port column. Finally, still between the lines, in single file, came four transports "Anadyr," "Irtysk," "Kamchatka," and "Korea," followed by the tugboat "Rousse" and the water-tank steamer "Svir." Bringing up the rear, and behind the fighting lines, were the two hospital ships "Oryol" and "Kostroma." Outside the columns, on a level with its leading units, were our scouting cruisers: to starboard, the "Zhemchug," and to port, the "Izumrud." About a mile in advance, in triangular formation, were three additional scouts: the "Svetlana," the "Ural," and the "Almaz."

Thirty-eight vessels in all.

It was in this compact formation that we approached Korea Strait. Many of us were amazed at Rozhestvensky's tactics. Indeed, his heedlessness, when he must have known that the enemy lurked so near, was criminal. It could not be contended that the five scouting cruisers disposed as aforesaid were making a serious reconnoissance. They served merely to extend our field of observation by a couple of miles. Thus the squadron was advancing blindfold.

Boatswain Voevodin, shaking his head as he contemplated the squadron, whispered to me:

"Fine sort of admiral we've got, haven't we?"

At that moment, Lieutenant Hirs came up on to the bridge.

"It seems, Sir," I said interrogatively, "that we're bound for Korea Strait?"

"Unfortunately, that is so."

"Then the admiral has decided to force his way through to Vladivostock by the shortest route?"

Hirs shrugged his shoulders, and replied:

"Queer business. Beyond me. . . ."

Not merely had the captains of the ironclads and cruisers been kept in ignorance, but also Rozhestvensky's colleagues, the rear-admirals, as well. Nevertheless, the determination to force the Strait of Tsushima had leaked through to St. Petersburg (and thence

probably to the Japanese) months before the battle. Senior Flag-Lieutenant Sventorzhetzsky wrote from Nossi-Bé to a certain Pavel Mihailovich:

“We have had considerable losses, which will be greatly augmented when we have endeavoured to make our way through Tsushima Strait, the chief Japanese naval base.”

I went to the main deck, where the bluejackets were drinking tea after their mid-day rest, and conversing about the war, their native villages, this, that, and the other.

A quiet day. The squadron steamed at eight knots, speed being reduced to five knots at nightfall.

Few of us slept soundly.

IX

Admiral Rozhestvensky, to my great satisfaction, for practical purposes did not know me, and took no interest in me. As far as he was concerned, I was an insignificant item among nine thousand men in uniform. We existed only to carry out his orders, as the living force needed to ensure that the engines should keep going, that shells and torpedoes should be fired on suitable occasions. The lot of us were, for him, fused into one huge mass organised for combat against the Japanese. But I thought a good deal about the admiral, wondering how he directed the squadron, what he had done in its behalf, how far his influence extended, how he dealt with his subordinates, what were his relations with his staff, and (above all) what he was like as an individual.

I endeavoured to deduce answers to these questions from a study of his behaviour, wishing to understand him as a man no less than as commander of the squadron. An additional reason for my interest in Rozhdestvensky was that he represented a type common in the imperial fleet. Ultra-typical, indeed; for he manifested to a degree which set him apart the arrogance and authoritarianism germane to all his colleagues, and which our despotic Government infallibly developed among its chief instruments.

Little was known about Rozhestvensky's past before the Russo-Japanese war, and its tragical conclusion, thrust him into the limelight.

He had already reached the grade of lieutenant when, in 1873, he finished his studies at the Mikhailoffsky Artillery School. Appointed, soon after, a member of the naval gun-practice committee, he held

this position until the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish war in 1877. Then he became attaché to the admiral-in-chief of the Black Sea fleet. When the "Vesta" was transformed into an auxiliary cruiser, he served on board of her under Captain Baranoff (later governor of Nijni-Novgorod), taking part in the naval action near Kyustendzhi on July 11, 1877. Our men, according to the newspapers of the day, showed extraordinary valour. The poorly armed "Vesta" was said to have engaged and routed the Turkish ironclad "Fethi-Bulend." For this feat, Rozhestvensky and his colleagues received the Order of St. George and the Order of St. Vladimir. Rozhestvensky was promoted captain.

Having been sent to St. Petersburg with the commanding officer's report of the sea-fight he delivered it *viva voce* to the tsar and the imperial family.

A year later, on July 17, 1878, he published in the *Birzhevye Vedomosti* an article entitled "Ironclads and Auxiliary Cruisers." This contained facts about the "Vesta" which had not previously been made known to the world. It appeared that the Turkish ironclad had by no means fled before the Russian auxiliary cruiser, but had pursued the latter for five and a half hours, and had in the end given up the chase because she was overladen with ammunition and the "Vesta" had the heels of her. The writer's account of the matter was convincing.

In the contemporary Russian press, Rozhestvensky's article raised a storm. The *Novoe Vremya*, the *Birzhevye Vedomosti*, the *Petersburgskie Vedomosti*, the *Yakhta*, and various other periodicals, attacked him as a liar, or praised him for his frankness.

Certainly Rozhestvensky's article proved its author's courage. But we have to ask ourselves whether an ulterior motive did not lurk behind the disclosure. Obviously he had not spared himself, but risked his career. It may be contended that only a thoroughly honest man would venture upon such a course. Yet why did he wait a year before breaking the seal of silence? Why did he not make his announcement immediately after coming ashore? Why did he not refuse decorations which, on his own showing, were undeserved? He continued to flaunt them as signs of distinction down to the very day of the Battle of Tsushima.

From the time when the "revelations" were published in the *Birzhevye Vedomosti* until the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war, twenty-six years elapsed. When the sinking of the "Petropavlovsk"

at Port Arthur had consigned to a watery grave, together with the famous painter Vereshchagin, one of the ablest of our admirals, Makaroff, and when there had been a series of other grave disasters to the Russian forces by land and by sea, the tsarist Government looked around for a new saviour of the country. He was not far to seek, being in the personal suite of Nicholas II. Tall, grave, virile, his head bent forward a little, as if heavy with thought, he had so imposing an appearance that it seemed as if he could command success. The name of Admiral Rozhestvensky was known far and wide throughout Russia. In the hour of national tribulation, the press was already acclaiming him as a hero and a probable deliverer.

During the voyage to the Far East I frequently met my friend Ustinoff, secretary to the admiral's general staff. I went to visit him on the "Suvoroff" whenever we were in port, or sometimes he looked me up on the "Oryol." Thanks to his position, Ustinoff knew more about the war and the admiral's plans than did the captains of the various units; and he had no secrets from me. Thus, although I was not serving on the flagship, he kept me fairly well informed as to the working of Rozhestvensky's mind.

I have previously explained that the commander of the fleet never left the "Suvoroff" except to administer reprimands. Nor did he summon the rear-admirals and captains to the flagship. He neither asked their advice nor discussed any problems with them. In an armchair, installed for his personal use on the bridge of the "Suvoroff," he passed his days and often his nights, keeping watch on the movements of the units, studying their evolutions, and having their signals interpreted. But he seemed to care nothing about what went on between decks, in the turrets, in the engine-rooms, or in the stoke-holes. Such matters were beneath his notice. Yet details of this sort decide the technical value of a warship, its powers for offence and defence. Thus the functions of the admiral and his staff were restricted to the general supervision of order throughout the squadron. Provided that we kept line and maintained our proper distances one from another, all was considered to be going well. But if a ship got out of line, Rozhestvensky completely lost control. He jumped out of his armchair, shouting furiously. Sometimes he would fling his cap on the deck, whereupon one of his officers would pick it up and hold it reverently as if it were a holy relic. Panic swept across the bridge. The officers of the watch, the staff, look-out men, orderlies, bluejackets, contemplated the admiral with terror, as though he had

been a 15-inch shell about to burst. After a volley of oaths directed at the offending vessel, the order would come:

“Signal that idiot a reprimand!”

Officers and signalmen did not need to ask who was the idiot in question, but jostled one another in their haste to find and hoist the requisite flags. In a minute the signal which announced that (let us say) the “Admiral Nakhimoff” had blundered, was duly flying.

Thereupon Admiral Rozhstvensky calmed down. Taking his cap from the officer who had taken charge of it, he replaced it on his head with an angry jerk, and stumped up and down the bridge.

When manœuvres were in progress, he would suddenly clench his fists, and shout at the top of his voice:

“Where are you going, you foul bitch? Where in hell are you going?”

A look along the line showed those on the bridge that the “Aurora” must be the “foul bitch” in question (“foul bitch” was, indeed, Rozhstvensky’s pet name for this particular vessel); and, though the ship was five miles away, the admiral continued to volley abuse as if the men on board of her could hear his objurgations.

Another time, instead of shouting and storming, the admiral would hiss through his teeth:

“Signal that preposterous almshouse not to lag behind as she is doing!”

Thereupon the signalmen would run up the flags that communicated Rozhstvensky’s orders to the “Sisoy Veliky.”

Or the admiral would roar:

“Why in thunder is that fathead dancing about as if a wasp had stung her?”

Then the “Svetlana” would be singled out for Rozhstvensky’s censure.

When the admiral got into one of his tantrums and began to curse and swear, the men on deck, being temporarily out of range, grinned at one another, and whispered:

“Listen, Comrades, the fun’s beginning up there.”

Rozhstvensky had opprobrious nicknames for the captains, and even for the rear-admirals, as well as for the ships of the squadron. Sometimes these names were witty, sometimes merely offensive—vulgar without being funny. Rear-Admiral Felkerzam, an obese man, was “the manure-sack;” Rear-Admiral Enkvist, not conspicuous for intelligence, was “the void space;” Captain Yung, of the “Oryol,” dapper and nervous, was “the polished fidget;” and

Captain Bukhvostoff, in command of the "Alexander III," an ex-guardsmen, was "the portmanteau for the guards' uniform." Captain Serebrennikoff, in command of the "Borodino," having at one time taken an active part in the populist movement, was styled "the brainless nihilist." The captain of the "Ushakoff," Miklukho-Maklay, a relative of the famous explorer, was "that double-distilled idiot." Captain Ber, in command of the "Oslyabya," who was something of a woman-hunter, was "lascivious carrion." The nicknames of some of the captains and commanders were derived from the terminology of venereal diseases. Lest the reader should fancy that I am drawing the long bow about this matter, I may mention that subsequently, in evidence before the Commission of Enquiry, Rear-Admiral Nebogatoff stated: "Most of the captains were known to Admiral Rozhstvensky by nicknames of his own coining—nicknames which took the form of coarse expletives, and which the admiral did not hesitate to use before officers and men."

Rozhstvensky wanted to have as little to do as possible with subordinates, and these latter, for their part, knowing the violence of their chief's temper, avoided him whenever they could. The captains of the other vessels never went on board the flagship unless their duty made this imperative, feeling sure that such encounters would involve them in a "rowing."

When we were at Nossi-Bé, the cruiser "Svetlana" was so grossly overladen with coal and other stores that some of her internal framework broke. Captain Sheina therefore visited the "Suvoroff" to ask permission for a reduction in these burdens. Rozhstvensky was infuriated, and, volleying abuse and curses, shoo'd the captain out of his cabin.

At Van Fong, the "Navarin" was ordered to ship three hundred tons of drinking water. Captain Fitinhoff tried to make the admiral understand that, since the "Navarin" had already more coal on board than she could well carry, any additional load would endanger her stability. The admiral, having listened to the protest, turned his back on Fitinhoff, and yelled:

"What are you talking about? D'ye think you can teach me my business? You dare to challenge my orders? Well, then, you will immediately ship five hundred tons of water. Be off with you. Not another word!"

He himself, however, added some words which are unprintable. Captain Fitinhoff saluted and departed, saying:

"At your orders, Admiral!"

To several of the captains, in the presence of their subordinates, Rozhstvensky said such things as:

"You're not fit to command a ship. You would have done better to stay in one of the naval store departments and distribute mops."

It may well be wondered how the officers could endure such insolence. Epaulets and decorations were no safeguard against humiliation. Could incidents of the sort have occurred in any other navy?

To begin with, those who did not know Rozhstvensky believed him to be a man of strong character, as well as an outstanding expert in naval and military affairs. He was the heaven-born leader who would overcome all obstacles, and this thought made for tolerance of his vagaries. By degrees, however, as the squadron proceeded on its course, disappointment grew. The admiral's violence, the tenor of the orders he issued (whether by signal or directly to his subordinates), his way of treating his officers, could not fail to undermine his authority. People came to perceive that it had been a mistake to suppose his roughness and coarseness to be no more than a mask for a subtle intelligence and a supreme talent for organisation. His contempt for underlings was but the expression of overweening pride and unwarrantable self-assurance.

Rozhstvensky was no more considerate to his staff officers than to others, treating the former as badly as the latter. There were but two exceptions, Senior Flag-Lieutenant Sventorzhetsky, and Commander Semenov, who served on the "Suvoroff." These men were the admiral's supplementary eyes and ears, and it was by their reports that he formed his opinions as to what was going on throughout the squadron. No other member of his staff enjoyed his favour or his confidence. Being of an extremely dictatorial temperament, he regarded advice as an infringement of his prerogatives. Hence his staff officers never dared apprise him of the errors inevitably committed by a man of his stubborn and self-satisfied nature. The staff consisted of men as subservient to him as well-trained dogs to their master. Far from venturing upon an advisory role, it was content to be Rozhstvensky's passive instrument in his dealings with the squadron.

Captain Clapier de Colongue, chief of staff, was especially exposed to humiliations at the hands of the admiral. Theoretically, next to the latter, he was the most important person in the squadron. He should have seen to the carrying-out of his chief's ideas—but for

this he would have had to be informed as to their nature. In actual fact, Rozhestvensky kept the chief of staff wholly under his thumb. Before going to report to the admiral, Captain Clapier de Colongue was always careful to ask for a pointer from the orderly.

"Tell me, friend, in what sort of temper is His Excellency to-day?"

"Nothing much amiss, Sir," would sometimes be the answer.

Only in that case would Colongue venture to knock at the admiral's door, after taking off his cap, crossing himself, and murmuring a prayer.

On one occasion, Clapier de Colongue was about to make the usual enquiry of the orderly on duty outside the admiral's cabin, when he noticed that the unlucky bluejacket had a black eye and other recent contusions—obviously the handiwork of the admiral's fists.

"His Excellency is not in a good mood to-day?"

"Sorry, Sir; he's been knocking me about, as you see."

"But what the devil am I to do? I've an extremely urgent report."

"Not my place to advise, Sir; but I wouldn't go in, if I were you. He's in a red-hot temper."

The urgent report was postponed to a more favourable opportunity.

My friend Ustinoff told me that quite frequently Colongue's eyes were tear-stained when he came from an interview with the admiral. Nay more, we have the admiral's own testimony. Rozhestvensky wrote to his wife under date March 31, 1905:

"I gave Colongue such a wiggling to-day that he was blubbering when he left me."

The admiral behaved as if he alone counted, the staff and the captains of the various ships being of no importance whatever. He was entitled to order, curse, punish, sometimes even praise; his subordinates had merely to obey, to do the work, to overcome difficulties, and to accept unflinchingly every insult he hurled at them. His only argument was force, and he was absolutely convinced that the success of the second Pacific squadron wholly depended on compliance with his own autocratic will. He suppressed the initiative of his staff, the captains, their chief subordinates, indeed of every one in the fleet. All were to look up to him as the only person who knew anything, knew what to do and how to do it. He fancied himself a man of genius—and this was his greatest misfortune. Having unlimited authority, he made of those who came into contact with him mere pawns to be moved hither and thither in accordance with his

whim. He hypnotised himself into a belief that the squadron could not possibly get on without him.

It is true that Rozhestvensky had a will of iron; but, since he was utterly lacking in naval or military talent (to say nothing of genius), this "firmness of character" could bring him, and us who served under him, nothing but disaster.

X

On May 13th the weather improved considerably; the rain ceased, the wind fell, and from time to time the sun shone brightly.

The squadron was approaching Korea Strait at a speed of nine knots per hour. From moment to moment we were expecting to sight the enemy, and everything was ready for the combat; but, to our great surprise, no Japanese warships appeared. Nevertheless, our wireless outfits were now picking up undecipherable messages, which showed that our foes were not very far away, and that their battleships were probably communicating with their scouting cruisers.

The flagship signalled that a sufficient boiler pressure should be maintained in the cruisers to steam at fifteen knots, and in the ironclads to steam at twelve knots.

Most of the day was devoted to evolutions with Nebogatoff's detachment. The results were no less discouraging than had been those of the manœuvres before Nebogatoff joined us. Since the squadron was composed of a motley collection of units, manœuvring was extremely difficult. We were continually getting out of line; the signals from the flagship were imperfectly understood and badly obeyed; and when, at length, the "Suvoroff" ordered us to resume our fighting formation, confusion became worse confounded.

But there was something which interested us more than this customary blundering. Why, we asked ourselves, did the admiral undertake such exercises when we were obviously within fighting distance of the Japanese, and when it seemed unlikely that the decisive combat could be deferred more than a few hours. Rozhestvensky had not hitherto conducted joint evolutions with Nebogatoff, but he could have done so tranquilly off the coast of Indo-China, as soon as the junction with his colleague had been effected. It would have made no appreciable difference if our entry into Korea Strait had been delayed by two or three days. Had the admiral overlooked that fact? No, he had reasons of his own for pushing north-eastward,

and had reasons of his own for now holding the fleet in check for a while. We made a shrewd guess at these reasons. On May 12th he had slowed the squadron by several knots. Now he was devoting May 13th to futile manœuvres. Had he not done these things, we should presumably have passed through Tsushima Strait (the narrower, eastern limb of Korea Strait) during the night of May 13th to 14th, when the weather was thick. Probably the Japanese fleet had already concentrated to await us; but, profiting by the fog and rain and rough weather (which would have greatly interfered with the enemy scouting), we could perhaps have slipped through unnoticed. Of course we might have been attacked, but, even so, the upshot could not have been worse. What, then, was the admiral aiming at? He wanted the sea-fight to take place on May 14th, the anniversary of the tsar's coronation.

But on May 13th, as before, Rozhstvensky showed a criminal disregard for the importance of reconnaissances. Many of us were astonished at his indifference, his almost incredible unconcern as to the doings and movements of the enemy. Why, in that case, had we brought with us a number of light, swift cruisers, whose chief business was scouting, since they could play little part as fighting units in a combat between armoured vessels with much heavier guns?

The night of May 13th-14th was dark and foggy, so that only a few stars peeped through at intervals. The sea was covered with a thick haze, and there was very little wind.

Now that we were so close to the waters in which the enemy scouts were likely to be awaiting us, we extinguished our lights. Our ships advanced silently through the murk, predestined to sink in these remote waters the inflated glories of the Russian empire and the last hopes of the Manchurian army.

We had journeyed more than eighteen thousand miles, and were only three days' steaming from Vladivostock. Yet we had never been farther, in reality, from that harbour of refuge. To reach Russian territory, we had to go through the Valley of the Shadow, to traverse the terrible Strait of Tsushima.

BOOK TWO
THE NAVAL ENGAGEMENT

CHAPTER ONE
THE FIRST BLOW

(The Battle as seen from the "Oryol")

I

MAY 14, 1905. On the "Oryol," two bells struck. As the sound died away, our ears were assailed by the familiar strains of the reveille. The bugler, on the upper deck, had put the highly polished instrument to his lips, and the brass gleamed in the morning light. His cheeks puffed out, his eyes sparkling, he emitted the melodious signal. Thereupon followed the boatswain's whistle.

"Turn out! Roll up your hammocks!"

"Quick about it! Lively there! Tumble up, men!"

The sleepy bluejackets turned out quicker than usual, for, on this anxious night, few of them had troubled to sling their hammocks, preferring to curl up in any available corner. They scuttled off to the lavatories to sluice hands and faces. The forenoon passed much as usual: breakfast, swabbing decks, the customary round.

A wind was freshening from the south-west. Grey mist hung ominously over the rollers. Slowly the sun rose, dark-red, huge, as if swollen by the effort.

The squadron steamed at nine knots, towards the Strait of Tsushima. Just after 5 a.m., our look-out men and Midshipman Shcherbacheff perceived through their binoculars and telescopes a ship rapidly approaching from the starboard. Arrived at a distance of about forty cable lengths, she kept a course parallel with ours. A few minutes later, having starboarded her helm, and steaming at not less than sixteen knots, she vanished in a bank of fog. We could not make out her flag, but her behaviour led us to suppose that she must be a Japanese scout. The proper course would have been to send two swift cruisers in pursuit. They might not have been able to sink her, but could at least have thrown light on the extremely important question, whether the enemy had discovered our fleet or was still unaware of our arrival. That would have determined our plan of action. Admiral Rozhdestvensky, however, took no measures to solve the enigma.

We subsequently learned that the vessel in question was the Japanese auxiliary cruiser "Sinano Maru," which had been dispatched during the night to reconnoitre. Before dawn she encountered one of our hospital ships, which was brightly lit. Very soon after this the Japanese sighted the whole squadron. The commander of the aforesaid auxiliary cruiser, Narikava by name, wirelessly to Admiral Togo: "The enemy is in square 203, and is evidently making for the eastern channel."

Towards 7 o'clock, another boat, her two funnels streaming smoke, hove in sight. As soon as she arrived within fifty cable lengths we recognised her to be the light cruiser "Idzumo." For an hour she steamed parallel with our fleet. She had an excellent reason for keeping within range. This became plain to our wireless operators, for their instruments registered incomprehensible messages—obviously cipher dispatches to Admiral Togo, acquainting him with our position, speed, course, and formation. Admiral Rozhstvensky signalled orders to train the starboard and stern guns of our starboard column on the "Idzumo." A mere demonstration, for no shots were fired, and our swift cruisers were not brought into action.

Between decks, we discussed the matter.

"Why is the Old Man messing about like this, instead of ordering us to open fire on the Japanese?"

"Yes, she's only a little cruiser, not much bigger than a fishing-smack."

"What are you talking about? If we were to open fire, the others would take alarm and hook it. There would be no one left to fight with, and none of us would get any kudos, medals, and all that."

The squadron continued on the same course. I fell in with Engineer Vasilieff, who was walking on the upper deck with the aid of crutches. No one was within hearing. He said:

"We have not been able to slip past the Japanese without being discovered. We'll soon be at grips. But what the deuce will happen to our transports? I don't think it's too late for them to make for some neutral port. They ought to get to Shanghai easily enough. The first thing is to drive off that Japanese cruiser. Then the transports can head for the open, under cover of the fog. We should gain three things. The transports would escape; our cruisers, freed from convoy duty, could take an active part in the coming naval engagement; and the speed of the squadron could be increased from nine to twelve knots."

"Evidently Rozhestvensky believes in his star, thinks he will win the battle," I put in.

"So idiotic a belief, incompatible with facts and figures, might be expected in one of our Russian priests, but surely not in an admiral?"

"You're annoyed with the Old Man because of his blunders. Still, you have said often enough that the worse we come off in the war, the better our chances of a successful revolution at home. Haven't you?"

Vasilieff knitted his black brows, and looked at me gloomily.

"True enough," he replied; "and I've no thought of eating my words. If the Japanese make an end of the second squadron, which is the empire's last hope, that will advance our cause far better than bombing a minister of State or some distinguished nobleman. Defeat in this war will mean the collapse of the whole governmental system. The very men who wield authority have ceased to believe in themselves. They are faced by the overwhelming strength of the infuriated masses. All the same, our rulers will never climb down. They'll sit tight until the revolution kicks them out. Still, I cannot think without horror of the sinking of our ships, with the loss of life this will entail. I'm torn two ways. . . ."

Up the officers' companion, near which we were standing, came Midshipman Vorobeichik, a chubby-faced youth.

"Yes, the Japanese will presumably attack in force," said Vasilieff, making for the after-bridge, while his crutches tapped angrily on the deck.

By the admiral's orders, the scouting detachment was now transferred to the rear, with the result that the "Svetlana" followed in the wake of the transports, and behind her, still in wedge formation, the "Ural" and the "Almaz." The cruisers "Zhemchug" and "Izumrud," which had been steaming on either side of our main lines, were advanced somewhat. The hospital ships remained as they were.

This day being (as aforesaid) the anniversary of the coronation of the tsar and tsarina, at 8 o'clock in the morning the St. Andrew's flag (which is also the Russian war-flag) was hoisted on the stern flagstaff and on both masts.

The ship's company was unusually cheerful and talkative. Some, in quiet corners, were playing draughts; others were reading. One group was discussing whether a man could possibly eat fifteen pounds of rye bread at a sitting. It seemed incredible that they were all

about to take part in a sea-fight wherein many of them were fated to die. There was, perhaps, a touch of bravado in their flaunting such indifference to danger.

The only way of explaining this attitude is to suppose that they were sick of the voyage. For nearly eight months they had been cruising in unknown waters, with scant spells of shore leave; they had been worked to the limit of human endurance, wretchedly fed, and had suffered severely from the tropical heat.

Furthermore, ever since our departure from Libau, we had lived in unceasing dread of a Japanese attack. Panic became intensified after we passed Madagascar, and grew still worse when we left Annam. We spent night after night expecting a torpedo raid. These troubles were over, and the end was close at hand: for some, a watery grave; for others, a return to their native land—since who could doubt that part of the squadron would reach Vladivostock?

At 10 o'clock, four enemy warships appeared on the port bow; at a distance of about sixty cable lengths. One of them had two funnels, the others, one funnel each. The officers on the fore-bridge, after prolonged and careful examination, were able to identify them as the "Hashidate," the "Matsushima," the "Itsukushima," and the "Chin-Yen" (the two-funnelled boat). They were battleships of the second grade; out of date, slow, of a displacement ranging from four to seven thousand tons.

The signal "action stations" was issued from the "Suvoroff." Many of us supposed that the swiftest battleships of the second division, accompanied by our most powerful cruisers, such as the "Oleg" and the "Aurora," would instantly engage the Japanese. The four hostile ships would have been sunk before reinforcements arrived. But Admiral Rozhstvensky, for reasons best known to himself, missed his chance. The enemy craft quietly steamed away until they were lost to sight.

Their places were speedily taken by four light cruisers: the "Chitoze," the "Kasagi," the "Niitaka," and the "Tsushima." No further doubt was possible. The decisive moment was at hand. Our enemies drew nearer. The four cruisers, as vanguard of the main force, were steering in the same direction as ourselves, but on a converging course. Their business was to keep the Japanese admiral informed, and our own chief did nothing to prevent this.

The auxiliary cruiser "Ural" was equipped with a powerful wireless plant able to transmit messages over a distance of seven hundred

miles, and competent to block the Japanese wireless. Why was this not done? When the "Ural" signalled the flagship for permission, Rozhestvensky replied:

"Do not interfere with Japanese messages."

Such disdain for the enemy could only have been justified by sublime confidence in the superiority of the Russian forces. Not one of us underlings shared this cocksureness. What can explain the succession of blunders made by our admiral? Was he a traitor? No. His record as a patriot, and even as a jingo, was unblemished. Blinded by pride, he was unable to appreciate the situation, or to deal with it intelligently. How dared the commander of an auxiliary cruiser presume to advise Rozhestvensky, chief of the Russian fleet, as to the best course of action?

One thought engrossed the admiral's mind—to show servile devotion to his imperial master. The enemy forces were gathering on the horizon, but Rozhestvensky refused to forget that this day, May 14th, was the commemorative festival of the tsar's coronation. The squadron must be reminded of the fact by the hoisting of the appropriate flags.

On the "Oryol," bugles sounded, and the petty officers shouted:
"Thanksgiving service!"

"All hands to sing the thanksgiving service!"

We took our places on the main deck, where the chaplain, Father Paisy, in full canonicals, was already standing in front of the icons. His red, unkempt beard was as tangled as a hayfield that has been trampled by a herd of cattle. His lustreless grey eyes and his crumpled countenance expressed bewilderment. He gabbled the prayers unceremoniously, his thoughts obviously elsewhere. The men's faces were sour, and rigid as in a cataleptic trance. The members of the congregation crossed themselves jerkily, as if flapping away flies. To wind up, they raucously sang *Long live the Tsar*, and dispersed, muttering unseemly protests.

While this was going on, the squadron assumed a new formation. The first and second divisions of armoured cruisers, going ahead at full speed, took the lead of the port column of battleships. The transports remained in the rear of the starboard column, protected by cruisers which were covered by five torpedo boats of the second division. The "Vladimir Monomakh" was posted to starboard of the transports in order to shield them from the "Idzumo." The light cruisers "Zhemchug" and "Izumrud" were also sent to starboard,

accompanied by four torpedo-boats of the first division. This force kept close to the line of our most modern armoured cruisers. Thus our convoy formation was altered to a battle formation.

But for two hours now we had been steaming ahead in the first formation, exposed to the scrutiny of many enemy scouts. For our part, we had no idea where the main force of the Japanese might be—how near, or how far. At any moment they could have popped out of the mist, which was reducing visibility to five or six miles. The battle of Port Arthur had shown that the Japanese guns were effective at this range. What could we have done in the event of an attack? We should have had to change, while under fire, from convoy formation into battle formation. Experience showed that such a change needed an hour at least. After sighting us, the enemy could, in about twenty minutes, have steamed near enough to hit without fail. In such circumstances, our squadron would have been destroyed in double-quick time.

The four enemy cruisers continued their course on our port beam in full sight, at a distance of about forty cable lengths, and our guns were trained on them all the time. We were still wondering why the admiral did not give the order to fire. Suddenly one of the 6-inch guns in the middle port turret of the "Oryol" went off as if by accident. It gave us a start. The shell hurtled through the air and struck the water close to the bow of the second Japanese cruiser. Our other boats, taking this as a signal, opened fire. The Japanese guns answered. The shells directed at us behaved in a way that surprised us. They burst on striking the water, producing fountains of spray accompanied by volumes of black smoke. Evidently these were a new kind of shell to be used as sighting shots and range-finders. However, the Japanese, not being present in sufficient force, quickly turned tail. The bombardment lasted about ten minutes without a hit being registered on either side.

The "Suvoroff" hoisted the signal:

"Don't waste shells."

On the "Oryol" many of the complement were mightily puffed up, regarding this skirmish as a remarkable victory. First Boatswain Saem, who was standing on the upper deck, sniggered as he said:

"We've shown these Japs that they've something more formidable to deal with than the Port Arthur squadron!"

Midshipman Vorobeichik nodded his head approvingly, and remarked:

"It'll be all right if we don't strike a mine. As far as artillery goes, we can give them a good drubbing."

Second Boatswain Voevodin ventured to put in a demurrer:

"One can hardly suppose that they have mines all over the place, and moored in such deep water. As for artillery, Sir, you must admit they know how to shoot."

Midshipman Vorobeichik was annoyed.

"Boatswain, you are letting your tongue wag too freely."

Voevodin pursed his lips, and maintained a respectful silence.

The "Suvoroff" now signalled:

"Ship's companies to dine, by watches."

A tot of rum having been served out, we dined at our posts, in accordance with war-time regulations. The ship's company was then allowed to take a rest.

"Just as well to have a nap," said Petty Officer Murzin, making for a comfortable corner.

"For my part, I shall finish reading Gorky's *Petty Bourgeois*," announced Electrician Kozyreff, betaking himself to the mizen-top.

I went up to the bridge to look for the enemy cruisers. The "Idzumo" was discernible to starboard, while on the port beam four of the Japanese ships were faintly visible, but so far away that their outlines were indistinct. We were still steaming on a course N. 50° E., directing ourselves towards the straits to the west of which is the island of Tsushima and to the east Kiushiu, the southernmost of the three chief islands of Japan. Soon Admiral Togo's fleet might be expected to appear. Unquestionably, made acquainted with our movements by wireless, he must be concentrating his forces in the Strait of Tsushima. That being so, why was not our commander sending some of his swiftest craft to attack the enemy within sight? The Japanese were so greatly outnumbered that they would have to make a bolt for it. Thereupon our squadron, freed from anxiety about the transports, could veer to port into the western passage of Korea Strait. This manœuvre would have been favoured by the mist. No doubt the enemy would pursue us, but before they could overhaul us and attack we should have made our way far into the wide waters of the Sea of Japan. What ought our swift cruisers to have done? Retreating as soon as the Japanese scouting cruisers had been reinforced, they could either have taken the same course as the main squadron, or else, rounding Kiushiu into the Pacific, have eventually reached Vladivostock by a more northerly route. It is likely enough

that this scheme would have been futile, but I feel certain that the Russian admiral committed a fatal blunder in remaining passive.

Vasya Drozd came up to me and said:

“Last night, I did not sleep a wink.”

During the cruise he had lost flesh. His long, scraggy legs seemed to be thinner than ever, so that he looked as if he were mounted on stilts. His face was pale, his bloodshot eyes were restless.

“Were you afraid of a torpedo-attack?” I asked.

“Oh no. There was something else in my mind. I had got hold of a sheet of newspaper without either beginning or end. The fragment contained a long article on self-culture. An interesting article. The writer said one must know what to read and how to read. Then, by devoting three hours a day to study, one would get on finely. You know how useful that would be. Keep it up for three years, and you would find yourself among those who are really well-educated. Do you believe it?”

“More or less.”

“Every day I mean to allot three hours to this purpose.”

Vasya Drozd smiled, and pensively added:

“Ah, if only I were in prison, in solitary confinement! There, it is said, political prisoners are not given hard labour, and can read as many books as they like. One would get on twice as fast as outside. And when one had served one’s time, one could do something big. . . . Next autumn I shall pass into the reserve.”

“If you’re alive next autumn. Look, there they come,” I said, pointing to the Japanese cruisers.

“I have already thought about that, and have even composed a song on the subject. It would go to the tune of *The Hussars*. But I have ideas for a special tune. Here are some of the words:

‘Beyond the turrets, blue is the sky . . .
 What can await me in that far land?
 The heart within me grows numb, and I
 Tremble for my young life.

Those distant waters may be my grave . . .
 They may enfold me in their dark depths,
 In a sleep whence there is no awakening . . .

Thus will come peace to our futile griefs . . .
 We are but victims foredoomed by fate . . .’

If I went on with the thing I should inevitably come to the revolution—and that's all up in the air. Still, I mean to finish my song in one fashion or another, when we're through our troubles: rewrite it in fact."

Eight bells struck. Noon. When the watch was changed, the officers in command went into the conning-tower. We were now abreast of the southernmost point of the island of Tsushima. Under orders signalled by the flagship, the squadron altered its course to N. 23° E., heading for Vladivostock. From the stern bridge some of us gloomily surveyed the squadron, which was so long drawn out that the rear boats were hardly discernible through the mist. Who could have believed that so great a force was about to be annihilated?

II

For a time the mist thickened, so that we could no longer see the Japanese cruisers. Taking advantage of this cover, the admiral ordered a change in the formation of our line-of-battle ships. Why did he do this? The reason has never been disclosed. I must, however, dwell upon the manœuvre, in order to explain why its consequences were so disastrous to us when at length we came to grips with the main forces of the enemy.

The signals from the flagship were to the effect that the first and second divisions of ironclads were to increase their speed to eleven knots, and then starboard in succession eight points. The flagship was the first to starboard her helm, this rectangular change of course being followed by the "Alexander," the "Borodino," and the "Oryol." In other words, all these vessels made a half-right turn. Just as they had done so, the Japanese cruisers re-emerged from the fog. To hide his plans from the enemy, Rozhestvensky now cancelled his order as far as the second division was concerned, leaving these ships to advance in line as before. Many of our officers expected that the admiral would order our four best ironclads to the front forthwith, as a "shock force." He did not do so. When they were steaming away from the other line at right angles to it, the "Suvoroff" signalled:

"Battleships of the first division to port in succession eight points."

Confusion resulted. The "Alexander" ported in the wake of the flagship, but the "Borodino," misunderstanding the signal, ported

simultaneously with the "Suvoroff." Perplexed by this, the "Oryol" hesitated awhile.

Tempers were frayed. Captain Yung, who was in command, shouted to the senior navigating lieutenant.

"You're wrong. The signal was 'Port all at the same time.'"

Lieutenant Satkevich, a careful and competent officer, answered without hesitation:

"Impossible, Sir. I myself read the signal, in conjunction with Senior Signalman Zefiroff."

The captain, still dubious, said testily:

"Lieutenant Slavinsky, please verify the matter."

Slavinsky, usually so deliberate, was quicker than customary in his movements as he examined the signal-book and reported:

"No mistake, Sir. The signal was 'Port successively.' The 'Borodino' must have misread the order."

The officer of the watch, Midshipman Shcherbacheff, concurred.

Captain Yung was reassured when the "Borodino" at length, porting her helm, fell into the wake of the "Alexander."

Now the battleships of the first division were once more in line. This column was slightly in advance as well as to starboard of the second and third divisions. Again the squadron advanced northward in two columns, the eastern one led by the "Suvoroff" and the western by the "Oslyabya." The distance between the lines was about thirteen cable lengths.

At one-thirty p.m., on the "Oryol," when many of the company were asleep, the order was issued:

"Tumble up, men, for tea-parade."

The tea for the company was prepared in huge samovars of shining copper. The men, mugs in hand, ran to get their allowance, but they were not given time to drink it. Within five minutes, the main force of the enemy hove in sight on the starboard bow. The number of Japanese vessels quickly increased. They advanced in column, barring our passage.

It was all up with us! They could outpace our ships, so there was no sense in trying to escape by flight. In this matter, a sea-fight differs fundamentally from a combat on land. In the latter case, soldiers can shelter in valleys, on mountain-sides, in forests. At sea there is no cover; everything is exposed to view on the surface of the unstable waters. On land, the commander-in-chief is not present at the seat of action, but guides operations from afar in accordance with

reports sent him by subordinates. At sea, the admiral witnesses each manoeuvre and shares in all the perils. The enemy shells, fired at a floating platform, pay no heed to the rank of those who may be destroyed. Nay more, the flagship is a choice target. When a warship founders, without there being time for the men to take to the boats, each individual's chance of survival depends upon his personal skill, his bodily strength, and his prowess as a swimmer—so that a young bluejacket is more likely to keep his head above water than a middle-aged captain or an elderly admiral.

For a moment the sun pierced the clouds and lit up the watery waste. The enemy fleet drew nearer. Our officers tried to make out which ships they were. A lieutenant, pointing, exclaimed with astonishment:

"Hullo, there's the battleship 'Mikaza'!"

"Nonsense! The 'Mikaza' was reported sunk ages ago."

"Well, if she's the 'Makaza,' she's suffered a resurrection!"

In actual fact, it was the "Mikaza," under the flag of Admiral Togo, which was leading the Japanese line, followed by the battleships "Shikishima," "Fuji," and "Asahi," and by the armoured cruisers "Idzumo" (Admiral Kamimura's flagship), "Yakumo," "Asama," "Adzuma," "Tokiva," and "Ivate." A small group of sailors had collected in the bows, and these men were gloomily scrutinising the enemy vessels. Some of our lads, in conformity with ancient tradition, had had a bath and put on a clean rig-out as if for a naval review, so as to make a decent appearance before the seat of the Almighty. Contrasting with them was Stoker Baklanoff in greasy overalls.

The chaplain, Father Paisy, in his vestments, holding a cross in one hand and a holy-water sprinkler in the other, hastened to the upper deck, accompanied by a bluejacket carrying the holy-water stoup and functioning as acolyte. At each turret they halted, for the chaplain to besprinkle it, to murmur a prayer, and bless the muzzles of the guns with the cross.

Stoker Baklanoff, catching sight of the padre, said:

"Look, boys, at what His Reverence is up to. To my way of thinking, that mummerly won't help in our present fix. Soon we shall all be at the bottom of the sea, and a merciful God will look on without batting an eyelash while we become food for the fishes."

Some dissentient voices made themselves heard:

"Shut up, you blasphemous beast."

"The only way to keep him quiet is to stuff his maw with cotton-waste!"

"Action stations" was once more signalled. The men hurried to obey, and thereafter dead silence prevailed. It seemed as if the "Oryol" were in a state of suspended animation. To guard against fire, the hoses were playing jets of sparkling water on the bridge. The reservoirs had been filled in the course of the morning.

I was ordered to act as assistant in the sick-bay. When I went to my post on the starboard side of the lower deck near the companion ladder, I found our two surgeons with their trained assistants already installed there; also Engineer Vasilieff, who was not yet fit for combatant service. Chaplain Paisy was on hand too, no longer wearing his cope.

The sick-bay, which had white enamelled walls, was fairly spacious. Whenever the order "action stations" was issued, I had to report for duty there. While we were passing through the tropics, the heat had been insupportable, for it was just over the engine-room, and the temperature sometimes rose to 165° F. Now that we were in the temperate zone, this inconvenience was no longer noticeable. The sick-bay, however, had another grave defect. It could only be reached from the battery deck by a very narrow ladder, most unsuitable for the transport of wounded men. Still, it was well protected.

Throughout the voyage, the surgical staff, under the direction of Chief-Surgeon Makaroff, had been at work upon the preparation of dressings. Fifteen hundred first-aid packets had been put together for individual use, each containing sterilised gauze, a piece of oil-silk, and a bandage; the whole wrapped in oil-paper and enclosed in a cardboard box. These boxes, sealed, and stamped with the Red Cross, were kept in store on each of the bridges, in the conning-tower, in the turrets, in the casemates, and in various other places. The men had been taught how to use them. Fifty stretchers, made of canvas on a bamboo framework, were ready to transport the wounded. At the forward end of each stretcher, a canvas pocket had been stitched, sufficiently large to hold a man's feet, so that the sufferer should not slip off the stretcher when being carried down to the sick-bay. The stretcher-bearers were posted in different parts of the ship, and some remained in the sick-bay, to be dispatched wherever needed at the orders of the chief-surgeon.

Beside the sick-bay, near the workshops, were the headquarters of

the fire-fighting staff, under the command of Midshipman Karpoff and Mechanical Engineer Rums. The last-named remained on duty to receive captain's orders should fire break out. Not only were these men to extinguish fires, but, when possible, to plug leaks.

Eager to know what was going on in the open, I slipped out of the sick-bay without asking leave, and climbed to the upper deck.

The enemy fleet was approaching from starboard and from port. Behind some larger units, I saw the scouting cruisers we had had a brush with in the morning. I could not but admire the regular formation of the Japanese, whose vessels were all moving forward as parts of a single mechanism. They were not steaming faster than fifteen or sixteen knots, but the oncoming of these monsters gave an impression of extreme swiftness. Painted olive-grey, they harmonised with the colour of the waves, whereas our vessels, black with yellow funnels, were conspicuous targets.

Admiral Rozhestvensky had ample cause for regretting his blunder of half an hour ago, when he detached four of his best ironclads to constitute an independent line far away to starboard. To re-establish a single starboard fighting line, these vessels would have to move thirteen cable lengths to port. At 1.40 p.m. the "Suvoroff" ported 45°, followed in serial order by the three other cruisers of the first detachment. But this manœuvre, performed under the eyes of an enemy which was in fighting trim close at hand, threw our whole squadron into confusion.

The ironclads of the first division, which had thus to move diagonally in order to head the line once more, increased their speed by two knots. This acceleration did not suffice to bring the four of them in advance of the starboard column, which continued on its course. Only the "Suvoroff" and the "Alexander III" took their proper places at the head of the line. As soon as they had done so, they resumed a course N. 23° E., regardless of the evolutions of the "Borodino" and the "Oryol." These latter, to avoid collision, had to reduce speed to nine knots. General confusion ensued. The second and third divisions, not having been notified by the flagship that they must slow down, continued to advance without slackening pace. Thus it was for the moment impossible for the "Borodino" and the "Oryol" to take their places in the line. At length, to give them a chance and to avoid ramming the "Oryol," the "Oslyabya" slowed down, and then stopped her engines altogether, hoisting a signal to show that she had done so. What were those in the rear of the column

to do? They had to slow down and put over their helms, some to starboard and some to port. The disorderly rout of ships formed a magnificent target for the Japanese.

At this moment the enemy flagship, which led the Japanese fleet, was approaching the bows of the "Oryol," and was not more than forty cable lengths away. Some of our officers believed that the enemy intended to defile along our flank and attack the squadron in the rear. Suddenly, however, the "Mikaza" put about, to adopt the same course as our flagship. The others followed suit. The movement was effected with amazing precision, but was extremely hazardous, since for a time the ships were in double line, close together, and masked one another.

It seemed as if fortune smiled on our admiral, enabling him to retrieve some of his errors. We had a handy target of ships, many of which would be unable to reply; and target-practice had shown that our fire was untrustworthy at a longer range. At first, indeed, the leading enemy ships were thirty-two cable lengths away, and this was too far. But the reversal of direction on the part of the Japanese occupied a quarter of an hour and brought them much closer. If the four best ironclads comprising our first division had seized their chance, a good many of their shells would probably have hit the mark. In that case, Admiral Togo's situation would have been extremely critical. Having begun his manœuvre, he would have had to continue it to the end, while many of his best units would have had their fire blocked by those which had already put about. On the other hand, our four first-class ironclads could have delivered a devastating fire from forty 6-inch guns and sixteen 12-inch guns. In a word, had we risked the venture, we might, with comparatively little loss, have fought our way through into the Sea of Japan.

But fate decided otherwise. Rozhstvensky, not being of the stuff of which heroes are made, could not grasp his opportunity. He remained passive, and the squadron continued on its course without firing a shot while Togo was effecting the before-mentioned evolution.

III

I returned to the sick-bay. At length was heard the thunder of heavy ordnance, and the sharper crackle of 75-mm. guns. The whole ironclad shook as shells were discharged at the enemy. In the sick-bay, however, all was quiet.

The glow-lamps burned steadily. Surgeons and assistants, wearing white overalls, were as solemn as on parade, while awaiting the victims. Close to the door, Engineer Vasilieff sat on a stool, his splinted leg stretched out stiff and straight, and his crutches ready to hand. His eyes were fixed on Chaplain Paisy, as if admiring the padre's stole trimmed with gold braid and embroidered with flowers, and taking fresh note of the red beard which framed His Reverence's pallid visage. Chief Commissary Dobrovolsky was standing with a nonchalant air, his hands clasped behind his back, and his puffy face showing neither fear nor astonishment. Avroroff, the assistant-surgeon, a small fellow with a blond beard, somewhat pot-bellied, seemed plunged in thought. Perhaps his mind had turned towards his nearest and dearest at home. Close by him stood Chief-Surgeon Makaroff, tall, lean, and with a strangely lustreless countenance. Although everything had been made ready long ere this, he continued to scrutinise his little kingdom and make sure that all was in order: the cupboards with glass walls and glass shelves, pots of many sorts and sizes, bottles containing various drugs and lotions, nickel boxes filled with sterilised dressings, a full assortment of surgical instruments. Everything was in place: morphine, camphor, ether, valerian, sal-volatile, ointment for burns, sodium bicarbonate solution, iodoform, chloroform, silk-threaded suture needles in carbolic solution, shaving brushes, hot water, basins, soap and nailbrushes, enamelled pails. The outfit reminded me of goods exposed for sale and no customers to buy them. We were silent, but all, whatever we looked like, stood rigid with attention. From moment to moment something terrible might happen—yet nothing happened. The white walls glistened beneath the electric light; the operating table, covered with white linen, was as immaculate as ever. Contemplating it, I wondered whose body would be the first to writhe upon it in agony, and upon whom the polished steel instruments would first be used.

The ventilating fans, turning incessantly, made a buzz like that of a huge bumble-bee.

Suddenly we were aware that two shells had struck the "Oryol" in quick succession. We stared at one another, expectantly. But no wounded men were brought to the sick-bay. What could this mean? I did not feel afraid, and detected no signs of fear in my companions. We smiled at one another, and talked of indifferent matters. It was hard to believe that the dreaded sea-fight had begun. One might have thought that nothing more serious than target-practice was

going on. We were almost pleased when the first casualty case came for relief. It was Voronin, the cook, who had been stationed at the companion-ladder leading down from the admiral's cabin, charged with the duty of assisting in the transport of the injured.

"Well, what's the matter, my lad?" asked the chief-surgeon amiably.

The cook, watching Makaroff's lips, guessed what was being said, and answered:

"I'm stone-deaf, Sir. A shell burst close to me and blew me right across the deck. I thought I was done for, but found myself alive—only that I can hear nothing. Wounds? That's all, Sir."

We flocked round him as he raised a finger to show where a tiny piece of skin had been grazed off. So trifling an injury seemed disproportionate to the thunder of the cannonade—though the deafness was real enough. The incident revived our confidence. The Japanese were not such terrible fellows after all! Our ship was stoutly armoured, and would never sink, with its nine hundred men, to the bottom.

Soon, however, the wounded began to arrive in considerable numbers, some unaided, others on stretchers. Most of them were officers, quartermasters, gunners, look-out men, signalmen, range-finders—in a word, those whose duties kept them in exposed positions on the upper deck. A series of well-known faces passed before my eyes. One of the wounded was Sidoroff, with shell-splinters in the back and the right leg, and with briskly bleeding wounds in the shoulder and the sole of the foot. One of the first of the officers to appear was Midshipman Tumanoff, who had been in command of the port battery of 75-mm. guns. A shell-splinter had torn his back open. He gave us news:

"Gun no. 6 has been smashed. The two gunners serving the piece were killed outright. I have handed over the command of the battery to Midshipman Sakellari. He is wounded, too, but able to carry on."

"What's the general outlook?" enquired the chief-surgeon.

Midshipman Tumanoff made a gesture of despair, and answered only with a groan.

Kutsenko, the look-out man, turned up with an expression on his face as if he were about to sneeze—the bridge of his nose had been broken. Bluejacket Karnizoff, while showing the surgeon a lacerated groin, shook a bleeding head which looked as if it had been clawed by a bear. Quartermaster Volkoff had a broken collar-bone, so that

the shoulder on that side drooped, and the arm was useless. Range-finder Zakhvatkin, crumpling up with despair, covered his face with his hands. One of his eyes had been destroyed; the other, wounded. Gunner Tolbennikoff, with severe burns on head, shoulders, and arms, shifted restlessly from one foot to the other. Now the injured were coming or being brought in thick and fast: men with bellies torn open, bones broken, skulls fractured. Some were so badly burned as to be unrecognisable; they shivered pitifully, moaning:

“I’m so cold, so bitterly cold.”

When first aid had been given, and the dressings applied, the sufferers were placed side by side on mattresses upon the floor of the sick-bay.

As always happens, some of the wounded were courageous to a fault, whilst others lacked spirit. The former, though grievously injured, wanted to return to duty as soon as their hurts had been dressed; others, with trifling scratches, were eager to remain in the sick-bay, and, when ordered out, tried to conceal themselves in some inconspicuous corner.

I have previously referred to certain contrasts between land warfare and marine; these contrasts apply no less to the treatment of the wounded. At sea there can be no immediate possibility of sending a wounded man out of the line of fire; a casualty case is compelled to remain on board till the ship reaches port—or goes to the bottom. As long as an ironclad is in steering trim, she must keep in the line of battle, and avoid endangering the other units of the fleet by leaving this line in order to transfer her worst casualties to the hospital ship. Nor can the hospital ship venture into the region where the fight rages. Thus the wounded and the surgical staff continue to share the full risks of the engagement. The difference extends to the character of the wounds. In a sea-fight the surgeons have not to deal with rifle-shot injuries, bayonet thrusts, or sword wounds, nor with contusions made by the iron-shod hoofs of horses; but only with the effects of bursting shells, which produce very serious lacerations or burns. In a land action the surgical staff, even when in the fighting line, has less serious difficulties to contend with. They, at least, work on solid ground. When a ship heels over, on the other hand, this may, for all that those in the sick-bay can tell, be a prelude to sinking.

These unfavourable conditions notwithstanding, our two surgeons did their work with incomparable energy. The minor injuries were

dealt with by the assistants who had been trained in first-aid work. Those seriously wounded were referred forthwith to Makaroff, who, at a glance, would sometimes say:

“The operating table.”

A sea-fight is not, as a rule, a lengthy business. Since it is often dangerous to do operations amid the accompanying turmoil, first-aid is preferred whenever possible, and serious intervention is deferred till the issue has been decided one way or the other. On the present occasion, the injured were arriving in such numbers that Makaroff and Avroroff had no time for detailed examination. They could merely tie spouting arteries, detect major fractures, and do what the emergency required. From moment to moment, Makaroff would order:

“Plug the wound with sterilized gauze.”

“Splint that arm.”

“Give a double dose of morphine.”

The trained assistants ran from patient to patient, applying the necessary dressings. My task was to keep the surgeons supplied, to change the soiled linen on the operating-table, to remove (often by cutting) the injured man's clothing and boots, and to give a sip of water. Our ironclad was continually shaken by her own guns and by the explosion of enemy shells. At such moments the surgeon's bistoury would cut too deep, or the scissors he was wielding would divide healthy tissue instead of clearing away dead flesh.

Chaplain Paisy listened to the confessions of the seriously wounded, who were placed on mattresses as soon as their injuries were dressed; then he administered the last sacrament. Kneeling beside them, he said gently.

“Confess your sins.”

If the man was unconscious, the priest covered him with the stole, and gave absolution; then, with trembling fingers, he parted the sufferer's lips, and, with a spoon, forced a portion of the Host into the mouth of the dying.

A poor fellow with a broken neck was writhing in the death-agony.

“The last sacrament is administered to . . .”

Paisy stopped to ask:

“What is his name?”

One of the sick-bay assistants answered:

“Kostyleff, Father; but I don't know his Christian name.”

Another put in:

"He's an electrician, Father. Call him simply, 'Electrician Kostyleff.' They'll know all right up aloft."

The padre looked puzzled for a moment, but then went on as instructed:

"The last sacrament is administered to Electrician Kostyleff."

The wounded and the stretcher-bearers arriving from all parts of the ship kept us informed as to what was going on. Their news was discouraging. Fires had burst out on the "Suvoroff," the "Alexander III," and the "Oslyabya." Our "Oryol" was seriously battered.

A man was put on the operating table. His left knee had been so frightfully crushed that the leg remained attached to the thigh by no more than some tendons. Before being picked up by the stretcher-bearers, he had dragged himself half way across the deck from the casemate where he was struck down, leaving a trail of blood behind him. Now he lay pale as death, practically unconscious. We cut away his trousers as far as the groin. Makaroff, having divided the remaining tendons, said to me:

"Novikoff, take that away."

I removed from the operating-table the boot containing the gory remnants of a leg, and, not knowing what else to do with this fragment of a human being, continued to hold it in my hands as I watched the operation. The stump was swabbed with iodine. The surgeon turned his sleeves back to the elbows and picked up his amputating-knife. I saw him cut flesh and fat as he dissected away flaps large enough to cover what would be left of the thigh-bone. Some fragments of bone were removed, and then I heard the grating of the saw. The flaps were turned in over the thigh-bone, and the surgeon began to stitch them together. I was still holding the boot with the severed leg, being in a cold sweat, and feeling sick and faint. Chief-Surgeon Makaroff, who went on with his work, never noticing that his forehead was flecked with blood from spouting arteries, or that drops of perspiration were running down his chestnut beard, glanced at me and said angrily:

"Why are you still holding that boot?"

"Don't know what to do with it, Sir," I replied automatically.

"Throw it under the table."

I did what I was told, but to my disordered senses the falling leg and boot made no more noise than if they had been a down cushion.

At this moment Range-Finder Selinoff rushed in, and screwed

up his eyes, for he was almost blinded by the glare of the electric light.

"The 'Oslyabya' has turned turtle," he shouted.

Our heavy guns were still firing, and the "Oryol" was shaken by the repeated discharges. No one said a word, even the groans of the wounded were stilled. All eyes were fixed on the man who had brought the terrible news. His lips trembled.

"What in thunder are you talking about?" asked Makaroff uneasily. "Turned turtle? I don't understand."

"She's keel uppermost, Your Honour."

"Absurd, can't be true," insisted the chief-surgeon.

"Saw it with my own eyes, Sir. First she was on fire, then listed, and finally rolled bottom upwards."

Some stretcher-bearers bringing in a wounded man confirmed the tidings.

"Not only that," they said; "she's sunk now."

The wounded began groaning once more, and not only for their own pains. One of them burst out sobbing. The chaplain looked upward, and crossed himself. Makaroff stroked his beard with a blood-stained hand, and resumed work.

Feeling that I was about to faint, and without being fully conscious of what I was doing, I stumbled to the upper deck.

IV

The fight went on along two parallel lines. The enemy force consisted of four ironclads and eight armoured cruisers. The two swift dispatch-boats, "Tatsuta" and "Chihaya," had no effective value as fighting units. They steamed on the port side of the column; the "Tatsuta" on a level with the "Mikaza," and the "Chihaya" on a level with the "Idzumo." We had twelve ironclads. The adversary lines were separated by about thirty cable lengths.

Streamers of mist drifted across the waters, broken up from time to time by flurries, to disclose against a grey background the harsh outlines of the enemy craft. These followed one another in Indian file, looking like fantastic monsters, which furiously belched lightning-flashes in our direction. Our ironclads responded in kind. The fate of two opposing empires depended upon the outcome of this naval engagement. Behind us, farther to starboard, the cruisers were pounding one another. The big guns were making such a din

that the heavens resounded like an iron dome struck by titans' hammers. Hundreds of shells, unseen, but making a wind which could be felt, hurtled through the air in intersecting trajectories. A hail of metal was falling upon our ships, especially the foremost ones. The Japanese shells exploded when they merely struck the water. Then there was a tremendous splash, and an uprush of red, roaring flames. It was impossible to be calm amid this unceasing agitation of the air, this continuous shaking of the warships. No human nerves could endure the strain.

The Japanese boats were equal to one another in respect of speed and armament, whereas our fleet was composed of heterogeneous units. We had four up-to-date ironclads, but, having to fight in line with obsolete types, their value was in great measure reduced to that of their less well-equipped companions. The resulting disadvantage was plain. Our speed was nine knots, that of the Japanese was fifteen knots or more. The enemy turned this difference to tactical account, outstripping us so easily that the sixth and seventh warships of the Japanese line were soon on a level with the "Suvoroff." They were able to concentrate their fire upon our leading units. Obviously Admiral Togo intended to annihilate the kernel of our squadron. No such tactics were possible on our side, owing to our inferior speed. The Japanese flagship was soon so far ahead, that even the "Suvoroff" had very little chance of hitting her. Furthermore, endeavouring to block our advance, Togo forced our line to starboard while keeping his ship practically beyond striking distance. Thus the "Oryol," which was the fourth unit in our line, could not bring her stern guns into action against the "Mikaza."

Rozhestvensky's orders were to concentrate our fire upon the front units in the enemy line. Many of the captains, not daring to take the initiative, docilely carried out their admiral's instructions. They could not have made a worse blunder. The Russian shells fell idly into the water. It would have been much better to fire at the Japanese craft which were abreast of us.

In the "Oryol's" conning-tower this had become obvious half an hour after the fight began. Senior Artillery Officer Lieutenant Shamsheff said to Captain Yung:

"Our shells are having no effect on the 'Mikaza.' They are all falling short."

"Yes, we're simply wasting ammunition," agreed the captain, as he scrutinised the Japanese fleet through the loopholes.

“May we train our guns upon the cruiser ‘Ivate?’”

“That’s the only thing left for us to do.”

The “Ivate,” which was of much the same build as our “Aurora,” was the nearest of the enemy warships.

An order was transmitted to the central post, and thence to the port turrets.

“Fire at the Japanese ship which is like the ‘Aurora’.”

In one of the turrets there was a misunderstanding. The recipient of the order could not understand it, and thought there must be something wrong.

“Why should we fire at the ‘Aurora,’ one of our own vessels?”

The order had to be repeated several times, and to be reinforced with objurgations and invectives:

“Blockhead! Listen, and don’t chatter.”

During this prolonged conversation between the conning-tower and the turret in question, the “Ivate,” warned by the fire of the other guns, had sheered off to a considerable distance. The rest of the Japanese did the same thing as soon as we registered any hits.

The enemy high-explosive shells were veritable aerial torpedoes. Of course, as the range increased, the shooting became less accurate, but whatever reached its mark was destructive. These shells did not perforate the armour of our ironclads, but wrought havoc in the upper works, put guns out of action, destroyed the means of communication, started fires, scattered wounds and death.

Our missiles, on the other hand, were armour-piercing shells. Before exploding, they had to penetrate the cuirass to a considerable depth. This meant that they were only effective at a comparatively short range. When fired from a great distance, they rebounded from the armour-plate, or broke into fragments without their explosive charge getting to work. During the Dogger Bank panic, the “Aurora” had been hit by several of our own shells, a considerable proportion of which had proved “duds,” failing to explode even though they pierced the armour-plate. Besides, here at Tsushima, to judge by the flashes, it was plain that the enemy fleet was discharging twice as many shells as ours. Beyond doubt, the Japanese were inflicting a great deal of damage upon us, whereas we were doing them very little harm.

Did Rozhstvensky realise this? If so, why did he not endeavour to frustrate the enemy plans? Why did he not manœuvre? His only

aim seemed to be that of evading the issue, so that our fleet veered more and more to starboard. No worse tactics could have been conceived. By three in the afternoon the squadron, having abandoned the course of N. 23° E., was steering due east, towards Japan.

The "Suvoroff," spouting flames from the fires ignited by enemy shells, moved to starboard out of the line of battle. The "Alexander III" began by following her; but then, perceiving that the flagship no longer guided the squadron, she assumed the headship—the "Oslyabya" having meanwhile been sunk. Our position was going from bad to worse. Rear-Admiral Nebogatoff, in command of the third division, remained astern, followed by Rear-Admiral Enkvist with the cruisers. Thus the six leading ironclads, constituting the first and second divisions, were practically without a guide. The squadron no longer had a supreme command.

We ought to have opened fire on the Japanese before they arrived in bulk, but none of our captains were bold enough to take such an initiative. Besides, it would have been difficult, owing to our inferiority in speed. The general scheme was: force a way through to Vladivostock. This had become a fixed idea with the various captains, and they did all that was humanly possible to carry it into execution. But why persist in the plan when it became obvious that we could not break through? If a shattered remnant of the squadron had reached Vladivostock that would not have bettered the Russian situation from the military standpoint. Should we not have done better to attempt an escape round the south of Japan, into the vast spaces of the Pacific? Of course the Japanese would have pursued us, but that does not alter the fact that there was no other chance of escape than by flight. It is hard to guess what our admiral would have done had we managed to make good our escape into the Pacific. Would he have tried to reach Vladivostock by one of the northerly routes? Would he have sought safety in a neutral port, where the fleet would have been interned? Would he have endeavoured to get back to Russia? The one thing certain is that he was running his head against a stone wall in trying to force a passage through the Straits of Tsushima.

Though it was plain that we were hastening to destruction, our ships did their utmost, with a heroism that bordered on madness, to fulfil Rozhstvensky's orders. The enemy line of battle having forged too far ahead, the Russian vessels, led by the "Alexander III," made an attempt to slip northward in the rear of the Japanese. Togo,

guessing our design, took steps to frustrate it. Four units of his first detachment ported eight points, and advanced as a fighting front. A few minutes later, having ported an additional eight points, they constituted a file, blocking our advance, the "Nisin" being now the leader and the "Mikaza" the rearmost ironclad. Admiral Kamimura's detachment continued on the old course, for he had noticed that we were once more heading east. Thus our leading ironclads remained under heavy fire.

The "Oryol" was hit many times, and large numbers of shells struck the near-by waters, drenching us with spray. The sea appeared to form a wall, barring our progress. Vomits of black and brown smoke, jets of flame, fountains of spray thrown up by the bursting shells, created an elemental tempest.

The Japanese manœuvred their fleet to perfection. This showed how much time they had devoted to training. One might have been witnessing a first-class naval review. Obviously Admiral Togo was leaving a good deal to the initiative of his subordinates, and that was why Admiral Kamimura was able to perform the evolution he did.

But the subsequent behaviour of Admiral Togo showed that he had doubts as to the wisdom of the tactics he pursued. Had he been consistent, he would have resumed his previous formation as soon as he perceived that the Russians were no longer trying to steam northward. Instead, he ceased firing, and, with his detachment, disappeared into the fog, thus losing sight of the Russian fleet. Admiral Kamimura, whose detachment had been weakened shortly before by the complete disablement of the "Asama," had only five ships with which to engage ours. Luckily for him our squadron was deficient both in speed and in proper training for concerted action. Had it been otherwise, we could have sunk this part of the Japanese fleet.

Kamimura chased us for no more than a quarter of an hour. Then, presumably realising that his position was hazardous, he paid off sixteen points to port, thus putting about, and followed the first Japanese detachment, also losing sight of our squadron, which seized the opportunity to make southward.

The action was over for the time. How long would the respite last?

What had our cruisers been doing throughout the first phase of the battle? Not one of them had come to the aid of the main part of the fleet. They remained in the rear, as convoys of the transports. Had they joined in the fight they might have reinforced our ironclads with sixty pieces of medium calibre.

Nor did our nine destroyers do anything to help us. They stayed out of reach of the Japanese guns, having been told off to follow the flagships, and to rescue the admirals in case of need. Thus Rozhdestvensky had reduced them to the grade of lifeboats.

The battle was not yet finished, but there could be no doubt as to the fate which awaited our squadron. The ironclad "Oslyabya" was at the bottom of the sea. The flagship "Suvoroff," disabled, was drifting somewhere away from the line of battle. The "Alexander III" and the "Borodino" had got out of hand again and again, and had suffered from repeated outbreaks of fire. The "Oryol," hit many times, was in very poor case. But I will come to details about that in the next section. Plainly we were outclassed by the Japanese in respect of speed and accuracy, in the quality of shells, and in concentration of fire. They had taken the initiative in joining battle; and their greater swiftness enabled them to dictate the range. They steamed on a parallel or convergent course as they pleased, shepherding us so to say, and, by exercising an irresistible pressure on the head of our lines, turning in whichever direction they wished. No doubt their main force had been reduced by the disablement of one armoured cruiser, but we were defeated physically, and still more morally. An hour sufficed to transform our squadron into a floating caravan of death.

V

Two large-calibre shells, entering by the gun-ports, had exploded in the "Oryol's" casemate. The officer in charge of the battery, hit in the forehead by a splinter, fell dead on the spot. Three of the men under his command were likewise killed, and the gunners were too badly wounded to carry on. One of the starboard 75-mm. guns was put out of action by shell-splinters. Soon after, the port turret was destroyed. Then the forward casemate was devastated by a 12-inch shell, which exploded the store of ammunition it contained. Coal-dust, steam, and smoke filled the inwards of the ship, making our eyes very sore—for the explosion had shattered the partition between the casemate and the rest of the ship.

Lieutenant Pavlinoff was in command of the forward 12-inch turret. Seated at his post, his head in the observation tower, which had three loopholes, he directed the fire. Beneath the armoured deck, in a sort of well, the motors of the ammunition hoists hummed as

they brought up shells from the magazine. These shells were passed into the two guns, the breeches opening and closing automatically. Every two minutes there was a roar, and as the piece was discharged, its muzzle emitted a gush of purple smoke. Then came the recoil, after which the gun resumed its normal position, and the round went on as before.

Suddenly there came a dazzling flame, which rushed in through the loopholes of the observation tower, accompanied by a horrible noise. Several men fell. Lieutenant Pavlinoff doubled up, and held his bruised head tightly with both hands—as if in fear that he had been decapitated. Then he smiled, to find himself alive.

“These devils of Japanese will make an end of us all!” cried one of the gunners.

But Lieutenant Pavlinoff could not hear a word. His ear-drums were broken, and blood was running from his ears. Nevertheless, he stuck to his post, asking:

“Are the ammunition hoists out of gear?”

The right hoist had been destroyed. The left one was not so badly damaged, except for the electric transmission, so that it was necessary to push the shells by hand into the breech. But when fire was about to be resumed, Gunner Volkoff shouted:

“God, what has happened? Look, Sir!”

A large portion of the muzzle of the port gun had been carried away, but the company in the turret did not know that this great piece of metal, weighing a ton and a half, had been flung on to the fore-bridge, killing three bluejackets.

Enemy missiles were exploding in all parts of the ship, destroying ironwork, knocking away hand-rails, breaking up boats. The yellow funnels showed black, gaping holes. Suddenly, behind the stern 12-inch turret, the deck burst, opened like stretched paper struck by a fist. Flames rushed upward, for the cabins on the battery deck were on fire. A shell burst in cabin no. 20, that of Engineer Vasilieff, blowing the door to pieces, destroying the iron partitions between no. 20 and the adjoining cabins, reducing to smithereens, rags, and shreds, bed, cupboard, wash-hand-stand, writing-table, blue-prints, clothing, and bedding. Universal wreckage.

Chief Store-keeper Fedoroff ran to the sick-bay to acquaint Engineer Vasilieff of the catastrophe. With an air of mystery, that of a conspirator, his ear close to the officer's ear, Fedoroff conveyed the news in a hurried whisper.

"What a damned nuisance I hadn't put my blue-prints somewhere else," said Vasilieff laconically.

Then he went on:

"Is there a large hole in the side?"

"About forty square feet. The sea has put out the fire. Water is pouring in on to the battery deck."

"Plug it at once."

"We've tried and failed. The planks and hammocks we used were carried away by the inrush. If the bombardment slackens, perhaps we shall be able to manage better."

Then, struck by an idea, Fedoroff rushed off to the repairing-shop.

Lieutenant Slavinsky, in command of the fore 6-inch turret was shouting to keep up his men's spirits:

"Courage, lads; it's all right!"

At this moment there came an explosion. A huge sheet of flame appeared in front of the embrasures of the turret, lighting up the interior. The associated thunder-clap sounded as if the vessel had split. The men, blinded, deafened, and choked by noxious gases, remained for several minutes as if stunned. At length they were sufficiently recovered to ascertain that the shell had perforated the fore-bridge and the two decks. Lieutenant Slavinsky inspected the inside of the turret, but could find nothing amiss. Shortly afterwards, however, another shell struck the turret, probably below the water-line. The ship was not seriously damaged, but a piece of armour-plate fifty feet high was detached, and fell on the deck. Water tumbled into the turret, drenching the men, sousing the ammunition, and spreading panic among those serving at lower levels, who thought that the ship must be about to founder.

We ceased firing for a while, but speedily resumed.

When the guns were trained on the "ivate," Lieutenant Slavinsky estimated the distance at thirty cable lengths, but really the cruiser was farther off. Consequently our missiles fell short. A ratification having been made, we overshot the mark. At length the lieutenant cried joyfully:

"We've got the range at last. That touched her up. Aim at the conning-tower. Oh!"

With a loud cry, Slavinsky fell on the gun-platform. A hole had been drilled in his forehead, one eye smashed, and the other filled with dust. His round, freckled face was stained with blood and

twisted with pain. Two casualty men helped him towards the sick-bay, after he had said to Master-Gunner Tsareff:

"The command of the turret devolves upon you. I've done my bit."

Subsequently the turret was hit again and again. At last there came so formidable an explosion that all were hurled to the ground. The gunners were paralysed with alarm. For a moment, not understanding what had happened, they thought that the wall of the turret had been pierced. Then, recovering composure, they saw that the dials had been broken, that the sights were lying in fragments on the gun-platforms, that the speaking-tubes were twisted and crushed, that the shells were forced out of their sockets, that the bolts had been snapped, and that a star-like fissure had been produced in the revolving part of the turret. Gunner Volnikoff, his eyes wide open, was lying supine on the gun-platform. Those who were slightly wounded ran to his side, saying:

"What's wrong, old chap? Stop foxing! Get up!"

But he was dead, though no wound was found on him.

"Turret to starboard, then to port," shouted Master-Gunner Tsareff. But the turret could not be turned, so the guns were of no further use. The men, having applied first-aid dressings, went below.

The fore port 6-inch turret was likewise seriously damaged. A shell hit the upright piece of armour-plate which guarded the entrance, and another exploded on the roof, destroying the look-out tower. One of the gunners, falling down, crawled about on all fours, crying:

"Brothers, where am I wounded?"

An enlarging splotch of red was visible on his white jumper, between the shoulder-blades. His face grew livid. Then, turning on his back, he died. The master-gunner and an ordinary gunner were also wounded. The normal entrance was blocked, and the only exits from the turret were by the smashed observation tower or the ammunition hoists.

One of the starboard 6-inch turrets was put out of gear by a shell-splinter. Midshipman Vorobeichik and his gunners came out of the turret to clear away the debris. They succeeded in clearing an entrance; but before they could get back into cover another shell killed one of the gunners and slightly wounded the midshipman in the leg. He sat down on the deck, grimacing with pain, and yelled:

"Stretcher-bearers, stretcher-bearers!"

Two men placed him on a stretcher. Groaning, he declared himself on the point of death. He was being quickly carried to the sick-bay, but when the party was on the way down from the upper deck a shell exploded, killing one of the bearers, and seriously wounding the other. Vorobeichik jumped up, and, yelling, ran to the sick-bay so precipitately that he nearly overturned a man who was in his way. Having reached his goal, he pranced about, trampling on the injured who lay on the floor until the assistants got hold of him, and ranged him, too, on a mattress, where he continued to groan:

“I am dying! I am dying!”

Not long afterwards, a large-calibre shell hit the turret which Midshipman Vorobeichik had just abandoned, and completely disabled it. The wounded were conveyed to the sick-bay and those who remained fit for service were assigned to other batteries.

The fire-fighting section, under the command of Midshipman Karpoff, worked busily at extinguishing conflagrations.

The conning-tower was also frequently hit, but no one in it was wounded until a large calibre shell burst on the left side of the armoured roof. Splinters flew in through the loop-holes, breaking the range-finder and other apparatus, and working havoc among the speaking-tubes. Since direction of gunfire from the conning-tower was thus rendered impossible, the chief artillery officer, Lieutenant Vrednyi, sent instructions to those in charge of the various guns. Thus the fire could be continued. Almost all the occupants of the conning-tower were wounded: Lieutenant Vrednyi slightly on the left shoulder; Larionoff, junior navigating lieutenant, on the forehead and the neck. These two were sent to the sick-bay. The other officers, the look-out men, the orderlies, and the telephone operators remained at their posts, making light of their injuries.

Throughout the voyage, Captain Yung had been rendered brusque and jumpy by Rozhestvensky's perpetual reprimands. His subordinates had therefore expected him to go completely balmy when the supreme test came. In actual fact, however, he remained calm, and did not leave his post although wounded in the head. He knew that we faced defeat, and that nothing but catastrophe awaited the Russian fleet. The fresh colour vanished from his face, and his blue eyes were full of anguish as if he envisaged the ultimate disaster, and his own imminent death. Yet this carefully groomed individual who had not forgotten to shave on the morning when the Japanese were about to attack, held his head high, as though defying fate. Commander

Sidoroff seconded his chief valiantly, knitting his brows as he repeatedly wiped away the blood which trickled down his face and clotted on his white moustache. Soon Lieutenant Shamsheff was wounded also. By 3 o'clock Senior Navigating Lieutenant Satkevich was the only man in the conning-tower who had escaped injury.

Amid frequent explosions, vomits of flame, and huge splashes caused by the shells that burst as they struck the water, no one could tell from moment to moment what would happen.

Boatswain Voevodin, having succeeded in extinguishing a fire which had broken out in the paint-room, went forward. The torpedo-hand Vasya Drozd came to meet him on the upper deck. Vasya walked swiftly, though stooping, holding one hand over the top of his head, while waving the other as if it could ward off shells. Whither away in such a hurry, this lean, long-legged dreamer? Anyhow, he stopped short in his stride, to look at the enemy. At this precise moment the boatswain was knocked down by the wind of a shell. He rose, uninjured, and caught sight of something which, surrounded by grey smoke, was jumping like a young bear. When the smoke had blown away, the boatswain could hardly believe his eyes. Vasya Drozd, with both legs shot off at the knee, was in the death-struggle. His eyes anguished, his face twisted, he was bounding on the red stumps that were left him, trying (it seemed) to run, and fighting desperately for breath. A moment later he fell into the pool of his own blood.

"Brothers, the ironclad is flying up into the clouds, up into the clouds," he cried, in a heart-rending voice.

He continued to roll on the deck, this fragment of what had just before been a man, now laughing savagely, now uttering hysterical shrieks. Then the noise was stilled. The death-agony was over.

Voevodin thereupon pulled himself together, and fled in search of a refuge from the nightmare vision.

VI

As the main force of the enemy approached, our flagship, the "Suvoroff," prepared for action. The call "action stations!" was sounded. The chiefs, who were also the chiefs of the whole squadron, entered the conning-tower.

If we are justified in comparing a warship with a living human organism, then we may say that the conning-tower, owing to the

part it has to play during an engagement, represents the ship's brain. It is an armour-plated cylinder about ten feet in diameter, the steel casing ten inches thick. The roof, also of armour-plate, is mushroom-shaped. In the walls, at the eye-level of a man of average stature, are narrow slits or loopholes for observation. At the stern of the cylindrical tower is an aperture of entry, without a door, but guarded by a rectangular piece of armour-plate, wider than the entry, and standing vertically disposed at a little distance from it. The conning-tower is in the middle of the lower fore-bridge, and the cylinder of which it consists extends downwards into the bowels of the ironclad. By means of the cramp hand-and-foot holds in the interior of the cylinder, you can descend from the conning-tower to the central post of the ship. The conning-tower is furnished with various apparatus necessary for directing operations: an engine-room telegraph disc, a steering wheel, a compass, the navigating lieutenant's chart-table, speaking-tubes and telephones which run to all batteries and other departments. On the inner wall of the tower are dials encircled by luminous figures, electrically connected with similar dials in the casemates and on the battery deck. As the pointers on the dials in the conning-tower are turned, the pointers on the sister dials gyrate simultaneously, informing those concerned (master-gunners, etc.) when to open or cease fire, the number of enemy units within sight and which are to be aimed at, the kind of shells to use, and so on.

The "central post" is a reduplication of the conning-tower, but several tiers lower down. It contains the same multiform appliances, connecting it, likewise, with all parts of the ship. If the conning-tower is destroyed, the command of a battleship is removed to the central post.

Thus the conning-tower, I repeat, is the brain of the vessel. On the flagship it is the directing brain of the fleet. From it are issued the orders that dictate the activities of every unit in the squadron.

The conning-tower of the "Suvoroff" was so crowded that the inmates could scarcely move. Rozhestvensky was there, with the members of his staff: Flag-Captain Clapier de Colongue; two other flag-officers, the flag artillery officer and the flag navigating lieutenant; and the admiral's two principal orderlies. There were also Captain Ignatsius, the senior artillery officer, the navigating lieutenant, the inspector-general, and the chief officer of the watch. At the wheel were two steersmen; the bluejackets told off for communication duty

stood at their respective dials awaiting orders, and others at the telephones and speaking-tubes; at the port range-finder was a man ascertaining the distance of the enemy; and by the entry stood the captain's look-out men, signalmen, and orderlies.

Our conning-towers were not of the latest type. So extreme a concentration of the command at one point was very dangerous indeed. This not only on theoretical grounds, for the danger was practically demonstrated by a disaster which occurred during the battle of Port Arthur on July 28, 1904. Here, on the ironclad "Tsesarevich," a large calibre shell struck the front part of the roof of the conning-tower, putting the vessel out of action, and deciding the issue of the combat. Admiral Vitheft, commanding the squadron, and several members of his staff, were killed; and, simultaneously, all those present in the conning-tower were so grievously injured as to be unable to carry on. Since the flagship was no longer in a position to direct operations, the co-ordination of the fleet was at an end. The units dispersed in different directions, and six of them returned to Port Arthur, where inevitable destruction awaited them.

But Rozhstvensky was not the man to break away from routine, or to learn anything from what had happened at Port Arthur ten months before. He would not transfer his flag to a swift cruiser, as Admiral Makaroff had done, and insisted upon staying on board the ironclad which was at the head of the fighting-line. But the question of command was of supreme importance to the Russian fleet. The units had never been trained for independent action. Every one had been taught to look for guidance to Admiral Rozhstvensky, who insisted upon extreme centralisation—with himself as centre. As I have previously explained, but must now reiterate, before the sea-fight he had taken no steps to acquaint even his closest collaborators with his plans; nor had he said a word about them to the various captains and commanders, who had to do what they were told as a blind man follows the guide who leads him by the hand. He had inculcated upon the squadron the idea that it was rendered a united whole by his inflexible will alone.

The hour of trial had struck.

The "Suvoroff" steamed forward at nine knots. Except for the throb of engines, absolute silence prevailed, so that one might have imagined that no living creature remained aboard. Even in the conning-tower, hardly a word was spoken. The general condition

was one of tense expectation, in which men hold their breath as they await the issue.

The admiral, tall and stout, with his grizzled beard, his cheeks tanned by sunshine and sea-air, kept his eyes riveted to his binoculars as he watched the Japanese. His stature made it necessary for him to spread his legs wide and stoop in order to see through the loop-holes. His thick neck, round and tight as a sausage, projected above his uniform. As his manner was, he made ceaseless chewing movements, which gave a little life to his otherwise stony visage, but inspired terror in his associates.

At 1.48 p.m. Captain Clapier de Colongue ventured timidly to observe:

"Your Excellency, the 'Mikaza' is making in our direction."

Rozhestvensky answered raucously (as if his mouth were dry):

"I can see that for myself. Their ships are porting in series. Togo evidently wishes to steam on a course parallel to ours."

The admiral went on:

"Hoist the signal: 'Fire on the leader.' Begin with trial shots to get the range. Use port forward 6-inch gun."

A minute later, the "Mikaza" paid off eight points more to port, so that she had completely put about. The "Suvoroff" fired at her from a range of approximately thirty-two cable lengths. The shell out-distanced the target. Our other ships opened fire. The effect of this concentrated fire was nil, serving merely to raise huge fountains of water near the "Mikaza," without touching her; and since none of our gunners knew which shell had made this or that splash, they learned nothing to improve their aim.

Two minutes later the enemy replied. Instantly the superiority of Japanese naval training over Russian was made manifest. The range was found by trial shots from a single vessel, which promptly notified the others. Not until then did the rest open fire with broadsides which registered a high percentage of hits.

At first, indeed, the "Suvoroff" was struck only by shells from the "Mikaza." But as one Japanese warship after another put about to steer a course parallel with that of the Russian fleet, that is to say at intervals of a minute or a minute and a half, the warships "Fuji," "Shikishima," "Asahi," "Kasuga," and "Nisin" joined in with their large-calibre guns.

Soon, six Japanese cruisers concentrated their fire upon the iron-clad "Oslyabya," while the "Suvoroff" remained the chief target

of the enemy's six strongest battleships. The flagship was subjected to a positive hailstorm of high-explosives, which had much the character of aerial torpedoes. When bursting, they broke into thousands of fragments, and gave off jets of flame amid volumes of black or light-yellow suffocating smoke. Everything combustible, including the paint that coated the ironwork, instantly took fire. The salvoes of her own guns, the bursting of enemy shells, the rattling made by the missiles from machine-guns against iron—all these combined to produce an inferno of noise, while the "Suvoroff" was shaken from keel to mastheads.

Small shell-splinters, fragments of broken wood, smoke, jets of water, etc., entered the conning-tower through the loopholes. Outside, where there was no armour-plate protection, were a hail of missiles, sheets of devouring flame, and inundating jets of water. Accurate observation had become impossible. Apart from the difficulties of a physical character, the occupants of the conning-tower had by this time been too much demoralised by the furious bombardment to attempt observation. Terror made the chiefs crouch on the deck, where they were shielded by the armour-plate wall of the tower. Only the bluejackets remained at their posts—the men at the steering-wheel, range-finders, speaking-tubes, and telephones—obeying the call of duty, while their officers squatted or knelt. Even the stubborn and imperious Rozhestvensky stooped lower and lower to avoid the hail of splinters. At length, like all the officers, he was on his knees. In fact, he set a pusillanimous example. In this humiliating posture, his head drawn down upon his chest, he looked more like an intimidated passenger than the commander of a squadron. From time to time one of the junior officers ventured to raise his head and glance through the portholes. Several of them had already been slightly wounded.

Captain Ignatsius, at this juncture, said to the admiral:

"Your Excellency, the enemy seems to have got our range very well. May we change our course?"

"Alright," answered Rozhestvensky, immediately.

At 2.5 p.m., therefore, the "Suvoroff" payed off two points to starboard. Thereupon the hits slackened for a while. Soon, however, the Japanese having readjusted their aim, matters became as bad as before. A 6-inch shell struck the conning-tower. It did not do any serious damage, but gave all within a bad shake, and stopped the chronometer.

On the poop, on the spar-deck, and in the admiral's cabin, a series of conflagrations broke out. The fire-fighting brigade was called into action. But it was impossible for the men to keep afoot on the open deck, where incendiary shells were continually bursting. The men of the fire-party were struck down, singly or by groups; the hoses were severed. Little by little the separate fires fused into a roaring furnace extending from the fore-bridge to the stern-bridge.

Vladimirsky, the senior artillery lieutenant, who was in the conning-tower, was severely wounded. The port range-finder was smashed; and since it was from the port side that our fire was directed towards the Japanese, the starboard instrument was transferred to port. Artillery Flag-Lieutenant Berseneff, a very tall and lean man, had just taken his place at the Barr-Stroud in order to ascertain the range, when he was hit by a shell-splinter and killed on the spot. The two steersmen were also killed. The reserve steersmen were summoned, but meanwhile two flag officers, Lieutenants Sverbeeff and Krzhizhanovsky took the wheel. The spokes were splashed with the blood of the slaughtered men.

The "Suvoroff" now resumed her previous course, N. 23° E.

The news which reached the conning-tower from various parts of the ship was far from cheering. The sick-bay on the main-deck had been hit, and a place already full of wounded men had been transformed into a shambles. A shell had made a serious leak close to the port under-water torpedo tube. A message came by telephone:

"Large-calibre shells have struck the stern 12-inch turret, and have put it out of action."

By this time, half the guns of the ironclad had become ineffective.

The admiral, though wounded by a shell-splinter, remained in the conning-tower. But his presence there was futile, since it was no longer possible for him to retain command of the squadron.

So insistent was the enemy fire, that no one could reach the connecting bridge to hoist signals. Any who attempted to do so were instantly struck down. Furthermore, the halyards had been swept away, and the box containing the flags used in signalling had been devoured by the flames. The mainmast, severed by shells, had fallen overboard. The lower yard-arm of the mizen had likewise been shot away.

Rozhestvensky, powerless and passive, stayed at his post, hoping for a shot which would relieve him of the burden of command.

Perhaps he was meditating upon his past.

At St. Petersburg, on the banks of the Neva, is the old Admiralty, surmounted by a golden spire. The admiral had spent the two years preceding this fatal voyage at work in that building as chief of staff in the Ministry for Marine, and enjoying the special favour of the tsar. In these conditions he regarded himself as unconquerable. He was then no more than a rear-admiral, 55 years of age, comparatively young. Yet, in defiance of jealous rivals, he had climbed over the heads of vice-admirals to occupy his outstanding post. Every one trembled before him. He was sure that under his auspicious governance the Russian navy would prosper and would become triumphant in many seas.

Then, maybe, his thoughts turned to the future, conjuring up a very different vision. A naval court of enquiry would be held concerning the disaster that had befallen the Russian fleet at Tsushima. Before this same Admiralty building, solid-looking carriages would draw up beside the statue of Peter the Great. The notables of the Ministry for Marine would assemble on that occasion. The pleasant-mannered elderly janitor, his chest blazing with the four crosses of the order of St. George and with numerous medals, would relieve these worthies of their hats and overcoats. Then they would mount the grand staircase, pass the billiard-room, and enter by the next door on the right. Here was the minister's office, with windows giving on the Alexander Garden and the Winter Palace. There was a magnificent stove. The walls were adorned with portraits of tsars, those of famous admirals and generals, and pictures of noted sea-fights. A heavy bronze chandelier hung from the ceiling. The floor was covered by a thick Persian carpet.

Rozhestvensky was intimately acquainted with the place. How clearly he remembered the huge walnut table, its top covered with green baize. He pictured the notables who would be seated round it: admirals, minister for marine, and other dignitaries. Some of them would be distressed and alarmed, others furtively delighted, as they discussed the disaster at Tsushima. The council would be held in a day or two, when the news arrived by wire; and the name most often on their lips, in accents of reproach, would be his own.

In the conning-tower, the second range-finder was knocked to pieces by flying splinters. The admiral turned his face, convulsed with anguish, in the direction of the noise; and, hissing through his clenched teeth, uttered the one word:

“Damnable!”

But how to save the situation? How to inform the other units of the fleet that their last resource must lie in bold independent action, since the flagship had borne the brunt of the enemy fire, and was no longer in a condition to lead? The trouble was that Rozhestvensky had accustomed them to act as sheep following their shepherd, and without the shepherd they were helpless. All still relied upon the will of the admiral, who was kneeling in the conning-tower of the "Suvoroff."

The Japanese, taking advantage of their superior speed, swiftly enveloped the head of our column, the Russian flagship being at the centre of the arc formed by their vessels. At 2.25 p.m., the "Mikaza," then about forty cable lengths distant, was directly barring our line of advance. Hitherto only five or six of our foremost warships had been able to participate in the action. An officer pointed this out to the admiral. He ordered the course to be changed four points to starboard, in order to bring our column into some sort of parallelism with the attacking force, and thus introduce our rearmost units to the fight.

It was just when the change of course was being effected that a large-calibre shell burst close to the conning-tower. Some of the occupants were killed outright. The others were wounded, including the admiral, whose forehead was lacerated by a splinter. The men at the wheel having been struck down, and the helm having been starboarded, the "Suvoroff" began to turn in a circle. The unguided flagship got out of line. The tragedy of the "Tsesarevich" at Port Arthur was repeated.

Thenceforward the column followed what had been the second ironclad, the "Alexander III." To begin with, this vessel steered in the wake of the aberrant "Suvoroff," but resumed her original course as soon as her captain realised that the flagship had been definitively put out of action. Temporarily she drew the enemy fire upon herself, and thus saved the "Suvoroff" from a further battering with big guns.

On the flagship, a conflagration broke out close to the conning-tower. Flag-Lieutenant Sverbeeff took command of a fire-fighting party, which had, of course, to work in the open. Being wounded in the back, the lieutenant sought surgical aid. In the conning-tower, the admiral remained seated with hanging head. There was no possibility of conveying him below across the open deck, where fires were raging and on which the Japanese machine-guns were still

playing. His control of the squadron of thirty-eight units was at an end. Flag-Lieutenant Filipovsky, though his wounds were bleeding freely, endeavoured to steer the "Suvoroff," but the steering-gear had been so badly damaged that the ship would not answer her helm, wobbling alternately from port to starboard and from starboard to port.

A few minutes later, another shell hit the conning-tower, and numerous splinters flew in through the loopholes. The admiral was wounded again, this time on the foot. The captain of the "Suvoroff," struck down at first, soon struggled back into a kneeling posture, looking savagely about him, and clasping his bald head, where blood was spouting from a scalp-wound. He was carried below for treatment. Flag-Lieutenant Krzhizhanovsky, whose hands had been badly torn by tiny splinters, made an attempt to get the steering-gear in order again. All the appliances in the conning-tower had been shattered, and communication between the tower and other parts of the ship had been cut off.

By 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the conflagration had extended to the fore-bridge and the chart-room. Most of those in the conning-tower were dead, the only survivors being four in number, badly wounded: Admiral Rozhestvensky, Staff-Captain Clapier de Colongue, Flag-Lieutenant Filipovsky, and one of the quartermasters. They were in danger of a horrible fate, for they might either be stifled by smoke, or roasted to death. Since it was impossible to escape by way of the burning bridge, the only exit was through the central post in the bowels of the ship, close to the keel. Thrusting the corpses aside, the four men opened the trap-door, and made their way down the tube by the ladder of cramps. The others were afraid that the admiral might lose his grip and fall headlong, but he managed to retain hand and foot holds, and reached the bottom without further mishap.

The "Suvoroff" had had such a gruelling as to have become irre-recognisable. The mainmast and the after-funnel had been shot away, the after-bridge and the spurs demolished, the upper deck was in flames, the hull had been pierced in several places; nothing was left to recall the trim flagship. Looming through the clouds of black smoke, with only the truncated mizen-mast and the fore-funnel projecting above the deck, her silhouette recalled that of the Japanese cruisers of the "Matsushima" type. After the "Alexander III's" frustrated endeavour to make for the north behind the tail of the enemy fleet,

the "Suvoroff," astray upon the field of action, crossed the Russian line near its middle, and wandered vaguely between the contending fleets. Our rear vessels, not aware of the circumstances in which the flagship had left the head of the line, took her for a Japanese vessel in distress, and opened fire upon her, hoping to finish her off!

The flagship was being directed from the central post. Of all the staff, only Flag-Lieutenant Filipovsky remained there in a fit state to take charge. The others had disappeared, including the admiral. Disregarded by every one. Rozhestvensky wandered for a time in the depths of the ironclad, limping as he went, and stopping now and again as if to reflect. He wanted to make his way into one of the still intact turrets, but his route was blocked by flames. He issued no orders. The bluejackets, who were carrying on as best they might, paid no heed to him. He had become a superfluous passenger.

The steering-gear had been set in partial order again. By manœuvring with the port and starboard engines, the "Suvoroff" was able to resume her old course, towards the rear of the column and under its protection. There was a temporary lull in the bombardment. This enabled the officers and men who were still valid to devote themselves to fighting the conflagration and to re-establishing a semblance of order on board. The gunners were withdrawn from the batteries to assist in these tasks. Spare hoses, in place of the severed ones, were fitted to the steam-pumps. The decks, the gangways, and the bridges were cleared of the dead. Accommodation ladders were fitted where the iron steps had been shot away. Examination of the guns showed that the only turrets which remained in fighting trim were the fore and central starboard 6-inch ones, which had hitherto played no part in the fight; and a few of the 3-inch guns on the battery deck were still intact. Steam-pressure was falling, because the destruction of the stern funnel had impaired the draught in the furnaces. In its devastated condition, the flagship had no longer a combative value; being, indeed, a hindrance rather than a help to the rest of the squadron, which did not wish to desert its admiral.

At this juncture, Flag-Captain Clapier de Colongue, having recovered from the insensibility brought on by shock or loss of blood, was running hither and thither throughout the ship to ask every one he encountered:

"Where is the admiral?"

Perhaps never before, in a sea-fight or a land-action, has a chief of staff been thus in search of an admiral or a generalissimo.

"He passed this way," answered some of those questioned.

"His Excellency was making for the upper deck," declared others.

At length an officer was found who could give precise information. Rozhestvensky was in the middle starboard turret.

When the battle had lasted four hours, the "Suvoroff" was once more between our lines and the enemy's and again the Japanese concentrated their attack on her. The second funnel was shot away, the conflagration was renewed, and the deck spouted flames like a volcano. Those on board the other Russian vessels which passed near her were heartbroken to witness this spectacle of devastation and death.

The Japanese, naturally enough, were inspired by other feelings, and wanted to seize their chance of sinking the disabled Russian flagship. It seemed to them that the time had come for a torpedo attack. A detachment of destroyers emerged from behind the enemy fleet, and these vessels converged upon the "Suvoroff." But the jackals were gathering too soon, and the dying lion had strength enough to drive them off, with the aid of the guns that still remained uninjured. She had, of course, to put about in order to make effective use of her starboard pieces, but was able to manage it by manœuvring with her screws.

The "Oslyabya" had gone to the bottom long ere this. Our remaining ten battleships, fleeing southward, kept up a vigorous exchange of shells with the pursuing Japanese.

The "Suvoroff," zigzagging as she went, made slow progress. The upper deck, bending in the heat of the flames, collapsed upon the battery deck. The stokers were choked by the fumes which came down into the stoke-hole through the ventilating shafts. The armour-plating on the hull along the water-line crumpled up under the heat, and many leaks were sprung. Still, the flagship continued obstinately afloat.

VII

The ironclad "Oslyabya," tall and shapely, with three funnels, and having a displacement of nearly 13,000 tons, was regarded as one of the finest units in the Russian fleet. She was of comparatively recent build, having been launched in 1898. The New Admiralty (this being the name of the chief naval dockyard at St. Petersburg) had spent seven years building her, a period equal to her life at sea

before the Japanese sent her to the bottom near the coast of the Land of the Rising Sun. Her Harvey-steel armour was inadequate, so she was a good cruiser (developing a speed of eighteen knots) rather than a first-class battleship; but the high command had decided "to frighten the enemy" by including her among the ironclads. As to her armament, besides five torpedo-tubes, she had four 10-inch, eleven 6-inch, and twenty 3-inch guns, with twenty pieces having a calibre of 47 millimetres.

Her commander, Captain Ber, was a bachelor of 45, of great stature, with a large, bald head. His wide mouth was partly hidden by a thick chestnut-grey moustache, surmounted by an enormous aquiline nose. His chin was adorned by a long grey beard, which descended in two points over his chest. In general, his face was severely impressive, but the harshness was tempered a little by his light-blue eyes. A good trencherman and a heavy smoker, he was an abstainer as far as alcoholic liquors were concerned. He dressed with extreme care, and never missed a chance of frequenting the society of the ladies. In naval circles he was regarded as an efficient officer. He could speak three foreign languages fluently: English, French, and German. Six years before the battle of Tsushima he was commissioned by the Government to visit Philadelphia in order to supervise the construction of two vessels laid down for the Russian navy in American shipyards: the ironclad "Retvizan" and the cruiser "Ryurik."

Ber was a strict disciplinarian as regards the nine hundred men under his command. Since he had a mania for paint and polish, the appearance of his ship left nothing to be desired. He watched over her cleanliness with an eagle eye, while paying little heed to the weight of the burdens he laid upon his crew. After coaling, the blue-jackets had not only to swab decks, but also to wash the sacks which had been used for coaling. Every week he made a detailed inspection, prying into corners, and descending into the stoke-hole, which had been washed in preparation for his visit. With white-gloved hands he touched the iron partitions, and lifted this object or that. If a trace of black showed upon his gloves, he would rail at the stokers, and order the offenders under arrest for three days. This meant confinement in the hawser-room.

Even during the night he could not let the men alone. Should he notice a stain on the deck at this inopportune time, he would have them turn out and set to work cleaning. He took no interest in what the crew ate, but the copper utensils must be polished till you could

see your face in them, till they were as bright as the chalices in a church.

The man was brave enough, unquestionably. But he had not been able to inspire his subordinates with the same courage, or to win their esteem and affection. He tried to do so, without success. A good while before the battle, he had the ship's company assembled on the upper deck, where he made a terse and persuasive speech:

"Lads, I hope you are ready to give your hides for the faith, the tsar, and our country. You will show yourselves to be true Russian sailors."

It was only the non-commissioned officers who answered, and not heartily:

"We'll dø our best, Sir."

Junior officers, with few exceptions, blindly carried out the captain's orders. The rank and file counted for nothing with them, and were only fit to be addressed with such epithets as:

"Idiots!" "Brutes!" "Gaol-birds!"

This behaviour was the outcome of a hierarchical conviction, of a contempt for subordinates, and of discipline run mad—as if the "Oslyabya" had been on her way, not to a naval engagement, but to a naval review.

Discord between officers and men increased during the voyage. Life on such a ship was a torment, and the men had good reason for speaking of her as a floating prison.

The men began to turn against their superiors, playing tricks on them, carrying out orders with deliberate misunderstanding, and even practising sabotage. One day, when in port off Madagascar, they cut the tackle of a steam pinnace, intending to send the little craft to smash. Subsequently, when drawn up on the main deck, they booed the second in command. There was almost a mutiny. Rozhdestvensky came on board, swore at the men, and sent up for court-martial those who were denounced as instigators.

A good many of the crew, reduced to despair, cursed the ship and her officers, and were more than once heard to say:

"The sooner we sink to join Makaroff, the better for us all."

Felkerzam, admiral in command of the second division of ironclads, had hoisted his flag on the "Oslyabya." The men nicknamed him "Filka." He was a good-hearted fellow, who liked to chat with the crew. In general, however, he was too much occupied with his duties as commander of a division to heed what went on in his flagship.

Very popular was a member of the staff, Navigating Lieutenant Osipoff. Tall, long-legged, and lean, though he was well up in years it was his way to walk with rapid strides. His pinched face was always red, as if he had just got out of a steam-bath. His hair was thick, growing in grey tufts which looked like wreaths of sea mist. Lengthy cruising had taken the fresh colour out of his blue eyes and had hollowed six deep furrows on his high forehead. So good-natured was he that the other officers seldom ventured to knock the men about when he was present. Every one was fond of him, and spoke of him affectionately as "Beard."

The younger engineer officers were also on good terms with the men, but they could do nothing to better the regime which prevailed aboard the "Oslyabya."

Admiral Felkerzam fell ill early in April, and grew worse as the ship approached Japanese waters. At length, on May 11th, three days before the sea-fight, he passed to his last rest without any aid from the Japanese. His flag was not lowered, but Rozhestvensky was informed of what had happened by a pre-arranged signal:

"The davits have broken on the ironclad."

Rozhestvensky replied:

"Carry on till Vladivostock."

The admiral's body was enveloped in sheet-lead and removed to the chapel of the "Oslyabya," to await burial in the Siberian port. Meanwhile a requiem mass was said. The faces of the congregation showed general and sincere grief. Felkerzam's death was regarded as of evil omen, and depression prevailed on board until the sea-fight began.

The officers and men on the ships, since they saw that Felkerzam's flag continued to fly over the Oslyabya, had no idea that the admiral was dead. Nor had the Japanese, so they naturally concentrated their fire on this second (and imperfectly armoured) flagship, as well as on the "Suvoroff." Thus a mere rag of bunting attached to the masthead accelerated the destruction of the vessel.

After the admiral's death, the command of the second division was entrusted to Captain Ber. But he, when the Japanese fleet appeared on the scene, left his detachment to do whatever it pleased, without troubling to issue any special orders.

On May 14th, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, when the preliminary skirmish with the enemy cruisers had taken place, the Japanese fleet appeared in full force. The "Oslyabya" ordered "action stations."

The men flocked to their posts in as orderly a fashion as if they had been participating in a review manoeuvre. Captain Ber stood on the bridge in front of the conning-tower, smoking cigarette after cigarette, as he calmly scrutinised the approach of the enemy.

But at this juncture something happened which no one would have expected from Rozhestvensky, whose qualities as a naval strategist and tactician were so highly esteemed in St. Petersburg. The admiral's maladroit attempt to re-form his squadron in line of battle compelled the "Oslyabya" to stop her engines in order to avoid ramming the ship immediately ahead of her. The Japanese were quick to seize their chance. Putting about, to steam on a course parallel with that of our fleet, they were able to deliver a fierce fire upon an almost stationary target.

They got the range immediately. The third shell struck the "Oslyabya" on the port bow, carrying away the hawse-hole and piercing the hull. The anchor dropped, the chain running out until a link caught on a torn fragment of sheathing. The leading Japanese vessels signalled the range to their successors, so that each enemy battleship as she put about delivered a broadside at the unfortunate "Oslyabya," which received a terrible pounding. A hail of projectiles descended upon her, and her water-line and port bow were struck. She was fully exposed, and could do nothing to escape the enemy fire. By the time a way was open for her to steam full-speed ahead with all her three engines having a total of 14,500 h.p., and with her three screws simultaneously in action, several big holes had been pierced in front of her armour-plating. The alarm was sounded, and an order issued:

"Fire-fighting squad to the fore-part of the main-deck in double-quick time."

At this juncture a big shell which struck the port beam at the water-line just in front of the first water-tight compartment, exploded on impact and made a huge hole. Torrents of water inundated the first and second compartments of the main deck. Through fissures in the deck and along the shattered ventilating tubes, the sea made its way into port magazines and beneath the turrets. Here there was so much smoke that the incandescent lamps were useless. Half of the aperture was below water-line, the sea was choppy, the "Oslyabya" was steaming at top-speed and did not venture to slow down, so nothing could be done to stop the inrush. On the decks the water was partly held in check by the second of the bow water-tight

compartments; but at lower levels the forward dynamos and torpedo-tubes were swamped. Soon the vessel was well down by the head, with a strong list to port. The crew, headed by Artificer Uspensky, made heroic efforts, but could do little more than reduce the list somewhat by deliberately flooding the starboard magazine.

The main electric cable having been cut by shell-splinters, the bow 10-inch turret was put out of action after three shots had been fired. The electricians managed to splice the severed cable, but it was too late, for by this time the turret had been struck by two large-calibre shells, forced off the rails, and knocked askew. The armour-plates of the turret had been partially detached by the explosions; and the muzzles of the useless 10-inch guns pointed vaguely towards the enemy like enormous dry tree-trunks.

Before the action began, two bluejackets were stationed beside this turret for the sole reason to have them killed by enemy shells. Their names were Korol and Suslenko. They had been in the lock-up for some time: Suslenko because he had robbed the chapel offertory-box, and Korol as one of the ringleaders in the mutiny on the "Admiral Nakhimoff."

When stationing them in this exposed situation, the senior officer said:

"Should fire break out, you will use the hose to extinguish it. Neither of you is to quit his post on any excuse. The offender who does so will be shot out of hand. I shall myself execute summary justice."

Both of them were blown to bits.

The roof of the turret was carried away, one of the shells having probably burst in a loop-hole. Inside, one man was decapitated, and all the others were grievously wounded. They filled the place with their shrieks and groans. Master-Gunner Bobkoff was brought out of the turret minus a leg. While the stretcher-bearers were taking him to the sick-bay, he lamented his fate and uttered the most abominable curses.

The fore-bridge was shattered into fragments. Here had been installed the range-finder, in charge of Lieutenant Poletsky and a number of bluejackets. The shell wrought such havoc among them that they were scattered in all directions, and so horribly mutilated that only the officer was recognisable. His chest was torn open, but he was not, like the others, instantly killed. Groaning, he rolled his eyes, and bellowed:

“The ‘Idzumo’—the cruiser ‘Idzumo’—thirty-five cable lengths—the ‘Idzumo’—five—thirty . . .”

Within a minute he was dead.

Soon the upper bow casemate protecting the 6-inch gun was struck by two shells. The sheathing slipped down and blocked the gun-port, while the gun was dismantled. Then two more 6-inch guns were silenced. In fact all the port artillery was put out of action in the course of twenty minutes, most of the gunners being killed. Those of them that remained alive, including the artillery lieutenant, took refuge beneath the armoured deck.

Another shell exploded in front of the conning-tower. Of the drummer who had been on duty there, nothing was left but a headless and legless trunk. Shell-splinters flew through the loopholes into the interior of the tower. Steersman Prokyus, who was at the wheel, was killed outright. The staff-officers and the ship's officers were wounded. Many of them had to be sent to the sick-bay, and stayed there. Captain Ber, very pale, his face splashed with blood, came out of the conning-tower, and, holding a lighted cigarette between his fingers, cried:

“Send for Commander Pokhvisneff.”

One of the men ran to obey the order, while Ber, putting his cigarette between his lips, emitted a puff of smoke, and then re-entered the conning-tower to carry on the command of a vessel which was already derelict.

In the middle port casemate the splinters caused a truck laden with shells to explode. This destroyed the 6-inch gun and killed the whole gun-crew. The other two 6-inch guns had already been rendered useless by the list of the vessel. Speaking generally, the fire of the “Oslyabya” was ineffective. Most of the shots she discharged went wide, for none of her gunners had discovered the range or trained their pieces properly.

The bow of the ship was now completely submerged. The men in charge of the two bow dynamos, having their normal exit from the power-room cut off, got out through the turret. Anyhow, this part of the power-plant was of no further use, the main cable having been short-circuited by sea-water. Consequently the pumps, the ammunition hoists, and all the rest of the electrically worked apparatus, were out of gear.

In the depths of the ironclad, two sick-bays were functioning: one, the ordinary sick-bay; the other, improvised in a bath-room.

The chief surgeon was at work in the former, and the assistant surgeon in the latter. There was blood everywhere; pallid and drawn faces; anguished looks. Round the operating tables, amputated limbs were lying on the floor. The living huddled promiscuously among the dead. The halitus of blood was nauseating. The sufferers groaned and screamed by turns. One of the wounded wailed:

“Water, water; my guts are on fire!”

A delirious quartermaster cried:

“Make it eight bells. How thick the fog is!”

A master-gunner, with the upper part of his head swathed in bandages, seated in a corner, was repeating:

“Where are my eyes? What’s the use of a blind man?”

On the operating-table was a bluejacket, yelling with pain. The chief surgeon, wearing a blouse drenched with blood, was probing a wound in the man’s shoulder, and removed some splinters. The number of the maimed increased from minute to minute.

“Don’t crowd me, lads,” said the chief surgeon. “I must have room to work.”

But the poor wretches could not help “crowding” him.

Each shell that struck the vessel made a tremendous uproar, and shook her from stem to stern. The jar was like that which would have been produced if hundreds of iron rails had been dropped from a great height upon the deck. The wounded men were startled afresh each time, and looked at the door as if asking:

“Is this the end?”

The stretcher-bearers brought in a new patient. On the right side the soft parts had been stripped from the ribs, and one of these latter was hanging loose like the broken branch of a tree. He screamed:

“Your Honour, help me!”

“No more room here,” said the chief surgeon to the stretcher-bearers. “You must take him to the other sick-bay.”

“That’s full up too, Sir,” replied the bearers.

At this moment the list to port increased. The blinded master-gunner jumped to his feet and waved his arms, as he shouted:

“We are sinking!”

The other wounded men, greatly agitated, joined in his cries. But the alarm was premature. The blind man was forced to sit down again in his corner, being sworn at for raising a panic. Still, the list to port grew more marked, and the eyes of the sufferers in the sick-bay dilated with terror. They were under the shadow of imminent

death, and never expected to see the sunshine again. The chief surgeon, ignoring the fact that his minutes were numbered (a fact of which he could have no doubt), went on quietly with his work.

Up above, the rain of shells continued. Six Japanese cruisers were bombarding the "Oslyabya"; and the shells that failed to hit threw up mountains of spray round her. Those that struck the sea close to the water-line made jets as high as the funnels, and deluged the decks with water. The death-rattles of the dying, the groans of the wounded, mingled with the noise of exploding shells, the roaring of conflagrations, and the sound of smashing iron. The "Oslyabya's" own gunfire had completely ceased. Lieutenant Nedermiller, who was in command of one of the batteries, told his gunners to clear out; then he put a bullet through his head. All the upper works of the ship were in flames, and the conflagration extended beneath the after-bridge. Thick smoke rose above the spar-deck, and flames spouted through various shell-holes and through the ports. The officers' quarters and the admiral's cabin were on fire. The men of the fire-fighting brigade worked like spectres amid the smoke, but their efforts were unavailing. The "Oslyabya," her nose buried beneath the waters, was no longer a fighting unit. Yet, battered though she was, she forged ahead, while awaiting destruction. This was not long delayed. An 800-pound shell struck her abeam on the water-line between the port torpedo-tubes and the bathrooms. The rivets holding the armour-plate in this region were broken by the shock, so that the plate was ripped off like the plaster from an old house. Then the denuded area was struck by another shell, making a hole through which a coach and horses might have been driven. Water flooded the battery-deck and the magazines. The men from the repairing-shop, under the command of Engineer Zamchinsky, did their utmost to stop the leak. They made a framework of planks, reinforced and buttressed by bars; but their attempts were vain. The inrush of the sea swept their would-be plug away, though they went on working up to their waists in water. The spare heaps of coal were flooded, and the "Oslyabya's" list to port steadily increased.

The ironclad starboarded her helm, to get out of the line of battle.

From all the decks and from the multifarious compartments between decks, terrified cries were raised:

"We are sinking!"

"All's up with us!"

At this moment, Lieutenant Sablin, Senior Artillery Officer Henke,

and Midshipman Boldyreff were on the bridge. Captain Ber came out of the conning-tower to join them. He had lost his cap, and had a laceration on his bald scalp, but was smoking a cigarette as usual. To the officers he said:

“Yes, we’re sinking. Good-bye, shipmates!”

Then, emitting a last puff of tobacco smoke, he shouted:

“Every man for himself. Jump overboard as quick as you can!”

But it was too late. The “Oslyabya” lay on her side. No need now for captain’s orders! The whole ship’s complement realised that the final catastrophe was at hand. Men came scurrying out of the depths of the ship, the torpedo-rooms, etc., hanging on to whatever holdfasts offered, falling and then righting themselves to seize a fresh grip. All were trying to reach the battery-deck, from which it would be possible to jump into the sea.

The wounded left the sick-bays. Those who were too severely injured to walk implored the others to help them; but at these supreme moments human selfishness is in the ascendant. There was not an instant to lose. Torrents of water were rushing over the lower deck, and blocking the exits. Some of the men, their wounds bleeding, managed to scramble out into the open, but they were few in number.

The most terrible fate was that of those who were trapped in the engine-rooms and stoke-holes. Throughout the bombardment, the hatchways had been battened down, to keep the enemy missiles out of the vital parts of the ship. The hatchways could only be opened from outside, and men had been posted to attend to this duty should the worst befall. But these bluejackets, seized by panic, had deserted their posts, abandoning their unfortunate comrades. A few of them, indeed, after a first impulse of weakness, returned, and tried with whatever tackle was available to dislodge the heavy watertight and shell-proof hatchways, but the extreme list of the vessel frustrated their endeavours.

Engineer-officers, artificers, greasers, and stokers, shouted appeals, but no help came. Without exception they went to the bottom, buried alive as if beneath a heavy tombstone.

On the battery deck, there was a horrible scuffle. Some jumped overboard just as they were. Others sought for life-belts and cork-jackets. Some of the hardier ones went to the men’s sleeping quarters for hammocks, which (as aforesaid) had cork mattresses, and threw as many as possible into the sea, so that their comrades might keep afloat.

The chaplain, a monk, appeared on the uppermost or starboard side of the deck. He was a middle-aged man, rather stout, and heavily built. His hair in disorderly tufts, blown about by the wind, and his eyes starting from his head, he looked like an escaped lunatic. Realising that the ship was about to sink, he shouted in a heart-rending voice:

“Brothers, shipmates, I can’t swim. Save me!”

But every one was intent on saving his own life, and the chaplain, having jumped overboard, sank within a minute or two.

Around the “Oslyabya” numerous men struggled in the water, swimming, or hanging on to lifebelts or hammocks; but a great many, who had not decided to take to the water, remained on deck. This, since the ship was turning over, was now almost vertical. The men rolled into the port scuppers, amid fragments of wood and iron, crates, benches, and what not—bruising themselves, sustaining scalp-wounds, or breaking arms and legs. The worst of it was that the enemy fire went on without cessation. Those who were struggling in the water were hit by splinters from bursting shells. Nor was this all. The ironclad’s huge funnels were now lying on the water, still vomiting smoke, which suffocated men who were already on the verge of drowning. Those among the poor fellows who had no better support, clung to fragments of the shattered boats. Appeals for help were voiced in all directions. Jets of water raised by exploding shells, spurting here and there amid the heads of the poor wretches who were still struggling for life.

Captain Ber, though the conflagration was raging close beside him, remained on the bridge. Every one realised that he had decided to go down with his ship. He seemed to have but one aim left—to save as many of his subordinates as he could. Clinging to what had been an “upright” of the awning, he tried to make his voice heard above the lamentations of the victims.

“Get farther away from the ship, the devil take you! If you don’t, you’ll go down in the suck! Farther away!”

Perhaps he was showing off a little in the jaws of death, but anyhow he was magnificent.

Now the ship turned turtle, so that her keel was visible, and, while her nose dived, her stern rose high in the air. The starboard engine was still working, the screw revolving freely. Then, as the final plunge came, its blades thrashed the water—the last convulsions of the drowning leviathan.

Not one of the engineer officers or machinists was saved. No less than two hundred men were batted down without possibility of escape. Anyone familiar with the details of naval life can imagine what went on in the bowels of the doomed ship. When she turned turtle, they must have been flung from floor to roof with all objects that were not firmly attached; and this in absolute darkness, save for the glow from the furnaces not yet extinguished, while human cries mingled with the clash of inanimate objects. But we know that one of the engines was still working when the "Oslyabya" sank, and can guess that those who fell into the machinery and were brayed to pieces were perhaps more fortunate than the rest. For the entrance of water into these sealed depths must have been very slow, and death may have occurred from asphyxiation rather than from drowning. Many of the men may have been still alive when the vessel touched bottom. An hour or more probably elapsed before death came to bring release.

CHAPTER TWO

A FLEET IN ACTION WITHOUT ORDERS

I

THE slow, sad tolling of the Lenten bells was calling the villagers to repentance. Humble in spirit, they made their way towards the wooden church, where they would relieve their souls of the burden of sin. Dread of the Last Judgment tinged their faces with melancholy, but the joy of springtide enlivened the air. Winter was being vanquished by March. Day by day the sunshine grew warmer, and the glare from the snow less painful. Drops of water fell continuously from long icicles clinging to the thatch.

On one such clear and silent day, two troikas drove into our village, to the tune of jingling bells. Vorontzoff-Dashkoff, an elderly count, had come with his huntsmen to shoot bears. Next day the hunt was organised, 120 beaters being levied. I, a lad of eighteen at the time, was one of them. The weather took an unfavourable turn. Snow fell; and, under a strong wind, the drifts quickly obliterated the spoor. We had penetrated about three versts into the forest when we approached the beast's den, and gathered round it in a circle. Waist-deep in snow, we drew nearer and nearer, while the huntsmen began to discharge their pieces. We did not spare our voices, but yelled like drunkards. Having been paid thirty copecks a head to shout, we were determined to give good value for the money. Despite all these preparations, the count did not kill his bear, which, though twice wounded, made good its escape. Vorontzoff-Dashkoff, tired and disappointed, returned to the village. Knitting his brows, he quartered himself upon a well-to-do timber-merchant, and, without uttering a syllable, set to upon a copious dinner of ham, cheese, and bread-and-butter, washed down with excellent wine. It was then I first came to realise that Lenten fasting is for peasants, and not for the rich. Hardly had the count finished his meal, when the bear arrived at the outskirts of the village. The weather being what it was, the animal could easily have secreted itself in the woods. But, maddened by the chase and by the pain of its wounds, it had come to the spot where death awaited it. The count's men

sallied forth, and within a few hours its huge corpse, weighing about eight hundred pounds, was brought in upon a broad sleigh.

Our squadron reminded me of that bear.

The Japanese, after their first successful onslaught, in which they had disabled the "Suvoroff" and sunk the "Oslyabya," lost sight of us in the fog. We were fleeing to the south. Since it was obvious that we could not force a passage through Korea Strait and make direct for Vladivostock, we ought to have continued on our southerly course. But Admiral Rozhestvensky's orders held us in check like an invisible curb, and compelled us to put about. The squadron, battered and maddened, seeming disdainful of life and eager for destruction, steered northward once more. The "Borodino" thus headed the line, followed in serial order by the "Oryol," the "Sisoy-Veliky," the "Alexander III," the "Navarin," the "Admiral Nakhimoff," and the third division under the command of Admiral Nebogatoff. Then, so far astern as to be almost out of sight, came our cruisers, destroyers, and transports. On the "Oryol," as on the other ships, conflagrations had been put out, some of the worst damage repaired, the casualties among the gun-crews replaced, and the wounded cared for.

Within half an hour the grey Japanese warships loomed in sight upon the port bow. They concentrated their fire upon our flagship, the "Suvoroff," which, her steering mechanism out of gear, could guide itself only by manipulating with the engines, and, on fire, bombarded, amid clouds of black smoke, moved indomitably towards the north. The squadron began to outstrip her, and the enemy, perceiving our main strength, advanced to meet us. Without counting the two dispatch-boats, the Japanese had twelve ironclads, for the "Asama," having repaired damages, was once more in the fighting line. Within a few minutes the battle was resumed. Speedily the Japanese, being able to outpace us, and adopting their previous tactics, enveloped the head of our squadron.

At 4 o'clock, fire broke out on the "Sisoy Veliky." Quitting the line, she fell astern, to join the cruisers, her place as third being taken by the "Alexander III." The "Navarin" had one of her funnels shot away, and also slowed down. Rear-Admiral Nebogatoff's detachment, consisting of the "Nicholas I," the "Apraksin," the "Senyavin," and the "Ushakoff," moved in from port to fill the vacant space.

The proper course would have been for Nebogatoff to steam to

the front, and direct the squadron from his flagship, but he was not entitled to do so. Four days before the sea-fight, Rozhestvensky, in order no. 243, had issued instructions to the effect that, in the event of the leading ship being put out of action, the command should pass to the next in the line. The upshot was that, during the engagement, the admirals of the second grade were paralysed, being completely deprived of initiative. Since the "Suvoroff" had quitted the line, the "Alexander III" led the squadron for a time, and then the "Borodino." Naturally, the leading ironclad bore the brunt of the enemy fire, while no one could tell whether the captain or the second was in command of her—for either or both might have been killed, and the rear-admirals in the ships that followed were under the guidance of they knew not whom.

During this second encounter, the "Oryol" was subjected to an even fiercer bombardment than before. One after another, large-calibre shells struck her, shaking her huge bulk violently, so that sometimes her course was arrested, to be speedily resumed, amid clouds of smoke, and jets of water spewed up by shells bursting close to her sides. Several missiles struck the stern casemate, one, a 12-incher, producing so terrific an explosion, that we deviated from our course. Torpedo-Quartermaster Khritanyuk and Torpedo-hand Privalikhin, who were stationed close to the steam-steering-engine in the stern below the armoured deck, believed for a moment that the whole of the poop had been shot away.

"We thought," they said afterwards, "that the stern of the 'Oryol' had been struck by a torpedo, and that within a minute or two the ship would sink. But we were mistaken. It was nothing worse than a gigantic shell, which had exploded some of the ammunition in the casemate."

These two men went up into the casemate, to find (as they thought at first) that no one was left alive there, but that a fire had broken out. Pulling off their boots they filled them with the water which was streaming in through the fissures made by the explosion, and succeeded in quenching the flames. Then Khritanyuk went back to his steering-engine, leaving Privalikhin in the casemate to take stock of the damage. Two of the guns had been put out of action. Splinters everywhere, from the shell and from the smashed dead-lights. A huge breach yawned in the battery-deck. The wounded had evidently made for the sick-bay, for only corpses remained. Bluejacket Vatsyk was lying with a broken neck; close beside, was the body of

Gunner Eremin, and, reconciled with them in death, that of another gunner with whom Eremin had had a violent quarrel just before the explosion. For, after all, there was only one man left alive. He had witnessed the scene. His job had been to hand up ammunition, and now he was lying in the hoist, half-buried under the coal which had been piled against the wall of the casemate as a supplementary protection. He was extricated without a scratch, leaving his boots under the wreckage, and related afterwards that Midshipman Kalmykoff, who was in command of the battery, had instantaneously vanished as if by a conjuring trick, just when crying the order "elevation 30°." Simultaneously, one of the gunners, blown overboard by the force of the explosion, had soared through the air like a great black bird and disappeared into the sea.

The stern 12-inch turret was hit almost at the same moment. A shell struck the armoured roof just above a loophole, dinting the plate so that it was impossible to train the port gun at a greater range than twenty-seven cable lengths. Midshipman Shcherbacheff, Master-Gunner Rastorgueff, and Quartermaster Kisloff were wounded, but, after applying first-aid dressings, they stuck to their posts. Master-Gunner Bitte had half his head shot away, so that the deck was slippery with his scattered brains.

Midshipman Shcherbacheff, however, could not long retain command. He soon lay insensible on the gun-platform, arms and legs spread wide as one lies on an intensely hot day. His men ran to pick him up. They found that the bridge of his nose had been driven in, that one of the blood-vessels of the scalp behind the ear had been torn, and that where the right eye should have been there was a gaping wound. One of the men cried:

"Finished! He has not even groaned."

"Yes," agreed another, "he's done for; he's dead."

At this moment the midshipman, regaining consciousness, asked:

"Who's dead?"

"You, Sir," answered a bluejacket.

Shcherbacheff threw back his head, and stared at the gun-crew with the eye that was left to him.

"What? Am I dead? Tell me, lads, am I really dead?"

"No, Sir, you're not dead after all. We thought you were; but you're live enough, it would seem."

Shcherbacheff gingerly fingered the wound in his face.

"My right eye is done for anyway, if I'm not," said he.

A few minutes later, the guns were at work again. The command of the turret had devolved upon Master-Gunner Rastorgueff. Midshipman Shcherbacheff, seated upon the turret-deck and leaning against the armour-plate wall, groaned, while his head fell forward more and more. Soon he lost consciousness again, and was carried off to the sick-bay. On the unarmoured parts of the flanks of the "Oryol," fresh holes were continually made. Though they were above the water line, the sea entered as the ship rolled, flooding the battery deck, and invading the lower parts. Immediate repair of these gaping and irregular apertures was impossible, for we were still under heavy fire. From moment to moment, white-hot splinters were scattered hither and thither, killing men and causing widespread devastation.

Then upon the lower fore-bridge there came an explosion like a thunderbolt with a lightning-flash. Every one in the conning-tower was swept off his feet. Senior Signalman Zefiroff turned a complete somersault, and fell unconscious. Coming to himself, he raised his dome-shaped head, and wondered whether he was alive or dead. Blood flowed from his forehead and his chin, while one of his legs was exceedingly painful. Becoming aware that he was lying on two bluejackets, he struggled to his feet. The other men rose with more difficulty, screaming with pain, and looking astonished to find themselves alive. Solnyshkoff, of the paymaster's department, had been wounded in the mouth, and Look-out Man Saikoff in the forehead, but they returned to their posts. Volosky, who had been in charge of the range-finder, wagged his head to and fro, staring vacantly at the deck. Quartermaster Kolesoff, with a formidable contusion on one of his cheeks, was breathing heavily as he leaned his elbows on the engine-room telegraph. Commander Sidoroff, having received a blow on the forehead, went out into the open in front of the conning-tower for a moment, hoping that the fresh air would do him good. Lieutenant Shamsheff, twisted with pain, held his hands tightly pressed to his belly, where a shell-splinter had wounded him. Boatswain's Mate Kopyloff and Steersman Kudryasheff, though both bleeding freely from cuts in the face, went back to their places at the wheel, in order to get the ship on her course again.

But there were others who could not rise. Lieutenant Satkevich lay unconscious. In the middle of the conning-tower was Captain Yung, with a shattered shoulder, and delirious. Without opening his eyes, he muttered:

"Torpedo attack . . . Fire segmented shells. . . . What has become of the men?"

Beside him writhed his orderly, Nazaroff, fragments of brain-substance oozing from the back of his shattered skull, while he bel-lowed like a beast, alternately clenching his fists and opening his fingers, as if climbing the ratlines. A piece of the steel cornice, twisted by the explosion, had cut deep into the neck of one of the blue-jackets, who, panting, gripped Nazaroff's legs as though clinging to a life-belt.

At length Commander Sidoroff pulled himself together, and re-entered the conning-tower to take command.

"Send for the stretcher-bearers at once," he ordered.

Meanwhile the men were applying first-aid dressings to one another.

Since the ladders leading to the fore-bridge had been shot away, the commander had accommodation ladders fixed, but the transport of the injured down these was very difficult.

The first to be conveyed to the sick-bay was Captain Yung. On the way thither, he was wounded for the third time, by a shell splinter which perforated his lungs, spleen, and stomach, coming to rest finally in his back, just beneath the skin. When removed, it was still scorching hot. The captain, while his wounds were being treated, remained delirious, crying again and again:

"Port your helm. . . . Why have you slowed down? . . . Full speed ahead, ninety revolutions."

After carrying down Captain Yung, the stretcher-bearers brought Lieutenant Satkevich and the badly wounded bluejackets to the sick-bay. They were followed by Lieutenant Shamsheff, who was able to walk unaided.

From my post of duty in the sick-bay, I glanced through the doorway leading into the gangway and caught sight of Stoker Baklanoff. He summoned me with a wave of the hand. I went, supposing he had some important news, but was surprised to see a broad grin on his grimed and square-chinned visage. His breath stank of vodka as he whispered:

"Well, old chap, I'm in luck. The bosses' hors d'œuvres are so good that they positively jump into one's mouth. As for their wines, they make the heart sing like a nightingale. First time in my life I ever filled myself up with such lovely tipple."

"Where?" I asked.

"In the officer's mess."

Showing me that his pockets bulged, he added:

"Don't think I forgot you, my lad. Let's go to the repairing-shop, and you shall eat and drink your fill too."

"Aren't you ashamed to guzzle like that, when your messmates are being killed and mutilated by the dozen?"

"Ashamed? Stuff and nonsense! Shame isn't like a shell-splinter which sticks in your belly. Your lips are trembling, but that won't help you an atom. If drown I must, I'd rather drown tipsy than sober. Come along."

Losing my temper, I cried:

"Go to the devil!"

He glanced at the poor maimed wretches who were lying, not only on the floor of the sick-bay, but, in an overflow, on the floor of the gangway as well, and with a wink, said:

"Fine acrobats they'll make, won't they?"

Outraged by his cynicism, I answered furiously:

"Our friend Vasya has qualified as one of these future acrobats. Boatswain Voevodin saw him on deck—without any legs."

Sobered in an instant, Baklanoff said:

"What are you talking about? Vasya . . .?"

"Go and see for yourself."

He made for the upper deck at a run. Ten minutes later I met him in the gangway once more. He was a different man, profoundly moved by the death of our chum.

"Well?" I enquired.

"Dead as can be. I threw what was left of him overboard."

Then, laying his heavy hand on my shoulder, he went on:

"We've lost a real man in our Vasya. He wanted to study all the sciences, and see what's become of him. Why should he be butchered? He had done no wrong."

Wiping tears mixed with coal-dust from his face, bent with grief, he slowly mounted the companion-ladder.

Soon after he had gone, we heard of the disaster to the middle 6-inch turret. A white-hot splinter had entered through a gun-port and led to the explosion of a reserve shell. This set off three other shells, one of them in the act of being pushed into the breech of his gun by Master-Gunner Vlasoff. Smoke, gases, and tongues of flame spurted out of all the apertures in the turret, with a noise which seemed like a cry of despair from this inanimate object.

Simultaneously, screams came from the human beings penned within it. The paint on the inner wall, the electric cables, and the waterproof gun-covers took fire. The men serving the guns, suffocated by the gases, roasted in the flames, maddened and blinded by the smoke, struggled vainly to find the exit, cannoning against the pieces of artillery and the armour-sheathed walls, then falling on to the gun-platform and rolling over one another. Their horrible cries were heard by those in the compartment beneath, and they informed the central post. Meanwhile the fire was threatening to spread to the magazine, along the electric cables and the woodwork. Only by stupendous efforts were the fire-fighters able to avert a terrific explosion.

The stretcher-bearers came to the turret and shouted through the entry:

“What’s happened to you?”

The only answer consisted of groans and death-rattles. Three of the gunners were charred corpses. Quartermaster Volzhanin and Master-Gunner Zueff, though still alive, had had their clothes singed off and their skin was hanging in burned rags.

The 6-inch shells whose explosion had caused so much havoc were a reserve supply of ammunition, there being four of them in each turret. Ever since we had steamed away from Reval, they had been kept in readiness for a surprise onslaught by the Japanese. Inasmuch as the apertures in the turrets were too large, and therefore offered a risk of what had happened on this occasion, these reserve shells ought to have been fired at the outset of the engagement, but no one had thought of taking this precaution.

One of the master-gunners, who was most indignant about the matter, said to me later:

“We were lucky that the explosion did not take place in the 12-inch turret, where more than six hundredweight of powder was stored. Besides, every one knows that mechanical loading is a much quicker process than loading by hand. Furthermore, in the magazine below the turret, where we were feeding the ammunition hoist, a spark might have blown up the whole ironclad. What the devil were our chiefs thinking about?”

The fight went on. Our squadron made so many turns and twists that it would be difficult to describe them all. Finally we headed south once more.

About a hundred shells of various sizes had already struck the “Oryol.” The starboard side above the battery deck was pierced

with numerous holes, hastily plugged with hammocks and mattresses. To close the port dead-lights on the battery deck, since the chains which actuated them were broken, the men had, under the enemy fire, to climb down at the risk of tumbling into the water.

The Japanese shells, in bursting, developed so high a temperature, that our armour-plate was blistered and starred. Fires were continually breaking out, and the fire-fighting brigade was insufficient to cope with them. Every one had to lend a hand at this work. Even Commander Sidoroff, who had now taken charge in place of Captain Yung, left the conning-tower several times, accompanied by Senior Signalman Zefiroff and Bugler Balest, to deal with the conflagration on the bridge. Canvas hammocks had been tied on to the roof of the conning-tower, as a protection against shell-splinters. These caught fire, and gave off an intolerable stench. They were drenched with water, but soon began to smoulder again. Sidoroff said impatiently:

“Chuck them overboard.”

Astern, close to the mizen-mast, the vulcanite speaking-tubes caught fire. Near at hand were cases of cartridges for the 47-mm. guns. Some had already exploded, so the rest were incontinently flung into the sea. Sidoroff and the men who performed this exploit, did so under fearful risk, but they got safely back to the conning-tower—Sidoroff with a bruised spine.

Boatswain Voevodin, passing in front of the chapel, saw five sailormen on their knees before the icons, praying to the accompaniment, not of church-bells, but of a thunderous cannonade. Needing men for duty, he shouted to them:

“What the hell are you swabs doing here?”

At this moment there was a fearful explosion, and not a soul of those who had been imploring God's help was left alive. One might have fancied that even the icons were groaning! The billy-goat we had bought in Madagascar as a mascot was killed at the same time. Since the beginning of the sea-fight, the poor beast had been running about the decks, bleating miserably, not knowing what to make of the turmoil. The shell that destroyed the worshippers carried away the middle of its back. The creature sustained itself on its forelimbs, the hind-limbs being paralysed, and shook its horned head, while looking in agony at Voevodin. Soon its troubles were over.

Lieutenant Slavinsky, his forehead and one eye swathed in bandages, turned up at this juncture, walking unsteadily. He noticed that water was running to waste from the fire-hose, and, after a

moment's reflection, called to the boatswain, who had just been extinguishing the fire in the chapel:

"Voevodin, turn off the tap of that nozzle."

The boatswain hastened to carry out the order, while Slavinsky mounted to the upper deck through the hatchway. But he did not stay long. While the men up there were fighting the fire, something struck him on the head, tearing the bandage from his wound. He was carried insensible to the sick-bay.

At this moment we heard some "Hurrahs!" on the upper deck. We did not understand what the rejoicing was about until Senior Boatswain Saem, who came down to have a slight wound in the hand dressed, explained matters to us.

"The enemy is retreating," he said solemnly, as befitted the occasion. "One of the Japanese ironclads is in flames and can scarcely move. Our ships are bombarding her, and will soon sink her."

Chaplain Paisy, crossing himself, exclaimed:

"Lord, help us to overthrow our cruel adversary."

Thereupon I turned over in my mind the strangeness of human institutions. Those designed for war purposes are the most solidly constructed, for men of genius have been working to perfect them for thousands of years. For my part, like most of my comrades, I was by no means eager to make war on the Japanese, men dressed in blue much like ourselves, and involved with us in a common misfortune. All the same, I performed my duties more or less conscientiously. If I had been ordered to do gunner's work, I should have obeyed, however much it went against the grain.

The wounded grew livelier at the news that a Japanese warship was on fire. I, too, was inflamed by the joy which one feels, when out shooting, at having killed the game. Glancing at the man from whom I had learned so much, Engineer Vasilieff, I saw the same murderous light in his eyes. A dying bluejacket cried, with livid lips:

"Good, that means the accursed Japanese are getting their gruel too!"

But soon we learned that Saem had been mistaken. The burning vessel which could make little headway through the mist to starboard of our line was not Japanese at all, but our own flagship, the "Suvoroff." The "Oryol" had, by mistake, fired several shots at her. Great was the disappointment in the sick-bay, and several of the wounded cursed the senior boatswain for having misinformed us.

At this juncture we noticed that our ironclad had taken a list to starboard. Sick and hale looked at one another enquiringly, but none of them understood what was happening. Had we a serious hole below the water-line? Should we, within a few minutes, turn turtle like the "Oslyabya"? General disquiet prevailed. All eyes were fixed on the exits from the sick-bay, each man wondering whether he could get out first if the ship were about to sink, or whether he would be jammed amid the press of men struggling in the doorways and on the companion-ladders. Some were already moving to escape on deck. Of the wounded, not a few were raving in delirium; the others were silent, trying to distinguish the thunder of our own guns from the explosions of Japanese shells. The vessel shook, as if dreading the plunge into the abyss; and we trembled in unison, being but parts of the one great whole, and awaiting the same doom.

The list increased to 6°, but we were able to maintain our speed, and keep our position in the line. At one moment, when we paid off a little, the list increased. We felt that a wall of steel had cut us off for ever from life.

Memories of my mother rushed into my mind. Going up to Engineer Vasilieff, I said to him:

"My mother reads Polish. Indeed, she has about twenty Polish books which she knows almost by heart."

Vasilieff, taken aback, tried to understand what I was driving at, and answered:

"Is that so? Excellent. Does she know French as well?"

"No, Sir, she has never been in France."

Commander Sidoroff, in the conning-tower, was much disquieted by the list. Through the speaking-tube, he got into touch with Lieutenant Burnasheff and Engineer-Artificer Rums, who were in the central post:

"See if you can do anything to get the ship back on an even keel."

Rums immediately mounted to the upper deck, to discover the cause of the list. He found that the gunners were to blame. Being embarrassed by the presence of large quantities of water on the battery-deck, they had opened the starboard water-tight doors without asking permission of the officers in the magazines. Consequently the lower parts of the ship were inundated to starboard between the thirty-second and the forty-fourth ribs.

It was a good thing for us that the list was to starboard and not to port, for the sheathing had been breached in various places on

the port beam, and temporary repairs of these apertures had not yet been effected. Thus had we had a list to port we might have been hopelessly inundated, and have suffered the fate of the "Oslyabya."

Rums, however, had sufficient water let in to port to trim the vessel. Then the pumps were set in action to discharge the inundation from both sides.

There were three artillery officers on the "Oryol." Two of them, Lieutenant Shamsheff and Lieutenant Ryumen, having been disabled, Commander Sidoroff sent for the third, Lieutenant Hirs, to take over duty in the conning-tower.

Hirs was the second gunner-officer, an efficient man, who hitherto, during the engagement, had been in command of the bow starboard 6-inch turret. Able artillerist though he was, it had never occurred to him that the reserve shells ought to have been fired first. At the moment when he was summoned to the conning-tower, the enemy warships which were blocking our route were raking us with their fire. The "Oryol's" starboard turret had fiercely replied. Lieutenant Hirs ordered a quartermaster to take charge, and went to the exit—a tall, lean man, his energetic countenance decorated with blond whiskers. Just as he was opening the armour-plate door, the reserve shells exploded, as had happened some time before in the adjoining turret. Nevertheless, he was able to open the door, and, without a cap, his face scorched, quitted the turret where a number of wounded men were writhing in agony on the floor. On his way to the conning-tower he met some stretcher-bearers, and ordered them to go to the turret and see to the injured, but, regardless of his own hurts he went ahead, determined to obey Commander Sidoroff's order. Hardly had he set foot on the bridge when another shell ignited the wood beneath his feet, and he was again surrounded by flames. Undaunted, he made for the conning-tower, saluted as if at a review, and said:

"Here I am, Commander."

Perceiving that Sidoroff did not recognise him, he explained simply:

"Lieutenant Hirs, Sir. You sent for me."

The explanation was needed, for he was unrecognisable. His clothing, burned in various places, hung in tatters; his hair, whiskers, and eyebrows were singed away. His lips were seared and bloated; the scalp was so much charred by the flames, that strips of skin hung in rags amid the red, denuded subcutaneous tissue. Our own guns

were firing continuously; the enemy's shells were hurtling through the air; at the instant of Hirs' arrival, one of our boats on the upper deck was smashed into flinders. The lieutenant, however, seemed to pay no heed. His haggard eyes fixed upon Sidoroff, he stood quietly awaiting the commander's orders.

For a few seconds only, then he tottered, and almost fell. Two bluejackets ran to his aid, and, sustaining him by the arms, helped him into the conning-tower, where he sank on to the deck, murmuring hoarsely:

"Water!"

II

Towards ½ o'clock, the artillery struggle ceased once more. For the second time the enemy lost sight of us in the mist. As during the first phase of the battle, our squadron paid off to starboard, turning eastward for a while, and then resuming a southward course. The fog having cleared a little and disclosed us, the Japanese followed us tenaciously. Now we set our course to the west. Soon afterwards, Rear-Admiral Nebogatoff, noticing that the squadron was without a commander, and believing Felkerzam to have gone down with the "Oslyabya," took charge, and hoisted the signal:

"Steer N. 23° E."

Thus during the second period of the engagement our vessels described a complete circle.

Several conflagrations were raging on the "Oryol." Her decks were thick with smoke, which trailed across the waters. The men poured up through the hatchways, and streamed out of the turrets. They looked bemused, as if asking one another in alarm: "What is going to happen now?" Stoker Baklanoff, waddling on his stumpy legs, appeared on deck with the others, and, coming up to me, said gloomily:

"Well, the Japs have just about cooked our goose, haven't they?"

The most important task now was to extinguish the fires. All available hands were detailed to assist the fire-fighting brigade. Torn hose-pipes were replaced by sound ones from spare stock. Soon, however, a rumour spread through the ship that a conflagration had broken out in the magazine beneath the middle 6-inch starboard turret. The men at work there fled in terror, while smoke was vomited by the ammunition hoists, filling the turret and forming grey wreaths on the battery deck. A catastrophe seemed imminent, and many of

us were terror-stricken. The ship's complement was on the verge of panic. Discordant cries were raised:

"Inform Commander Sidoroff."

"Flood the magazine."

"Jump overboard. That's our only hope."

Some seized lifebelts; others ran to get their hammocks with cork mattresses. From moment to moment, we expected the ship to blow up. One would hardly imagine any form of sudden death to be worse than another, yet somehow it seemed a less dreadful prospect to be slain by an enemy shell than for us all to go to glory together through the explosion of our own magazine. The men who had been able to procure lifebelts or hammocks, flocked to the side, but at the supreme moment they lacked courage to fling themselves into the sea. Vainly did they scan the grey waters for a glimpse of land. Their only chance would be that of rescue by one of the ships that followed, and who could tell whether, in the present emergency, these would stop to pick up drowning men. Still, if one man had flung himself overboard, the rest would have followed his example. The officers could not have restrained them, for only three were left on duty, the others being dead or in the sick-bay. In two or three minutes the "Oryol" would have been deserted. But at this juncture Stoker Baklanoff shouted:

"What the hell's the matter with you? I'll go and see what's up down below."

Without losing an instant, he disappeared into the smoking turret, on his way to the magazine. The men stared at him open-mouthed, terrified but admiring. Why did Baklanoff take this risk? My readers know that he had little love for the service, cared nothing for rewards or the praise of his superiors. In fact he was often regarded as a shirker. Nevertheless, he had a firmness of character which set him above his shipmates. His determination to investigate the nature of the threatening disaster, evoked approval and stayed a panic—which is an even worse catastrophe than the risk of explosion. After a few minutes of strained silence, Baklanoff reappeared, undismayed, and (to every one's astonishment) safe and sound. Half-stifled, indeed, by the smoke, he planted himself in front of his comrades, legs wide apart, and coughing while he wiped the water from his eyes with grimy hands. The bluejackets flocked round him, pestering him with questions, to which he replied with a volley of abuse:

"Pack of idiots that you are, your heads are as empty as a dried

bladder. I should like to know how so many fools can have been got together on one ship! Cowards. You're only fit to fight cockroaches in the kitchen!"

These invectives were strangely comforting. We felt the satisfaction of the faithful whose preacher rails against their sins, and were ready to kneel before a man who brought us the glad tidings of salvation, or at any rate of deliverance from death.

At length he told us what was amiss. The ventilating fan of the turret had got jammed, while the ventilating shaft between the magazine and the turret was still in working order. Since smoke was pouring into the magazine from one of the minor fires in the bowels of the ship, naturally the turret had been filled with fumes. The order to flood the magazine was cancelled, much to the delight of the gunners, for the water would have spread to other magazines, putting the whole group of turrets out of action.

Having explained matters, Stoker Baklanoff went down from the upper deck, remarking as he departed:

"Damn it all, this business has made me as hungry as a hunter once more!"

Taking advantage of a temporary lull in the bombardment, our men succeeded in extinguishing all the fires, and in setting the ship to rights as far as possible. The upper deck was encumbered with litter; fragments of broken gangway-ladders, shell-splinters, pieces of torn wire hawsers, scraps of planking from shattered boats. This raffle was flung overboard. Accommodation ladders were fitted in place of the destroyed iron means of communication between the bridges and the decks. The holes in the side were plugged with wooden frames, hammocks, and rolls of canvas. The gunners worked busily to refit their pieces for action.

Even when these temporary repairs had been finished, the "Oryol" looked like a monster that has been badly slashed and maimed. Large portions of the upper works had been shot away, and the gangway between the fore-bridge and the after-bridge had been torn from its standards and twisted like a corkscrew. Both the anchor chains had been broken, and the starboard hawse-hole was at the bottom of the sea. The mainmast, having been hit by a shell at the level of the lower bridge, was likely to break off at any moment. The shrouds of both masts were torn in many places, and flapped lamentably in the wind. The electrically worked davits of the steam pinnaces had been broken. The planking of the deck had been

furrowed by the enemy fire; and to starboard, where a huge area had been destroyed, the deck was impassable. The fresh-water cistern on the forecastle had been pierced again and again, and the system of piping for the distribution of drinking-water throughout the ship was hopelessly disorganised. The men working in the magazines and the stokeholes, where the temperature was over 100° F., had to be supplied with water in buckets and saucepans.

The "Oryol" was furnished with ten row-boats, two ordinary steam pinnaces, and two torpedo-launches. As I looked at the shattered fragments of these, I recalled what Engineer Vasilieff had said to me a month before the battle, after returning from an engineers' conference which had been held on the flagship:

"I proposed that all the row-boats and steam pinnaces on the battleships should be sent on board the transports, for they will only serve to start fires when the battle comes. Besides, they overload us, and we should be more stable without them. But the admiral and his staff would not listen to my counsel."

It was now obvious that Vasilieff had had more insight than Rozhestvensky. Not one of our boats was left uninjured. They were a mass of charred wreckage. If the "Oryol" were to sink, we should have to trust to our capacity as swimmers, or to the chance of clinging to a life-belt or a cork mattress.

A good many of the ammunition hoists were out of gear, only those that supplied the 75-mm. guns being workable. Furthermore, the rails on the battery deck had been in great measure destroyed, this being an additional hindrance to the supply of the guns with shells. The apparatus for training the large-calibre and medium-calibre pieces upon their targets was likewise injured, so that our gunners (not particularly competent at the best of times) would be more inclined than ever to fire at random.

In a word, the effective force of the "Oryol" as a fighting unit was reduced by considerably more than half.

The battle was about to enter upon a new phase. To starboard, somewhat astern, appeared Admiral Togo's first division. These six warships, which showed no signs of damage, steered a course parallel with ours, and rapidly overhauled us. Once more the "action stations" was sounded on the "Oryol," and seemed to us like a funeral knell. Reluctantly and gloomily, the men went to their posts, to meet this final test. At six o'clock in the evening, fire was reopened both by the Japanese and ourselves. Only our starboard

guns were in working order. Half an hour later, Admiral Kamimura, with his six ironclads, also arrived upon the scene.

In our squadron there began anew the butchery of men whose only crime was that they had been born.

The "Borodino," at the head of our line, was, of course, the enemy's chief target. Still, the "Oryol" had a fair share of Japanese missiles. It seemed, from time to time, as if huge pincers must have gripped the side of the battleship, biting out great chunks of armour-plate. Our only chance of safety was furnished by the sheathing; but the battery deck projected no more than five feet above the water-line, whereas the waves were seven or eight feet high. Consequently the water flowed freely over this deck, running below, and seriously increasing the list whenever we veered to port or starboard.

Engineer Parfenoff was in command of the starboard engine-room, while his assistant, Engineer Sklyarevsky occupied a similar position in the port engine-room. Throughout the voyage from Kronstadt to Tsushima, they had worked day and night to train their subordinates, who were therefore far more competent than the gunners or other hands.

Parfenoff had his special seat in the engine-room, beside the telegraph, the pressure-gauge and other registering apparatus, and the speaking-tubes. His soiled overall was open, and showed his hairy chest; his cap was thrust to the back of his head, disclosing his high, shiny forehead; while droplets of sweat rolled down his face and shone like pearls in his beard. Continually he watched the pressure-gauge, the telegraph, the revolution-indicator, etc. From time to time orders came from the conning-tower to increase or to reduce speed. These were simple, and did not disturb him. The vital changes when a ship is in action are "stop" or "reverse" and "full-speed astern," for on instant obedience to these directives the life of a vessel depends. While watching the work of his engines, Parfenoff also eyed his subordinates. How would they behave, should things go badly? If, seized with panic, they made for the ladders, would he be able to control them by threats and curses, or would he have to shoot some of them in order to intimidate the rest?

In engine-rooms and stoke-holes, work was even more arduous than on deck, though the men were not directly exposed to the enemy fire. Sparkling in the electric light, the huge piston-rods moved rhythmically, well oiled and noiseless. The artificers stripped to the waist, were busy keeping all the parts greased. Shut off from the

outer world, they knew nothing of what went on overhead, except that they could hear the thunder of our guns and feel the shocks caused by the striking and the explosion of enemy shells. Here, far below the water-line, underneath the armoured deck (whose hatchways were battened down), in the realm of steel and machinery, there was practically no risk of being killed or wounded by shell-splinters. But every one at work there knew very well what awaited him should the ship sink.

Suddenly the starboard engine-room became filled with noxious fumes, blinding and stifling the men. One of the artificers, rushing up to Parfenoff, asked in a voice of terror:

“Are we done for, Sir?”

The engineer officer’s only answer was to shout:

“Stop the aspirating ventilators!”

Instantly the air cleared, but the temperature rose to above 140° F. It was extremely hard to work under these conditions, when the men were in a sort of baker’s oven.

The same thing happened in the port engine-room.

A few shell-splinters made their way into the engine-rooms, down the ventilating shafts, but luckily none of them damaged vital parts of the machinery.

In the fore-stoke-hole, one of the main steam-pipes burst, and the place was filled with scalding steam. Engineer Rusanoff and Quartermaster Mazaeff succeeded in turning off the steam and putting the boiler out of action before any one was hurt. The remaining nineteen boilers were able to supply a sufficiency of steam for the main engines and the necessary apparatus.

When approaching Tsushima Strait, we had, as far as possible, stripped the “Oryol” of wooden furniture and fitments, throwing them overboard. But this did not prevent the outbreak of fires. Gun-covers, life-belts, rubber piping, the hose for fire-fighting (!), the packing of the steam-pipes, mattresses, sacks, hammocks, hempen cordage, oakum, the furnishings of the officers’ cabins and the upper deck, the deck itself wherever it had been grooved by shell-fire, and the wreckage of the boats—all were blazing merrily. Besides inspiring general alarm, these conflagrations hindered communication between various parts of the ship, and interfered with the gunners in their work, continually threatening them with the danger of an explosion in the magazines. Sometimes the gun-crews were smoked out of the turrets as bees are smoked out of a

hive. The optical apparatus were rendered useless by the dimming of the glass.

Furthermore, these fires had a disastrous effect upon the morale of the crew. A conflagration at sea is more terrible than one on shore, for though in the latter case it destroys goods and houses, it does not necessarily endanger life.

Our battleship continued to burn amid the watery waste, though there is a natural hostility between the two elements, fire and water. The flames were devouring the interior of this ship which contained hundreds of men. The surrounding sea was being churned up by an unceasing hail of shells. Yet amid this inferno, this chaos, every one had to stick to his post: in the turrets, the casemates, the magazines, the torpedo-rooms, the engine-rooms, the stoke-holes, the sick-bay, the repairing-shop, etc. Those in charge of the range-finders, the speaking-tubes, and what not, must continue their work, just as gunners under fire must stick to their guns. "Carry on whatever happens" is the rule, if a battleship is to be saved. The lives of the men depend upon the life of the vessel; and that, in turn, depends upon the unflinching courage of the men. As long as the "Oryol" kept afloat and under way, every one on board not yet fatally injured had a chance of survival.

Our only defence against the flames was water—which was at the same time a deadly enemy. Pouring over the upper deck, it fell in torrents upon the lower decks, rushed in through the shell-holes, and descended into the bowels of the ship by way of the damaged ammunition hoists. We had by this time more than five hundred tons of water washing about down below, and Engineer Rums, with his corps of artificers, was hard put to it to pump out the bilge. What was in some sort protecting us from the fire, threatened to sink us in the sea.

On the operation-table a severely wounded man was groaning, while Chief-Surgeon Makaroff was stitching a laceration in this patient's great omentum. Just as Makaroff turned to say something to the dresser who was assisting, a large-calibre shell hit the ironclad on the starboard beam, close to the sick-bay. The ship was violently shaken, and vibrated like a huge drum. One had the feeling that the "Oryol" was a living organism whose ribs had been so forcibly struck that its viscera must have been injured. All who were standing in the sick-bay lost their footing. Makaroff fell upon the unhappy patient, who yelled with pain. The rest of us rose painfully. Within

a few seconds, another shell registered a hit, again to starboard, extinguishing the electric light. Groans were heard on all sides, and there would undoubtedly have been a panic had not the chief-surgeon quietly called out:

“Be calm, lads. It’s all right. Pull yourselves together.”

The candles kept for such an emergency were promptly lighted. By their pallid flames, I saw my companions’ haggard faces, terror-stricken eyes; and I watched a bluejacket who was badly injured in the chest get on to his hands and knees to vomit—over his neighbour on the floor! Another, while his bandaged head twitched, was clutching the iron wall, breaking his nails as he did so.

Captain Yung, recumbent on a mattress, was muttering in delirium:

“Your Excellency, what is the plan of action? . . . Give me my dismissal. . . . Cowardice is intolerable to me. . . . Your Excellency. . . . Your brain is quaking like a jelly.”

Then he shouted:

“Send all the non-commissioned officers on deck!”

Many of the other sufferers were delirious, and their lamentable utterances in the half-light made my head spin.

The electricians succeeded in splicing the torn electric cable. My mouth was parched, and I hastened to get myself a drink of water. But as I was drinking, the glass dropped from my hand. There had been a tremendous explosion close to the ladder just outside, with a noise like that of a house falling down, and the next moment the sick-bay was filled with smoke and stifling gases. Yells of fear added to the disorder, and neither adjurations nor curses from the officers could hinder a panic flight towards the exit. This went on for a couple of minutes, until Engineer Vasilieff stopped the inlet ventilating fan, the air became respirable once more, and comparative calm was restored.

The list of 6° to starboard continued. Some of the water-tight partitions had been loosened by the battering of shells. Besides this, the water retained on the battery-deck had accumulated to starboard. Our chief longing, therefore, was to have the vessel restored to an even keel.

The surgeons and their trained assistants went on working, though their activities seemed futile. If we were within a few minutes to be sunk and drowned inside this mass of shattered ironwork, what matter whether a wound was dressed or not?

The smell of blood and antiseptics made me feel sick. My brain

could no longer react to new impressions. At length, having reached the end of the tether, I went to the upper deck regardless of danger. The signal "repel torpedo-attack" was being sounded. No enemy torpedo-boat was in sight! Afterwards we were told that this false alarm had been a device of Commander Sidoroff, who wanted to get together the gunners attached to the small calibre pieces, that he might set them to work upon fighting the flames. At this moment a Japanese shell struck the water nearby, and made a great splash. Rebounding, long and black like a dolphin, the 6-cwt. missile hit the upper bridge. There was a burst of flame encircled with black smoke. A current of hot air knocked me endwise, and I felt as if I must have been shattered to bits like dust blown before the wind. Then, much to my surprise, I found that I was uninjured, verifying the fact by fingering my head, my body, and my limbs. Wounded men, uttering loud cries, were running away in all directions. Two blue-jackets had been killed. A third, flung close beside me, remained motionless for a few seconds, and then clambered swiftly on to one knee as if carrying out an order. Casting terrified glances around, he seemed prepared to take to flight, though his entrails were hanging out of his torn belly like rags emerging from an open trunk. His fear changed into astonishment as he looked down at the gaping wound, and, with a convulsive and wellnigh unconscious movement, endeavoured to thrust the guts back into their place. He uttered not a word, but pushed and packed as hastily as if he could save his life by avoiding delay. Death was kind in claiming him without more ado, for he fell inanimate with a howl like that of a wild beast.

I was eager to get below, but was detained by cries of:

"The 'Borodino'! Look at the 'Borodino'!"

Two or three minutes before, on reaching the upper deck, I had glanced at this ironclad. Leading the squadron, she had a marked list to starboard, and was enveloped in flames. Her bridges and the admiral's cabin were on fire, while tongues of flame spouted from the gun-ports and other apertures, and threw a lurid light on the encircling waters. What I now witnessed, filled me with anguish. The "Borodino" lay right over on her starboard beam, and then, after a last defiant salvo from her stern 12-inch turret, turned keel uppermost.

This was at 7.10 p.m.

Passing the capsized "Borodino" on our starboard, we steamed ahead.

I had witnessed so many horrors during the engagement, that my senses might have been numbed. However, this last terrible vision has remained indelibly impressed upon my memory.

Of the first division, only our "Oryol" was left as a fighting unit, but so much knocked about as to be of little value. Still, she had to take the lead, and thus draw upon herself a concentration of the Japanese gunfire.

The day was drawing to a close. Amid massed clouds on the western horizon, red streamers radiated from the setting sun—streamers like long bleeding wounds. The wind continued to stir the empurpled waves. Only a few minutes were left before darkness would fall, and these minutes would decide our fate. Like a butterfly clinging to a tree during a storm, I leaned against the wall of the 6-inch starboard fore-turret, unable to shake off the torpor which had seized me. One might have thought that another will than my own had taken charge of my destiny. Anyhow it would surely be better to be blown out of existence by a shell in the open air than to perish slowly of suffocation in the bowels of a sunken ship, like the unfortunates on the "Borodino."

The shells now seemed to be falling on and around us out of a riven sky, instead of being fired at us by an enemy. The "Oryol" was no more than a floating brazier. From the after-bridge, red tongues of flame rose, twisting upwards, almost to the level of the main-top. The wind blew the smoke into long ribbons. I found it hard to understand how my nerves endured any longer, just as I found it hard to understand how the ironclad continued to forge ahead amid the explosions and the jets of water caused by them.

Taking a handkerchief out of my pocket, I absent-mindedly unfolded it. In one corner my mother had embroidered in blue letters my initials "A.N." She had given me this handkerchief during my last spell of home-leave. I had not hitherto used it, but had mechanically taken it out of my kit-bag on the morning before the battle. Still leaning against the starboard turret, I wiped my face. Though I had not even a scratch, there was blood upon the handkerchief, splashed on to my face doubtless from another's wounds. I wondered idly: "Will it be possible to wash out the stain?"

The formidable images of this concluding phase of the engagement penetrated to my brain through the tiny apertures of the pupils. Our ship was pretty nearly done for, and was making a supreme effort to reply to the Japanese bombardment. I was convinced that the

end was at hand, and yet, in the surface of my mind I could only think: "Soda will surely cleanse the blood-stain from my handkerchief, but it will make the blue of the initials run." A flaming star, as large as a child's head, passed so close to me that my face was scorched. It was a white-hot shell-splinter, which buried itself in the deck ten or twelve feet away. Round where it had struck, writhing golden serpents radiated. Suddenly I was blinded, overturned, crushed. I felt as if some monster of the deep had seized me, and was dragging me overboard. But it was nothing worse than a huge jet of water raised by an exploding shell. When I got to my feet again, I saw that all the Japanese vessels were sheering away from us to starboard, on a north-easterly course. From their stern turrets came a farewell discharge at the burning "Oryol." In the failing light they had underestimated the range, so forty shells fell almost simultaneously into the sea behind our poop, and raised sparkling waterspouts. Thus ended the day's fight.

III

Night fell rapidly.

The "Nicholas I," flying the flag of Rear-Admiral Nebogatoff, steamed ahead of us, having hoisted the signal:

"Follow me. Course N. 23° E."

Thus within a few minutes the flagship was leading the squadron, the "Oryol" occupying the second place. After us came the "Apraksin," the "Senyavin," and the other ironclads which had hitherto suffered little damage.

At this moment the enemy torpedo flotilla appeared on the horizon. These destroyers were to play the part which cavalry plays in a land action: to finish off a disorganised and retreating adversary. Grouped in small detachments, the destroyers advanced to attack us from the north, the east, and the south. Compared with the battleships, they looked like innocent toys. Waves were continually sweeping their decks, but, in their rapid progress, they threw off the water to right and to left. Toys though they might seem, we knew that each of them represented a huge destructive force. Any one of their torpedoes, well aimed, any one of these independently motile cigars charged in the nozzle with a couple of hundredweight of high explosive, could sink an ironclad. Our destruction was imminent.

Panic seized the squadron. The "Nicholas I" ported her helm,

and the other vessels did the same, some keeping line, the others turning independently. The net upshot was that our fleet was thrown into disorder. Still, by the time we were all heading southward the column had been reconstituted.

Our cruisers and destroyers, which had hitherto, with the transports, been following the battleships, were now, in our new formation, having also put about, steaming ahead of us. The moment had come for them to close in round us in order to protect us from the Japanese destroyers. This was a most elementary demand of the logic of the situation. But nothing of the sort happened. Their behaviour was almost inconceivable. Moving southward at top speed, they vanished into the darkness. Why, one cannot but ask, did Rear-Admiral Enkvist, who was in command of the cruiser division, take this line of action? Anyhow, only one cruiser, the "Zumrud," stood by us, and Admiral Nebogatoff ordered her to steam parallel with the "Nicholas I," on the latter's port beam.

A luminous signal from the flagship gave the directive:

"Speed 13 knots. Put about. Course N. 23° E."

The clouds hung low over the sea, and the wind whistled. Amid the blackness of the night, foam danced on the crests of the waves, looking spectrally white. The ironclads flashed their search-lights upon the approaching destroyers. The crackle of machine-guns was added to the sharp reports of small-calibre pieces. From time to time the roar of a heavy gun devastated the night. The enemy destroyers, barely visible, retired before our fierce fire, but soon returned to the attack from a different quarter.

The four leading ironclads, one of which was the "Oryol," on which the conflagrations had at length been extinguished, advanced without lights except for a stern lantern on each, so masked as to be invisible abeam, but sufficient to enable us to retain our formation. Rear-Admiral Nebogatoff, during his voyage to the Far East, had trained his detachment to keep line in this way without showing masthead or side lights. The training proved useful, though unfortunately some of the vessels that brought up the rear were continually disclosing the ironclads by an incautious use of search-lights.

The "Oryol," now under the orders of Nebogatoff, abstained, like the "Nicholas I," from using her search-lights, but for a simpler reason. All six of them had been destroyed by shell-splinters. We tried to use the search-lights of the steam pinnaces, for these had been stowed away safely below the armoured deck before the fight

began. Our electricians, under the command of Torpedo-Lieutenant Modzalevsky, connected them with the main electric cable, fed by our largest dynamo, but the resulting light was so feeble that it could serve only to reveal our position to the enemy instead of enabling us to sight the Japanese torpedo-boats. To the great disappointment of officers and crew, the attempt had to be abandoned. Probably this was all the better for us!

Only a moderate number of our guns were still fit for use: one of the 12-inch pieces in the bow turret (the breech of the other had been shot away); the guns in the starboard 6-inch turret, though these could only be trained and loaded by hand; and the four 47-mm. guns on the bridges. The 12-inch stern turret was also fit for service, but there were only four shells left, and these were held in store for the possibility of a renewed attack by Japanese battleships. We still had a few valid 75-mm. pieces, but could not use them, because as soon as we opened the gun-ports the battery deck was inundated. The other turrets and casemates had either been completely destroyed, or else were so much damaged that their repair would be a lengthy dockyard business.

Such were the "Oryol's" inadequate means of repelling a torpedo attack. Furthermore the ship had no less than three hundred holes, of various sizes. They were all above the water-line, if the sea had been calm, but the waves broke into many of them. The water-tight partitions had been so much shaken that many of them no longer deserved their name. In the bilges there were more than five hundred tons of water, which was gaining on us despite our best efforts at the pumps.

I resumed my ordinary avocations as paymaster's steward. The paymaster, Lieutenant Burnasheff, told off my immediate chief, Pyatovsky, and myself to distribute emergency rations. We did this in the stern torpedo-room, which was brightly lit by electricity. Men, arriving post-haste from various parts of the ship, formed up in line. Of course their number had been greatly reduced by casualties, and those who came were but representatives of sections; but the rationing was strictly controlled, under the supervision of Chief Paymaster's Steward Pyatovsky. Paymaster Burnasheff also looked on, without the customary expression of nonchalance on his pimply and blubber-lipped visage. Indeed, he was quite lively, and asked each man in turn:

"Where are you from?"

"The magazine of the middle port turret," the man would reply, for instance.

"How many are on duty there?"

"Twelve, Sir."

"All right. Three tins."

Thereupon, Pyatovsky made a note of the man's name, the section he came from, and the number of tins.

When Torpedo-Hand Privalikhin's turn came, and Pyatovsky asked, "How many?" the man replied:

"Two, Sir."

"But one box has to do for four persons; that's a quarter of a pound of meat for each."

"Well, Sir, we shall share out with the two men at the wheel."

"Very good, but see that there's no hanky-panky!"

One of the greasers, whose overall was befouled with oil and smuts, lost his temper with the paymaster, refused to accept the offered tins, and clambered swiftly up the ladder that led to the battery deck. For some time his oaths and grumbles floated to us from the torpedo-room:

"A fine sort of officer, that. As close-fisted as a miser. Look at the way he walks, quite unsteady on his pins. When he has to jump overboard, we'll fill his pockets with his damned tins, to make sure he sinks."

The lieutenant could hear these invectives perfectly well. His thick lips curled in a smile:

"What's the matter with that chap? Drunk, d'you suppose?"

"Yes, Sir, drunk with his own sweat," answered one of the bluejackets.

Burnasheff made no comment, staring the group out of countenance, with the expression of a man who looks at a swamp he has to cross.

Stoker Baklanoff was always on hand when victuals were being distributed. Now he approached the paymaster, and, with breath that stank of vodka, said in a blarneying tone:

"A pity, Your Honour, to hand out so many tins. Besides, one for four men is surely too much? All that good food will make them sleepy. They'll curl up for a nap, and there'll be no one left to defend the ship. For my part, not a morsel has passed my lips since yesterday. No appetite, you see. Can think of nothing but the defence of the country."

"Don't try to humbug me, you rogue," replied the paymaster. "How many tins do you need?"

"It's for three stoke-holes, Your Honour. Five will be plenty."

"Give him five."

I understood very well the cupidity of Pyatovsky, who had been a well-to-do peasant, and who, in the navy, had risen to the grade of chief paymaster's steward. I had had talks with him during the voyage. His dream was to "squeeze" enough money out of the State in order to open a shop somewhere when his term of service was finished. But I was puzzled by the niggardliness of Burnasheff, who owned a large estate in the Orel government, and was a wealthy man; yet he watched over each box of emergency rations with an eagle eye, being as stingy as his subordinate the Kulak, when the guns were thundering overhead and we were in imminent risk of being sent to the bottom.

Making some excuse to get away for a moment, I climbed the ladder to the battery deck. The twilight was almost completely finished. To avoid advertising our position to the enemy, the deck was lighted only by blue-glass incandescents, which emitted a sepulchral gleam. The ship was rolling in a feeble but alarming manner. Waves formed on the water which had inundated the battery deck, and they reflected the sheen of steel. When the "Oryol" listed and was slow to recover, a sinister splash came from the depressed side. My head aching, I paddled hither and thither. Everything was so unfamiliar that I could hardly believe it was our "Oryol." She had been tremendously battered—witness the smashed partitions, the ammunition hoists knocked to fragments, the yawning gaps in her sides. In the wan light, I could scarcely recognise my shipmates, officers and men, who moved jerkily, with pallid faces and sunken eyes. I felt as if among corpses fruitlessly re-animated. This macabre impression was intensified by the dead bodies of Midshipman Shupinsky and a number of bluejackets. No one had found time to remove them, and they lolloped from side to side in the water as the ship rolled.

Whereas on the upper deck all efforts were concentrated on repelling a torpedo attack, here the main concern was for the ship's stability. Midshipman Karpoff with his fire-party, Engineer Rums with the ablest artificers he could muster, and the quartermasters with a squad of carpenters and bluejackets, were at work upon the holes through which we were shipping heavy seas. Some of these were no larger than a man's hand, but there were so many of them

that, taken together, they admitted large quantities of water as the waves broke against the "Oryol's" flanks. They were being plugged with billets of wood, or rolls of greased canvas. To stanch the larger apertures was a more difficult matter. No one had suspected that the steersmen's quarters were flooded. When the door was opened there came a great rush of water, with a consequent panic. Cries of alarm filled the night.

Believing that all the prow of the ship was inundated, some of us began to make a bolt for it. A shout from Boatswain Murzin soon put a stop to this:

"Where are you cowards bound for? Come back!"

The gaping orifice was plugged with mattresses reinforced with planking kept in place by stays. A good deal of time and hard work were expended over this job.

There were, however, just as many holes in other parts of the ship. The side of Lieutenant Larionoff's cabin had been ripped away over an area five to six feet square, but, fortunately, the edges of the rent were so straight and regular that they looked as if they had been cut with shears. This made a temporary repair much easier. On the other hand, the hole in the hundredth lateral compartment was of such a character that to put matters to rights was exceedingly difficult. A 12-inch shell had torn so ragged an orifice that no wooden framework could be fitted against it. In vain did the artificers hammer the twisted edges and try to planish them. At length Midshipman Karpoff said:

"Bring blankets and matting, and be quick about it."

Only thus was it possible to arrest the inflow of water.

A huge hole in the forecastle was the most dangerous of all. Here the electric fittings had been destroyed, so the work was done by the light of hand electric-torches, which were only switched on intermittently, to avoid arousing the enemy's attention. The men worked chiefly by feel in the darkness, as they carried out Engineer Rums' orders, and exclaimed or swore from time to time when they knocked against an obstacle. They were standing waist-deep in water.

One heard waspish observations:

"For God's sake steady the planks on your shoulders."

"Give some support, can't you?"

"Why the devil did you jam that piece of timber in my face?"

"Stuff in some blankets, you lubber."

"Blast you, you're treading on my foot."

Engineer Rums switched on his torch for a few seconds, and in the dim light could be seen the curved backs and strained faces of those who were trying to fix a temporary barricade against a shell-hole as high as a man. Several times it seemed as if they were on the point of succeeding, but then would come a fresh wave, sweeping the men off their feet and undoing their work. These foreign waters were at enmity with us, demanding victims. But the workers were steadfast, and renewed their endeavours again and again.

At length Rums cried:

"No use, lads. We shall never manage it this way; must tackle the job from outside."

A kind of tin-plate plaster was fixed externally and the men who did this were continually exposed to the risk of being swept away. At length the end was gained, and the amount of water entering through the leak was reduced by at least two-thirds.

In the same manner was repaired an enormous cavity in the seventy-first lateral compartment.

On the battery deck about fifty men were sweeping water towards the pumps or bailing it overboard in buckets and other utensils. Though their labours were unremitting, the quantity of surplus water diminished very slowly. At any rate such was our impression, no doubt because we were so eager to see the last of it.

This corps was under the command of Boatswain Voevodin. He had lost his usual equanimity. His cap thrust far to the back of his head, he ran excitedly from one group to another, shouting (as if to keep up his own courage):

"Stick to it, my lads, stick to it! Don't lose heart. Better to get ashore where you can drink and cuddle a wench again, than to sink here in deep water and end your life in the belly of a shark."

Engineer Vasilieff now came up from the sick-bay, aided by Quartermaster Osip Fedoroff, and hobbling on his crutches. He wanted to see what was being done on deck, and, perhaps, to put in a word of advice. He was moving to starboard when the ship heeled considerably in that direction, so that he was in water up to his knees. Extricating himself, he jostled against me.

"Hullo, Novikoff," he said, "Glad to see you're still safe and sound!"

"Yes, all right so far, Sir," I answered.

There was a noise of hammering, for the ammunition hoist of the 75-mm. battery was being repaired.

We halted beside the hatchway of the repairing-shop.

Vasilieff, glancing round to see that there were no eavesdroppers, whispered:

"It's a miracle we're afloat. We may turn turtle and sink any moment."

"But why?" I asked in astonishment.

"Very simple, as you'll see when I explain. Two hours ago I had a talk with Engineer Rums. We came to an extremely disconcerting conclusion. The stokers have only a moderate amount of coal down below. Then we asked the gunners, and learned that during the engagement they had fired more than four hundred tons of projectiles, all brought up from the magazines below the water-line. That means that the weight of the ship has been seriously reduced in that quarter. On the other hand, there are at least two hundred tons of water on the battery deck. Less weight below the centre of flotation, and more above! In these circumstances, the stability of the 'Oryol' is so gravely reduced that she cannot endure a list exceeding 8°."

Vasilieff's words alarmed me as much as if he had put a pistol to my head.

We went into the repairing-shop. My friend had a violent headache, and lay down on one of the tables, asking me to find him something which would serve as pillow.

I improvised one by rolling up my tarpaulin.

When he felt a little better, I asked:

"Shouldn't we do well to go to the upper deck? I will help you."

Shading his eyes from the electric light, Vasilieff answered, with a melancholy smile:

"What's the use? If the 'Oryol' founders, even those who are not disabled won't have a dog's chance of survival. As for me, I'm a cripple, so I can't swim. I'd rather stay where I am, and get through with it quickly, without prolonging the agony. I see things clearly. Nine degrees is our limit. A heavier roll than usual, and we shall turn over. I asked Rums to inform Commander Sidoroff, and even sent the chief a written memorandum."

I went on deck alone. The darkness was so intense that it seemed to lie heavy on my shoulders. No sound but that of the winds and the waves, and the torn shrouds flapping against the mast. Also a partially detached piece of armour plate creaked and grated plaintively. Slowly my eyes became accustomed to the gloom, and I could dimly

make out surrounding objects. I groped my way towards the fore-bridge, moving with the utmost caution to avoid tumbling into the holes that gaped here and there. Often I had to retrace my steps and seek another route, while again I splashed through water up to the knees.

Suddenly I heard a cry of anguish:

“Help, help! I am drowning! Save me!”

Was it an officer or a bluejacket? Had he fallen overboard from the “Nicholas I,” steaming ahead of us, or was he one of the complement of a sunken ship? Who could tell? We could not stop to pick up a lone man when the condition of our ship was so precarious. Besides, we had no boats to lower. The voice was half choked, as if the poor wretch who uttered the cry was already on the point of drowning. How many such were scattered over the face of the waters, battling with the waves?

I reached the bridge. Leaning against the conning-tower was some one scanning the night through binoculars. I made out Zefiroff, senior signalman.

“Well, how goes it?” I asked.

“Afloat, anyhow; and perhaps we shall keep above water.”

“Where are we making for? Russian territory, or a neutral port?”

“The answer is plain enough. Since nine this evening the ‘Nicholas I’ has been leading us on a course N. 23° E.—that is to say towards Vladivostock.”

I could not but feel that Rear-Admiral Nebogatoff was making a big mistake. He must know that we were hopelessly defeated. A naval commander in such circumstances had but one thing to do: Save from complete destruction, or from surrender to the enemy, the remnant of the forces which had been entrusted to his care. Obviously a return voyage to the Baltic was, for the moment, impossible, but we could have sought safety by internment in the nearest Chinese port. Though left in supreme command by the fortune of war, Admiral Nebogatoff did not adopt this plan. In blind obedience to the orders issued by Rozhestvensky before the battle, he continued the attempt to force his way through to Vladivostock with what the Japanese had left afloat. Yet who could tell that the enemy would not attack us again at daybreak? Besides, had we reached Vladivostock with a few ships that had little combative value, these could not have affected the outcome of the war. Since the battle

opened, this was the fourth attempt we had made to steam through waters strongly held by the enemy. In our discouragement and exhaustion, we felt that we were being goaded forward by a hostile and implacable force—goaded to annihilation.

Zefiroff gave me some news:

"We just missed sinking the 'Izumrud,' which came too close to us on the port beam. Mistaking her for a Japanese warship, we opened fire, but luckily the four shells went wide."

At this moment there was a flash of purple flame on the port beam, and we heard a sound as of distant thunder.

"What was that, do you think?" I asked Zefiroff.

"Probably some ship that has blown up," he answered in a hoarse voice. "Or else she's been torpedoed."

In my mind's eye I saw the dreadful picture of a sinking vessel, and of her men struggling amid the waves. Were they Russians or Japanese? But the painful thought of these distant and invisible victims occupied less than half my consciousness, for my attention was chiefly concentrated upon our own ship for which a like fate was probably reserved. At either end of the bridge was a look-out man, scrutinising the horizon, and the master-gunners were waiting, ready to fire their 47-mm. pieces. On the roof of the 12-inch turret I vaguely discerned the tall form of Lieutenant Pavlinoff, who had stationed himself there the better to detect the approach of a Japanese destroyer. From time to time he shouted an order, whereupon his turret and the 6-inch starboard turret revolved towards the suspected quarter.

Now I looked into the conning-tower. Of the four officers remaining on duty there, only Torpedo-Lieutenant Modzalevsky was uninjured. Lieutenant Shamsheff sat on the floor, doubled up and groaning. Commander Sidoroff, utterly exhausted, leaned his bandaged head against the armour-plate wall. Lieutenant Modzalevsky and Midshipman Sakelari were, through the loopholes, watching the stern lamp of the "Nicholas I," our leader. Boatswain's Mate Kopyloff was at the wheel. He was our best steersman, knowing every detail of his craft, and ready for anything that could happen when an iron-clad changed her course. He had been on duty since early morning, when the Japanese scouting cruisers first appeared, and had stood unwaveringly behind the compass, though he bled freely from numerous wounds. Indeed, he had lost two fingers from his right hand. Look-out Man Shemyakin and Steersman Kazinets were also in the conning-tower.

"The admiral is paying off to port," announced Midshipman Sakelari.

"Follow him" answered Sidoroff, drawing himself up with a jerk.

Then, addressing Kopyloff, he added:

"But port your helm gently."

"Port it is, Sir, and gently," replied the helmsman.

As the "Oryol" ported, she took on a list to starboard, and one could hear the rush of water across the battery deck. The enemy fire had destroyed all our registering apparatus, but we had no need of them to be aware that the ironclad was on the point of capsizing. Her whole framework trembled as she listed. Dead silence prevailed in the conning-tower, where every one, like Zefiroff and myself outside, believed the supreme catastrophe to be at hand. Then, slowly returning to an even keel, we forged ahead on our new course.

"She's a good old bitch, after all, our 'Oryol,'" exclaimed Commander Sidoroff, with a sigh of relief.

A quarter of an hour afterwards, when we had again to head N. 23° E., we passed through similar moments of terror.

Presumably Rear-Admiral Nebogatoff was making such twists and turns to throw the enemy destroyers off the track. Each time, however, we lost sight of the flagship. The "Nicholas I" could pay off abruptly, whereas we could only describe a wide curve. On these occasions our guiding light vanished. Still, Zefiroff could see in the dark nearly as well as a cat, and he was always able to guide us into the wake of our leader.

"I have a shivering-fit," said the commander.

"Better go down to the sick-bay, Sir," advised Midshipman Sakelari.

Sidoroff was about to answer when he was interrupted by an agonising shout from the bridge:

"A destroyer! A destroyer!"

The starboard guns flashed and thundered.

"There's the torpedo!" screamed another voice.

I ran to the starboard end of the bridge, and stood petrified. Making a phosphorescent trail through the water, the enemy torpedo could be seen swiftly approaching. Destruction loomed before us, and nothing could be done to avert it. We could almost hear the beating of our hearts, and certainly we could count the seconds by the throbbing in our temples. Our thoughts were concentrated on

the question whether the torpedo would pass in front of us, or, hitting its mark, sink us within a minute or two.

But our hour had not yet struck! The torpedo pursued its shining course in front, missing our bow by a few feet. The men breathed freely once more.

Sidoroff, in his relief, could not restrain an oath, and then penitently exclaimed:

“Lord have mercy upon my sinful soul.”

Senior Signalman Zefiroff also gave vent to his feelings in a curse, saying:

“That blasted torpedo nearly got us, by God!”

He took off his cap, and banged it against his knee, as if to shake dust off it.

Every one—officers and men—said something absurd or irrelevant, like the utterances of a dream.

The Japanese torpedo-attack did not cease till after midnight. For nearly six hours it kept our nerves on the stretch. At length came a period of repose, when the enemy seemed to lose sight of their quarry.

Stoker Baklanoff suddenly turned up outside the conning-tower. Together we made for the after-bridge, where we had decided to spend the rest of the night. A good many of the crew were already there, supplied with hammocks or lifebelts. Baklanoff and I also found hammocks, and we sat down side by side, leaning against the mizen.

The waning moon rose and flooded the sea with silver light. Lovingly I hugged my hammock lined with cork, which, in case of disaster, might keep me afloat. I listened drowsily to the voice of my comrade:

“In how many churches and convents, now, they must be offering up prayers for our victory. Hundreds and thousands of priests and monks are lifting their eyes heavenward—but what use is it? God must have his ears plugged with cotton-wool. He hears nothing. Oh, well, if only I live through it, I’ll let a few people know what I think of their rotten old poojah!”

Slowly, as if burdened by crimes, the night drew to a close. But there is still to be described one scene which I shall never forget. It happened before I left the neighbourhood of the conning-tower. On the starboard bow, about a cable length away, I saw the outlines of a tiny warship, lit up by a search-light from one of our ironclads.

The little craft was a Japanese torpedo-boat. Battered by shells, with her boilers put out of action, she could not move. Her commander was not under cover, but exposed on the bridge. Evidently wishing to show the Russians his contempt for death, he was kneeling on one knee, his elbow poised on the other, and he smoked a cigarette as he watched the battleships go by. A large-calibre shell fired by a ship astern of us hit the torpedo-boat squarely abeam. When our "Oryol" in turn opened fire, it was too late. There was nothing left of this cockle-shell of a boat but a cloud of steam and smoke. The searchlight was extinguished, and the sea was again plunged in impenetrable darkness. But the vision of this engulfment was hard to dispel. No matter how often I might assure myself that none but "enemies" had been destroyed, my heart was wrung by the thought of how impassively, within a few minutes, death swallowed dozens of human lives in its inexorable maw.

IV

I matriculated from high school, doing very well in the examination. My dreams were, it seemed, to be fulfilled, and I looked forward to entering the University of Moscow as a student in the physico-mathematical faculty. I vowed to be both diligent and successful in the chosen path of a man of science. What luck for a youth born in a backwoods village! But my self-congratulation was premature, for I failed in mathematics—proving myself to be the greatest duffer in the world. The uniformed professor, a greybeard, fixed me with a glassy stare, and said, in a tone of devastating raillery:

"No good, young man. You're wasting others' time as well as your own. So ignorant are you, that I doubt if you even know your multiplication table. Can you tell me what eight times seven is?"

Yet I had always been fond of mathematics, and at high school had done well enough in the elementary branches. Here, under the professor's mocking glance, I could not answer the simplest question in arithmetic. What had happened to me? The class burst out laughing at my perplexity, as I stood in front of the huge blackboard. Turning round in confusion, I could see nothing but maimed and crippled men. Some had had their heads shot away; others, their faces squashed in; others stood with broken arms or were minus a leg. How could a decapitated man laugh? A bleeding, limbless trunk rolled on the floor at my feet. How could such a horror laugh?

But now my mother appeared before me, blotting out this hideous vision, as she said gently:

"It's all right, dear. Don't worry. You'll become a monk, and live in a monastery."

Her face melted into tears, and vanished like snow beneath the rain. Only her eyes remained visible, greatly enlarged, changing into the firm azure of the sky. Yes, the sky, not eyes any more; a sky that was clear-blue at first, but soon became full of writhing, winged, black serpents about to attack me.

Awaking with a start from this nightmare, I looked up at the mizen-mast, furrowed by shell-splinters, while torn shrouds (the aforesaid "serpents" no doubt) flapped against it. The rolled hammock I had been clutching slipped from my grasp. Beside me was seated Stoker Baklanoff, his grimy, square-chinned face split by a broad grin.

He said:

"You're a queer chap! You've been muttering in your sleep, but I couldn't make out a word. I was wondering if you'd gone balmy."

The peaceful dome of the sky stretched far and wide above tumultuous waters. There was very little wind. I drew deep breaths of the fresh sea air, which acted like an elixir. The sun was rising, and I, who had come unhurt through the carnage of the day before, looked out into the blue distance with as much enthusiasm as if I had just been reborn.

"Let's go and get some breakfast," proposed Baklanoff.

We began to descend the ladder from the after-bridge to the deck. I knew that the "Oryol" had had a formidable drubbing, but could never have imagined that she would look so utterly pitiful. Enemy projectiles had left their mark everywhere, so that the ironclad had the aspect of one of those yards where old iron has been indiscriminately tumbled. However, her vital parts were sound. Smoke issued steadily from both her funnels, pierced though they were with holes; and she forged ahead in the wake of the "Nicholas I," abreast of which was the cruiser "Izumrud." We were followed in single file by the "Apraksin" and the "Senyavin." But I could not see our other three ironclads, the "Navarin," the "Sisoy Veliky," and the "Ushakoff"; nor yet the battleship "Admiral Nakhimoff." What had become of them? Had they been torpedoed and sunk, or had they simply been outpaced during the night?

The bluejackets, fretted, gloomy, and fatigued, searched the horizon for an answer to these momentous questions. There was no smoke to indicate the presence of other vessels. Beneath the eastern sun of springtime, the sea sparkled brilliantly, indifferent to the sufferings of poor humanity.

We breakfasted on tinned meat and biscuits. Somewhat revived by the food, I decided to make a general inspection, and see for myself whether the ship was likely to be able to keep afloat till we reached Vladivostock. Also I wanted to know what means of defence were left in case of a renewed attack.

During that unforgettable night when few on board snatched any sleep, tremendous efforts had been made to repair damages and restore order.

The gangways had been cleared of all encumbering rubbish. Accommodation ladders had been fitted in place of the iron ones that were shot away. Some of the broken water-pipes had been mended. The numerous holes in the sides had been more effectively plugged, and the water had been pumped away from the battery deck. We were drawing two feet less than overnight, and our stability was greatly improved. If the weather got no worse we should be seaworthy; but in our present dilapidated condition we could not hope to ride out a storm.

Apart from this realisation, I was still more discouraged after the talk I had with some gunners. Out of our fifty-eight guns, half were hopelessly out of gear. The remainder could certainly be fired in case of need. Nevertheless, all the valid pieces had had their sights damaged; every range-finder on board had been broken; and the apparatus for training the guns at their targets was deranged. In these circumstances, to shoot at an enemy would have been as futile as to throw hand-grenades at random during a street-fight. Some of the turrets could only be turned by hand; in others the electric loading mechanism was out of order. Several of the pieces could not be elevated sufficiently to use them at long range—this being partly because of the “Oryol’s” list. A number of the ammunition hoists supplying the battery deck had been demolished. Four-fifths of our ammunition had been fired away; and what remained in the magazines was irregularly distributed. There were guns without shells, and there were shells without guns to fire them. For the stern 12-inch turret there were left (as previously said) only four shells available, and one of the gunners remarked to me:

"When we've fired four shots we can sit down and smoke, or twiddle our thumbs, for all the good we can do!"

In a word, as a fighting unit the "Oryol" was not worth a tenth of what she had been twenty-four hours ago. She could only defend herself against a second-class cruiser.

On the upper bridge I met Boatswain Voevodin, face drawn, eyes bloodshot.

"Hullo," he cried, "it seems that you and I are among the lucky ones so far. Do you know what we need now? Like all sailormen, I hate fog, but a good thick one would serve our turn. We'd be lost in it, like a needle in a glass of milk."

"Yes, old chap, a fog would save our bacon!"

But there was no fog, nor hint of one. On the contrary, visibility was extremely good.

"Still, don't you think we've a chance of reaching Vladivostock?"

"Maybe, maybe," answered the boatswain, as he continued his way to the conning-tower.

The sea cradled us in the illusion of peaceful good fortune.

A few minutes later, a pennon of smoke showed above the horizon on the port beam, drifting slowly down wind, like the reek from a bonfire. Then appeared a second and a third. The news spread rapidly through the ship, and caused general disquietude. When the hulls of five vessels began to disclose themselves, what distressed us all was the question whether they were part of our own fleet or of the Japanese.

"Brothers," exclaimed a young bluejacket, "God be praised, those are some of ours. I'm certain of it."

"Sure enough," agreed the others. "There's the 'Nakhimoff,' followed by the 'Aurora,' and then by the 'Alexander III.'"

"But wasn't the 'Alexander' sunk yesterday?"

"If so, then number three is the 'Suvoroff.'"

"Too many funnels," objected my neighbour. "Unless they've sprouted new funnels in the night, as mushrooms sprout after rain."

"You're mistaken, Comrades," cried Electrician Kozyreff, coming down from the conning-tower. "I've just been looking at them through the telescope, and they're Japs."

The men glared at Kozyreff as if he were a malefactor.

"Don't try to fool us," said one.

"You deserve a hefty clout on the head," added another.

I hurried away to the workshop to tell Engineer Vasilieff the

disastrous news. Not finding him there, I went on to the sick-bay, where the surgeons were redressing the wounds inflicted yesterday, while the patients groaned, or rambled in delirium. Ventilating fans were sucking out the air that was tainted with antiseptics and the smell of blood, while fresh air flowed in through the doorway. In one corner was Vasilieff, seated on a stool, and supported by a crutch. He looked sad even in his sleep.

I touched him on the elbow.

"Japanese warships sighted," said I curtly.

Though the words were spoken scarcely louder than a whisper, the wounded men nearby raised their heads.

"What ships are they?"

Vasilieff took the words out of my mouth:

"Their smoke was seen some time ago, but they are still too far off to be identified."

He spoke quietly, implying that the affair was a trifle.

Then he asked me to come with him to the workshop. As we walked along, Vasilieff said:

"Obviously we are once more under enemy observation, and our situation is extremely perilous—all the worse because we can do nothing to avert the approaching catastrophe. We can only fold our arms and await events. Last night I could not sleep a wink. My brain feels as if it were impregnated with coal-smoke, and I'm dead weary. Better lie down and sleep so soundly that I shall not awake even if the ship is sinking."

"If that disaster is at hand, I shall try to get you on deck. I've got two lifebelts safely hidden, and we'll jump overboard before it's too late."

"Thank you. That's kindly meant, but, crippled as I am, I'd rather go down with the ship, and make short work of it."

I left him to go to the upper deck. On the bridge in front of the conning-tower I found Commander Sidoroff, Lieutenants Modzalevsky and Pavlinoff, and Midshipman Sakelari, scrutinising the Japanese warships through binoculars. They steamed on a course parallel with ours, and the officers decided that they were the swift cruisers "Suma," "Chioda," "Akitsushima," and "Idzumi," and in addition, two cruisers unrecognisable. Their distance from our line was about sixty cable lengths.

The "Nicholas I" hoisted the signal:

"Action stations."

Then Admiral Nebogatoff ordered the squadron to pay off "in unison" eight points to port. Thus our vessels presented a fighting front to the enemy in order to engage them before they could secure reinforcement. But the Japanese, grasping our intention, and being enormously speedier than we, promptly withdrew. Once more we resumed the course N. 23° E.

The enemy cruisers lacked the power to arrest our progress, and our spirits began to revive. Very soon, however, we were disillusioned. Further smoke-trails appeared on the port bow. Nebogatoff sent the cruiser "Izumrud" ahead to reconnoitre. After half an hour, which seemed an eternity, she returned to announce that an additional detachment of Japanese cruisers was approaching. Probably the enemy vessels, in touch with one another by wireless, were grouping themselves all round us. Before long, indeed, six more warships showed themselves to port. Our fate was sealed.

An order came from the bridge:

"Crew to have a tot and then to dine."

The bluejackets, grave of aspect, drank their allowance, and, like automata, consumed their rations of tinned meat and biscuits. Meanwhile some more units of the enemy fleet appeared on the starboard beam.

After dinner an order was issued for the burial of the dead. The mutilated bodies had long ere this been ranged on the poop in two rows, and covered with flags. Boatswain Voevodin went to fetch the chaplain.

"But, Boatswain, how can I conduct the funeral service on the poop if the enemy open fire while I am saying the holy office?" asked the priest, whimpering, when the summons was delivered.

"That doesn't matter, Little Father, don't be afraid."

"No, no, for the love of God, not on the poop. I shall say mass for the dead much better down here. In their absence, believe me, I shall pray for them two hundred times better. And if I survive, I shall continue to invoke a blessing on them after I return to the monastery."

"Really, Little Father, you're disquieting yourself for nothing. It's our own ships that are drawing near."

"No humbug? All right, I'll come then. The dead must have absolution. Without that, they can't be buried. Beyond question they died for the Orthodox Church."

On the poop, Father Paisy, while gabbling the necessary prayers,

looked suspiciously at the Japanese warships which had now completely surrounded us. Since he did not know one vessel of the Russian squadron from another, he could not possibly understand what was going on. His tousled red hair and his straggling beard looked like flames in the sunlight. He stammered, mispronouncing the prayers. A congregation of thirty bluejackets attended the service, their eyes wandering, as they listened to the priest, from the enemy warships to the recumbent forms of their dead comrades. Among the corpses were interspersed detached arms and legs whose ownership it was impossible to determine. One of the gunners brought a hand and placed it with the other remains. A tub filled with sand had been provided, that some of the contents might be scattered over what was to be committed to the deep, and thus maintain a semblance of earth burial. From the censer rose a blue flame and the characteristic odour. We living ones who were awaiting a fresh hail of explosives felt that we were being absolved as well as the dead. I was standing with a group of bluejackets on the quarter-deck.

The enemy continued their enveloping movement, with a fleet comprising twenty-seven warships, destroyers not included. They manœuvred the twelve ironclads and armoured cruisers we had been fighting the day before. These ships, and the others as well, looked as fit as if ready for a naval review; no masts shot away, no pierced funnels, no shattered bridges. The Japanese had disabled our squadron and sunk several of our best ships without themselves sustaining any more damage than if they had been engaged in target-practice. Now, as though at summer manœuvres, they were surrounding us with a deadly ring of iron and death. Triumph on one side, impotence on the other. During the voyage we had known well enough that defeat awaited us, but no one expected the smash to be so overwhelming. Chance or luck having left us alive and afloat after yesterday's battle, we had succumbed to a sort of torpor. Our senses were numbed, our intelligence was stupefied, so that we could scarcely understand what had happened to us. Some of the bluejackets started a discussion upon the causes of our defeat.

A master-gunner, waving his hands, cried excitedly:

“But we fired a vast number of shells, using up most of our ammunition, and the magazines are nearly empty. How is it that the enemy boats show no signs of damage?”

Every one looked reproachfully at the gunners as if they were to blame for the disasters that had befallen us.

"You bunglers, don't you remember the four days' practice off Madagascar, and how, when we retrieved the targets, they were not so much as splintered?"

Senior Boatswain Saem had a different explanation to offer:

"It's obvious, Brothers, that yesterday we were fighting a British squadron, while the Japs were in hiding on the other side of Tsushima. Only now have they come into the open in order to finish us off."

"Yes, I expect that was the way of it," commented the master-gunner. "I myself saw a four-funnelled warship founder, and I've heard our officers declare that there are no ships with four funnels in the Japanese fleet. So we must have been fighting the British."

Stoker Baklanoff tapped the master-gunner on the shoulder, and said:

"Look here, old chap, are you quite sure what you loaded your pieces with? Perhaps with air-balloons instead of shells."

"Oh, go to hell," roared the master-gunner.

Electrician Shtareff put in, with a sigh:

"Yes, for all I can see we might as well have fired saluting charges at the Japanese!"

One of the bluejackets snapped out:

"The Government only sent us here to be slaughtered."

As I contemplated the Japanese fleet I wondered what sort of resistance we could put up. We had nothing but the shattered remnants of a defeated squadron: the "Nicholas I," fourteen years old, with out-of-date guns, using smoky instead of smokless powder, and unable to register any hits; the "Oryol," a much more recent type of ironclad, but horribly knocked about, and with a large proportion of her best officers and men killed or severely wounded; two coast-defence ironclads, the "Apraksin" and the "Senyavin," with a draught of little more than 4000 tons each, and together by no means a match for a single modern armoured cruiser; finally, the "Izumrud," a second-class cruiser competent to sink a destroyer but helpless against a battleship. Five ships against the whole Japanese fleet. We were completely outclassed.

What would happen when the action began? We could not hope to keep it up for more than ten minutes, since a few hits by large-calibre shells would shake loose all the frameworks with which yesterday's holes had been so laboriously repaired, while the tarpaulin and canvas plugs would be set on fire by incendiary projectiles.

The "Oryol" would most likely turn turtle after a brief bombardment. Even if the order "Save yourselves as best you can by jumping overboard" were issued, the men in the depths of the ship could only reach the deck very slowly by climbing the extemporised ladders. Most of them would be trapped in the sinking leviathan. The roar of inrushing water would mingle with the cries of those prisoned in the various compartments. The few who got on deck would scurry hither and thither scrimmaging for lifebelts or cork-jackets while the enemy fire continued. All the boats and the two steam pinnaces had been shot to pieces, and most of the lifebelts, etc., were burned. Not a third of the men could swim, for the officers, concerned only with display, had given no thought to having them instructed in this vital matter.

The signal "action stations" was sounded. The bluejackets were startled, but for a minute or two made no move to obey, seeming to find it impossible to believe their ears. Then, pallid, they sluggishly went about their duties.

The chaplain dropped his censer and fled below. There was no time to finish the burial rites. The unblessed bodies were hastily flung overboard, just as, a little while before, a lot of shattered lumber had been jettisoned.

I stood petrified, Was the end close at hand? Had our long and arduous voyage been nothing more than a funeral procession? Yesterday we had watched some of our ironclads sinking like black coffins into the sea. Our turn had come. Within a few minutes we should see our last of the spring sunshine, the blue sky, and the sparkling seascape.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a roar of enemy guns. I made for the nearest accommodation ladder leading below. But hardly had I begun to go down, when I heard cries and shouts which led me to retrace my steps.

Something unexpected was happening on the "Oryol."

V

During the battle of May 14th, the Japanese, whose main purpose it was to destroy our best ironclads, paid little attention to the "Nicholas I." Nevertheless, at the outset of the engagement, a large hole was made in the port bow of this vessel just below the water-line, and gave her a great deal of trouble. The leak could not be

wholly stopped, despite the crew's best endeavours. Subsequently she was hit several times. One of her 12-inch guns was disabled; torpedo-tubes and steam pinnaces were smashed; and the row-boats badly damaged. Lieutenant Mirbakh and several bluejackets were killed; Captain Smirnoff and about fifteen others were seriously wounded.

The gunners of the "Nicholas" could shoot fairly well; but, since she had no smokeless powder, she was wreathed in black fumes after each discharge, and could not fire again till the vapours had cleared away. However, she used 1456 shells of large and medium calibre, emptying her magazines as rapidly as did the other warships.

When Captain Smirnoff was wounded, Admiral Nebogatoff took charge. With his tightly fitting white tunic, which showed off his obesity, and wearing very loose black trousers, he looked more like a well-to-do man of business than a naval officer of high rank. Still, his subordinates respected his authority, and obeyed him to the letter. He showed remarkable courage, frequently leaving the conning-tower for the open bridge, in order to get a better view of the situation. A good all-round sailor, trained in the Naval Academy, he could not fail to recognise that our position was hopeless, but he showed no sign of alarm. His face, plump, even bloated, spotted with scaly eczema, and adorned with a pointed beard, remained tranquil as ever. But the binoculars through which, with his rather prominent eyes, he scanned the enemy vessels, trembled from time to time.

The admiral, speaking with much concern, said to his staff:

"I have received no fresh orders from Admiral Rozhdestvensky, and don't even know whether he is still alive. If he has been killed, Admiral Felkerzam ought to replace him by right of seniority, but he may have gone to the bottom with the 'Oslyabya.' In that case the command devolves upon me. But who is in command of the 'Suvoroff,' and therefore, technically, of the squadron?"

"A midshipman, likely enough," answered Commander Kross, tugging his long moustache as his manner was.

After a few moments' reflection, Nebogatoff brusquely ordered: "Hoist the signal to steer N. 23° E."

A few minutes later, Senior Flag-Lieutenant Sergeeff reported:

"The destroyer which has just overhauled us communicated by megaphone an order from Admiral Rozhestvensky: 'Head for Vladivostock'."

Nebogatoff nodded, saying:

"Evidently I did well to hoist that signal. We shall continue on our course."

The admiral remained perfectly cool during the night, when the Japanese torpedo-attack was in progress. At one moment an enemy torpedo was heading straight for the "Nicholas I." All in the conning-tower held their breath. Nebogatoff shouted:

"Port her, hard!"

Thanks to this manœuvre, the torpedo missed its mark.

At dawn, Nebogatoff, who had hoped to reunite the dispersed squadron, found that it now consisted of five craft. The other warships in sight were Japanese, and their number continually increased. The admiral grew more and more uneasy. Since, the day before, the whole squadron had been unable to inflict serious damage on the enemy, what was to be expected now, when ships beyond our range could bombard us at their leisure and without risk?

The admiral went out on to the bridge, and then back into the conning-tower. There could be no doubt that we were surrounded by the Japanese. Several times, questioning the evidence of his own eyes, he asked his subordinates:

"Can't you make out any of our ships in the offing?"

Always came the same answer:

"Nothing but Japanese warships in sight, Your Excellency."

Nebogatoff was silent for a time, having drawn the peak of his cap down over his eyes. He felt that all were looking at him, awaiting his decision. What could he do to avert useless slaughter? Had his ships been near the coast, he could have grounded them, blown them up, and tried to escape to shore by swimming. But there was no land within sight. He bent his back as if the weight of his gilt epaulets was too heavy to bear.

"Yes, we're done for," he muttered, without directly addressing anyone.

At nine o'clock Commander Kross came up to him and said in a low tone:

"Captain Smirnoff begs me to inform you that in his opinion we have no option but surrender."

The men at the wheel overheard this, and pricked up their ears.

With a shiver the admiral replied:

"Wait and see."

Had the advice been tendered by Kross on his own initiative,

Nebogatoff would have paid scant heed to it. But the commander was spokesman for the captain. Smirnoff was a highly educated man, a good linguist, well-to-do, a fine sailor, and an extremely sensible person. He had intimates in leading naval circles and at court, and his opinion was not to be lightly ignored. If Smirnoff held such a view, there was probably no other course open.

With laboured breathing, the admiral said to Kross:

“And what is your opinion?”

The commander answered tranquilly:

“I agree with the captain, Sir.”

A whirlwind of conflicting thoughts must have passed through Nebogatoff's mind. He contemplated the future: the shame of surrender, prison, court-martial; perhaps he'd be shot for cowardice. Yet his whole being was in revolt against allowing his ship to be sunk needlessly, or blown up with all on board. If the Japanese opened fire, the “Nicholas I” and the rest would be sunk. What would he and his ships' complements perish for? Of course he had to fulfil his duty to the State. But how could he do so with hulks of scrap-iron, miscalled warships? Even if, as chief, he was partly responsible for the pitiable condition of the fleet, and ought to be a scapegoat, the ratings were not to blame. He could not take upon himself the responsibility of sending two thousand five hundred men to a needless doom. Public opinion would justify his surrender. Humane thoughts got the uppermost. With flushed face he turned to Commander Kross, saying:

“Ask the captain to be good enough to come to the conning-tower immediately.”

While a bluejacket went for Smirnoff, the staff officers and the ship's officer exchanged views. No one thought that there was any option but to surrender. Meanwhile the three-flag international code signal of surrender was got ready.

Captain Smirnoff, tall, well-built, with hazel eyes that looked out piercingly from beneath thick, beetling brows, entered the conning-tower. Though he had been severely wounded the day before, he held his head erect. His scalp was bandaged.

Nebogatoff turned to him.

“Vladimir Vasilievich, what are we to do?”

Unhesitatingly and firmly, Smirnoff answered:

“Yesterday we did our duty. To-day we are no longer in a condition to fight. There is nothing for it but surrender.”

Then, saying that his head was extremely painful, he returned to the sick-bay.

Thereafter, things happened quickly on the "Nicholas I." The admiral summoned a council of war, and, accompanied by his staff-officers, went out on to the bridge. The flags indicating surrender were already attached to the line. The officers, downcast, approached Nebogatoff, who, without waiting till they were all assembled, said:

"Gentlemen, I propose to surrender, as the only means of saving our crews from destruction. What is your opinion?"

There were some protests, but nearly all agreed.

On the mizen-top there was a range-finder, and Midshipman Dybovsky shouted:

"The enemy is at sixty cable lengths."

There was a hubbub on the bridge. Some of the officers had tears in their eyes. Others sought justification by saying:

"This is not the first time we've had to surrender to the Japanese. Remember Liao-Yang, Port Arthur, Mukden. . . ."

The admiral turned to Senior Artillery Lieutenant Pelikan and asked him:

"Any use firing at the enemy?"

"No, Your Excellency, they're out of range."

Now Nebogatoff lost control, a very unusual thing with him. Tears welled from his eyes. Snatching off his cap, he flung it on the ground, and trampled on it as if it had been to blame for the disaster.

But the order was given, the signal of surrender was hoisted, and the look-out men reported that our other vessels had followed the flagship's example.

The Japanese, nevertheless, opened fire, with a trial shot, which took the water near the "Nicholas I's" port beam.

Nebogatoff cried:

"The enemy has not understood our signal. Run up the white flag, and quickly, for in five minutes there will not be a mast left standing."

But no white flag could be found, so a sheet was hoisted at the mizen. Still the Japanese fire continued, and fountains of water splashed up around the ironclad. Shells whistled overhead. Then one hit the "Nicholas I" near the conning-tower. Flag Navigating Lieutenant Feodotieff was wounded, and the conning-tower was filled with black smoke. In the darkness, the admiral shouted hoarsely:

"Our guns must not reply. Still they don't understand! Lower the Russian flag and hoist the Japanese. Stop the engines."

While these orders were being carried out, the ironclad was again hit by several shells, one of which carried away the hawse-hole, so that the anchor fell into the sea. More apertures were made to starboard.

The "Nicholas I" came to a standstill. The Japanese ceased fire. The other Russian warships also stopped, and, like the "Nicholas," hoisted the flag of the Land of the Rising Sun.

With one exception, the "Izumrud." This was a small cruiser with three masts and three funnels, of elegant build, and swift as a bird. At first she hoisted the signal of surrender, then, those in command of her having changed their minds, she lowered it, and, putting on all possible speed, made for a gap which remained to starboard between the enemy warships. The Japanese did not at first grasp that it was her intention to escape. Then they sent two cruisers in pursuit, which fired at the fugitive; but she had the heels of them, and soon got out of range. We, who had surrendered, watched breathless until she disappeared, and were delighted by her escape. She had certainly shown much heroism in thus braving the whole Japanese fleet.

On the "Nicholas I," Nebogatoff summoned the ship's complement, and addressed the men from the bridge. The sunlight showed up the white hairs in his grizzled beard, and made his epaulets and decorations glitter. But he looked shrivelled, as if by cold. Having explained the reasons for surrender, he went on:

"Lads, I am getting on in years, and do not fear death. But I do not wish to have your young lives cut short. Let the shame of this action rest on me alone, I am ready to be tried by court-martial, and to accept the extreme sentence."

Then, stooping under the weight of his sorrow, he descended from the bridge, amid the cheers of the crew.

There was plenty of work to do on the ironclad before the Japanese arrived to take possession. Ciphers, codes, signal-books, secret documents, had to be destroyed. Some of the officers even wished to destroy such delicate mechanisms as were left intact, and to fling various apparatus overboard. The men collected their kit. Some got hold of vodka, and soon a good many of them were reeling drunk.

On to the upper deck came Vasily Fedorovich Babushkin. He was the man thanks to whose exploit twenty-three days earlier (as previously related) it had become possible for Nebogatoff's detachment

to get into touch with the main force of the second Pacific squadron. The wounds received at Port Arthur having re-opened, he had remained in the sick-bay ever since joining the "Nicholas." When the enemy fleet hove in sight he installed himself in the engine-room, and stayed there, trembling with emotion, praying for victory, refusing to admit the possibility of a Russian defeat. When told that the "Nicholas" and three others had capitulated, he insisted upon going on deck, though he could hardly walk, even with the aid of crutches. He stood among the bluejackets, huge, lean, with a bristling black beard. He stared at the poop, where the Japanese flag was flying. Knitting his brows, he cried in his booming bass:

"Brothers, what has happened? I fought in the first squadron. Our commanders brought about its destruction. I shed my blood at Port Arthur, where I received eighteen wounds from a bursting shell. But the chiefs surrendered the fortress to the Japanese. Off Singapore I rejoined as a volunteer—and now Nebogatoff has capitulated. What the devil does it all mean?"

The bluejackets laughed.

"Look out, Vasya, you'll overtire yourself. Better lie down and rest."

Babushkin, angrily striking the deck with his crutch, exclaimed:

"Russia has been put to shame, and you want me to go and lie down!"

"The whole war has been a disgrace, and shameful to us who have fought in it."

"Shameful to fight? But one must fight!"

"Why must we fight? Only because we're damned fools!"

"I shall go below and myself open the scuttles. We must sink the ship rather than surrender."

"If you try any such games, we'll chuck you overboard."

Babushkin realised that his shipmates would never let him carry out his plan. Sulky and silent, he returned to the sick-bay.

(The reader will probably be interested to hear about this man's subsequent career, and his unlucky fate. It was several years after the close of the war before his wounds were fully healed. Then he recovered his magnificent bodily strength and became a professional wrestler, appearing on public platforms both at home and abroad. In 1924 he returned to his native village, Zastrugi, in the Vyatka-Polyansky region. There he was killed by a pistol-shot. It was generally believed that the man who fired it did not do so by accident,

but—though he was Babushkin's assistant—was in the pay of some of the latter's rivals in the arena.)

A Japanese destroyer now steamed alongside the "Nicholas I." An aide-de-camp sent by Admiral Togo boarded the ironclad, and requested Nebogatoff to visit the enemy flagship in order to arrange the terms of surrender. A few minutes later, the destroyer conveyed the Russian admiral and his staff to the "Mikaza."

Though I anticipate, I may as well explain here what view of the capitulation was taken by the Russian authorities at home. Tsar Nicholas was furious. Before their return to Russia from imprisonment in Japan, the officers and crews were cashiered, though this decision was subsequently rescinded as far as the latter were concerned.

In November, 1906, Nebogatoff and the officers who had served under him (with the exception of those who had been severely wounded) were brought before a naval court of enquiry at Kronstadt. There had been a preliminary investigation at the Kryukovsky Barracks in St. Petersburg, where, to the great annoyance of the Government, the rotten state of the Russian fleet before the battle was revealed. Nebogatoff's disclosures were especially damning—and he paid dearly for them. He was sentenced to death, but the sentence was commuted to ten years' imprisonment in a fortress. The same fate befell the captains of the "Nicholas I," the "Senyavin," and the "Apraksin." The seconds-in-command of the same vessels and Flag-Lieutenant Kross were allotted terms of several months' imprisonment. The remaining officers were acquitted.

As for the "Oryol," the court held that this vessel was in such a hopelessly battered condition that surrender was justified by the naval regulations. Consequently the acting captain and his subordinates were absolved from blame.

To a considerable extent the Russian tsarist navy was manned from the Baltic provinces, both as regards officers and men. The Baltic barons were of diverse quality—good and bad, clever and thick-headed. Speaking generally, they were great sticklers for form. Proud of their crusading ancestors, they looked upon their Russian shipmates, and especially the foremast hands, with disdain. The tsarist Government, however, made much of these Baltic magnates, who were bureaucratically disposed, and ever ready to repress liberal and revolutionary tendencies that might manifest themselves among the crew.

Fersen, captain of the cruiser "Izumrud," was a Baltic baron; but, unlike his compatriots, he would converse freely with officers of pure Russian extraction, even with midshipmen. He had a fixed smile on a face that was decorated with long blond whiskers; and, when off duty, he spoke in gentle tones. But when he issued orders, his blue eyes assumed a cold and fierce expression, his voice became harsh and metallic, and he was too strict a disciplinarian ever to listen to a suggestion from an underling.

From the outset of the naval engagement until the time when the "Izumrud" made her bold dash to escape, Fersen's behaviour had been irreproachable and his orders intelligent. But no sooner had his ship got clear away, than the captain lost his self-control. The farther the cruiser was from danger, the more nervous and excited did he become. After a chase that lasted three or four hours, the Japanese gave up. But Fersen could not believe in his own success, and became still more distraught when his ship sighted the Siberian coast. Though there was sufficient coal on board to reach Vladivostock, he had the furniture and woodwork used to stoke the furnaces. He kept on harrying Polushkin, the navigating lieutenant, to make sure that they were on the right course. The baron's fear of the Japanese infected and demoralised officers and men. Every one began to expect the worst. At length the "Izumrud," overstripping Vladivostock, reached the Bay of St. Vladimir, about one hundred and eighty miles too far to the north.

This was the first blunder.

Not liking the Bay of St. Vladimir, Fersen made for the next inlet, that of St. Olga. Since he could not find a good anchorage here, he put about, and sought elsewhere. This was after dark. Had the captain kept cool, he would never have behaved so foolishly. There was nothing to be feared from the Japanese, who had lost sight of the cruiser two days before, and in these wide waters might as well have hunted for a needle in a haystack. Still, Captain Fersen hurried into the next indentation that offered. Suddenly there was a slight shock, and a grating sound. The cruiser had grounded off Cape Orekhoff.

The commander shouted:

"Full-speed astern! Full-speed astern!"

The second blunder had been made.

Only the cruiser's bow had stuck. No damage had been done to the hull. All that was necessary was to await the flood tide, when the ship would disengage herself; or she might have been lightened by

jettisoning whatever was superfluous; or help could have been summoned from Vladivostock by wireless. Meanwhile arrangements could have been organised to blow up the "Izumrud" in the event of the enemy's appearing on the scene. But Baron Fersen, his fair whiskers shaking as his face worked with excitement, cried:

"I feel certain that the Japanese are near at hand, and may appear at any moment. I will never surrender the 'Izumrud.' Make everything ready to blow up the ship."

Thereupon, bustle and disorder became rampant. Innumerable light articles were thrown overboard; heavier ones, when combustible, fed the furnaces. The machine-guns and the fourteen quick-firers were sunk in the bay. It was a point of conscience with the captain to leave nothing which might be of service to the Japanese. He shouted so much that he could no longer articulate, and, foaming at the mouth, emitted raucous sounds to incite his subordinates to haste in their work of destruction. The men rushed about as if the "Izumrud" had been on fire, their voices resounding throughout the ship. There had not been so much noise aboard of her since she came off the stocks. A disinterested observer might well have imagined that the company was smitten with collective insanity.

Finally the whole lot of them, officers and men, armed with rifles, took to the boats and made for shore. Baron Fersen's orders were obeyed. A train, laid to the magazine, was fired before departing; soon there came an uprush of flame succeeded by a formidable detonation, while a cloud of black smoke rose high in the air, and the hills re-echoed the thunder of the explosion. There was nothing left on the reef but a tattered mass of scrap iron.

This was the third blunder.

With hanging heads, the refugees from the "Izumrud" set forth upon the long march to Vladivostock.

VI

Before sounding the "action stations" signal on board the "Oryol," Commander Sidoroff, who had taken charge when Captain Yung was disabled, said to his officers:

"How can we make a stand against the whole Japanese fleet? Our ironclad has practically gone to pieces, our guns are disabled, we have little ammunition left. There is no choice for us but death."

Midshipman Sakelari answered pertly:

"An hour ago I told you what I thought. The proper course was to transfer our ship's complement to the 'Izumrud,' and sink the 'Oryol.' But you refused to heed my advice. Now it's too late."

Sidoroff thereupon ordered us to prepare for action.

At this moment Zefiroff, the senior signalman, ran up:

"Your Honour," he cried, "the 'Nicholas' has just hoisted a signal."

"What signal?" asked Sidoroff.

Before this question could be answered, the international code-book had to be consulted. The signal was:

"I surrender."

Sidoroff opened his mouth, but was kept silent by consternation. Obviously his conscience could not reconcile itself to this notion. He scrutinised the faces of Zefiroff and the officers. Then, shaking his bandaged head, he declared:

"It's impossible."

However, the signal was verified from the code-book, and no shadow of doubt remained.

Sidoroff leaned forward, grasped his head between his hands, and, talking aloud to himself, said:

"Well, Konstantin Leopoldovich, what are you going to do now?"

Then, unable to master his emotions, he sobbed like a lost child.

Soon he was told that the "Nicholas" had been fired on after running up the international surrender signal, and had thereupon hoisted a white flag.

Sidoroff drew himself to his full height and fingered his gold epaulets, which had been soiled by soot and the smoke of explosives.

"If the admiral has surrendered, we can but follow his example. Repeat the flagship's signal. Run up the white flag."

A few and not very energetic protests were made. As had happened on board the "Nicholas I," some of the officers proposed to sink the ship, and others to blow her up. But one of them raised the problem of the wounded, among whom were Captain Yung, and several officers of high rank. There were, indeed, about a hundred severely wounded men. Were they to be consigned to the deep? This consideration served to daunt the extremists, and seemed to provide a justification for surrender. A heavy weight of responsibility was lifted from the shoulders of the senior officers.

Besides, the signalmen were not bothering about such nice scruples, or about what the officers were saying among themselves. Commander Sidoroff's order was warrant enough, and forthwith they hoisted the international surrender signal and the white flag.

The news spread quickly through the ship.

"Have we really surrendered?"

"Yes, yes, the signalman has just told me. They've hung out a tablecloth on the bridge, since there's no white flag."

There was a great stir on board, and the crew flocked to the upper deck. They were startled by the firing of one of the guns in the port 6-inch turret, where the gunners had not yet been informed of the surrender. After two shots, notice was given from the conning-tower to cease fire. Since regular means of communication had been damaged, messengers were sent to all the turrets shouting:

"Don't shoot. The battle is over."

The engines were stopped, and the "Oryol," coming to a standstill, rolled gently. She was second in the line, and when the flagship hauled down the St. Andrew's flag to run up Japanese colours, Sidoroff declared:

"I have no Japanese flag."

One of the officers, a dark-skinned fellow with a pointed beard and a heavy moustache, said, strongly moved:

"It seems to me, Sir, with all due respect, that, if we have decided to surrender, we may as well go the whole hog, and run up enemy colours. Whether we do so or not, the Japs will do so as soon as they take possession, amid shouts of 'Victory' and the playing of a band. Why should we expose ourselves to needless humiliation?"

His fellow-officers, not excepting Sidoroff, were influenced by this reasoning.

According to the naval regulations, during an engagement the St. Andrew's flag, having once been hoisted, must be guarded by a sentinel who was to see that it was not lowered unless by the captain's express order. But Quartermaster Zaozeroff, who was on duty at 1 p.m. the day before, was wounded by a shell-splinter, and had not been replaced. Anyhow, no one now bothered about a piece of bunting. The St. Andrew's flag was struck, and Japanese colours were hoisted.

From that moment, the "Oryol" ceased to belong to the Russian empire.

I hurried to the workshop that I might acquaint Engineer Vasilieff

with what had happened, and found him asleep on a bench. I touched him on the shoulder, and, forgetting titles, addressed him simply as: "Vladimir Polievktovich."

He awakened with a start, sat up, and said:

"I heard the shooting through my sleep, and then wondered why the noise of firing had ceased. The shouts, too, puzzled me. In my dreams I wondered whether we were sinking."

In a few words I told him that we had surrendered, and were prisoners.

"All is over then. The Russian fleet is done for, and the Japanese rule the waves. The surrender of four ironclads is the logical end of this absurd campaign. The white flag flutters on the bridge, and Japanese colours have been run up astern. All the better. This will give the death-blow to autocracy."

With my aid, he mounted to the upper deck.

"Watch out," he said, as he sat down, "lest some lunatic among the ship's company may still try to blow up the vessel."

The Japanese were now cautiously approaching our four battle-ships, their circle growing steadily smaller. They kept on hoisting fresh signals.

Disorder increased on the "Oryol." Those of the crew who were not on the bridge, still wondered what was going to happen. Some insisted that the ship would be blown up; others denied it.

From the central post, Lieutenant Burnasheff, the paymaster, climbed to the bridge and asked Commander Sidoroff:

"What shall I do with the pay-chest? Then there are various codes and ciphers which ought to be destroyed."

"Throw the papers into the fire," answered Sidoroff; "and distribute the money among the officers and men."

The paymaster protested:

"It doesn't seem to me right that the money should be shared out in the way you suggest, Sir. In my opinion, it ought to be thrown overboard."

"All right," answered Sidoroff; "but give £10 to each officer first."

The paymaster, usually so phlegmatic and clumsy, seemed suddenly transformed into a man of action. Within a few minutes he entered the stoke-hole, and in the twinkling of an eye the documents of which he had spoken were reduced to ashes. With no less speed, Burnasheff returned to the central post, where the treasure-chest had been kept during the battle. A sentinel and several bluejackets were on guard.

The chest contained more than seventy thousand roubles in Russian and English money, apart from reserves kept in a separate cash-box. The private funds of the captain and the crew were also in the pay-chest. The paymaster swiftly sorted the money into a number of little bags, separating gold, silver, and copper. His hands trembled, and drops of sweat rolled down his pimply face. He stuffed his pockets with bundles of notes. The watching bluejackets understood what he was about, and protested.

“Share out, Sir, if you please.”

Burnasheff looked up.

“All right, my lads, you shall have some of the money, but you must keep mum about it, or I shall be in for a lot of trouble. If your shipmates get wind of the matter, the whole pack of them’ll be at my heels.”

Some were given a hundred roubles, others more. Steersman Zhirnoff, who helped the paymaster “to throw the money overboard,” got away with twelve hundred and twenty-five roubles. The biggest windfall came to Paymaster’s Chief Steward Pyatovsky, who turned up opportunely.

Actually, nothing but small change in coin was thrown overboard. The bulk of the ship’s money remained in the paymaster’s pockets—something like fifty thousand roubles. But this did not satisfy our rich landowner from the Orel government. He also filched a packet belonging to the captain. Poor Yung, dying of his wounds, was unaware that one of his officers had robbed him.

The morale of the men being undermined, they refused to obey orders. Commander Sidoroff told me to empty the barrels of rum, of which we still had six at 80° and three at 40°. They were broached, and the liquor was run off into the bilge. When this had already been done, some bluejackets peered through the after hatchway, and asked angrily why I had wasted all that good stuff.

“Officers’ orders,” I answered laconically.

“But aren’t we as good as the officers? One man’s as good as another now.”

I took my notebooks and other papers, which I kept in the store-room under a meal-sack, and consigned them to the flames. When they began to burn, my heart was wrung. Still, I consoled myself with the thought that I had a good memory, and should never forget what I had written.

Now I was free to roam about the ship and see what was going on.

The bluejackets were in a turmoil, and could not settle down to anything. The eight hundred or so who remained unwounded were no longer an organised force under the command of a single will. A few were distressed by the surrender, but the great majority were inclined to rejoice at having escaped with their lives. They gave vent to oaths and facetious exclamations. The officers issued contradictory orders.

Many of the men were drunk. Having discovered that the rum had been run off into the bilge, they took buckets and other utensils to bale it out. The liquor was foul, but that did not trouble them. They filtered it through cotton-waste.

As they grew tipsier, they became increasingly impertinent. The officers, aware that their writ no longer ran, took little notice, not even protesting when a bluejacket spoke to them with a cigarette between his lips.

Machinist Tsunaeff, nicknamed "the man of iron" because of his remarkable strength, met Lieutenant Vredny on the battery deck and said:

"I want to pay my debt, Your Honour."

"What debt? I don't recall any."

"But I recall it very well. I got in your debt three months ago. It was when you put me under arrest."

The lieutenant turned pale; his red, pointed beard trembled; and, before he had time to utter a word, he was rolling on the deck. What happened passed so quickly that the onlookers could not see where Vredny had been struck. Clenching his great fists, the machinist was about to resume the onslaught when Stoker Baklanoff intervened:

"First of all," he said, "one doesn't hit a man when he's down; and besides, you've seriously injured him. Don't show off your courage here. Keep it for when you get back to St. Petersburg."

"He's not hurt, confound him. He's only shamming."

"That's for the surgeon to decide."

While Tsunaeff and Baklanoff were disputing, Lieutenant Vredny got up and took refuge in his cabin.

The men broke into the officers' cellar and carried off the choice wines they found there.

Commander Sidoroff sighed as he said:

"I wish the Japanese would hurry up. Otherwise the Lord knows what will happen on board this drunken ship!"

Rear-Admiral Nebogatoff summoned all the commanding officers to join him on the "Nicholas I."

Soon a Japanese steam pinnace came alongside the "Oryol." Captain Grigorieff of the "Senyavin" and Captain Lishin of the "Apraksin" were already on board this little craft. Commander Sidoroff joined them, and they departed for the "Nicholas."

From the bridge we saw a Japanese destroyer making for the "Oryol." We had just finished the destruction of our secret codes and other private documents.

The Japanese, armed with rifles, came aboard. Then, under orders from the officer in command, they dispersed to take charge of the turrets, the torpedo rooms, the magazines, the dynamos, etc. Others, unarmed, descended into the engine-rooms and stoke-holes.

Our men, regardless of the enemy, continued to carouse and to sing. One heard maudlin voices intoning the Russian version of the *Marseillaise*:

"Let us reject this old world!

Let us shake its dust from our feet!"

When Commander Sidoroff returned at about two o'clock we were drawn up in lines on the upper deck. The Japanese had decided to tranship two thirds of us to their ironclad the "Asahi." Some of our officers were to accompany us: Senior Engineer Parfenoff, Engineer Rums, Lieutenants Modzalevsky and Satkevich, Midshipmen Sakelari and Karpoff, and Chief-Auditor Dobrovolsky.

Sidoroff announced the terms of surrender:

"The officers can keep their side-arms, their money, and their personal effects. They will be permitted to return to Russia on signing an engagement to take no further part in the present war. The men can take their kit with them."

The Japanese did not allow the Commander to say any more, but made him re-embark immediately in their pinnace. The selected officers accompanied him. Then came the turn of the crew, who were to go in row-boats. Being eager to see a Japanese ironclad, I decided to get myself included in the party that was to be shipped. First, however, I went to take leave of Engineer Vasiliëff, who, supporting himself on his crutches, stood on the after-bridge. Shaking me warmly by the hand, he said:

"Take good care of yourself, for important work awaits you. We are on the eve of great happenings. To-day a new chapter opens in the history of the Russian empire,"

Carrying a portmanteau filled with books, I seated myself in one of the boats. When we started, towed by the steam pinnace, I took farewell of the "Oryol." She was rolling gently in the swell. Her paint was burned, cracked, and blistered; and, though it had been black before the battle, it was now of a dull grey tint.

When the surrender had been effected, Captain Nicolai Viktorovich Yung, was removed from the sick-bay to the isolation cabin, usually reserved for cases of contagious disease. It was spacious, and, notwithstanding the fires that had raged, it had remained uninjured. The white enamel of the ceiling and the walls retained its lustre. Beside the iron bedstead were a small table and a chair.

The captain suffered from wounds which had perforated the stomach and the liver, one of his shoulders was fractured, and he had sustained injuries to the head. He was delirious, and there was little hope of his recovery. At the request of our officers, a Japanese sentry was posted outside the door of the cabin, to keep other Japanese from entering. It was hoped that for a time Yung would learn nothing about the surrender. He was fighting for life, uttering cries and groans. An orderly, Maksim Yakovleff, was on duty beside him night and day, while Chief-Surgeon Makaroff paid him frequent visits.

Not till the evening of May 16th did Yung recover consciousness.

Yakovleff, the orderly, a man not overburdened with intelligence, almost illiterate, told us afterwards what had happened:

"Hardly had the captain recovered his senses when, as ill-luck would have it, some Japanese appeared outside the open door.—'What are those fellows doing here?' he asked me.—I could only answer: 'We have surrendered, Your Honour.' He sat up among his pillows, and burst into tears. Then he began to explain something to me about the Zemsky Sobor (District Assembly). 'The war has ended in disgrace,' he said; 'but you, Maksim, will perhaps become a member of the Zemsky Sobor.' Tears ran down his face. I was desperately sorry for him. He had always been such a decent fellow. But I think his mind was wandering. How could I become a member of the Zemsky Sobor? Anyhow he went on shedding tears. Then he sent me for the Chief Surgeon."

In his youth Captain Yung had been a member of the revolutionary party known as the "People's Will." When still a midshipman, he was one of a group of naval officers headed by Lieutenant Sukhanoff, and in touch with Sophia Perovska and Vera Figner. Sukhanoff

was condemned to death and executed in 1881. Yung escaped the governmental reprisals because he was at sea when proceedings were taken against the revolutionists.

Chief-Surgeon Makaroff, having obeyed the summons, tried to convince Captain Yung that the orderly had misinformed him, and that no surrender had taken place. Yung remained incredulous. Thereupon Makaroff came back to the sick-bay, and asked Junior Navigating Lieutenant Larionoff, one of the wounded, to see if he could persuade the captain that everything was all right.

Two Japanese bluejackets went with Larionoff to the isolation ward, but allowed him to enter alone.

Yung, swathed in bandages was half sitting up. His face was livid, and the image of distress. His right arm, splinted, was beneath the sheets, while his left arm hung limp. Staring at Larionoff with his blue eyes, he said in a firm voice:

“Leonid, tell me what has happened.”

Yung had been a close friend of Larionoff’s deceased father, had known the young man from childhood, and (when not on duty) had treated him like a son. How could Leonid deceive him? Yet the truth, sometimes, burns like a branding-iron. Why intensify the anguish of a dying man? But the orderly had already told him the state of affairs, and the captain had himself seen the Japanese. However, Larionoff answered:

“We are making for Vladivostock. Only a hundred and fifty miles more.”

“Why, then, are we going dead slow?”

“The ‘Ushakoff’ delays us. She can’t steam any faster.”

“Leonid, are you telling me the truth?”

Larionoff, choking with emotion, answered:

“Have I ever lied to you, Nikolai Viktorovich?”

To hide his tears, the navigating lieutenant stooped, and kissed the captain’s hand. It was cold and tremulous. Death was close at hand.

Yung must have known well enough that Makaroff and Larionoff were deceiving him; but, aware that it was a pious fraud, the dying man feigned belief.

“I want to smoke,” he whispered.

He took two or three puffs; then the cigarette fell from his shaky fingers. The agony was not prolonged. He groaned, shook his head as if to deny something; then, sighing like a man relieved from a

heavy burden, he stretched himself for the last time. His face with its blond beard assumed a somewhat harsh expression, and his blue eyes (which had been roving hither and thither) became fixed on a particular spot in the ceiling as if he were determined to unravel a mystery.

Larionoff, shaking like an aspen leaf, left the dead man's bedside.

The Japanese agreed to a burial at sea. The corpse was stitched in sailcloth with weights at the feet, and then placed on a plank at the edge of the poop. The Japanese flag was half-masted. When mass had been said, two bluejackets tilted the plank. The Japanese stood to attention. While drums beat and a volley of rifle-shots was fired, the captain's remains dropped into the sea.

Half an hour later one of the Japanese officers handed Larionoff, who was the only Russian navigator left on board, a card on which had been inscribed an extract from the Japanese log-book. It gave the precise details of the spot where Captain Yung's body had been consigned to the deep:

Latitude: 35° 56' 13'' N.

Longitude: 135° 10' E.

VII

The Japanese steam pinnace was towing three large row-boats, in one of which were numerous Russian bluejackets, including myself. Many of them were close friends of mine. At first we sat speechless, contemplating the "Asahi," the ironclad to which we were being taken. We were in the power of our enemies, and on the way to our new domicile. What was going to happen to us? Boatswain Voevodin, hunched up, and with his face contorted, looked like a man trying to solve a difficult problem. Electrician Golubeff was persistently knitting his flaxen eyebrows. Stoker Baklanoff, blinking, smiled at something which passed through his mind.

Some one said, with a sigh:

"Well, we shall have no more fighting."

Another voice promptly answered:

"Yes, we've suffered, we've suffered, and for what?"

Electrician Kozyreff exclaimed joyfully:

"God be thanked, I have not shed anyone else's blood, nor yet

lost a drop of my own. I've been as lucky as a man who get's rid of a bad mother-in-law. Now I shall try to get a letter sent home."

The master-steersman put in, solemnly:

"You watch out that these Japs don't prod you in the backside with their bayonets."

Every one looked rather alarmed at this suggestion.

"Do you think they'll really do us any harm?"

"If it's only a question of a flogging, I'll let down my breeches readily enough. But what if they were to string us up to the yard-arm, like so many fishes hung out to dry?"

"Yes, indeed, they'd think nothing of skinning us alive. They're only Asiatics. People without understanding."

"True, men without understanding," said Boatswain Voevodin angrily. "All the same, they've smashed and sunk our squadron, and sustained no injury to their own."

"Don't you worry, Boatswain," interjected Stoker Baklanoff sarcastically. "Let the fools chatter before they die."

The sky was cloudless, but a violet haze covered the surface of the waters. The enemy vessels were exchanging signals. Other boats were following in our wake, for the Japanese were bringing prisoners from the "Senyavin," the "Ushakoff" and the "Nicholas I."

The boat that was towing us ported abruptly, in order to draw up alongside the "Asahi." We examined the Japanese ironclad with anxiety as well as interest. She was painted a steel-grey, and was emitting volumes of smoke from her two funnels. Her numerous big guns, which yesterday had so mercilessly bombarded us, now preserved a menacing silence. But what impressed us more than anything else was that she did not show any sign of having been hit by our shells. Her superstructure was intact, and there was not even so much as a scratch on her hull. The "Oryol," on the other hand, was a floating ruin. How was it that the "Asahi" had remained uninjured, as if protected against shell-fire by a talisman?

I shivered when, having drawn up alongside the gangway ladder, I began to mount to the deck, being greatly exercised in my mind as to how the Japanese would receive us. But they welcomed us, their enemies, in the most friendly fashion, smiling as they reiterated:

"Oh, Russians, Russians!"

Our officers were taken to the cabins, while we bluejackets were conducted to the forecabin. Each one of us, without being asked whether he was a smoker or not, was given a packet of cigarettes.

Then the prisoners' dinner was prepared. It consisted of American tinned meat and ship's biscuit. Not one of us had expected such considerate treatment. Still, the matter became clear to me after a moment's reflection. What grievance could they have against us? Our shooting had been inconceivably bad. The "Asahi" had received no obvious damage, and was in apple-pie order. We subsequently learned that one hatchway and part of one ladder had been smashed, and that the total casualties had been eight killed and twenty-three wounded. Yet the "Oryol" alone had fired about four hundred tons of shells. Manifestly our shells were pacifically disposed, and did not wish to hurt either ships or human beings! The upshot was that we had surrendered four ironclads to the Japanese, with a rear-admiral and his staff. They ought to be greatly obliged to us for giving them the chance of winning so signal a naval victory.

Our men began to cheer up, and, as they made ready for dinner, they took out of their kit-bags bottles of choice wine stolen from the officers' cellar. Drinking great gulps of sherry, marsala, port, madeira, champagne, and various liqueurs, they livened up rapidly, and the forecastle (where I, too, was dining) resounded to the clatter of their loosened tongues. At the door were stationed two Japanese sentries, watching the Russian bluejackets curiously. Then one of our men shouted:

"Brothers, we ought to give those fellows a drink!"

The proposal was carried by acclamation.

Bumpers brimming with liqueur were offered to the sentries. For a long time they refused, shaking their heads and saying "No thank you" in their own tongue. Some pressing was needed, our men crying:

"You just taste and see. It's gentlemen's booze this. You've never wetted your whistles with anything like it!"

At length one of the sentries accepted a rummer and raised it to his lips. Perhaps he had intended to take no more than a sip, but the aromatic flavour was agreeable, and he swallowed the glass full of a liqueur having a strength of 80° of alcohol. His mate followed suit, and soon the pair of them were sitting among us joyously, as if there had never been any question of a war.

Once more the question was raised, with what ships the "Oryol" had been fighting the day before.

"With a British squadron," some insisted.

"No, I tell you, they were certainly Japanese," rejoined others.

"You must be as blind as a bat. Didn't you notice that the paint on the Japanese guns was not scorched? How could they have fired all those shots at us?"

"That only proves that they use a jolly good fire-proof paint; or else that they've touched up the paint since yesterday."

"But if they were Japanese ships we were shooting at, what the devil became of our shells?"

"They went wide, old chap, and dropped into the sea. There's plenty of room!"

I began to explain that, beyond question, we had been defeated by the Japanese and not by the British. Not a single ship (to say nothing of an entire squadron) of any other nationality than Russian or Japanese could have taken part in the Battle of Tsushima without the matter becoming known to the world at large, and leading to grave international complications.

Stoker Baklanoff cut me short.

"Enough! Enough! It's stupid to go on chewing the same old cud. The Japanese licked us because they are better equipped than we are, and better trained as well. It's as plain as the nose on a man's face. If both sides had been armed only with rushes, the Japs would never have got the upper hand. They're little fellows, and not very strong physically, but all that is beside the point. There is a more important question I should like to ask."

"Well, what is it?"

"Do you think the tsar and the tsarina will get a belly-ache over this affair, or not?"

A shout of laughter greeted Baklanoff's sally.

Then some of the men began to chant a stanza which had become current in the fleet since the Dogger Bank affair:

"We stopped to coal at Skagen,
We nearly sank the 'Aurora,'
And, in our fear of Japanese destroyers,
We defeated the North Sea fishing fleet."

One of the Japanese sentries, stimulated by our men's singing, thereupon intoned, after his national fashion, words which were, of course, incomprehensible to us. His face was bronzed; his cheekbones were prominent; and he rolled his eyes strangely as his body swung to and fro in time with the chant. The other sentry, a wizened little chap, black-haired like all members of his race, parted his lips

to disclose his teeth, and, with many gesticulations, tried to explain something to us. Both of these sentries, unused to strong liquor, were exceedingly drunk. Artificer Semenoff, also drunk, interposed, exclaiming:

“Look here, I’ve something important to ask you. Why have you chaps and we been fighting one another? Because the big pots wanted it, I suppose; same here as there? They made you risk your lives in order to get the better of Russia. But would any of them have given you a thousand roubles to improve your condition? Not a bit of it. Those lords of the earth would not have given you so much as a turnip, unless they expected to gain something by it. Well, I’ve left two children at home. What are they to do? Beg?”

He tapped the Japanese on the shoulder, and asked:

“How many kids have you got?”

The Japanese answered in his own tongue, doubtless saying something which was not at all to the point, but the drunken Semenoff jumped at a meaning:

“Three brats, you say? Well, if I’d killed you, they’d have no resource but to beg. Now you understand the position, don’t you, Brother? We’ve been bally idiots to fight one another, and have done ourselves no good by it. But if it comes to a question of dividing up the land, you here in Japan and we in Russia shall know how to look after ourselves without consulting the lords of the earth! I’m talking to you like a friend, and telling you something you’ve never thought of before. Oh, I forgot, let me give you a good hug.”

Semenoff suited the action to the words. He was maudlin in his cups, and the tears rolled down his cheeks. Then he took his watch out of his pocket and handed it to the Japanese, saying:

“There, my friend, keep that in memory of Artificer Semenoff.”

The Japanese looked blankly at the watch. He did not understand. Semenoff went on:

“It’s a good watch, brother; cost twelve and a half roubles; came from Warsaw.”

The machinist slipped the watch into the other man’s pocket. Only then did the Japanese understand that he was being given a present, and he grinned amicably. In his turn, he gave Semenoff a tortoiseshell cigarette case adorned with a picture of a dragon.

These two sentries who had become our guests did not stay with us much longer. A non-commissioned officer came in, and promptly ordered them under arrest for having quitted their posts, and for

being drunk while on duty. As they departed, under guard, they turned and waved to us, crying:

“Russians! Russians!”

To my way of thinking, though Semenoff was drunk, there seemed to be a good deal of sound sense in his words. Why had such men as he and the Japanese bluejackets been fighting one another? What advantage did the workers and peasants of any country derive from international warfare? I recalled how, one day at a fair, I had watched a cock-fight, paying twenty copecks for the privilege. Combative by disposition, and trained to fight, the birds battled furiously, attacking one another's eyes and combs with beaks and spurs. But the advantage accrued, not to the poor mutilated game-cocks. It was their owners who made money out of the affair.

The same thing, though on a much larger scale, happens to the men engaged in an imperialist war. The profits are not made by those who risk life and limb on the battlefield or (like ourselves) in a sea-fight. The day will surely come when the workers of the world will understand this simple truth, and will use their weapons, not against one another, but against those who incite them to make war.

That evening the Japanese warships and the captured Russian ironclads set forth (as we were informed by those who had us in charge) towards the Japanese naval port of Sasebo. Next day, however, for a reason which was not explained to us, the battleship “Asahi” and the armoured cruiser “Asama” were detached from the rest of the squadron to convoy the “Oryol” towards a different destination—Shimonoseki. However, we derived the impression that something untoward had occurred on the “Oryol.” Only after landing in Japan did we learn what had taken place. Some of our men who had been left on board the “Oryol” to work in the holds had opened the scuttles, and soon the vessel developed a list of 4°. The Japanese prize-crew, in a panic, made for the upper deck. Then, recovering their presence of mind, they were able, with the aid of the Russian prisoners, to close the scuttles and avert any immediate danger of sinking. But it was thought expedient to steer the “Oryol” for the nearest Japanese harbour.

One question which continued to interest me greatly was, in what the superiority of the Japanese consisted. The general action of May 14th had shown them to possess exceptional skill in manœuvring, and to be able to take full advantage of the greater speed of their vessels in order to secure the best positions for attack. Also they were

extremely good marksmen; and their shells, though unable to pierce the armour of our ironclads, were incendiary, so that the numerous fires which broke out on the Russian ships had a disastrous effect upon the morale of our men. But was this the whole explanation?

When I came to study the structure of the "Asahi," I was amazed at its perfection. The vessel was a marvel of modern technique. There was no superfluous luxury about her, such as made our Russian warships more comfortable but impaired their fighting efficiency. The "Asahi" was very simply built, with no unnecessary ornament, and no wooden fittings in the superstructure. Thus when it became necessary to prepare for action, no process of dismantling was requisite. Less space was allotted for the officers' cabins, and this made it possible to mount more 6-inch guns. The loopholes in the conning-tower were narrower than ours, so that the men and machinery inside were less exposed to wounds and damage from shell-splinters. Each turret and each casemate had its own range-finder. The embrasures were so well fitted that there was very little likelihood of splinters making their way through the gun-ports.

My thoughts turned to the past of the Japanese. Barely half a century before, under American and Russian pressure, they abandoned the policy of seclusion from the outside world. At that date they had no navy, except for one paddle-wheel steamer, three sailing ships, and a steam-yacht presented by Queen Victoria. But after Commodore Perry's visit in 1853, they set to work rapidly in order to make up for lost time, and the Japanese navy grew apace. It was founded at a period when the other navies had already begun to replace sailing vessels by steamships. There were none of those ancient traditions and habits which are so hard to shake off. Japanese statesmen, when building and organising their fleet, borrowed from the foreign world only what was most essential to success. That success was remarkable indeed. When the Russo-Japanese war broke out, Japanese naval superiority was indubitable alike in respect of fighting force and of organisation—as was shown again and again throughout the naval struggle.

My comrades and I spent three days on board the "Asahi," and I was able to learn a good deal about Japanese naval organisation, and the conditions of service in the Japanese fleet. Obviously much of what I saw would have been difficult to understand, had it not been for the aid of some Japanese bluejackets who could speak Russian. One in particular, a master-gunner whom I will call Yatsuda, became

most friendly. Before entering the navy he had spent several years in various parts of Russia working as a laundryman.

On the "Oryol" the crew was divided into two watches, and each watch into two sections. The section, consisting of men detailed for various specialised work, was under the command of a commissioned officer who, not being himself a specialist, knew little about the members of his section except the ordinary bluejackets classed as able seamen. In fact he had hardly more to do with them than to see that his men got their pay. Matters were very differently arranged on a Japanese warship. There, every part of the crew assigned to a specialty, constituted a section under the command of a specialist officer—engineer, navigating lieutenant, torpedo-lieutenant, gunnery lieutenant, surgeon, or what not. Such an organisation of the crew enables the officer in command of a section to interest himself in the actual performance of each duty. He gets to know the personal value of the men, and can further the advancement of the most efficient.

One thing which astonished us greatly on the "Asahi" was the relation between officers and men, which was simpler and more unaffected than in the Russian navy. Nevertheless, discipline was strictly maintained, and I could see for myself how minutely the bluejackets carried out their functions. While we were on board the call "action stations" was once sounded, not because there was an enemy in sight, but simply as a matter of drill. The men went swiftly and silently to their posts, without any hustling, or objurgations from their chiefs. All was ready within three or four minutes.

One evening, the reasons for such an excellent performance became clear to me. Captain Nomoto had just finished an inspection of his ship. At sundown, every light which could show to the outside was extinguished. Although the Russian fleet no longer existed as a danger, the guns were ready for instant use, each with its full complement of gunners. At 7.30 p.m. hammocks were distributed. The men who were off duty were free to do whatever they liked.

On the fore-deck, the Japanese and the Russian bluejackets drew together round a saucer of oil in which there floated a burning wick, so that anyone who wanted could light a cigarette. I was of the company, together with Boatswain Voevodin and Stoker Baklanoff. We could smell the sea. A gentle breeze caressed our faces. The western horizon was still golden, and the gold of the sky was mirrored in the calm waters. Seated in front of me was Master-Gunner Yatsuda, taking the three or four puffs of smoke provided by one fill of the

tiny metal pipes used by the Japanese. His obliquely set Mongolian eyes had a strange, a mysterious look. We began to talk about the service. He was very much surprised when I told him that Russian bluejackets did not usually spend more than four months of each year at sea, passing the rest of the time in barracks.

"It's different with us," said Yatsuda. "We're on board from year's end to year's end, and mostly cruising. We have lots of training."

"How do you get enrolled in the navy?" asked Voevodin.

Yatsuda explained that only about half the men were compulsorily engaged, spending four years on active service and four years in the reserve. The others were volunteers, chiefly drawn from the coasting trade or from the fishing fleets. The best specialists were volunteers, and the most industrious and skilled of these could become commissioned officers on passing the necessary examinations. It was true that very few succeeded in fulfilling this ambition, but it was a possibility which attracted a good many men into the navy, and incited them to study.

"I say, that's a fine scheme," exclaimed Boatswain Voevodin.

"Yes, in the Russian navy even a man of genius who starts at the bottom can have no hope of rising above the grade of petty officer," said Baklanoff, shaking his head dolefully. "A Government as stupid as ours deserves the beating it's got."

We learned, further, that in the Japanese navy the authorities always try to tempt the best marksmen to re-engage, by offering them high pay. After all, it is upon good shooting that success in a naval engagement mainly depends. The plan was obviously sound. Also the Japanese allot the best gun-layers to their most important ships, so that the ironclads and armoured cruisers shoot better than the secondary units of the fleet. Now, among ourselves the guns of the most modern battleships in the second Pacific squadron, which were intended to play a decisive part in gaining the command of the Sea of Japan for the Russians, were served by recruits or reservists. It never occurred to the Russian naval authorities to replace them by the best gunners of the Black Sea fleet. This alone might have prevented the Japanese from inflicting on us so overwhelming a defeat.

"I suppose you, since you are a first-class marksman, will re-engage when your time expires?" I said to Yatsuda.

"Not me. I'm fed up. I want to go back to Russia."

"Why?"

"I've invented a new way of starching collars. A secret process. I may make a lot of money out of it."

As I looked at him, I thought:

"Perhaps it was a well-aimed shot of yours which sunk one of our ironclads, carrying hundreds of men with her to the bottom. Now, as I look at you, I see a little chap recharging his tiny metal pipe—a man with the most innocent smile in the world."

His black keen-sighted eyes which had served him in his terrible task a day or two before, were looking soberly into the future. His mind was filled with a dream which had absolutely no connexion with war.

Late in the morning of May 17th, Captain Nomoto sent for Boatswain Voevodin.

"Good-morning, Boatswain," he said.

Voevodin could hardly believe his ears, for the captain spoke Russian, and he was slow to answer, in the same tongue:

"Good-morning, Your Excellency."

"Well, how are you getting on aboard my ship?" asked the captain, choosing his words slowly and with care.

"Very comfortable, Sir, thank you."

"Anything to complain of in the food?"

"It's extremely good, Your Excellency. We've only one trouble—no spoons, and we don't know how to manage the chop-sticks you eat with. We have to stuff the rice into our mouths with our fingers."

Nomoto could not restrain a smile.

"I'm afraid you'll have to put up with that for the present. You see, we didn't know the Russians were going to surrender, or we should have brought a supply of spoons. But you'll have them as soon as you get ashore."

Voevodin felt a trifle nettled, for he knew that he was being chaffed. But Nomoto proceeded to ask him how many casualties there had been on the "Oryol"—how many killed and how many wounded. The boatswain was on his guard lest he should be asked anything he ought not to divulge. But the captain was not so indiscreet, and went on to say:

"This morning Captain Yung was buried at sea."

"We knew he was mortally wounded, Sir."

"Was he a good captain?"

"Yes, Sir, his men were very fond of him."

Nomoto lowered his eyes, as if recalling old memories, and then said:

"Yes, I knew Captain Yung. He was a fine fellow, and I'm sorry he was killed."

"I venture to say, Your Excellency, that if Captain Yung had not been mortally wounded, you would not have renewed your acquaintance with him."

"Why not?"

"He would not have surrendered, Sir. He would have sunk the ship and have gone down with her, being a man of very strong character."

Nomoto's rather elderly face stiffened. He looked at the boatswain as a cat looks at a mouse that is being allowed to run away for a moment, and said harshly:

"You can go."

Directly afterwards, Voevodin told me of this conversation with Nomoto. We cudjelled our brains trying to puzzle out when the latter could have known Captain Yung, and where. I had heard from some of our officers that Yung had married a Japanese wife, and had had a son by her. Was it during those days that he had met Nomoto?

No, for subsequently I heard the true explanation. During the voyage out, Captain Yung wrote regularly to his sister, Sophia Viktorovna Vostrosablina. For the most part the letters were full of gloomy forebodings, and of doleful accounts of the disastrous voyage of the second Pacific squadron. But in one of these epistles, under date of January 5, 1905, the captain wrote light-heartedly enough:

"I hear that the sometime naval attaché, Ivan Ivanovich Nomoto, whom you met at my place Slavyanka, is now in command of a Japanese cruiser. It would be rather a lark if I could force the rascal to surrender!"

Yung was misinformed. Captain Nomoto was in command, not of a cruiser, but of an ironclad, the "Asahi"; and it was fore-ordained that Yung's vessel, the "Oryol," was to strike her flag before the "Asahi!"

When we sighted the coast of Japan, Master-Gunner Yatsuda came up to me and informed me, with a smile:

"Your admiral, Rozhestvensky, has been taken prisoner, and his staff with him."

We stared at the Japanese and said:

"How, when, and where?"

Instead of answering these questions, Yatsuda replied:

"The war will soon be over!"

He broke off the conversation, excusing himself by saying that his duties called him elsewhere, and he went below.

The news was instantly communicated by me to my shipmates, but none of them would believe it. They angrily cried:

“Your Asiatic friend was lying.”

“We know that Rozhestvensky has always been a damned fool—but as for surrendering, he was a man of far too much determination.”

“Even if his ship had been sinking, he would have shaken his fists at Admiral Togo, and would have gone down with her.”

“Rozhestvensky, for all his faults, would have killed himself rather than allow himself to be taken prisoner by the Japanese.”

At noon, before entering the port of Shimonoseki, we prisoners of war were marshalled on the fore-deck, and soon we heard the anchor let go. A fresh chapter in our life was opening; and we knew the surrender of our ships had only been necessitated by Admiral Nebogatoff's blind obedience to his chief's order that, whatever happened, he was to keep upon the course of N. 23° E.

If, after the sea-fight of May 14th, the remainder of the Russian squadron had desisted from the attempt to continue on this course, the Japanese victory would have been less overwhelming. This is made plain by the following extracts from Vladimir Semenov's Russian translation (Wolff, 1911) of an official Japanese work entitled, *The Great Naval Engagement in the Sea of Japan* (pp. 29-30):

“Our plan of campaign for May 28th (Russian date, O.S., May 15th) was almost identical with that of the day before. . . .

“Fortune favoured our scouting cruisers, and soon they wirelessed reports of the continued advance of Russian squadron. . . . Our naval operations, which had seemed likely to be difficult, were thereby greatly facilitated. . . .

“Our squadron had merely to await the coming of the enemy, who was thus running his head into the noose we had prepared for him.”

CHAPTER THREE

SACRIFICES CANNOT RESTORE FALLEN GREATNESS

I

THE two destroyers "Bedovyi" and "Buinyi," each of them with a displacement of 350 tons, each with four funnels, and each painted black, were as like one another as the two Dromios in Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*. On the day of the Battle of Tsushima their rôles became confounded. Tragical as was the issue of May 14th in the Sea of Japan, there was to be a comic side.

Commander Nikolai Vasilevich Baranoff was in charge of the "Bedovyi." He was a man of fifty, but, being in splendid health, looked younger than his years. An officer in the Naval Guards, he was dapper and martial-looking. He wore a huge beard, silky, and parted in the middle; his curly hair was brushed back from his forehead; these traits, with his well-rounded orbits, domed forehead, and quivering nostrils, harmonised perfectly with his great stature and broad shoulders. When he had to make a report to his superiors, he did so ably and dramatically. He was regarded as a man of strong character and exceptional resolution, one of whom people said at the first glance:

"There is a commander who will never lose his head, whatever happens."

Admiral Rozhstvensky had a very high opinion of Baranoff. The latter's little craft was always kept spruce. The chief was fond of mentioning her as an example for the captains of other vessels to follow. She acted as scout to the flagship, and received special instructions to follow the "Suvoroff" during the battle, so that, if the ironclad were irreparably damaged, the admiral and his staff could take refuge on the destroyer.

Now, those who knew Baranoff well, held no such high notion of his capacities. He was far from being a hero to the men who served under him. His behaviour during the naval engagement will be more readily understood by persons acquainted with his past.

Backward in his studies, he was no longer in his green youth when at length promoted midshipman. He knew very little about the details of his work, regarding naval guns and torpedoes as strange and

mysterious appliances. Though he rose to the rank of commander when commissioned to take charge of the "Bedovyi," he needed a whole winter of study under Colonel Filippovsky to grasp the laws of navigation. He never opened a book, and did not even know the names of any of the masterpieces of Russian literature. Indeed, he looked upon reading as a form of revolutionary contagion most hazardous to an officer.

He was a wealthy man, who had a fine house in St. Petersburg, and a seaside villa at Sestropetsk. Yet, despite his ample means, he was stingy beyond words. When the destroyer touched at Port Said, his officers bought an ample supply of white drill coats and trousers, costing only a few roubles per suit. Baranoff was not going to squander his money in that fashion. On the other hand, he purchased twenty thousand abominably bad Abyssinian cigarettes, which cost him two roubles a thousand. During the voyage through the tropics he continued, for the sake of economy, to wear his black uniform. He was like one of those hucksters who will haggle for hours about some infinitesimal difference in price. The result was that any financial deals with Baranoff were extremely disagreeable to his subordinates. He would argue interminably over a few copecks.

Off Crete something happened which the officers and men of the "Bedovyi" could never forget. At this time the "Bedovyi" was running in couple with the "Bezuprechnyi." The latter's only boat, overladen, capsized in the harbour, and a number of men were drowning. The "Bezuprechnyi" demanded aid from Baranoff, who, however, categorically refused to lower a boat. Nine men perished. The officers were furious, and Mishipman L., throwing discipline to the winds, said to the commander:

"You have failed in a seaman's first duty towards his comrades. The hardness of your heart sickens me. And, apart from that, I know you to be a rogue."

Baranoff was content to shrug his shoulders and turn his back haughtily upon his junior.

On board the destroyer he usually stayed in bed till noon. He never gave his officers any instructions as regards drill, practice, or what not. During a year and a half, while cruising in the Mediterranean, the "Bedovyi" had only one spell of gunnery and torpedo practice, in the Lake of Bizerta. Thus the vessel was by no means in fighting trim. But this did not disconcert Baranoff. He was content to appear on deck and shout at the top of his voice:

"I want my ship to be as resplendent as an imperial yacht."

Being lazy beyond belief, he did nothing that demanded the least exertion, yet when among his officers he would often complain:

"I'm quite alone. No one does anything to help me."

He had no notion how to handle a ship, and would sometimes spend from twenty minutes to half an hour in picking up his moorings. In fact, he was no sailorman.

Stupid and narrow-minded, his main concerns were promotion and the heaping-up of wealth. Yet, strange as it may seem, he had one other interest—he fancied himself as an inventor. He was going to make inventions which would astonish the world, and he bored his officers to distraction by talking about them.

Every one on the destroyer hated the commander like poison.

Here are two examples of the way in which the officers spoke of him:

"He's only fit to command a tugboat, not a warship."

"I look forward to the time when I shall no longer be under the orders of this rascal, who is a disgrace to the uniform he wears."

The bluejackets of the "Bedovyi" were treated little better than galley-slaves. A man of exceptional strength, Baranoff knocked them about, often striking them so violently that they fell. No complaint was possible, and the men had to be satisfied with voicing their feelings among themselves:

"Your Honour,' indeed. We ought to call him 'Your Dishonour!'"

"He's the admiral's toady."

"If Rozhestvensky were to say: 'I haven't a brush for my boots,' Baranoff would offer his beard!"

Speaking generally, he was cruel, dishonest, unprincipled, with no sense of duty, nor any ideals. How could such an officer secure advancement? How had he managed for two years to retain the post of second in command on the imperial yacht "Polarnaya Zvezda?" Certainly he was not the only man of the same kidney in the fleet. Instead of being dismissed as incompetent and idle, decorations were showered upon him. He had five Russian orders and seven foreign ones, including the Japanese Order of the Rising Sun.

His son, Midshipman Baranoff, was at this time serving on the ironclad "Alexander III." The midshipman was a tall, lean youth, straightforward and trustworthy, with candid eyes, and shy, so that his beardless face was often suffused with blushes. Fresh from the Naval Academy, he looked forward eagerly to what life would

bring him. But he was always unhappy when he encountered his father. Once, lunching in the "Bedovyi's" mess-room, he asked the officers:

"Why is it that none of you like Dad?"

The officers looked at one another in embarrassment, and made no answer.

The "Bedovyi," under Baranoff's command, reached Tsushima Strait safely. Throughout the voyage, the admiral continued to look upon his protegee as an exemplary officer, but he was to be painfully disillusioned on May 14th.

The "Suvoroff," at the head of the column, opened fire with her port guns. The Japanese promptly replied with a furious bombardment. As pre-arranged, the destroyer "Bedovyi" and the cruiser "Zhemchug" were on the flagship's starboard beam, about four cable lengths away.

So long as the danger did not seem grave, Baranoff remained at his post, marching to and fro on the bridge, head erect. The wind ruffled his fine beard, and his fair hair. But as soon as a shell, falling near the destroyer, covered it with spray, the commander grew alarmed. Withdrawing his head between his shoulders, he removed to what he thought a safer distance from the enemy fire.

The "Oslyabya" was sinking, and at that moment the "Bedovyi" was close to her. The water was full of men who had jumped overboard from the doomed ironclad. Instead of trying to rescue them, Baranoff steamed away at full speed. At this there were murmurs of protest from officers and crew. Some ventured to be more explicit:

"Why aren't we trying to save our comrades?"

"Suppose we were in like case?"

"Why, one even tries to save the enemy!"

Baranoff did not venture to withstand these ebullitions of feeling, and put the destroyer about. But it was too late. The "Oslyabya" had disappeared beneath the waters, and the "Buinyi" and the "Bravyi," which were much farther away when the disaster occurred, had steamed rapidly to the spot to pick up the survivors. There were still a few men whom the "Bedovyi" might have fished out, but now the Japanese opened fire on the destroyers, whereupon Baranoff fled once more, without saving so much as one man. He seemed very much pleased with himself, and tried to carry off the situation by saying:

"A pity we got there so late. Still, it would have been very

disagreeable to receive as guests men dripping wet, with whom we should have had to share our cabins."

Soon the "Alexander," seriously disabled, quitted the line of battle. Baranoff, feigning to believe she was the "Suvoroff," steered close to her. Then, dropping his pretence, he shouted:

"'Alexander,' ahoy! Can you send Midshipman Baranoff on deck? His father would like to see him."

No one answered the hail. The ironclad, riddled with shells, and with most of her superstructure destroyed, was blazing. Every able-bodied man aboard was engaged fighting the flames.

Baranoff ordered an appeal for news of his son to be made by semaphore, but still there was no answer. Shells began to fall near the "Bedovyi," and angry voices made themselves heard:

"We didn't save any one from the 'Oslyabya,' and now we're risking our lives here for nothing."

The commander was forced to issue an order that the "Bedovyi" should join the detachment of auxiliary cruisers. For the first time his men saw him nonplussed. His habitual composure had vanished, and his eyes were full of anguish. The wind blew his silky beard, now to one side, now to the other, while his face puckered with emotion. Frequently he glanced at the burning ironclad, where his son, foredoomed to die, was prisoned.

Throughout the day, the "Bedovyi" never went near the flagship. She fired no guns, launched no torpedoes, and did not sustain so much as a scratch.

In the evening, the two destroyers "Bedovyi" and "Groznyi" got into the wake of the first-class cruiser "Dmitri Donskoy." Night was falling, but in the distance the sound of heavy guns and the noise of exploding shells could still be heard. The crackle of machine-guns was likewise audible. Search-lights were working. The "Bedovyi" steamed somewhat a-starboard of the cruiser, as the three vessels advanced together. Commander Baranoff cried to his juniors:

"Whatever happens, don't lose sight of the 'Dmitri.' Follow her closely. She's our safeguard."

Suddenly a vessel loomed out of the darkness three or four cable lengths away from the "Bedovyi," and opened fire on the destroyer.

"Good God, what's happening?" shouted Baranoff.

It was the first-class cruiser "Vladimir Monomakh," which had mistaken the "Bedovyi" for an enemy destroyer. Fortunately, no damage was done.

When the danger was over, Baranoff pulled himself together. From his post on the bridge, however, he continued to call out:

“Keep close to the ‘Donskoy,’ or she may take us for a Japanese!”
The night passed without further incident.

II

A very different type from Baranoff was Commander Nikolai Nikolaevich Kolomeitseff, in charge of the destroyer “Buinyi.” He was a man of thirty-eight, lean, tall, upright, and active. Described in a passport, his lineaments would have been given as follows: eyes, grey and piercing; forehead, meditative; nose, narrow and straight; mouth, small; lips, compressed; moustache, turned up at the ends; beard, small and square-cut. These are the ordinary characteristics of a naval officer; but Kolomeitseff was a man of indomitable will, dauntless courage, and admirable presence of mind. A man of culture, he could speak several foreign languages, and was said to be a great admirer of British naval traditions. He had made many voyages to distant parts; and, before the war, when the ice-breaker “Ermak” had been entrusted to his care, he had shown himself to be an excellent commanding officer.

In 1900 the Russian Academy organised a scientific expedition under the command of Baron Toll, to explore the islands of New Siberia, in the Arctic Ocean. The expedition left St. Petersburg in June, on the yacht “Zarya,” and headed for the Murman Coast, circumnavigating the Scandinavian Peninsula. Three months later, the yacht passed through Kara Strait into Kara Sea. Continuing eastward, it reached Taimur Bay. Here, not far from Cape Chelyuskin, the “Zarya” was frozen in, and had to make arrangements to winter in the icefield.

Kolomeitseff was a member of the expedition. During the early part of the winter, he helped Baron Toll explore the coast with the aid of dog-sleighs; but soon the two men quarrelled, and found life together intolerable. Neither the chief nor the subordinate could accommodate himself to the other, and finally the lieutenant decided to leave the “Zarya.” A Cossack named Rastorgueff agreed to accompany him. They would have to make for the nearest inhabited spot, the village of Galchikha, more than five hundred miles away, on the River Yenisei. To get there, the travellers had to plunge through snowdrifts, cross mountains, and face many other perils. The cold

of the arctic winter was intense. The land was a vast frozen desert beneath the unceasing northern night, and the only other living creatures they encountered were a few affamished wild beasts. Sometimes the tundras were swept by violent storms, when, to escape the blizzard, the two adventurers crawled beneath the snow. Kolomeitseff's shipmates regarded the undertaking as crazy, and looked upon the pair as doomed to destruction. Great was the relief, therefore, when, a couple of days after the start, the two stalwarts returned to the "Zarya." Baron Toll was triumphant, being of the "I told you so" type. But his triumph was premature. Kolomeitseff had come back to fetch some spare parts for his primus stove. After a few hours' rest, he and the Cossack made a fresh start—and in the end they safely reached Galchikha.

On the "Buinyi," the commander maintained strict but reasonable discipline. Above all he insisted that his subordinates should be thoroughly competent, training them in the use of the various apparatus, having frequent target practice and torpedo drill, and making them carry out his orders to the letter. Thus his destroyer became an excellent fighting unit.

Being of an independent disposition, Commander Kolomeitseff could never bring himself to kowtow to his superiors, and this sturdy lack of obsequiousness made the admiral detest him. Rozhdestvensky never missed an opportunity of poking fun at the "Buinyi," showing his wit by making puns on her name, which means "turbulent" or "boisterous." Thus he would hoist a signal: "As usual, the 'Buinyi' has proceeded on her turbulent course, and has spoiled the formation of the column."

While the squadron was in port off Madagascar, Kolomeitseff had an attack of yellow fever. Since there was no surgeon or trained attendant on the destroyer, nor even a sick-bay, the commander handed the vessel over to his second, and removed to the hospital ship. He duly reported sick to the staff. Thereupon the admiral announced in his order of the day:

"The commander of the 'Buinyi' has basely deserted his ship, leaving chance to take care of her."

At this moment, Kolomeitseff was in bed, with a temperature of 104°.

But during the Battle of Tsushima, when courage was fiercely tested, and display no longer counted, destiny was to contrast the two commanders, Baranoff and Kolomeitseff.

I have previously related how the "Buinyi" speeded to the rescue

of the drowning crew of the "Oslyabya," when the "Bedovyi" ran away. Kolomeitseff, standing on the bridge of the destroyer, issued his orders clearly:

"Lower the boat; throw out life-lines."

His officers and crew had been carefully trained, so the necessary work was done quickly and without confusion. The destroyer was surrounded by drowning men, and the enemy was still firing. The ears of the "Buinyi's" complement were assailed by heartrending cries. The victims of the disaster clutched the life-lines. Meanwhile the boat, rowed by two bluejackets, and skilfully steered by Midshipman Khrabro-Vasilevsky picked up as many as she could of those who were further away than the lines could reach.

At this juncture, the destroyer "Bravyi" turned up, to help in the rescue.

The deck of the "Buinyi" was soon crowded with men saved from a watery grave—men who could hardly believe they had escaped. Among them were several officers, one of whom was Navigating Flag-Lieutenant Osipoff, wounded in the head.

The squadron was steaming away into the distance. Japanese cruisers, which were attacking our rearmost vessels, simultaneously opened a fierce fire upon the destroyers that were engaged in the saving of the survivors from the "Oslyabya." It was necessary to make for the offing. Through a megaphone, Kolomeitseff shouted to Midshipman Khrabro-Vasilevsky:

"We must clear out. Come on board as quickly as you can."

At this moment the "Bravyi," already departing, had her mizemast shot away.

The "Buinyi" cruised amid the wreckage, and soon her starboard screw was damaged. A few seconds later, the port screw was entangled by a steel hawser attached to a fragment of the "Oslyabya's" mainmast. Thus the destroyer's progress was completely arrested. With the agility of a trained acrobat, Engineer Danilenko rushed from the engine-room to the poop, and, leaning overboard, realised in an instant what had happened. A man needed strong nerves to retain his presence of mind in such circumstances. The destroyer was chained up, and seemed likely to perish with all on board. However, Danilenko asked the commander to have the port engine reversed. Thereupon the hawser slackened; some of the men dragged it on board with a boat-hook, and severed it. The screw was released, and the engines functioned again.

Meanwhile the boat had come alongside, and the remnant of the "Oslyabya's" men boarded the destroyer. But there could be no question of hoisting in the boat, and she was abandoned.

The "Buinyi," while continuing to reply to the enemy fire, put on all possible speed in pursuit of the squadron, herself followed by the agonised cries of four men whom there had been no time to save. Delay would probably mean the destruction of those who had been rescued, 204 in number.

The "Bravyi" had not picked up quite so many.

The rest of the "Oslyabya's" complement, more than five hundred of them, went to the bottom.

But one more remained afloat, dead, not living; the corpse of Admiral Felkerzam, which had been hermetically sealed within sheet-lead. The air in it sustained, not only the coffin and the body, but a bluejacket who clung to it in order to keep his head above water. This man was fished out, and the coffin was left to roll among the waves, as if the late admiral had determined to watch the doom of the squadron.

Kolomeitseff's destroyer was following in the wake of our cruisers when she sighted, far to starboard, an ironclad from which flames were spouting. The funnels and masts had vanished, but the engines were still working, and the battleship headed south. The south-west wind stirred the coils of smoke which formed above her port beam and her poop.

"Can that be the 'Suvoroff'?" asked Kolomeitseff, with a break in his voice.

All available binoculars were directed towards the blazing wreck.

"I think it must be she," said Midshipman Khrabro-Vasilevsky.

"But if so, why isn't the 'Bedovyi' standing by?"

"There is another craft near her; as far as I can make out, the 'Kamchatka'."

The "Buinyi" paid off in the direction of the two vessels. At this moment enemy armoured cruisers came in sight from the south-east. The destroyer had every reason to expect a rough time.

Commander Kolomeitseff could not at first convince himself that the battered ruin towards which he was steering was the remains of the Russian flagship. Only when he got close did he accept the horrifying conviction that she was, indeed, the "Suvoroff." It immediately occurred to him that Vice-Admiral Rozhstvensky, abandoned by the squadron, must still be aboard, surrounded by

flames, corpses, and masses of bent and broken iron. Heedless of danger, and ignoring the Japanese shells, he made for the burning hulk—which, indeed, protected him a little from the enemy. Soon he could distinguish the starboard 6-inch turret, out of which came a man who, using his arms as semaphore limbs, signalled:

“Embark the admiral.”

The “Suvoroff” stopped her engines. Only her huge armoured hull retained its original shape. The rest was but yawning holes, calcined debris, “old iron.” The paint had been charred off her sides. The 12-inch stern turret had blown up, and fragments of its armour-plating were scattered on the deck. The other turrets had been put out of action, with guns twisted and breeches torn off. The artillery of the battery deck had also been silenced. The conflagration was ravaging whatever the enemy fire had left undestroyed.

Now the “Buinyi” came within hailing distance. Midshipman Kursel, standing by the 6-inch turret, shouted to the commander:

“All our boats have been smashed. The ‘Bedovyi’ has never come near us. The admiral is wounded. At all hazards you must take him aboard.”

“Well and good. But I’ve no boat, either. Had to abandon mine when I saved some of the ‘Oslyabya’s’ men. The only thing is to come alongside the ironclad.”

This was extremely difficult. Although under the lee of the “Suvoroff” the sea was comparatively calm, flames and jets of smoke were pouring out through the shell-holes, and, on this port side, the destroyer was more exposed to the enemy guns. It was therefore doubly necessary to go to windward, the starboard side.

Kolomeitseff shouted his orders amid the noise of Japanese shells:

“Men to hang over hammocks and mattresses as fenders.”

The “Buinyi” drew swiftly alongside, stopped her engines, and made fast to the ironclad. When this had been effected (not without a certain amount of damage to the destroyer), Midshipman Kursel called out:

“The admiral is in the starboard bow turret. We’ll bring him immediately.”

Easier said than done! The door of the turret was jammed, and could not be fully opened, while the admiral had a stout figure. The master gunners who were carrying him treated him with no more ceremony than if he were a sack of potatoes, pulling him by the

arms and the legs, and twisting him this way and that, in the endeavour to get him through the narrowed aperture. He groaned pitifully; and, by the time they succeeded, the wounded Rozhestvensky had lost consciousness.

All this while the "Buinyi" waited patiently. Her thin plates were liable at any moment to be staved in by the ironclad's heavy armour. Shells were falling close to her, raising enormous sprays. Kolomeitseff knew the risk he ran in the endeavour to save the admiral and staff. At any moment his vessel might be sunk, with its crew, and the men rescued from the "Oslyabya," who still had the taste of salt-water on their lips. These poor fellows had had enough of bombardment and the chance of drowning. Every time a shell burst, they ducked their heads and shuddered. Their pale faces and haggard eyes betrayed their inmost feelings. But Commander Kolomeitseff remained perfectly calm, waiting upon events.

Not far from the "Suvoroff" was the repairing-ship "Kamchatka," nicknamed by the admiral "the dirty washerwoman." A shell, at this moment, carried away one of her funnels.

At length a group of officers and bluejackets carrying the wounded admiral emerged from among the smoking ruins on the deck of the flagship. The man they bore was no longer the despot before whom the fleet had trembled. He was, indeed, a pitiable spectacle. His uniform was torn, soiled with mud and soot; one of his feet was booted, the other wrapped in a table-napkin. Blood smeared his face, and much of his beard had been singed off. Time pressed. Choosing a moment when the deck of the destroyer was level with that of the ironclad, the bearers hoisted him from the latter to the former. Recovering his senses, Rozhestvensky opened his eyes and looked at his new surroundings. His pupils dilated with astonishment. He had been saved by the man whom, in all the squadron, he most detested. Commander Kolomeitseff looked at his chief with a strange expression, in which triumph was, perhaps, mingled with compassion. But this exchange of glances lasted only a few seconds, until the admiral was carried to the commander's cabin.

Captain Clapier de Colongue, Navigating Flag-Lieutenant Filipovsky, and various other members of the staff also came aboard the destroyer. So did about sixteen men of the rank and file, profiting by the confusion. Addressing Midshipman Kursel, who remained on the deck of the "Suvoroff," Clapier de Colongue asked him:

"Aren't you coming with us?"

"No, Sir," answered Kursel, "I shall stay by the ship."

About nine hundred of the complement, many of them dead or wounded, were left, for how could they have been accommodated on the little destroyer? The forsaken men looked with anguish at the officers who were deserting them, and wondered whether some other ship would be sent to their rescue.

Throughout the embarkation of the admiral, the "Buinyi" had been in great measure protected by the "Suvoroff" from enemy fire. But as soon as she cast loose and emerged from this shelter, the Japanese cannonade became terrific. A splinter from a shell, which exploded on striking the water near the bow, struck the destroyer above the water-line and killed one of the "Oslyabya's" boatswains.

The officers of the "Suvoroff" had been killed or wounded, with the exception of Kursel, who, when the "Buinyi" steamed away, gloomily betook himself to his casemate, where one 3-inch gun still remained in working order.

Within an hour the destroyer overhauled the cruiser detachment. Upon the orders of Clapier de Colongue she hoisted the signal: "Admiral Rozhestvensky transfers the command to Admiral Nebogatoff." Then he instructed the destroyer "Bezuprechnyi" to catch up the "Nicholas I" and acquaint Nebogatoff that the command now devolved upon the rear-admiral.

This was the second order issued by Rozhestvensky during the Battle of Tsushima, and it was the last.

First-aid was given to the vice-admiral by a sick bay attendant named Kudinoff. There were several wounds: under the right collarbone, on the right hip, on the left heel, and on the forehead. The last-named was the most serious, but Rozhestvensky remained fully conscious. Commander Kolomeitseff and the staff-officers visited him in his cabin. He questioned them as to their impressions of the fight, and made his own comments. When asked as to the course the squadron was to steer, he answered:

"We must make for Vladivostock."

The "Buinyi" steamed ahead, accompanied by the cruisers "Svetlana," "Vladimir Monomakh," "Izumrud," and "Dimitri Donskoy." As soon as darkness fell, the detachment scattered: for a time the destroyer kept the "Donskoy" in view, as well as two vessels of her own class, but soon she lost sight even of these.

Rolling in the swell, and showing no lights, the "Buinyi," thus left to her own devices, advanced at half-speed through the darkness.

It was growing more and more obvious that her course was nearly run. The fresh-water reservoir had burst, and the boilers had to be fed with sea-water. Under this regime, one of them soon got out of order, so that there was no longer a full head of steam. Coal was running short. There was very little likelihood of reaching Vladivostock. Besides, the Japanese were still on the trail, and the danger of their bombardment was only in abeyance.

Shortly after midnight, the commander decided to ask the advice of the admiral's staff. Going below into the messroom, where Clapier de Colongue and Filippovsky had lain down to sleep, he roused them, and acquainted them with the situation.

"In my opinion," he added, "the only thing left is to run the destroyer ashore, disembark the admiral and crew, and blow up the ship. I consider that, in view of the need to save the admiral, if we encounter the Japanese, we should not reply to their fire, but should run up the white flag and demand a parley."

Commander Semenoff expressed a similar opinion, and declared:

"There is all the more reason for this, seeing that the destroyer has become valueless as a fighting unit. She is overladen with wounded and salvaged men. If we were to hoist the red Cross and to declare ourselves a floating hospital, we should hardly be stretching the truth!"

"Maybe, but we cannot take any such decision without consulting the admiral," rejoined Clapier de Colongue.

Kolomeitseff, too, categorically demanded that the admiral should be consulted.

Filippovsky, Clapier de Colongue, and Kolomeitseff thereupon went to the cabin, where Rozhestvensky had been made as comfortable as circumstances permitted. Kolomeitseff touched the wounded man's hand. Our admiral opened his eyes. Filippovsky explained the position, and reiterated his conviction that there would be no option but to surrender if they encountered the Japanese.

The admiral, who had been such a fire-eater, answered meekly:

"Don't concern yourself about me, but act as seems best to you."

The officers of the general staff interpreted these words in the way which would be most conducive to their own safety, and a lively discussion took place. Commander Kolomeitseff went back to the bridge, to see what his officers thought of the matter. Meanwhile those in the messroom were mainly concerned with saving the admiral's life—and consequently their own. The difficulty would

be to get the consent of Kolomeitseff, who wanted a written order. How could they venture to give him a written order to surrender? He had a reputation for courage, while he had scores to pay off upon the admiral and the staff for the humiliations to which he had been subjected during the voyage. He might even put them under arrest, for those who wished to deliver his ship over to the enemy would cease thereby to wield any authority. Catching sight of one of the "Buinyi's" officers, a fat little fellow named Vurm, they told him to take a sheet, and carry it to the commander on the bridge.

"What does that mean?" asked Kolomeitseff fiercely.

"The staff has decided that if you encounter the Japanese, you must hoist this sheet as a white flag," replied Lieutenant Vurm.

Losing his temper, Kolomeitseff shouted:

"They're playing a tragi-comedy, in which I will take no part. I am in command of a Russian warship, and the admiral is under my charge. I will not surrender on my own initiative."

Snatching the sheet from Vurm's hands, he flung it overboard, and said:

"Go and ask them for a written order. Then we can consider what to do."

The staff officers had gone to sleep when Vurm got back to the messroom—or perhaps some of them were only foxing. Anyhow, he aroused them, and gave them the commander's message. They made no answer.

What was happening, meanwhile, to the forsaken squadron? Nobody seemed interested in that question. Nor did any one bother about the "Suvoroff." Hundreds of men had been left on the burning wreck. They hoped probably that the staff would bear them in mind, and would send other craft to which they could be transshipped. But the members of the staff, thinking only of their own chances of life, failed in their duty.

We learned afterwards the horrible fate of the flagship. At about seven in the evening she was attacked by a detachment of Japanese destroyers which speeded towards her as dogs might speed towards a dying lion. But the lion still resisted. Midshipman Kursel, who had stuck to his post, made good use of his 3-inch gun, and was able, for a time, to compel the Japanese to keep their distance. The enemy had to circumnavigate the ironclad, and approach her from the other side. Then they launched their torpedoes. The "Suvoroff" was hit by three or four almost simultaneously; she sent up a sheet of flame,

as if spreading a golden wing, emitted clouds of yellow and black smoke—and sank.

There were no survivors.

A few minutes later came the turn of the “Kamchatka.” Being about five cable lengths from the flagship, this repairing unit had tried to defend herself and the latter with such guns as she possessed, a few pieces of 47-mm. calibre. Then a big shell exploded in her bow below the water-line, and she followed the “Suvoroff” to the bottom.

The repairing-ship had been manned chiefly by volunteers—skilled workmen. A few of them were picked up by the enemy.

III

The two-funnelled first-class cruiser “Dmitri Donskoy,” 6200 tons displacement, with two compound engines, was launched in 1885. She was then able to steam at nearly seventeen knots, but now, after twenty years (when ships in the German navy are scrapped), her engines were so worn that her maximum speed reached barely thirteen knots. In respect of artillery, she had been brought up to date. Still, in Admiral Rozhestvensky’s opinion, she was fitted for nothing better than the work of harbour protection.

When the time of trial came, she was told off to convoy the transports. Throughout the sea-fight of May 14th, she did her duty conscientiously. Whenever circumstances seemed to demand it, the roar of her six 6-inch guns and her four 120-mm. guns was super-added to the din of battle.

But almost immediately after she opened fire, something went wrong with her steering-gear, and Captain Lebedeff, who was in charge, told his second, Commander Blokhin, to find out what was amiss. Speaking as suavely as possible, he said:

“She’s not answering her helm properly, Konstantin Platonovich. Go at once to the after-bridge and steer from there.”

“All right, Sir,” said the second, departing as ordered.

Blokhin was a thickset, vigorous man of about forty-three, with a round, ruddy face fringed by a spade-beard. A big nose projected above his large, blond moustache. His cold grey eyes gleamed with intelligence, and since he had begun to go bald, his forehead seemed exceptionally high.

Punctual and accurate, he demanded the same virtues from his subordinates. At the Naval Academy he distinguished himself as

a mathematician. Then he was appointed professor of astronomy, mathematics, and naval topography. His students feared him for his strictness, but admired him for his imperturbable humour. As second on the "Donskoy," he kept the ship as clean and orderly as conditions permitted. Though a good comrade in the officer's mess, when on duty he would tolerate no slackness. He had a passion for discussing their specialities with the torpedo lieutenants and artillery officers, and would keep to such topics for hours. The crew feared him as a disciplinarian. Having an excellent memory, he could not only bear in mind the names of all his men, but also knew their life-stories and their peculiarities.

Cool-headed, firm, and decisive—these were his most salient qualities, and they may explain the singular nature of his family life. When he had attained the rank of lieutenant, he courted a young woman; but, detecting a certain incompatibility, he changed his mind, and married—her mother. He proved an excellent husband.

Captain Lebedeff, about twelve years older than his second, was a man of a very different type. Tall, thin, with a small, pointed beard, hair grizzled on the temples, restless dark eyes beneath arched eyebrows, he did not stand upon the letter of the regulations, and was simple and pleasant-spoken to everybody. A thoroughly efficient commanding officer, self-respecting, he was not the kind of man to show servility towards superiors. He was, therefore, unsuited for life in the Russian navy, which, for all its fine show, was eaten up with routinism. Lebedeff could not stand the life, threw up his commission and went abroad, after attaining the rank of lieutenant. Having no private means, he had to earn a livelihood as best he could. For some months he worked as stevedore at Havre, thus becoming acquainted with the hard lot of a manual labourer. Still, his distresses were tempered by the joys of family life, for he was happily married to a young Frenchwoman of the working class, who bore him two children. A few years later poverty forced him back to Russia, where he rejoined the navy. He had been promoted captain shortly before the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war. Though, during the voyage, he showed himself far more competent than most of his colleagues, Rozhestvensky disliked him for his sturdy independence, and never missed a chance of finding fault with him. The admiral would say:

"Run up the signal of reprimand for that stinking liberal!"

Lebedeff was not a man to take this sort of thing meekly, and

sometimes, in conversation with his officers, he would speak disrespectfully of the admiral.

"One can do nothing, since the beggar has two eagles on his shoulders. Still, one knows that these birds often perch upon carrion."

Within half an hour after the opening of the Battle of Tsushima Lebedeff knew that we Russians were done for. Since he repeatedly came out of the conning-tower on to the fore-bridge, he was able to keep a close watch on the different phases of the battle: to see the flagship wreathed in flames, the fire that broke out on the "Alexander," and the sinking of the "Oslyabya." The squadron's marksmanship was bad, and its manœuvring was even worse. But he was especially indignant at being told off to convoy the transports. Pointing to them, he exclaimed:

"They're not warships, but only a lot of old tin kettles. Why the devil did the admiral keep them in the wake of the fleet? Yet to defend them, many of our cruisers have been detached from the fighting force!"

The "old kettles" proved a great attraction for the second-grade enemy vessels, which were not taking part in the main engagement. Under the Japanese fire, the transports crowded in among the cruisers, breaking their line of advance, and compelling them to change their course again and again, as the only way of avoiding collisions. The "Donskoy," now starboarding, now porting her helm, waddled hither and thither aimlessly, and was naturally unable to make good use of her guns. It was otherwise with the Japanese, who registered numberless hits.

Lebedeff realised that Russia's last hope of winning the war had vanished, and that the bulk of her naval forces were destined to be sunk in the Sea of Japan, off the island of Tsushima. He did not lack courage, but the most desperate courage could not now save the situation.

Blokhin stuck to his post on the after-bridge, performing the allotted task, and showing his usual phlegm until the steering-gear had been repaired.

During the day, the "Donskoy" fired more than fifteen hundred shells, but the Japanese paid little heed, reserving their fire for our cruisers of modern build. Thus there broke out only one fire aboard her, which was quickly got under control; and no more than eight of her complement were wounded.

By nightfall, the remnants of the squadron had been scattered as

if by a storm. Some, having lost track of the flagship, wandered alone in the void, not knowing whither to set their course. Such was the case of the "Dimitri Donskoy." The darkness grew thicker and thicker. The cruiser was steering S. 10° E. There were many alarms. Several times the "Dimitri" had to repulse torpedo-attacks. Then she narrowly escaped being rammed by the "Vladimir Monomakh," which was also trying to avoid the Japanese destroyers. The "Dimitri" got out of the "Vladimir's" way by suddenly porting her helm. But in the commotion attendant on this manoeuvre she was exposed to the badly directed fire of the "Svetlana" and some of our other warships. One missile from a Hotchkiss made its way into the officer's mess-room, but luckily failed to explode. Just after this, the "Donskoy" fired on some of our ships, mistaking them for the enemy. From moment to moment, the look-out men were shouting:

"Destroyer to starboard!"

"Destroyer to port!"

"Ship on the starboard beam!"

Glare of rockets, firing of cannon, and whistle of shells, made the night hideous.

Not until the small hours did the cruiser, steaming without lights, escape from the battle-zone.

"What course shall we now steer?"

Such was the question mooted by Captain Lebedeff at an impromptu council of war summoned on the fore-deck. Without waiting for an answer, he went on, in the brisk tone that was customary to him:

"We ought to be with Enkvist's detachment. But the admiral, most of whose ships, such as the 'Aurora,' the 'Oleg,' and the 'Zhemchug,' are swift modern cruisers, will have outdistanced us and got away to the south-west. We've been playing the same game, and it's not our fault if this old tub has not kept up with him. Useless, to my way of thinking, that we should try any longer to rejoin him."

"Let's make for Vladivostock, then," exclaimed several of the officers.

"Yes, I don't see what else we can do," replied the captain.

After a little further discussion, this was unanimously agreed upon.

At 1 a.m. the sky cleared, and the pole-star was visible. Bearings could be taken. It then appeared that the "Dimitri Donskoy" was forty-five miles north of Korea Strait, already in the open waters of the Sea of Japan. Her course was N. 23° E. But the alarms of the night

were not yet over, for the cruiser was being followed by three destroyers, which could not be identified, and it was necessary to keep a sharp look-out, with the guns ready for instant use. The hours passed slowly. The Japanese were attempting to communicate by wireless, but the "Donskoy" immediately used her own apparatus to block the messages.

Hope revived at dawn. The destroyers in the "Dimitri's" wake were not Japanese after all, but two of our own, the "Bedovyi" and the "Groznyi." From the bridges and the upper deck our men looked at them affectionately, as if they had been the children of their cruiser.

A look-out man whose sight was exceptionally keen, said to the senior officer:

"They're the same that were following us in the night, Your Honour. I was sure of them then. Not a doubt of it now."

Blokhim, pushing his cap to the back of his head, so that his big nose seemed more prominent than ever, pursed up his lips, and said to the captain:

"Maybe so. But I could have sworn, Ivan Nikolaevich, that there were three ships in our wake. Now there are only two. What's become of the third?"

Lebedeff answered promptly:

"Oh, well, that doesn't matter much. The essential thing is that none of the enemy are within sight. We have a chance of reaching Vladivostock."

Eastward, over Japan, the sky was rapidly growing brighter. There were no clouds, nor even mist-wreaths; and the calm waters reflected the rosy tints of dawn. Now a trail of smoke was visible on the horizon. What vessel was approaching? Soon the "Bedovyi" signalled to the cruiser a message just received by wireless: "Slow down to await the 'Buinyi', who wishes to transship the admiral."

IV

On the previous evening, when Admiral Rozhstvensky was already on board the "Buinyi," Baranoff received orders to seek out the flagship and rescue the staff. The order really signified that he was to save any members of the staff who might still be alive on the sinking wreck. But Baranoff understood it to imply that the admiral was on the "Suvoroff," for he did not know that anyone had

yet been taken off. Of course the "Bedovyi" did not find the flagship, for its commander did not wish to leave such protection as the light cruisers might afford. Losing touch with them in the darkness, he followed the "Dmitri Donskoy" for the remainder of the night. Consequently the message sent on the morning of May 15th, "transship the admiral," was extremely agitating. The name of the admiral was not mentioned. Was it Rozhestvensky or Nebogatoff? Or was it merely Felkerzam (whose death, as previously explained, had been kept a secret from the squadron). Anyhow, the wireless order aroused consternation in the chicken-hearted Baranoff. What was he to do if it should really turn out to be the vice-admiral? He stumped up and down the bridge in a state of great excitement, crying:

"What damnable luck. Not so bad if it's Nebogatoff or Felkerzam. But it may be the admiral-in-chief. Oh, I hope to God it's not Rozhestvensky!"

The "Buinyi" was now rapidly approaching the cruiser "Dmitri Donskoy" and the two destroyers "Bedovyi" and "Groznyi."

Commander Kolomeitseff went below, to where the wounded admiral was lying:

"Your Excellency," he said, "it is my duty to inform you that the engines of my destroyer are in a bad way, that the boilers are choked with fur, and that we have burned nearly all our coal. I don't see any chance of reaching port. In these circumstances, I must ask you whether you would like to be transferred to the 'Donskoy'?"

The admiral lowered his dark eyes, as if afraid to meet the gaze of Kolomeitseff, and enquired, in low tones:

"The cruiser has some destroyers with her, hasn't she?"

"Yes, Your Excellency, the 'Bedovyi' and the 'Groznyi'."

After a few moments' reflection, Rozhestvensky said:

"In that case, I would rather remove to the 'Bedovyi'; provided, of course, that she is not short of coal, and that her engines are in good order."

"I will find out, Your Excellency."

Kolomeitseff returned to the bridge.

As soon as he was within hailing distance of "Bedovyi," he shouted:

"How much coal have you, and how many knots can you steam per hour?"

Baranoff, having consulted his engineer-artificer, Ilyutovich, replied in his stentorian voice:

"I have forty-nine tons of coal, enough for forty-eight hours'

steaming at the most economical speed. I can steam up to twenty-five knots per hour."

"How long would you take to reach Vladivostock?"

"Thirty-six hours."

The same questions were put to the "Grosnyi," and the answers were no less satisfactory. However, the staff-officers, with the admiral at their head, decided to transfer to the "Bedovyi." All four craft stopped their engines, and rolled gently on the swell. Having received orders by semaphore, the "Donskoy" lowered a steam pinnace and one of her row-boats. The latter immediately pulled alongside the "Buinyi" to fetch the admiral and the staff, but it was a whole hour before the admiral could be transferred. Meanwhile, the pinnace having gone to the other side of the destroyer, began to convey to the cruiser the men saved from the "Oslyabya," with whom the "Buinyi" was overcrowded.

Baranoff, standing upright on the bridge, his eyes glued to his binoculars, was growing more and more agitated. Towards 9 o'clock, the row-boat put off from the "Buinyi," and made for the "Bedovyi." No further doubt was possible. It conveyed Admiral Rozhestvensky, who was lying on a stretcher. Bandaged as he was, the admiral was scarcely recognisable; but the members of his staff were with the wounded man: Captain Clapier de Colongue, Chief Navigating Lieutenant Filippovsky, both of them with dressings on their heads, Commander Semenov, Senior Flag-Lieutenant Krzhizhanovsky, and the rest of them. Baranoff ran to the gangway-ladder as if the devil were at his heels. His face turned pale and red by turns, while he tried to stammer apologies. He told himself that, however kindly the admiral had previously felt towards him, Rozhestvensky would never forgive his treacherous desertion of the day before. Useless to pretend that he had believed the commander-in-chief to have perished. The latter was certainly very much alive. From the stretcher, he fixed his eyes on the commander, as if endeavouring to read the secrets of Baranoff's faithless soul.

The rowers trailed their oars. Midshipman Hernet, who was in command of the boat, said to the admiral:

"What orders for the 'Donskoy', Your Excellency?"

Rozhestvensky replied firmly:

"Make for Vladivostock."

As he was being transferred to the destroyer, Lieutenant Leontieff said to the men who were lifting him:

"Go easy, lads. Don't forget it's the admiral, and that he's wounded in several places."

Baranoff stroked his silky beard, took a deep breath, threw a chest, and stood to attention. The hand with which he saluted trembled, and he winced like a frightened cur. But his fears were soon dispelled. In different circumstances, at another time, the admiral, weakened though he was, would have administered a ferocious reprimand to a commanding officer who had failed to obey orders. Now, no such thought occupied his mind. He held out a friendly hand to Baranoff.

"I say, Commander," he observed, "they gave us a fine grueling yesterday, didn't they?"

Touched by this mark of favour, Baranoff kissed Rozhestvensky's hand, and replied:

"Yes, Your Excellency, we did, indeed, have a dressing down. But, God be praised, Your Excellency is alive."

The crew of the "Bedovyi" looked on silently.

Twenty-four hours earlier, these same men would have been paralysed with fear at sight of the admiral. But now, the battle was lost, and the commander-in-chief who had deserted his beaten squadron, counted for nothing. The men scrutinised him curiously and regretfully, almost as if astonished that hitherto they had obeyed so poor a creature. To the admiral's salute they made no more than a half-hearted response, while a few muttered:

"We wish Your Excellency a speedy recovery."

Rozhestvensky was transferred to a hammock, that he might be carried more easily to the commander's cabin. Baranoff thrust himself forward, saying to the bluejackets:

"None of you presume to touch His Excellency, I myself will help him to his bed."

Very soon after Rozhestvensky was installed, Surgeon Trzhemesky arrived from the "Donskoy."

The "Bedovyi" headed for the north, and hoisted the signal: "'Groznyi,' follow me." But Commander Andrzheevsky, who was in charge of the latter vessel, being senior to Baranoff, did not obey the order. Baranoff ran up a second signal: "'Groznyi,' what are you doing?" Andrzheevsky replied, "Nothing"; then, being puzzled, came nearer to the "Bedovyi" and semaphored: "What do your orders mean, and who is issuing them?" The "Bedovyi" replied, likewise by semaphore: "We have Admiral Rozhestvensky aboard, wounded; with him are most of the members of his staff. Making for

Vladivostock. If coal runs short, we shall head for Posiet. Follow us in such a way that your smoke does not blind us." Thereupon the "Grosnyi" followed the "Bedovyi" well astern.

The "Donskoy" and the "Buinyi" stayed where they were for a time, while the men rescued from the "Oslyabya" were being transferred from the latter to the former. Soon, however, the transshipment had to be interrupted, for suspect smoke-trails appeared on the horizon. The "Donskoy," having taken her boats on board again, headed for the north, accompanied by the "Buinyi". By this time the "Bedovyi" and the "Grosnyi" were almost hull-down, and it was impossible to overtake them.

As soon as the staff arrived on board the "Bedovyi," the question was mooted:

"Have you a white flag on the destroyer?"

Afterwards it was found impossible to ascertain who had been the first to ask this. Baranoff ascribed it to the navigating flag-lieutenant; according to Midshipman O'Brien de Lassy, the question had come from Clapier de Colongue; and according to a helmsman and an orderly, from the admiral in person. Probably all three of them, obsessed by the same idea, raised the matter independently.

Baranoff had known Filippovsky for a good while, the latter having (as already said) been his instructor in the art of navigation. The pair of them now discussed the problem of the white flag, in the presence of Midshipman O'Brien, a young man of twenty with a girlish face and distinguished manners. He was not much good as a seaman, but was wealthy; and, according to his own story, a descendant of Irish kings.—There were, of course many "kings" long ago in the Emerald Isle, who elsewhere would only have been styled chieftains.

Commander Baranoff was somewhat puzzled by this talk of a white flag. Filippovsky explained that the general staff, before leaving the "Buinyi," had decided, in order to save the admiral's life, to surrender without a fight should the enemy be encountered.

"Ah, that's all right, I'm quite of your way of thinking," answered Baranoff, stroking his beard, and smiling with as much pleasure as if he had just received an announcement of promotion.

No white flag was to be found on the destroyer, so Midshipman O'Brien de Lassy suggested the use of a table-napkin or a sheet. This was not to the taste of Commander Baranoff, who said in a dictatorial tone:

"A white tablecloth would be more appropriate."

O'Brien de Lassy accepted the emendation with the nonchalance of youth, and cheerfully, unhesitatingly, gave an order to Look-out Man Sibireff:

"Be off with you as quick as you can to the officers' mess, find a tablecloth, and rig it for use as a white flag."

"But are we really going to surrender, Sir?" asked Sibireff, greatly surprised.

The midshipman replied, with a grin:

"Admiral's orders, my lad. We're to be ready for any emergency."

The rumour of these preparations spread rapidly through the destroyer. The men discussed the plan with considerable heat. Some of them refused to believe it. Boatswain Chudakoff, a tall, strong fellow, with a blond moustache, clenched his fists and growled as he declared his intention to knock out anyone guilty of circulating such a report.

"Easy, old chap," said his shipmates, "you've only got to listen to what the officers are saying on the bridge."

However, several of the crew asked, reasonably enough:

"Whom are we going to surrender to, when there's not so much as a Japanese torpedo-boat in sight?"

It was true. The sea was deserted, except for ourselves. Simple-minded and straightforward persons might very well suppose that the destroyers would reach a Russian port. They did not know that up above, on the bridge, measures were being taken to ensure our meeting the Japanese. Navigating Flag-Lieutenant Filippovsky traced on the chart a line passing close to Dagelet Island, leaving it a little to starboard. Both destroyers were to take this course. Midshipman Demchinsky ventured to remark:

"There may be a signalling station on the island. Then the Japanese will see us, and send some of their fleet in pursuit. Couldn't we give the island a wider berth?"

Obviously annoyed, Filippovsky knitted his brows.

"That's the only route we can take without running short of coal," he muttered. "It's the shortest and most direct."

The midshipman had no resource but to answer:

"Certainly, Sir, I hadn't taken that point into consideration."

Baranoff and the members of the admiral's staff, after talking things over once more, decided to stick to their plan. They sent to the engine-room for the Engineer-Artificer Ilyutovich, asked him what was the "Bedovyi's" most economical speed, and ordered him to

bank the fires. Then, instead of getting out of the danger-zone as quickly as possible, they had speed reduced to twelve knots.

It would seem that the admiral and his subordinates had no desire to reach Vladivostock. Only one member of the general staff, Torpedo-Lieutenant Vechesloff, divining his colleagues' secret schemes, was greatly incensed. He was a man to whom the rank and file were much attached, a talented young writer, and one who held advanced opinions. Commander Baranoff hated him because he was friendly to the men, and frequently talked to them about matters which had nothing to do with the service. Rather tall, broad-shouldered, with strongly marked features, and a bronzed skin, Vechesloff now wandered about the destroyer at a loose end, and as if he had lost something important, nay, indispensable. Conversing with other members of the staff, he urged them to explain why the admiral had come aboard the "Bedovyi." They said that the "Buinyi" was in bad condition, and short of fuel.—"Why not the 'Groznyi', then?"—Neither Clapier de Colongue nor Filippovsky, nor any other member of the staff could answer so embarrassing a question. Encountering Engineer-Artificer Ilyutovich, Vechesloff made no secret of his suspicions.

"What puzzles me is this. Commander Baranoff practically betrayed Admiral Rozhestvensky. Throughout the battle he never went near the flagship, which had been so frightfully knocked about, and was on fire. Yet the admiral, knowing all the facts, chooses to come aboard the 'Bedovyi.' How do you explain that?"

"I explain it on the ground that the chiefs know Baranoff to be the man most likely to lend himself to a shady business. Yes, a shady business; and one in which we shall all be involved without any power to extricate ourselves."

The arrival of another artificer put an end to the conversation.

Before dinner, there was no change in the situation. The two destroyers steered N. 23° E., at a speed of twelve knots. The horizon was clear. The Japanese gave no sign of life. The members of the staff seemed disappointed. Lieutenants Krzhizhanovsky and Leontieff, who were not used to the uneasy movements of a destroyer, were seasick. The others lay down to sleep. There was no reason to be anxious about the admiral, the surgeon having announced that his temperature was below 100°.

In the afternoon Lieutenant Vechesloff took the watch. At about three o'clock, the look-out man reported that there was smoke astern.

Vechesloff immediately sent news of this to Commander Baranoff. There was a bustle on board the destroyer. The members of the staff and the "Buinyi's" own officers came up to the bridge. Binoculars and telescopes were directed towards the smoke-trails, which approached and enlarged like clouds. What did they signify? For the moment no one could tell.

V

The "Dimitri Donskoy" and the "Buinyi" headed for Vladivostock, at the best speed they could manage. To begin with, the destroyer was on the cruiser's port beam, about five cable lengths away. Gradually, however, she fell behind. Her engines worked badly, and made an uncanny noise. Stokers and artificers did their utmost, but they could not get out of her more than 130 revolutions instead of the normal 350.

Commander Kolomeitseff, though he was a man who usually threw a chest, was now crumpled up, with hanging head, and a prey to bitter thoughts. He had not slept for twenty-four hours, and the strain to which he had been exposed had taken the colour from his cheeks, while his nose looked pinched. There was a gentle swell beneath a burning sun. All seemed calm and peaceful, but anguish gnawed at his heart. With his piercing grey eyes he watched the cruiser outstripping him. What was he to do? If he stayed in the open sea on board a disabled destroyer, he would, for no useful purpose, sacrifice the lives of his crew. Some decisive step was essential. He sent for Engineer-Artificer Danilenko, and, controlling his emotion, said in business-like tones:

"Supposing that we had enough coal, do you think the engines would hold out till we reached Vladivostock? In other words, should we signal the 'Donskoy' to stop and supply us with fuel, or would that simply be a waste of time? Tell me frankly."

Danilenko, his face soiled with sweat and coal-dust, and his clothes in no better case, looked sadly at his chief.

"Sir," he replied, "I don't think the engines will work much longer without a thorough overhaul—something more than is possible outside a dockyard. As for the boilers, they too, are nearly done for. We can't use no. 4 at all, for the joints of the steam-pipe are leaky."

Thereupon Kolomeitseff summoned a council of war, attended not only by his own subordinates, but by the officers who had been

saved from the "Oslyabya." After a brief discussion it was agreed that the only thing was to tranship on board the "Donskoy," and then sink the "Buinyi," lest she should fall into the hands of the enemy.

Within two minutes, the commander shouted:

"Hoist the signal: 'Am in distress.'"

Under the sorrowful eyes of officers and crew, this was run up at the mizen-mast. The fragments of bunting that waved in the breeze signified that the destroyer was at her last gasp, and was appealing for help to her consort. No one broke the silence. The commander plucked nervously at his flaxen beard.

The "Donskoy" put about, slowed her engines, and then came to a standstill. The "Buinyi" laid alongside, and, after a brief exchange of words between the two commanding officers, the transshipment began. This was after 11 o'clock in the morning.

By noon, there were only three men left on board the destroyer, Kolomeitseff, Lieutenant Vurm, and Boatswain Tyulkin. They made all necessary preparations to blow up the "Buinyi," got into a small boat, and pulled away to a safe distance—the destroyer having, of course, already been cast adrift from the cruiser. However, the explosion missed fire. Then, to save time, it was decided to sink the "Buinyi" by firing at her from the "Donskoy."

The commander and his two assistants went aboard the cruiser, whose gunners loaded one of their 6-inchers. The range was about one and a half cable lengths—three hundred yards. The first shell went wide. So did a second and a third. The "Buinyi" was intact.

The men began to murmur:

"I say, what rotten marksmen our gunners are!"

"They couldn't hit the pavement if they spat on it!"

"One can only suppose the devil's in the destroyer!"

Captain Lebedeff, who watched the firing from his post on the bridge, was in a fine stew when the fourth and fifth shots went wide like the others:

"This is monstrous! This is shameful!" he exclaimed. "One would think that our navy must be under a curse. And all because we've never paid sufficient attention to target-practice."

His senior officer, Commander Blokhin, could not help saying:

"Again and again I've talked the matter over with our gunnery specialists, and have always told them they could not train the men to lay their guns properly."

But Lebedeff interrupted him:

“It’s not only this group of specialists or that which is to blame. The evil cuts deeper. The whole organisation of the Russian navy is rotten.”

The sixth and the seventh shells touched the destroyer; but it was only the eighth which got seriously to work on her bow. Slowly she dipped by the head, then more rapidly, until at length, her screws rising high out of the water, and the signal of distress still flying at her mizen, she took the final plunge, as if determined to seek the depths.

This incident, coming so soon after the general naval engagement, opened every one’s eyes. Though insignificant, taken by itself, it characterised the state of our fleet, in which so much more attention was paid to reviews and ceremonial than to training for actual conflict—with the result that our gunners could not hit a stationary target that was almost within bowshot. These were artillerymen of Rozhestvensky’s school, the same school which had given that admiral so brilliant a career. How could we hope to hit and to put out of action Japanese destroyers steaming twenty-five knots through the darkness; or, still less, to inflict serious damage on ironclads forty cable lengths away? We had merely been wasting our shells.

Left alone, the “Donskoy” resumed her northward voyage. Had she not lost nearly five hours in her encounters with the “Bedovyi” and the “Buinyi” she would perhaps have made good her escape. But these delays sealed her fate.

In the morning she sighted some Japanese destroyers, which speedily vanished, presumably in search of reinforcements. The sun passed the zenith. The men went to rest after dinner, then drank tea. At four that afternoon she raised the Dagelet Island on the port bow. It was a precipitous mountain-top thrusting above the waters, with no anchorage to speak of, and about four hundred miles from Vladivostock. Nothing suspicious was in sight, the horizon being clear. A feeling of peace and confidence prevailed on board the cruiser, and all were eager to maintain this mood. Even the officers gave orders in gentle tones. They seemed to be the members of a united family on board, animated by the sole desire to see their native land once more. The men’s wishes in this respect secured plain expression:

“If we don’t sight the Japs before nightfall, that will signify we have got clean away.”

“Just to set foot on Russian soil! I shall kiss it like as though it were my mother.”

But this calm atmosphere was dispelled within two hours, and anguish took its place.

First of all, smoke-trails appeared to starboard. Midshipman Vilken at once climbed into the fore-top, to get a better look-out. The unknown ships drew nearer. The whole crew of the "Donskoy" came on deck. From the bridge, the officers kept on shouting enquiries to Vilken, whose replies were, at first, evasive.

"Well, what do you make out?"

"Maybe some of our own fleet."

"Enkvist's detachment, d'you think?"

"Can't tell yet. Too far away."

At length, came a cry of despair:

"They're Japanese. Not a doubt of it."

The words were uttered in the clear tones of a boy, but they were weighty with destiny, and put an end to dreams of a happy morrow. There was an uneasy stir on deck, and a buzz of conversation among the men from stem to stern. Some of the seamen scrutinised one another as if wondering which of them were doomed to be killed or wounded in the renewed fighting. The crew of the "Oslyabya," so recently saved from drowning, tasted once more, in imagination, the salt water in their mouths.

Captain Lebedeff, throwing back his head, shouted to the youthful officer in the fore-top:

"Midshipman Vilken, are you absolutely certain those are Japanese warships?"

"Yes, Sir, not a doubt of it. Four cruisers and three destroyers."

The captain had the helm ported, but it was too late. The enemy had already spotted the "Donskoy," and all their ships gave chase. Soon, two three-funnelled cruisers appeared to port. Orders were given to increase the steam-pressure to the utmost. The stokers and artificers did all they could. Oil was fed to the furnaces to activate combustion. Unfortunately, boiler no. 5, having been damaged in the previous day's battle, was out of gear. Speed was increased for a short time, and then perceptibly slackened. Slowly but surely the pursuers overhauled the cruiser, and a fight became inevitable.

Another council of war was summoned on the bridge. Fewer officers were present this time, since the pressure of events was overwhelming. Captain Lebedeff asked Commander Blokhin, Lieutenants Stark, Hirs, and Durnovo (his own officers), and also Navigating Flag-Lieutenant Osipoff, saved from the "Oslyabya,"

what they thought desirable in the circumstances. Some of them answered dubiously, wishing to shuffle off responsibility:

"It seems unlikely that we can do any serious damage to an enemy detachment comprising six cruisers and several destroyers."

"Still, we must fight, if they leave us no choice."

All eyes turned towards the captain, as if salvation could come from him. Osipoff was the only one bold enough to voice his real thoughts. His huge grey beard bristling, his forehead furrowed, his blue eyes widely opened, he strode up and down the bridge and exclaimed:

"I really don't see how we can put up a fight when we're so hopelessly outclassed. You might as well break your teeth by trying to bite through an anchor-chain. Besides, think what happened a few hours ago. We had to fire eight shells, before we could sink a destroyer close at hand, and without a man on board. Doesn't that prove our impotence? Only yesterday, though we ourselves had not to bear the brunt of it, we watched the deadly effect of Japanese fire. Do you suppose for a moment that this poor old tub of a 'Donskoy' can defend herself effectively? If we fight, we shall be sunk in ten minutes. Why should we, for no useful purpose, sacrifice the lives of eight hundred men?"

Captain Lebedeff cut Osipoff's harangue short, and, turning to his second, said, almost in a whisper:

"I think the council may as well break up."

Immediately Blokhin issued a sharp order:

"Gentlemen, you will be good enough to leave the bridge and to repair to your stations as soon as the signal is sounded."

Lebedeff told the man at the wheel to head for Dagelet Island and then said to Commander Blokhin:

"If the issue of the unequal struggle in which I am about to engage should take too disastrous a turn, I shall run the cruiser on to the rocks of the island."

VI

The "Bedovyi" and the "Groznyi" continued on their course at half-speed. The unknown boats in pursuit were overhauling them. Dagelet Island appeared to starboard. The officers were talking on the bridge of the destroyer:

"They must be some of our surviving cruisers."

"No doubt. They got separated from the squadron yesterday, and are trying to rejoin it."

"Likely enough. Anyhow, they're on the same course as ourselves."

Lieutenant Vechesloff grumpily put in:

"But what if they're Japanese?"

Flag-Lieutenant Filippovsky promptly rejoined:

"The Japanese never hunt in couples. There are always four of them together."

Vechesloff, by no means convinced, said:

"We'd better be prepared for all eventualities, and get a full head of steam in the other two boilers."

Baranoff did not agree:

"What's the hurry? Let's wait and find out what ships they are. Time enough then, if they turn out to be Japs, to show them a clean pair of heels."

Thereupon Clapier de Colongue and Baranoff went below, to see the admiral.

Astern the outlines of two one-masted boats soon became plain. A moment later there was no room for further doubt. The pursuers were Japanese destroyers; the first with three funnels, the second with four.

The "Groznyi" signalled, by semaphore:

"Enemy destroyers."

There were still only two boilers supplying the "Bedovyi's" engines. On his own initiative, the engineer-artificer made the best speed he could.

The decisive moment had come. The members of the staff and Commander Baranoff were extremely nervous. Wishing to conceal their true intentions, they gave a series of contradictory orders. They sent for Engineer-Artificer Ilyutovich, and ordered:

"Get up steam in the two other boilers."

A few minutes later Captain Clapier de Colongue revoked this.

Then Baranoff sent for Chief-Stoker Vorobyoff and asked:

"How long would you need to get a full head of steam in those two boilers?"

"Forty minutes, Sir."

"So long as that? Isn't the water still hot?"

"No, Sir, went off the boil long ago."

"How much coal have you?"

"Plenty, Sir. No shortage."

"Better go to the bunkers and have a look. Then report to me. Don't forget."

"Very good, Sir," answered Vorobyoff, saluting, and making for the bunkers.

On the deck he encountered Artificer Popoff, and, wagging his head towards the bridge, he muttered:

"They're muddling things on purpose. Why not say frankly they want to save their skins? Anyhow, this rotten war was not of my making."

"They've got the wind up, old chap. I've known that for a long time. But there'll be a hell of a row in Russia, if we surrender without a fight!"

Meanwhile the signalmen, as ordered, had rigged out a tablecloth as a white flag; and another one, with some red bunting pinned to it, as the flag of the Red Cross.

On the bridge, the officers were talking in a self-exculpatory fashion:

"It's no exaggeration to describe this 'Bedovy' of ours as a hospital ship," said Baranoff, stroking his silky beard, and looking round at the others for confirmation of his extraordinary statement.

"Quite so! Quite so!" rejoined Filippovsky, nodding his bandaged head. He was calmer than the others, but showed his nervousness by perpetually removing his pince-nez to wipe the glasses, and then readjusting it on his big nose.

"Obviously, since we have so many wounded men on board, such an appellation is fully justified," put in Clapier de Colongue, knitting his black brows.

"Besides, the chief thing is that the admiral is not in a condition to endure another naval action," added Leontieff.

Their words did not ring true, but they continued to talk in this fashion, trying to persuade themselves that they were acting in good faith. Not one of them troubled to point out that a hospital ship, according to the stipulations of the international code, must have characteristics sharply distinguished from those of a warship, and that the enemy must be notified beforehand of its existence. Here, a destroyer was being passed off as a hospital ship because there were a lot of wounded men on board. The same argument might have been applied to every warship that had taken part in the naval engagement of the day before, and they might all have claimed the protection of the Red Cross.

But the enemy were in no mood to wait. While the Russians were fooling about, they were steaming two knots to the formers' one. No glasses were now needed to distinguish them as Japanese.

Once more, Engineer-Artificer Ilyutovich was summoned to the bridge.

"Vladimir Vladimirovich, how soon can you have a full head of steam in those two other boilers?" asked Commander Baranoff.

"Half an hour, Sir."

"All right, get on with it as fast as you can," said Flag-Captain Clapier de Colongue.

Ilyutovich turned to go, but was stopped by the order:

"No, wait a minute."

The engineer-artificer, moving no more than his head, looked at his chiefs, and did not attempt to hide his anger and scorn. His face flushed beneath the tan; his black eyes glared; he stared menacingly at Clapier de Colongue; and, without moderating the fierceness of his tone, he shouted:

"Well, Sir, am I to stoke up, or not?"

"Yes, stoke up," answered Clapier de Colongue, in little more than a whisper.

Flag-Lieutenant Krzhizhanovsky, Surgeon Trzhemesky, and Midshipman Maksimoff were on the poop, where they were speedily joined by Commander Semenoff, who came from the officers' mess. Then they went to the bridge. Semenoff was a tubby little man, the shrewdest officer in the squadron, and one might even call him crafty. He had the art of extricating himself from the most compromising situations; and, though he had really originated the idea of styling the "Bedovyi" a "hospital ship," he did not wish to become entangled in this unwarrantable surrender. When the signalmen were about to run up the white flag and hoist the Red Cross, he indignantly asked every one who would listen:

"What the devil does this mean? Why aren't we going full-speed ahead?"

He said this while waving his arms to attract attention, and to demonstrate that he was not a party to what was about to take place. Then he returned to the officers' mess, and lay down as if exhausted.

Meanwhile the "Groznyi" signalled the "Bedovyi" for instructions.

"What are we to do?"

"How many knots can you steam?"

"Twenty-three."

"Make for Vladivostock."

"Why should we run away without a fight?"

The last question was left unanswered.

The Japanese destroyers were now within range. The "Groznyi" put on full speed and beat to quarters. On the "Bedovyi," the gunners, without waiting for orders, went to their stations. In a moment, however, Boatswain Chudakoff shouted:

"Don't remove the gun-covers."

Immediately afterwards, the members of the general staff descended from the bridge to the deck; and Lieutenant Leontieff, running from gun to gun, exclaimed:

"Not a shot must be fired. Can't you understand that we've got to save the admiral's life?"

"What do you mean, Sir? The Japs will drown us like a litter of puppies."

"They've no right to sink us. The destroyer has become a hospital ship."

Flag-Lieutenant Filippovsky, addressing the men in a more persuasive tone, said:

"We must save the admiral. He's worth more to Russia than a destroyer."

Clapier de Colongue added:

"A destroyer is of little account. We can build as many more as we please. But such an admiral is not to be found every day."

Now it seemed that the moment had come for hoisting the flags of surrender which had been got ready. Clapier de Colongue, however, pulling himself together at the last moment, sent Lieutenant Leontieff to report to the admiral. Accompanied by Midshipman Tsvet-Kolyadinsky, Leontieff hastened to Rozhestvensky's cabin, and speedily came back to report:

"The admiral agrees."

Immediately the white flag was run up on the mizen-mast and the Red Cross on the mainmast. Then the "Bedovyi" signalled, in the international code: "Wounded on board."

The "Groznyi" was steaming ahead as fast as she could. The three-funnelled destroyer "Kagero" chased her at top speed, and soon the pair of them were at it hammer and tongs. The other Japanese destroyer, a four-funnelled boat, the "Sazanami," opened fire on the "Bedovyi." This was five or six miles to the westward of Dagelet Island, at 3.25 p.m. No hits were registered, some of the shells falling short, and the others overshooting the mark. There was a panic on the "Bedovyi's" bridge. Midshipman O'Brien de Lassy scurried down into the stoke-hold to burn the signal-books, the charts, and the

secret documents. Baranoff rang "Stop" on the engine-room telegraph, and then shouted:

"Haul down the Russian flag on the stern flagstaff."

Lieutenant Leontieff and Look-out Man Tonchuk rushed to the poop, and the St. Andrew's flag was instantly lowered.

Baranoff, crouching behind a ventilating shaft, yelled:

"Damn them, why do those savages go on firing. Can't they see our signals?"

Then he pulled the siren cord, as if the wails of the siren might touch the hearts of the Japanese, and make them show mercy.

The "Groznyi," still exchanging shots with the "Kagero," was vanishing far ahead.

At length the "Sazanami" ceased fire. Cautiously she approached the "Buinyi," and then circled round the prize, her men shouting:

"Banzai! Banzai!" ("Victory! Victory!")

Engineer-Artificer Ilyutovich emerged from the engine-room, and, going up to Captain Clapier de Colongue, said firmly, but nevertheless strongly moved:

"Let me sink the destroyer, Sir. She'll be at the bottom within ten minutes, and then the Japs won't get her."

Clapier de Colongue tore his hair.

"What are you talking about, you rascal? Do you want to drown the admiral? The surgeon says he must on no account be moved."

Almost immediately afterwards the "Sazanami" lowered a boat, which pulled across to the "Bedovyi." The whole of the crew had assembled on deck. Commander Baranoff, stroking his beard as usual, stood at the top of the starboard gangway-ladder, as stiff as a ramrod. The Japanese officer who came aboard (we learned afterwards that it was Lieutenant Ayiba, commander of the "Sazanami") unsheathed his sword the instant his foot touched the deck. One could not but have the impression that, crazy with delight, he was about to cut his prisoners down. Some of our men shivered with alarm; all stared; but the sword was intended for a more innocent use. Striding hastily to the wireless outfit, with a few slashes the lieutenant dismantled it. There was to be no possibility of summoning aid! Meanwhile the crew of his boat had run to the poop, where they hoisted the Japanese naval ensign, the sun with red rays on a white ground. Then Lieutenant Ayiba, having had the Russians drawn up in line, announced in English:

"I am now in command of this ship."

The officers of the staff began to explain why they had surrendered the "Bedovyi," but Ayiba did not seem to understand. Commander Semenoff, who had apparently recovered from his temporary indisposition, was now in great form, and was ready to crack jokes with the Japanese. He even tried to talk to Lieutenant Ayiba in the latter's own tongue. Ayiba listened attentively to Semenoff and the others, and could hardly believe his ears when informed that among his prisoners were Admiral Rozhestvensky and all the surviving members of the naval staff. A little man, as lively as a grig, he showed his teeth in a broad grin, and, to manifest his delight, inspired hissing, as if drinking very hot tea out of a saucer. Yellow-skinned, beardless, with dark, sparkling eyes and black hair, he was in an ecstasy. Expecting only to capture a destroyer, he had wrought a miracle. He tossed his head and cried breathlessly:

"I shall remove your admiral to the 'Sazanami.'"

The staff officers implored him to do nothing of the kind.

"His Excellency is very seriously wounded, and what you propose might prove fatal."

After some argument, Lieutenant Ayiba gave way, on condition that four officers of high rank were delivered over as hostages. Then, somewhat impatiently, he said:

"But where is your admiral?"

"In Commander Baranoff's cabin. The surgeon says he must on no account be disturbed."

"I won't disturb him, Gentlemen, I assure you; but at least I must have a look at him."

Showing more emotion than is usual in an Oriental, Lieutenant Ayiba, having been informed which way to go, ran lightly down the steps leading to the stern cabin, and opened the door. The admiral, lying in bed, looked up, and his weary eyes encountered those of the Japanese officer. They showed neither surprise nor distress. With the same consideration as before, Ayiba closed the door gently, and departed on tip-toe.

A few minutes later, Rozhestvensky, having been informed by Clapier de Colongue that four officers were to be taken as hostages, asked to see them. He received them, wearing his night-shirt; his face was deadly pale, and his beard singed off. Propped up with pillows, he was half-seated, his legs dangling over the edge of the bed. Slowly, tremulously, he raised his bandaged head. With tears welling from his dark eyes, and his mouth distorted, he murmured:

“Poor fellows! Poor fellows!”

Suddenly the admiral, the cruel, the pitiless admiral, burst out sobbing. It was as incredible as it would have been to see an old wolf shedding tears when surrounded by a lot of puppies he had been accustomed to terrorise. The officers looked on in silence. He embraced them, and they bade farewell.

Lieutenant Ayiba departed forthwith, accompanied by his four hostages. The “Bedovyi” was taken in tow by the Japanese destroyer.

VII

The Japanese warships continued to chase the “Donskoy.” It had now become clear that the attack would be opened by the two cruisers to port, which were approaching more swiftly than those to starboard. The situation grew continually more menacing. Only the onset of darkness could save the “Donskoy”; but nightfall would be too long delayed. Before dawn, when there had been danger from destroyers, the crew of the “Donskoy” had longed for sunrise; now they were equally impatient for sunset—which was slow in coming, as if nature sided with the Japanese.

Captain Lebedeff asked the torpedo lieutenant to make all the arrangements requisite for sinking the cruiser, should this prove needful. The two hundred men and officers who had been saved from the “Oslyabya” were sent to the cabin-deck. They knew well enough what was likely to happen to them in case of a disaster to a ship as overcrowded as the “Donskoy”; and they had suffered torments of fear on the “Buinyi” when, under the enemy fire, the admiral and his staff had been transhipped from the “Suvoroff” to the destroyer. Why were they once more exposed to such an ordeal? Pale and trembling, they descended the ladders that led to their allotted quarters, full of despair as if consigned to certain destruction.

Blokhin, the second in command, having made a tour of inspection to see that all was ready for the fight, returned to the bridge. The “Otova” and the “Niitaka” opened fire, at a range of about forty cable lengths. It was half-past six, and the sun was near to setting.

Captain Lebedeff, paying no heed to the enemy shells, was leaning on the rail of the bridge, plunged in thought.

“Ivan Nikolaevich,” said Commander Blokhin, “shall I give the order ‘action stations?’”

The captain made no movement, and did not seem to hear the question.

Blokhin shrugged his broad shoulders, raised his eyebrows in astonishment, adjusted his cap, and repeated, this time more formally: "Captain Lebedeff, may I issue the order 'action stations'?"

The captain, drawing himself up, turned to face the commander. Tears were running down his cheeks, and glittered like rubies in the rays of the setting sun. He shook hands with Blokhin, and whispered:

"If anything should happen to me, remember me to my two little girls."

That was all he said. Overwhelmed by the thought of his family in far-off Russia, this man, valiant though he was, had forgotten for a moment his responsibilities as captain of a cruiser about to go into action, and could think only of himself as a father torn from his children, as one among many thousands doomed to become the victims of a wicked and foolish war.

Realising this, Commander Blokhin took matters into his own hands, and gave the necessary orders. Bugles sounded; drums beat to quarters; the port guns were fired. At this moment the "Donskoy" was about twenty miles from Dagelet Island.

The Japanese soon got the range, and began to register hits. Some were on the battery deck, so that the superstructure was seriously injured. Fires broke out in various places, but were soon got under control.

The "Donskoy," as ordered by the captain, repeatedly changed her course, zigzagging, now to port, now to starboard. This interfered with the enemy's markmanship. Soon, however, the ships to starboard which had been rapidly approaching, also began to use their guns to good effect. It was subsequently learned that this was Admiral Urin's detachment, consisting of the cruisers "Naniva," "Tokaniho," "Akashi," and "Tsushima." The "Donskoy" was thus between two fires, and her position became critical. More and more damage was done, the number of killed and wounded rapidly increased, and many of her guns were silenced.

The most desperate courage could not avail to save the cruiser. The only question was whether she could be run ashore before being sunk.

Bathed in the rays of the setting sun, Dagelet Island drew nearer and grew larger, as if being pushed up from the bottom of the sea.

Though still ten miles away, it looked quite close, alluring the men by its solemnity and calm, offering them life, and a safe refuge. But what would happen to the crew if the ship ran on the rocks at full speed? Who would really have a chance of escaping from the disaster and panic that ensued? Still, Captain Lebedeff, having now recovered his nerve, was fixed in his determination. Tall, thin, he stood among the officers and seamen in the conning-tower, eyes sparkling, and with the self-confident look of a man who has made up his mind beyond recall. He had, in fact, settled upon his course, one which would save the "Donskoy" from being sunk, and, at the same time, keep her out of the hands of the Japanese. The sea lying under the eastern extremity of the island was already plunged in comparative darkness. If he could get into this zone, the Japanese marksmen would be disconcerted. Profiting by the temporary respite, the cruiser, having done her duty to the last, could dash herself on the granite rocks, and no ingenuity would ever be able to restore her to fighting trim.

The men saved from the "Oslyabya," who were getting out of hand, were infecting the "Donskoy's" crew with their own indiscipline, and made it difficult to carry out orders. Demoralised by the risks they had run the day before, they had become almost crazy. The first shell that struck the part of the cruiser to which they had been consigned, threw them into a panic. Instead of working to extinguish the fire, they rushed for the exit ladders, uttering wild cries of alarm. It was necessary to fight them back and to turn the hose on them. A few, however, made their way on to the battery deck, where, after scuttling to and fro like frightened rabbits, they jumped overboard, to perish from drowning or to be killed yet more quickly by the shells which exploded in the water.

Commander Kolomeitseff, though not one of the "Donskoy's" officers, took part in their duties, even helping to extinguish the fires. The supply of shells for the 6-inch guns had started blazing, and the consequent explosions were projecting splinters in all directions. One of these splinters killed the quartermaster who was manipulating the hose. Kolomeitseff picked up the nozzle and succeeded in mastering the flames. In fact the man who had been in charge of the sometime "Buinyi" went on fighting like a Trojan until put out of action by a severe wound in the side. The crew of the sunken destroyer followed their chief's example, replacing the "Donskoy's" men whenever circumstances rendered it necessary.

The senior officer was on deck when a seaman arrived, and said breathlessly:

“Sir, the captain wants you, please.”

Blokhin instantly mounted to the conning-tower, and found that this had been partially demolished by an enemy shell. The flooring was drenched with blood. Lieutenant Durnuvo, half reclining against the wall, seemed plunged in thought; but, on closer examination the commander perceived that the top of his head and his cap had been sliced off, so that the brain was protruding. Master-Helmsman Polyakoff was curled up on the ground, as if trying to keep himself warm, but he too was dead. So was Lieutenant Hirs, from an abdominal wound through which the guts emerged. The only live man among them was Captain Lebedeff, who, his teeth clenched with pain, stood upright trying to keep the ship on her course. A shell-splinter had wounded him in the hip and fractured the pelvis; besides, he had been pierced in numerous other places. Standing on one leg, he did his best to steer, not having realised that the transmission from the wheel had been broken, so that the ship was inevitably falling away to starboard. As soon as he saw Blokhin, he murmured, with blue lips:

“You must take command.”

“Let me call some stretcher-men, Ivan Nikolaevich, to carry you to the sick-bay.”

“Don’t bother. I’d rather stay here. Make for the shadow of the island. No surrender. Run her on the rocks. . . .”

Blokhin gently laid the captain on the blood-drenched floor, sent an orderly for the surgeon, and immediately went down to the deck. As on the previous evening, he would have to con the ship from the after-bridge, and to use the hand-steering gear. To get back upon the former course it was necessary to take a wide detour, which brought the “Donskoy” nearer to the four enemy cruisers that were approaching from starboard.

The sun had set. The Japanese quickened their fire, eager to finish off the “Donskoy” before darkness fell. The range was now twenty-five cable lengths. The cruiser put up a stubborn defence, against a terrific bombardment from both sides.

Blokhin, his cap pulled down over his eyes, stood on the after-bridge, as firmly planted as a statue. His fierce, grey eyes tried to penetrate the shadow which lay ahead. His will was concentrated on this goal. Then the helmsman shouted, pointing to starboard. Turning his head, the commander saw that the cruiser “Naniva”

had developed a strong list, and was falling out of line. A few seconds later, fire broke out on the "Otova," one of the port line of enemy ships. Half to himself, Blokhin murmured:

"Hullo, here's a stroke of luck!"

But at this point the senior boatswain brought disquieting news: "Your Honour, the men from the 'Oslyabya' are going balmy. Their officers are no better. They're on the verge of mutiny. We can't keep them in hand."

Without troubling to look round, the commander said:

"Strengthen the guard at the exits. Not a living soul of them must get on deck. Tell Midshipman Senyavsky and Midshipman Avgustoŷsky to see to the matter."

"Very good, Sir."

Chaplain Dobrovolsky had already, on his own initiative, gone down among the frenzied men, and was trying to calm them. Tall, black-bearded, wearing a silver cross on his barrel-chest, he cast uneasy glances around. What he saw was not an imaginary hell, but a crowd of the damned and of phantoms covered with blood, adding their shrieks and groans to the horrible din of the gun-fire. The chaplain muttered something about "divine protection," but no one heeded him. The number of wounded was steadily increasing round the sick-bay, where Surgeon Hertzog with his assistants was at work. Those able to stand waited to have their hurts dressed. Others, more seriously wounded, rolled in agony on the floor. The horrible spectacle of these casualties, the sight of exposed and bleeding flesh, projecting and broken bones, burns and fearful bruises, conjoined with the cries of the injured, demoralised the "Oslyabya's" crew yet further. To make matters worse, one of the enemy projectiles exploded a load of shells which was being sent up by an ammunition hoist, killing twelve men. Their mutilated remains fell among those who had been saved from the "Oslyabya."

When, though under fire, one has arms in one's hands, or other duties to perform for the defence of one's own ship, or one is attending to casualties, etc., one can forget oneself, and think only of one's task. It was otherwise with these men from the "Oslyabya," disarmed, pent up in a place very poorly protected from the enemy fire, with nothing to think of, nothing to expect but a repetition of the previous day's ghastly experiences. They were tried beyond the strength of human nerves, and their pitiable state of panic, verging on dementia, is fully comprehensible.

Fires were raging on the cruiser, and fragments of broken iron were flying hither and thither with a frightful clatter. Prisoned in the stern of the "Donskoy," cut off from land by the pitiless sea, the "Oslyabya's" men rolled on the floor, ran madly to an fro, spun round like dancing dervishes, shook their arms threateningly. Some wept, others mouthed curses. One of the look-out men fell down in an epileptic fit, foaming at the lips. A gunner, with a red stripe on his sleeve, grovelled on the deck, gripping his rolled hammock in one hand while he made swimming movements with the other, and yelled at the top of his voice:

"Save me! I'm drowning! Help! Help!"

A seaman, sitting on a box, undressed and dressed himself by turns, murmuring incoherent words, while a thin stream of blood ran down from a wound in his temple. Several of the men crouched in corners, and, in a state of utter prostration, waited for the ship to sink. The less distraught of them, led by Flag-Lieutenant Osipoff and some others of commissioned rank, crowded round the ladder and tried to force open the hatches, shouting:

"Why are we treated as prisoners?"

"They want to drown us!"

"Why doesn't the 'Donskoy' hoist the white flag?"

His features working, his beard bristling, Flag-Lieutenant Osipoff showed more excitement than any of the others, and cried raucously to Senyavsky and Avgustovsky, the midshipmen in charge of the guard:

"I don't want to be sunk a second time. I am a staff-officer, and no one has any right to keep me penned up here."

But Senyavsky and Avgustovsky were imperturbable, and the crew of the "Donskoy" supported them valiantly in their task of holding this mutiny in check.

A huge shell burst on the lower deck, completely demolishing the petty-officers' quarters. To starboard another shell made a hole twelve feet square, killing six of the "Oslyabya's" men and wounding a dozen. Chaplain Dobrovolsky fell on his knees and covered his face with his hands, as if to hide the sight of death. A moment afterwards, however, he was trampled under foot by a crowd of frenzied men. With savage cries, they stormed the hatchways, swept aside the guard, and many of them thus escaped on to the upper deck. Now panic spread to the crew of the "Donskoy," some of whom deserted their posts in the casemates and the magazines to join in

the stampede. Those who had escaped from the lower deck ran about, not knowing where to hide. A few climbed on to the yards. Midshipman Marmontoff got into the box used for storing the first shots to be fired by the stern 47-mm. gun. A howling tempest raged in the cruiser, illuminated by a brilliant sunset.

Here was one of those exceptional instances in which it is difficult to say whether mutineers or partisans of order have right on their side. The "Oslyabya's" men had been tried beyond endurance. But it was impossible for Commander Blokhin to tolerate a mutiny while his ship was in action, and still more so when he was fighting against such desperate odds. Coming down from the bridge, he got together the officers and petty officers who had kept their heads amid the general confusion, and issued his orders with the indomitable calm of a wild-beast tamer. Repression of the mutiny began, to the accompaniment of the "Donskoy's" own gun-fire, the explosion of enemy shells, and the crackling of flames that were devouring the cruiser. The rebels (whether men or officers) were struck in the face, the hoses were turned on them, some of them were even shot down. It was like a scene from a delirium or a nightmare, rather than anything that could happen in real life. Fortunately for Blokhin only part of the "Oslyabya's" men had escaped from the lower deck, the rest being still below hatchés. Thus in the end order was restored.

Riddled like a sieve, water flooding her magazines, with a list of 5°, the "Donskoy" continued on her course. Most of her guns had been silenced, but she went on firing those that were still usable. Her bow-funnel was pierced in many places, while her stern-funnel had been shot away altogether. The pressure was falling in her boilers, and one might have thought that nothing kept way on her but anguish, as she moved onward with her cargo of corpses and blood, suffering and fear. Yet there was still determination, still hope. What saved her was that the Japanese did not grasp her design until it was too late for them to block her path. She entered the zone of shadow, and the enemy could no longer train their guns on her. The artillery combat was over. Some torpedo-boats were sent to attack, but the cruiser was able to drive them off. Night fell, and with it came silence.

The "Donskoy," having thus eluded the Japanese, did not need to fling herself on the rocks. She anchored to the east of Dagelet Island. By amazing luck, her boats had escaped destruction, and were lowered. The first to be landed were the "Oslyabya's" men, who continued to give trouble, and Captain Lebedeff, destined to die of his

wounds in the Japanese naval hospital at Sasebo. Then came the turn of the wounded, more than a hundred in number, who were moved on stretchers, and were made as comfortable as possible in the boats with the aid of hammocks and mattresses. Their cries and groans were reinforced, amid the absolute darkness, by the yells of a wounded pig somewhere on deck. Meanwhile thirty men, having broken into the spirit-room, were getting gloriously drunk, and cursing the war. Some of them were tied and brought ashore; the rest jumped overboard and swam to the beach.

At dawn, none but the dead were left in the cruiser. Now the Japanese warships reappeared. But they did not make a prize of the "Dmitri Donskoy." Her scuttles had been opened, and she was already at the bottom of the sea.

VIII

The "Groznyi," having inflicted serious damage on the enemy destroyer, shook her off, and steered on towards Vladivostock. She was in pretty bad case. A shell, striking her on the water-line, had breached her hull, demolished the controlling-gear on the after-bridge, broken one of the boiler-tubes, and killed Artificer Fedoroff. The leak was provisionally closed. Another shell carried away the search-light, killing Midshipman Dofelt and Petty Officer Ryadoff. Commander Andrzhhevsky was wounded in both arms, both legs, and the head.

Night fell, and the "Groznyi" steamed on, without lights. There was no pursuit. During the afternoon of May 16th her fuel gave out. To keep the engines going, everything combustible on board was used to feed the furnaces; wooden tables and chairs, sails, any coal-dust that could be swept up in the bunkers, grease. Thus, at a pinch, she was able before night to reach Askold Island, where she anchored, and wirelessly for help to Vladivostock. On the morning of May 17th a collier arrived to recharge her bunkers, and she was able to proceed to her destination.

Two other boats of the second Pacific squadron reached the same port: the destroyer "Bravyi" and the "Almaz," a second-class cruiser of little more than three thousand tons displacement, originally built to serve as Viceroy Alekseeff's yacht, and therefore provided with excellent cabin accommodation for the officers and a well-stocked cellar. Thus only three out of thirty-eight Russian craft

broke through the cordon established by the enemy across Korea Strait.

The "Bedovyi" had been given as good a chance; but neither the admiral nor his staff were keen on reaching home waters. At the place of surrender, the "Sazanami" took her in tow, and pulled her off towards Japan as if she had been a hound in leash. Thus the voyage continued throughout the evening and the darkness of night.

All was now quiet on the "Bedovyi." The men had nothing more to do. The hurly-burly done, they need worry no longer. Their fate was settled; they were prisoners. Assembling on the lower deck, they quietly discussed recent events. Their chief concern was to find an answer to the question: "Why had the chiefs been so eager to surrender?"

Various reasons were suggested, but the most plausible was the one put forward by Artificer Popoff. He was a lean young fellow, with a long, pale, clean-shaven face, and melancholy golden-tinted eyes. Well-informed and intelligent, distinguished for his sobriety, he was an authority among his shipmates. When he began to speak, in somewhat hollow tones, there was a lull in the conversation.

"Really, Brothers, the behaviour of the staff seems to me comprehensible enough. Suppose that our 'Bedovyi,' as was quite possible, had got through to Vladivostock. What then? All the big pots would have come on board without delay—captains, admirals, generals. How could our admiral and his staff have looked them in the face? Can't you imagine them asking Rozhestvensky: 'But, Your Excellency, what's become of the fleet?' He'd have been stumped for an answer, for he had abandoned the squadron, had fled from the scene of battle. A fine scandal for 'our national hero.' But worse would have been in store. His telegram to the tsar: 'Your Majesty, I and my staff have reached Vladivostock on the destroyer "Bedovyi." As to what has happened to the rest of the squadron, I don't know for the moment.' Rozhestvensky is exceedingly proud, and has had, up till now, a very high opinion of his own intelligence. But Admiral Togo has thoroughly deflated him. I'll bet you he's so ashamed, he'd like to hang himself. But, not content with the mess he had already made of things, he must add one more blunder to the series—this surrender."

"That's a good thrust," exclaimed Stoker Vorobyoff.

The other artificers and seamen nodded approvingly.

Popoff went on:

"Now the admiral and his staff, the destroyer's officers, and we of the lower grades, are all being carried off to Japan, like beasts in a cage."

One of the audience spat on the deck in his indignation; the rest muttered oaths.

Meanwhile another conversation was going on in the officers' messroom. Except for Commander Baranoff, the principal officers of the destroyer had been taken as hostages, but Baranoff stayed behind, having given his word of honour to Lieutenant Ayiba that he would not try to damage the "Bedovyi." With him were Clapier de Colongue and other staff-officers.

Some one said:

"Thank God, our troubles are over."

"Yes, it will be fun to see Japan."

Captain Clapier de Colongue was less cheerful.

"That's all very fine," he said. "Our troubles are over for the moment. But what do you think will happen when we get back to Russia?"

Midshipman Demchinsky sighed as he answered:

"Yes, Sir, you're right. We shall have a measly time then."

Lieutenant Leontieff rejoined:

"Nonsense. We surrendered in order to save the admiral. Besides, one destroyer more or less is of no particular importance to Russia, seeing what has happened to the squadron as a whole."

Navigating Flag-Lieutenant Filippovsky backed up Leontieff:

"True," he said. "Besides, before leaving the 'Suvoroff' we bore the brunt of the battle, and no one can complain that we did not put up a stout fight. If any should accuse us, we must turn the tables, and summon to the judgment-seat those who are now holding council beneath the gilded spire of the Admiralty in St. Petersburg—those who sent such a squadron as ours into action."

Baranoff was even more easy in his mind, and tried to carry his colleagues with him.

"To put the matter in a nutshell," he said with some warmth, "I did not surrender the destroyer. Once the Red Cross had been hoisted, the 'Bedovyi' became a hospital ship. It was an act of bad faith on the part of the Japanese to seize us. Had I not been deterred by the presence of the admiral, and by the fact that he is so seriously wounded, I should have shown my claws to the yellow skins—damn

them. I should have torpedoed one of their destroyers, and have made an end of the other with my guns.

At this moment a bluejacket rushed into the messroom and said to the commander:

"Your Honour, the tow-rope has parted."

Baranoff, stretching his neck, replied:

"You mean that one of you fellows has cut it!"

"No, Sir, it parted on its own. The Japanese destroyer has vanished. We can't make her out anywhere."

The officers were petrified at this dreadful piece of news. One would have thought that the bunkers must have sprung a leak, or that fire had broken out in one of the magazines. Nothing short of this could account for their consternation. They rushed on deck, and thence to the bridge. All were in despair. The conquerors had forsaken the prisoners.

"Turn on the searchlights," suggested one.

"No, a rocket would be better."

"Why not blow the siren?" asked a third.

Still, there was no reason for so much excitement. Within a few seconds, the "Sazanami" hove in sight, to take the "Bedovyi" in tow once more. The officers, reassured, could go back to the messroom and continue their discussion.

That night the sea was choppy, and the tow-rope parted several times. The Japanese therefore transferred some of the crew of the "Bedovyi" to their own destroyer, replacing them by men from the "Sazanami." The hostages were sent back, and the "Bedovyi" received instructions to follow her captor under her own steam.

On May 16th the Japanese cruiser "Akashi" was sighted. She took the "Bedovyi" in tow, and steamed ahead, accompanied by the "Sazanami."

Admiral Rozhstvensky still lay in Baranoff's cabin. His face was livid and sunken, the eyes fallen in like those of one at the point of death. The hours passed and he spoke no word, but remained plunged in gloomy meditations. Sometimes, however, seized with a shivering fit, he sat up, hanging his legs over the edge of the bed, while his teeth chattered. Balakhontseff, the orderly, watched him in terror. Dishevelled, with bandaged head, and the fixed stare of a man whose mind is disordered, he was, indeed, sufficiently alarming. What images of horror were coursing through his fevered brain? Did he see the corpses of the thousands who, owing to his blunders,

had been drowned or blown to pieces in Tsushima Strait? Or was he recalling the details of the meeting held in Peterhof Palace, under the presidency of the tsar, on August 10, 1904? It was then that Rozhstvensky had made his crucial mistake, believing himself a man of genius, and underestimating his adversaries. Two of the grand dukes, Alexis Alexandrovich and Alexander Mikhailovich, Admiral Avelan, minister for marine, General Sakharoff, minister for war, Count Lamsdorff, minister for foreign affairs, and Rozhstvensky himself, still only a rear-admiral, but already appointed commander-in-chief of the second Pacific squadron, had been the members of the council. The main question to be discussed was, how soon it would be expedient to send the squadron to the Far East. Rozhstvensky was in favour of its immediate departure, making light of the objections of those who declared that the situation had been radically changed by the failure of the first squadron, on July 28th, to break through the Japanese blockade and escape from Port Arthur. The fortress, said these dissentients, was doomed, and the warships of the first squadron would inevitably be destroyed before Rozhstvensky could arrive. The second Pacific squadron, therefore, would secure no reinforcements in the Far East, and would have to rely exclusively on its own resources; but it was not strong enough to overcome the enemy and win the command of the Sea of Japan. Besides, it would have no base until it had fought its way through to Vladivostock, an impossible enterprise. To dispatch it in its present condition would be to send it to certain destruction. Better keep it in the Baltic for the winter, with plenty of manœuvring and target-practice. Then, in the spring, when it had been reinforced by ships now on the stocks, and maybe by others bought from foreign Powers, it would, perhaps, have become a fleet strong enough to decide the issue of the war.

Brushing these arguments aside, Rozhstvensky stubbornly defended his own views. He had no doubt of his ability to inflict a crushing defeat on the Japanese. Avelan rallied to his support; and the pair of them were able, in the end, to persuade the tsar. Nicholas was eager to get the better of Mutsu Hito, without more ado.

Now, when the fleet had been shattered, the man to whom Russia had entrusted her fate and who represented the last hope of the army had been forced to abandon his flagship, had taken refuge on the destroyer "Bedovyi," and had surrendered to the Japanese. He could

easily imagine what would be thought of him by the authorities at home.

What had brought Vice-Admiral Rozhstvensky to such a pass? His vanity—a virulent infection—had driven him into this unhappy adventure in the Far East. Not content with his high position at court, he wanted to wear the laurels of a conqueror. Instead, he had covered himself with shame. He had inflicted a cruel blow on the tsar's prestige. The newspapers, which had made a hero of him, would now howl against him in chorus. A storm-wind of hatred would blow against him from all parts of the country, for he had led his squadron to destruction and had thrown away thousands of lives.

Yes, he had plenty to think over, and none of his thoughts could be agreeable. Was there not enough to make this opinionated man, who had proved so disastrous a failure as an admiral, dash out his brains against the iron walls of his cabin. Yet he did not do so. His pride rose superior to the humiliations of defeat and surrender. He remained impassive in his bed, only sighing from time to time amid the gloom of his thoughts, or groaning from the pain of his wounds.¹

On the morning of May 17th, the "Bedovyi" reached the Japanese naval port of Sasebo, where the "Nicholas I," the "Admiral Senyavin," and the "Admiral Apraksin," flying Japanese colours, were awaiting her. Baranoff, waving his hand at them, said cheerfully:

"You see, we're not the only ones."

¹ Vice-Admiral Rozhstvensky was court-martialled after his return to Russia in 1906. He took a good line, not attempting to shuffle off responsibility on to his subordinates, but declaring that the surrender had been made on his initiative. He said:

"Before discussing the various charges that have been brought against me, I consider it my duty to say that though I was unconscious when transferred from the 'Suvoroff' to the 'Bedovyi,' I recovered my senses afterwards, and retained them. The witnesses who have declared I was delirious, are mistaken. . . ."

He added:

"There is ample evidence to show that the surrender of the 'Bedovyi' was effected with my knowledge and consent, by my orders, and that I was in full possession of my senses at the time."

Rozhstvensky was acquitted. It was, in fact, impossible to make an example of him, for he was too well informed concerning what had taken place behind the scenes in naval matters, not excepting the financial hanky-panky in which certain members of the imperial family were involved. The revolution of 1905-06 had not yet been liquidated. The Duma, called into existence by this revolution, had not, so far, been suppressed. Consequently the address to the court delivered by General Vogak, who functioned as prosecutor, was, substantially, a plea in favour of the admiral.

Clapier de Colongue, Filippovsky, Leontieff, and Baranoff were dismissed the service. The other officers were acquitted.

Then the commander attended to the packing of various trunks, which he filled with State property. Twelve to begin with; but, since these did not suffice, he packed four more, two large and two small. He took possession of the destroyer's money-chest, which contained £6000, refusing to hand over any of the cash either to the officers or to the men. Clapier de Colongue said to him, most politely:

"I think you would do well to let each of the officers have £20 as a loan, to be repaid when they get home."

Baranoff lost his temper, and, although the "Bedovyi" was flying Japanese colours, answered testily:

"I am the commander of this ship, and will take orders from no one about such a matter. The responsibility is mine."

Still, after thinking things over, he advanced £20 to each of the officers.

His fit of temper did not last long, for gratified avarice put him in a good humour. His eyes sparkled, and he titivated himself up, carefully combing his silky beard. As he left the destroyer, he patted the funnel, as if it had been a horse's neck, and said:

"Good-bye, old dear."

One might imagine that the Japanese when, in earlier days, they had decorated Baranoff with the fourth-class Order of the Rising Sun, must have foreseen that in due time he would make it worth their while.

Did he give a thought to Midshipman Baranoff, forsaken on the "Alexander III," without hope of rescue? No one with true paternal affection could have been as lively as Commander Baranoff was when he went ashore at Sasebo.

Our narrative must now return to the incidents of May 14th.

IX

The "Alexander III" came next in line to the flagship, the "Suvoroff." The latter having, to begin with, sustained the brunt of the enemy fire, had been frightfully battered, so that she could not keep her place at the head of the squadron. Therewith, effective command ceased.

However, as pre-arranged, the leadership was now supposed to pass to the "Alexander III," the ironclad with whose name will always be associated the most distressing memories of the Battle of Tsushima. Being at the head of the line, she did her best to replace

the "Suvoroff" as guide. Thereupon she became the main target of a dozen Japanese warships, and, by drawing the enemy fire, saved the other Russian ships at her own cost. Though our fleet was hopelessly outmatched, she developed what initiative she could, covering, in some measure, the "Suvoroff," and trying to force a passage to the north. For a little while she even led the squadron out of reach of Japanese fire; and then, for some hours, maintained a desperate fight against overwhelming odds.

By evening, however, the battle had become a massacre.

No more than the other Russian ironclads was the "Alexander III," in the long run, able to resist the terrific bombardment to which she was exposed. At six in the evening, having a marked list, she fell out of line. At this time, her aspect was pitiful. Her hull had been riddled, most of her superstructure had been shot away, and she was wreathed in black smoke. Jets of flame were spouting from the numerous shell-holes. At one moment it seemed as if the fires would reach the magazines, and blow up the ship, but in the end they were got under control, and the "Alexander III" returned to the line. She was making a last effort to put up a fight against the Japanese.

What was happening, meanwhile, on the bridges, in the conning-tower, in the turrets, and on the decks? Who was really in command? Who manœuvred' the ironclad with such dauntlessness and skill during these terrible hours? Was it Captain Bukhvostoff, or Commander Plemyannikoff, or, when these had been knocked out, some youngster of a midshipman? Or is it possible that all the officers had been killed or disabled, so that, towards the end, the "Alexander III"—and therefore the squadron—was under the command of a senior boatswain, or even a simple helmsman? That will remain an insoluble enigma. In any case, the behaviour of this warship during the most terrible sea-fight known to history will always evoke widespread admiration.

Re-entering the line, the "Alexander III," which had fallen behind, did so somewhere about its middle, leaving the place of honour at the head to her sister-ship, the "Borodino." But she was able to keep in line for no more than twenty or thirty minutes, during which she was hit several times by large-calibre shells, which gave her her quietus. First she turned to port, her steering-gear being presumably so disordered as to have become unusable. She took a strong list, and the water rushed in through the shell-holes. In a minute or two she capsized.

Those on board the ironclad "Admiral Nakhimoff" and the first-class cruiser "Vladimir Monomakh," which were in her wake, saw her lie along the water on her side like a felled oak tree. Many of her crew jumped into the sea, others clambered on to the side of the hull. Then she turned keel uppermost, and floated for a couple of minutes in that position. Men were clinging to her huge bottom, which was covered with sea-weed looking like a green beard. Supposing that she would continue to float for a long time in this topsy-turvy position, the men who were swimming alongside clambered on to the inverted hull. One might have thought her a sea-monster, with tufts of greenish hair, and a red spine, the keel. The men looked like crabs crawling over this huge beast.

The other ships, battling for all they were worth, continued on their course. The wind freshened, and the waves broke over the "Alexander III" as she sank into the depths, sucking men down with her, and leaving only shattered fragments of wood as mute witnesses of this ghastly drama. No one will ever be able to relate the sufferings of her crew, for, of the whole complement of nine hundred, not one survived to tell the tale.

CHAPTER FOUR

FATE OF THE NON-COMBATANTS AND THE VESTIGES OF THE FIGHTING FLEET

I

DURING the sea-fight of May 14th the two hospital ships, "Oryol" and "Kostroma" steamed several miles astern of the fighting fleet. At three in the afternoon, the enemy auxiliary cruisers "Manju Maru" and "Sadu Maru" spoke to them and ordered them to make for a Japanese port. The "Kostroma" was released a fortnight later, but not the "Oryol." The reason for the difference was that, a few days before the battle, the second Pacific squadron had held up the British S.S. "Oldhamia." She was freighted with munitions for Japan. By Rozhestvensky's orders her crew was transhipped to the "Oryol," and the ship herself was sent to Vladivostock in charge of a Russian crew. When the Japanese captured the "Oryol," they found the Englishmen from the "Oldhamia" aboard, and this gave them a pretext for treating the "Oryol" as a prize, since she was carrying contraband of war.

The transports "Anadyr" and "Korea," having left the squadron, steamed together until May 15th, when they parted company. The "Anadyr" returned to Russia, by way of Madagascar; the "Korea" reached Shanghai on May 17th, and was interned there.

The transport "Irtysh" escaped from the sea-fight of May 14th, but was considerably damaged, and had a list of 10°. She hoped to make Vladivostock, hugging the western coast of Japan, but the water gained on her through the shot-holes in her hull, and on the second evening she foundered off the town of Hamada. The crew got safely ashore.

The destroyer "Bezuprechnyi" disappeared. From Japanese sources it has been learned that their cruiser "Chitoze" and their torpedo-boat "Ariake" encountered and sank an unidentified Russian destroyer at dawn on May 15th. Presumably this was the "Bezuprechnyi." There were no survivors.

The cruiser "Svetlyana" was holed below the water-line during the sea-fight of May 14th, and could not keep up with the other cruisers, which fled southward. She therefore decided to make for

Vladivostock, accompanied by the destroyer "Bystryi." Having, in the night, successfully repulsed a torpedo attack, next morning she fell in with two enemy cruisers, the "Otova" and the "Niitaka." Thus she was already out-matched, when the Japanese were reinforced by the "Marakumo." Not far from Dagelet Island a fierce combat took place. After half an hour the "Svetlyana" was sunk in water having a depth of three hundred fathoms. Thereupon the enemy warships retired, and the auxiliary cruiser "America-Maru" appeared to pick up the survivors; but Captain Shein and 167 of the crew had been shot or drowned.

The "Bystryi" made off at full speed in the direction of Korea, but, being pursued by the "Niitaka" and the "Marakumo," she could not make good her escape, so she was beached and blown up. Her crew got safely ashore, and were captured by the Japanese.

The ironclad "Ushakoff," like many of the other Russian warships, continued slowly northward on the evening of May 14th. She had lost touch with the squadron. At noon on the 15th, however, when she was passing near some of our boats which had already surrendered, and were flying Japanese colours, she was descried by the enemy. Two armoured cruisers, the "Ivate" and the "Yakumo" were dispatched in pursuit. As soon as these latter were within range, the "Ivate" hoisted the signal: "Advise surrender: your admiral is in our hands." However, the captain of the "Ushakoff," Miklukho-Maklay (nicknamed by Rozhestvensky "the double-distilled idiot") ignored this recommendation, and gave orders to open fire. In half an hour, the "Ushakoff" and her valiant commander were at the bottom of the sea. Of her complement of 428, 91 perished, the others being saved by enemy boats.

The cruiser "Vladimir Monomakh" was hit by a torpedo during the night of May 14th-15th, so huge a hole being made in her stern that the crew could not stop the inrush of water. Next morning the leak had gained on her to such an extent that there was nothing more to think of but the possibility of saving the crew. Accompanied by the destroyer "Gromky," she made for the coast of Tsushima, which was within sight. The ironclad "Sisoy Veliky" steered the same course, and signalled: "Request you to take command." The cruiser replied: "We shall sink in an hour." At this juncture there appeared on the horizon the Japanese destroyer "Shiranui," followed by the auxiliary cruiser "Sado-Maru." Captain Popoff, of the "Monomakh," ordered the "Gromky" to make full speed for Vladivostock, and had the

scuttles of his own ship opened, to sink her more speedily. The "Gromky" was chased by the "Shiranui," while the "Sado-Maru" began to fire at the "Monomakh," but ceased firing when no answering shots came. The Russian cruiser was lowering her boats. The "Sado-Maru" drew near to take possession, but the "Monomakh" sank too quickly, and all that was left for the Japanese was to pick up the crew.

The "Gromky" steamed northward at twenty-five knots, engaged in a running fight with her pursuer, the "Shiranui." She would probably have got away, had not two other Japanese destroyers appeared on the scene. She put up a great fight, and inflicted considerable damage on two of the enemy craft. After a while, however, out of her whole complement of 74, there had been killed her commander, Kern by name, one other officer, one master-gunner, and twenty men of the lower ratings; while three officers and twenty-three men had been wounded. She had discharged two torpedoes and all her ammunition. Now orders were given to open the scuttles, and the survivors, provided with life-belts, jumped overboard. The Japanese, who had lowered their boats, began to retrieve them. Meanwhile the "Gromky" sank, enveloped in a pall of black smoke.

The ironclad "Sisoy Veliky" had been torpedoed in the bow. Consequently she was very much down by the head, while her stern was high out of water. Nevertheless, her propellers were still able to keep way on her. As she was approaching the isle of Tsushima, there appeared on the horizon three Japanese auxiliary cruisers, the "Sinano-Maru," the "Yavata-Maru" and the "Tainan-Maru," accompanied by the destroyer "Fubuki." Without waiting for them to open fire, the Russian captain signalled: "Am sinking and request assistance." The Japanese answered: "Do you surrender?" Captain Ozeroff replied in the affirmative. An hour afterwards a Japanese row-boat drew alongside, her men came aboard, and immediately hoisted their own colours at the stern flagpost, but did not succeed in striking the Russian ensign which was fluttering at the foretop. Thus the sinking ship continued sadly to fly the flags of the two adversaries. The enemy vainly endeavoured to tow her to the beach, and at ten in the morning the "Sisoy Veliky" foundered three miles from shore, her officers and men having been transhipped to the Japanese auxiliary cruisers.

II

The battleship "Admiral Nakhimoff," like the other ships of the squadron, was grossly overladen when she reached the Straits of Tsushima. She carried enough coal to steam three thousand knots at her most economical speed; also about a thousand tons of superfluous drinking water; a great excess of food, lubricating oil, etc. Why this enormous provisioning? It was as if she had been got ready, not for an imminent sea-fight, but for a voyage to the North Pole, where no stores would be obtainable.

For the celebration of the anniversary of the tsar's coronation orders were issued "smartest uniforms." At eleven in the morning came the summons "drink and dinner." A barrel of rum had been carried to the upper deck. The men formed up in line for their tot. At this moment there came from various quarters cries of "Gangway, please."

This meant that the senior officer, Commander Grossman, had come on deck. He was extremely short-sighted, did not know his men apart, and could not even distinguish men from inanimate objects. That was why, whenever he was about, he uttered such peremptory shouts of "Gangway, please."

The men knew his little way, and used to mock him by uttering the same cry themselves.

Now, revolver in hand, he stationed himself beside the rum-cask to make sure that the chief-steward should not give any man more than the due allowance. Discipline had become very slack on the "Nakhimoff." Grossman had overlooked this, and had even forgotten that personally he was most unpopular. On hearing the men mock his "Gangway, please," he flushed with anger, and, brandishing his revolver, shouted: "You'd better shut up, or I'll shoot a few of you."

Thereupon the men poked fun at him more than ever, and renewed their shouts of "Gangway, please."

They made such a din that the noise reached the captain's cabin. Captain Rodionoff emerged from his sanctum, and, by the communication bridge, reached a point above the place where the rum was being served out. A little man, round-shouldered, and having a moustache stained with tobacco-juice, he looked at the senior officer, and said lispingly (for he had lost most of his teeth):

"Vladimir Aleksandrovich, be good enough to come to my cabin."

While Grossman withdrew in confusion, the men burst out laughing, and again shouted:

“Gangway, please.”

Now the crew had dinner. From the officers’ mess they could hear the strains of the band, interspersed with cries of “Hurrah!” as the chiefs quaffed champagne in honour of the expected Russian victory.

When, next day, the main force of the enemy appeared, the command of the ship was installed in the conning-tower. At the first rumble of the guns, Captain Rodionoff took off his cap and made the sign of the cross with it, saying in a loud voice:

“God save us!”

During the sea-fight of May 14th, the cruiser was hit by thirty shells, but none of them struck below the water-line. Most of the damage was done to the superstructure, the boats, and the various apparatus. Some of the guns were put out of action. Of the ship’s complement, twenty were killed and about fifty wounded.

When night fell, the captain ordered:

“Prepare for torpedo-attacks, and refit the search-lights.”

During the bombardment the search-lights had been dismantled, and stored for safety in the gangways below deck. Now they were refitted as directed, and the lights turned on. Perhaps that was why the “Nakhimoff” became the chief target for the enemy destroyers, the search-lights disclosing her position to the Japanese, and attracting torpedoes as a candle-flame attracts moths.

Helmsman Avramchenko, a huge fellow posted as look-out in front of the conning-tower, shouted in a stentorian voice:

“Destroyer to starboard. Change our course.”

This was done, and the Japanese destroyer was sunk by an 8-inch shell, but she had already discharged her torpedo, and it reached its mark. The shock of the explosion was so tremendous that the conning-tower was dislodged from its base. The glass of all the port-holes was shattered.

For some time no one knew where the torpedo had hit the “Nakhimoff.” Some of the men on duty in the stern compartment thought it had been there, and made for the deck, shutting the watertight doors behind them. The artificers and stokers also abandoned their posts. In the conning-tower the captain shouted:

“All hands on deck. Have the leak covered with an extemporised plate, or we shall sink.”

But still no one knew where the leak was, and the men rushed

about aimlessly in fear of imminent death by drowning. For several minutes after the explosion there was indescribable confusion. At length came the boatswain's whistle, and he shouted:

"We have been holed on the starboard bow. All hands on deck to repair the breach."

The torpedo had blown away much of the starboard bow in front of the helmsmen's quarters. These were flooded with water, as was also the adjoining dynamo-room. The lighting apparatus had ceased to function. The men, as they came out, closed the water-tight doors, which were devoured by rust, while the rubber round the edges had perished. Consequently the doors were ineffective, and the inflowing waters rushed on into the cordage store, the paint-room, the coal-bunkers, the food-stores, and the gangways. Thence it made its way into the torpedo-rooms and the magazines, the working of whose hatches was impeded by wooden wedges which ought not to have been there.

The battleship was now well down by the head, and the stern so much elevated that the screws were partly out of water, and speed was greatly reduced. The rest of the squadron continued on its course, leaving the "Nakhimoff" to her own devices. Light was procured from the stern dynamos, but immediately an order came from the bridge:

"Extinguish the search-lights, and anything that can show the enemy where we are."

By porting her helm, the battleship got away from the Japanese destroyers. Then her engines were stopped. About a hundred men set to work in an attempt to cover the hole in the bow with a temporary plate, or a tarpaulin. Since, however, during the voyage out, no drills of this sort had been undertaken, the work was extremely inexpert. The crew fussed about, got in one another's way, and the task was rendered all the more difficult by having to be done in the dark and in a rough sea. Also the ship was nose-down, and had a list of 8°. Besides, the anchor was in the way. During the day it had been struck by a shell and displaced, but remained hanging because the anchor chain had jammed in the hawse-hole. There was great difficulty in getting the raffle clear whereupon the anchor betook itself to the bottom of the sea. Commander Grossman directed operations. In this emergency, past animosities were forgotten. He no longer hustled the men or swore at them, but said, in gentle tones:

"Brothers, try to co-ordinate your work better. If you don't, we shall sink."

Nor did the men mock at him with cries of "Gangway, please." United attention of officers and men was given to the job.

At last the breach was repaired, after a fashion, but inadequately, for the water continued to rise within the ship although all the pumps were hard at work. It ultimately reached the main deck.

Still, the engines were restarted, and the battleship forged slowly ahead.

The officers, assembled on the bridge, were discussing the best course to take. The general opinion was that the "Admiral Nakhimoff" was too badly damaged either to overtake the squadron or to reach Vladivostock. What possibility remained but to make for the nearest shore, sink the ship, and save the men? But Captain Rodionoff said stubbornly:

"Our course is N. 23° E."

With that he closed the topic.

To reduce the list to starboard, the stokers were set to work shifting coal from starboard to port.

The men had hardly recovered their equanimity, when an order was shouted:

"Gunners to their posts."

Every one supposed that a new torpedo attack was imminent.

The officers and men in the bows perceived some small, dark, unknown boats just ahead. There were about twenty, and they all had lights. The "Nakhimoff" made ready to repel torpedo-boats, but every one on board fully expected to be sunk this time. The gunlayers had aimed at the lights of these menacing boats, and were about to discharge their pieces, when some one shouted joyfully, as if announcing news that a bounty had been granted:

"Don't fire. They're fishing-smacks."

Only then did the nerve-jumpy men on the "Nakhimoff" realise that if they had been enemy torpedo-boats preparing to attack, no lights would have been shown.

Thoughts now turned back to real dangers. When the moon rose, the hole made by the explosion of the torpedo was further covered by a huge sail. But even this did not suffice to stop the leak, and the battleship's bow sank lower and lower, until it was submerged as far back as the thirty-sixth bulkhead. Eaten into by rust for twenty years, the water-tight partition began to bend like cardboard under

the weight of water. At great risk, the men tried to shore it up with baulks of timber, but the water continued to ooze through the joints as if through a leaky embankment. This was the last barrier between the sea and the fore stoke-hole. Should it give way the boilers would blow up, and the ship would instantly sink.

At the suggestion of the chief engineer, the engines were reversed. Now, when the warship was going astern instead of ahead, the pressure on the bulkhead was diminished, and catastrophe was averted—for a time, at any rate.

The "Nakhimoff" was so much down by the head that half of each screw was out of water, and the blades thrashed it like enormous hands. Of course she steered badly, and, stern-first, could not steam more than three knots. The officers argued with the captain, trying to persuade him that, under these conditions, it was foolish to persist upon the course of N. 23° E., and that the only thing to think of was how to save as many lives as possible.

"Oh, well," Rodionoff said bitterly, after holding out for some time, "we'll make for the coast of Korea. There our divers may be able to repair the leak better. Then we'll steer north-east again. We must get to Vladivostock if we can."

The men eagerly awaited the end of this dreadful night. Few of them snatched any sleep. All felt that their lives hung by a thread. The first glimmer of dawn was greeted with joy. As the sun rose, the peaks of unknown mountains were seen. What coast was it?

During the night the longitudinal bulkheads, old and rotten, gave way, so that all the port bunkers were flooded. The starboard bunkers were crammed with coal. In the morning, the ship was got on an even keel again, but she was more down by the head than ever. The captain, extremely anxious, said:

"Make for the shore."

"Very good, Sir," answered Navigating-Lieutenant Klochkovsky.

Four miles off shore, soundings were taken—42 fathoms. The engines were stopped. The battered "Admiral Nakhimoff," grown old during her twenty years of sea-life, waited docilely before disappearing for ever.

Captain Rodionoff, when informed that the "Nakhimoff" was off the north-eastern coast of the Isle of Tsushima, was extremely annoyed with the navigating lieutenant.

"My orders were to make for the Korean coast, and see where you've brought us!"

Lieutenant Klochkovsky, looking at the captain through his spectacles, said with an air of confusion:

"I tried to carry out your orders faithfully, Sir, but, after the shock our ship sustained from that torpedo yesterday, the compass must have been disordered."

The work of lowering the boats was put in hand, but the requisite machinery had been damaged, and progress was slow. When one of the row-boats was safely in the water, and some of the wounded were being installed in her, the enemy destroyer "Shiranui" was sighted, approaching from the north.

The captain instantly ordered:

"Open the scuttles. Make preparations to blow up the ship. The men to provide themselves with life-belts or cork mattresses from their hammocks."

Soon another Japanese warship appeared, in the south this time, the auxiliary cruiser "Sado-Maru." No doubt the destroyer had summoned her by wireless.

On the "Nakhimoff," in the torpedo-room, there was a store of high explosives, and amid this was placed a shell connected by electric wires with two batteries on a six-oared boat under the command of the torpedo officer Midshipman Mikhailoff. The boat began to pull away, paying out the wires as she did so. Mikhailoff had a clear memory of the captain's orders:

"I shall be on the bridge. Keep close watch. When I wave my handkerchief, you must make the contact and the explosion will take place."

"But what about you, Sir?" asked Mikhailoff anxiously, divining that the captain had decided to perish with the battleship.

"That's no business of yours," answered Rodionoff with a frown. "Obey my orders."

"Very good, Sir," answered Mikhailoff.

The midshipman, having pulled to a distance of three cable lengths, told his men to trail their oars, and, watching the bridge of the iron-clad, awaited the signal.

The row-boat containing the wounded and the surgeon made for shore. The larger boats were filled with uninjured men. Those for whom there was no room were provided with cork mattresses from the hammocks, life-belts, and cork-jackets. No one remained below, where the water was rushing in through the open scuttles.

The destroyer "Shiranui," having come within ten cable lengths of the "Nakhimoff," hoisted a signal in the international code:

"Surrender and strike your flag, otherwise we shall save no one." Captain Rodionoff ordered his signalman to reply: "First half of message understood." Then he shouted to those of his men left on board:

"Into the water with you. I am going to blow up the ship."

Panic followed these words. The men jumped overboard like frightened children flinging themselves into their mothers' arms. The battleship which, up till now, had seemed their only safe refuge, had become a terrible monster, and every one wanted to get as far away from her as possible. Many of the men swam towards the torpedo-pinnace, which had been safely lowered, and was under a full head of steam. Since she was already crowded, the officer in charge tried to get away, but her steering-gear was damaged, and she circled instead of going straight ahead, over-running some of the swimmers. It was necessary to stop the engines. Thereupon, many of the dripping survivors climbed aboard, and their weight overloaded her until the water entered through her port-holes. She filled and sank, carrying with her to the bottom the men who were in the engine-room or elsewhere between decks.

The "Sado-Maru," approaching the Russian warship, lowered her boats.

Only two men were left in the "Nakhimoff," Rodionoff and Klochkovsky—for the navigating lieutenant had decided to share the fate of the captain. The last men to jump overboard were the torpedo hands and the electricians. They had been in no hurry. Well aware that the ironclad would sink in any case, they had privily disconnected the wires with whose aid Rodionoff had planned to blow up the ship. The captain, not knowing this, ran agitatedly up and down the bridge, shouting to the men to hasten, until at length he was left alone with Klochkovsky. Then, taking off his cap, and looking sunward, he made the sign of the cross. The navigating lieutenant clutched the rail. Rodionoff signalled by waving his handkerchief, but the explosion failed to occur. The captain bowed his head, and burst into tears.

Now the destroyer "Shiranui" steamed close to the six-oared boat. Midshipman Mikhailoff, having thrown the useless batteries overboard, hoisted one of the men's jumpers as a white flag. The other boats did the same.

The "Sado-Maru" was now about three cable lengths from the "Nakhimoff," and her boats were rescuing the Russians from the water. One boat, however, pulled alongside the sinking battleship,

and a Japanese officer with several men boarded her. Rodionoff and Klochkovsky managed to keep out of sight behind one of the deck-houses while these undesirable visitors stayed on board. The Japanese had just time to run up their own colours, and then got back quickly on board their boat, realising that the ironclad was on the point of sinking. After waiting for a moment until the enemy had pulled out of reach, the captain and the lieutenant emerged from their hiding-place and tore down the Japanese flag. Now the "Nakhimoff" heeled over to starboard. Thousands of tons of water inside her rushed noisily in the same direction, and immediately afterwards, bow first, the ironclad made her final plunge.

Rodionoff and Klochkovsky were dragged down with the suck, but, while there was still breath in them, they were raised to the surface by their life-belts. They saw the "Sado-Maru" and the "Shiranui," which had picked up the Russian swimmers, steaming away towards the "Vladimir Monomakh," now visible on the horizon. The two remaining survivors of the "Admiral Nakhimoff" drifted in the water until late in the evening, when they were rescued by a Japanese fishing-smack which chanced to sail by.

III

The first-class ironclad "Navarin" differed greatly in appearance from any other battleship in the second Pacific squadron. Very broad in the beam, she had four huge funnels, not in series, but paired, like the legs of a table turned topsy-turvy. By these funnels she could, at the first glance, be distinguished from the rest of the fleet. She had, in fact, a most formidable aspect, but the Japanese were probably well aware that her 12-inch guns, which were fired with old-fashioned powder (not smokeless), had a range of no more than forty-five cable lengths.

Captain Fitinhoff, who commanded her, was an able and experienced officer, fifty-four years of age. Of medium stature, taciturn, with eyes of a nondescript colour, a flattened nose, and one nostril torn, he presented a gloomy aspect. He was completely bald, and his thoughts were perpetually turned inward, so that he did not pay sufficient attention to externals. His uniform hung on him like old clothes on a scarecrow, his grey beard was rarely combed, his neck was covered with a downy stubble that looked like moss. Having had ample experience of the ups and downs of life, he neither entertained

high expectations nor was prone to despair. His mental equilibrium was imperturbable. Nothing, it seemed, could move him to strong emotion. He was exceedingly well informed in naval matters, and had voyaged far and wide, so that he might reasonably have expected long ere this, to have been promoted admiral; but he was too modest. He never thrust himself forward, pulled no strings, and was content to do his duty without ostentation.

Admiral Rozhestvensky did not like Fitinhoff, and had nicknamed him "Torn Nostril."

Fitinhoff, in his turn, though without malice, spoke of the admiral as "A Comedian devoid of Talent."

During a naval engagement no one is better informed as to what goes on than the signalmen and look-out men. Provided with binoculars and telescopes, they keep close watch on the movements of the ships in their own and the enemy squadrons, in order to report to the chiefs any change in the situation. They watch and pass on orders issued by the flagship. If the captain of a battleship has a communication to make to the admiral, it is made through their instrumentality. Being close to or inside the conning-tower, to which all information comes and from which every important order is issued, they cannot fail to know exactly what is going on in their own craft.

When, on May 14th, the "Navarin" was playing its part in the great battle, and was enveloped in clouds of smoke that issued from its guns, Senior Signalman Ivan Sedoff was posted just outside the entrance to the conning-tower, since there was no room for him within the armoured walls. A tall man, slow in his movements, it was in a leisurely way that he raised the telescope to his white-lashed eyes to scrutinise the movements of the Russian and the Japanese ships. His red, freckled face was swelled by the effort of observation. From time to time he came out into the open on the bridge, to get a better view of the battle. He was the first to tell the captain:

"Your Honour, the 'Suvoroff' has fallen out of the fighting line."

Fitinhoff murmured casually: "Alright."

Soon Sedoff turned pale. He shouted to those in the conning-tower: "The 'Oslyabya' has sunk."

The officers in general were greatly excited and distressed; but once more the captain said laconically: "Alright."

Sedoff was manifestly annoyed by Fitinhoff's seeming indifference.

Then, hit on the starboard bow by a large-calibre shell, the

"Navarin" listed. It was reported to the conning-tower that the bow torpedo-room had been flooded. The captain said:

"Stop the leak."

A little later, when the squadron was turning, Fitinhoff noticed how terribly the "Suvoroff" was still being devastated by enemy fire. He gave orders to manœuvre the "Navarin" so as to protect the flagship. At this moment she was hit on the stern by two big shells, one to starboard and one to port. The officers' messroom was frightfully knocked about, and fire broke out there. Sedoff became excited, but the captain was as calm as ever, issuing his orders without raising his voice and without any change of expression. Then it was reported to the conning-tower that the fire had been got under, and that the shell-holes (which were on the water-line) had been plugged with sacks, oakum, mattresses, sheets, and what not; but that the inrush of water had not been completely stayed.

Some damage had also been done to the super-structure, and there were casualties. Seventeen men had been sent to the sick-bay, together with three officers.

The captain came out on to the bridge. At this moment a shell struck the fore-top, with the result that shell-splinters and other jagged fragments of iron fell in a shower. Fitinhoff collapsed on to his knees, and then subsided into a sitting posture. He made no sound, not even the slightest groan; but his cap had been knocked off his bald head, and his face turned deathly pale. His trousers hung in rags about his legs, and wounds showed through the rents. Leaning forward, he supported his belly with his hands. When Sedoff ran up to him, he said no more than his customary: "Alright."

Quickly his officers gathered round him.

"Are you severely injured, Bruno Aleksandrovich?" asked the senior officer, Commander Durkin.

"Pretty bad," answered the captain, in his ordinary quiet tone, as if nothing more had happened than the loss of a button from his uniform. "It seems that my intestines are torn."

"Perhaps you'll pull through, Sir," said Durkin, encouragingly.

The captain glanced at the commander, but his eyes were already glazed, and he seemed to be looking through Durkin into an infinite distance.

"No," he replied, "I'm done for."

They lifted him on to a stretcher. He remarked (to no one in particular):

"I foresaw that I should meet my end in some such stupid fashion."

He was carried off to the sick-bay.

The command was taken over by Senior Officer Durkin.

Night fell.

In obedience to a signal from Admiral Nebogatoff, the squadron now steamed at a speed of from twelve to thirteen knots. The "Navarin" kept in line, and was successful for a time in repelling a Japanese torpedo attack. On bridges and upper deck the crew kept as good a watch as darkness permitted. From time to time could be heard shouts of alarm, when enemy destroyers were believed to be approaching. Then the darkness was temporarily dispelled by fire from the "Navarin's" guns. Senior Signalman Sedoff was extremely tired and sleepy, but the fear of death kept him alert. He remained on duty close to the conning-tower, his eyes glued to his binoculars. It was a great pity that the "Navarin" had no smokeless powder, so that whenever she fired her guns the black fumes made it impossible to see the enemy destroyers. At nine o'clock a man rushed on to the bridge, cannoned into Sedoff, and asked excitedly:

"Where's Commander Durkin?"

Sedoff recognised the voice of the first boatswain.

"In the conning-tower. What's up?"

The boatswain did not answer, but hastened into the conning-tower, crying:

"Report, Your Honour."

"Well, get on with it."

"The officer's mess is flooded, Sir. I suppose that at our present speed we are making too much water through the temporary repairs of the leaks."

"Close the water-tight doors," answered Durkin instantly.

The boatswain stayed on.

"What else?" asked the commander.

"I think, Your Honour, we ought to fix tarpaulins outside the leaks."

"For that we should have to stop the engines, and should lose touch with the squadron. Close the water-tight doors, and carry on."

"Ay, ay, Sir," answered the boatswain, hurrying away.

On the commander's orders, he was followed by the officer of the watch, Lieutenant Pukhoff. A little later the lieutenant came back to the bridge and reported that the order had been carried out. Soon, however, it became plain that the "Navarin" was failing to

keep up with the squadron. Commander Durkin shouted down the speaking tube to the engine-room:

"Increase speed as much as you can."

He scolded the stokers, and swore at the artificers. But all was in vain. The ironclad continued to fall behind. It was reported to the bridge that the stern was badly holed. A minute later came news from the bow engine-room that the bursting of a steam-pipe had put three boilers out of action. The speed was yet further diminished.

As long as the "Navarin" was steaming in line with the other ships, the enemy destroyers had not been able to get near her. The united fire of the squadron made them keep a respectful distance. If one battleship failed to see them, another detected and bombarded them. But it was particularly unfortunate for the "Navarin" to be left alone, since she had no smokeless powder.

Sedoff heard Commander Durkin calling anxiously down the speaking-tube:

"Hurry up with the repair of that burst steam-pipe. It's of vital importance."

The Japanese destroyers were closing in. They were in two detachments, steaming a little in advance of the "Navarin" on either bow, and keeping her under observation with their search-lights. This was a ruse. The officers and men of the Russian ironclad, fixing their attention on the obvious enemy destroyers, failed to notice that one of these craft was creeping up astern. She was quite close when a number of men detected her, and shouted. But it was too late, for she had already discharged a torpedo.

At the shock of the explosion, Sedoff felt as if the bridge on which he was standing had been shaken from under his feet, and he fell down. The battleship immediately took on a slant from bow to stern. For a while the signalman lay where he had fallen. When he struggled to his feet, he heard the voices of men and the roar of guns. He saw Midshipman Verkhovsky seize a life-belt and jump overboard. Several of the seamen followed their officer's example.

"Stop! What the devil are you about," exclaimed Helmsman Mikhailoff, in a voice of thunder. "We're still afloat, and in no immediate danger of sinking."

Thus he tried to calm his shipmates.

"All hands on deck! Gun-layers to their stations!" cried the commander, at the top of his voice.

Little by little the panic abated, and order was restored. An in-

spection of the damage caused by the torpedo was undertaken. The stern below the waterline to starboard had been completely destroyed, but the water-tight doors were functioning effectively, while the screws and the rudder were uninjured. Orders were given to stop the engines and apply tarpaulins over the leaks.

Captain Fitinhoff was brought up from the sick-bay to the conning-tower.

"Why bother about me?" he asked in low tones, speaking to the officers assembled round him. "In a couple of hours I shall be dead, whatever you do. Try to save yourselves, and leave me to sink with the ship."

Sedoff, having recovered from the first shock, went astern to see what was going on. He was chiefly struck by the fact that the poop was completely under water, as far as the rearmost 12-inch turret, against which the waves were breaking with a dull rhythm. About forty seamen, under the command of several officers, were trying to fix two heavy tarpaulins over the hole made by the explosion of the torpedo. In the light of improvised lamps they walked cautiously astern on the slanting deck.

"Hurry up, Brothers," said the officers, "or we shall go to the bottom in no time."

The men understood, and worked their hardest. One of them fell overboard, and uttered agonised cries. At this moment a high wave came, carrying away the tarpaulin, and seven or eight of the crew with it. From astern came the despairing shrieks of the drowning. The others could do nothing to help, and looked distressfully in the direction of the victims.

The boatswain began cursing.

"Devil take them," he said, "they've lost our tarpaulin for us; they're swabs, not sailormen!"

"Anyhow," put in Sedoff, "we must give the poor fellows a chance;" so some cork mattresses from the hammocks were thrown after them.

Work was resumed, but fruitlessly, more men being swept away, while it proved impossible to cover the yawning gap with a tarpaulin. The attempt was abandoned, and, as the enemy destroyers returned to the attack, orders were given to steam ahead once more.

As if awakening from sleep, the "Navarin" got under way, and, at a very few knots an hour, steamed towards the coast of Korea.

Sedoff went back to his post on the bridge, to keep watch on the movements of the Japanese. Whenever he saw the outlines of one

of their craft, his heart seemed to stop beating, and he shivered at the thought that the "Navarin" could now do nothing to repel their onslaught. The gunners' morale had been undermined by the explosion; they fired at random and many of them deserted their posts. The wind howled, and the sound of the waves suggested a funeral march. Destroyers surrounded the Russian ironclad, and there was nowhere to look for help. Numerous torpedoes were discharged at her, cannon and machine-guns were fired, and even ordinary rifles. It seemed that the enemy was determined to make an end of the "Navarin."

A shell-splinter grazed Sedoff's forehead, and blood trickled down inside his shirt. He made for the sick-bay to have his wound dressed. Just as he reached the main deck, a second torpedo struck the ill-fated battleship amidships, on the starboard beam. Vast quantities of water rushed in through the breach, the men shouting in alarm, while the decks were flooded, as well as the stoke-hole, the magazines, and other parts of the ship. The dynamos ceased working. In impenetrable darkness, officers and men jostled one another, and knocked their heads against unseen obstacles. Many lost their way, being unable to find the exits from the water-tight compartments. Some fell through the hatchways and broke their bones. It was impossible to move without running risks. The cries of the injured were most disconcerting to those who remained immune. It seemed as if the whole ship was groaning with pain.

Sedoff's mouth was as dry and bitter as if it had been cauterised; and he fell down several times before he could discover the exit. Having quickly mounted the first stair, he found the second, leading to the upper deck, blocked by a crowd which had got wedged in it. Moved by the instinct of self-preservation, they were all trying to fight their way upward, clambering on one another's shoulders, trampling on the smaller and weaker, struggling like fish in a net that has been drawn ashore.

"Why the hell don't you get on?" cried those behind, pushing the others, and striking them.

"Gangway, please, I'm an officer," shouted some one angrily, struggling among the rest, but no one paid any attention to him.

Sedoff could make no progress, and thought he was done for. Then a bold thought struck him. Having drawn back a couple of paces, he made a rush, and, climbing on his shipmates' shoulders, he mounted, clinging to their heads. When he was near the top, some

one seized him; he was repeatedly struck in the face and the ribs; and another bit him in the leg. Gathering all his strength, he pushed on with such vigour that those in front gave way for a moment, and he found himself free on the upper deck. He hastened to the conning-tower.

On the bridge he encountered Helmsman Mikhailoff, who gave him a cork mattress. Here were a number of officers and men fastening on cork mattresses or life-belts, but each thinking exclusively of his own safety. One of the officers, indeed, proposed that an attempt should be made to cover the new leak with a tarpaulin. Others advised trying to restart the dynamos, thinking that the pumps could perhaps get the better of the water. The chaplain, holding a crucifix in his right hand and a cork mattress in his left, knelt and prayed aloud, uplifting his voice to the dark sky. No one thought any longer of trying to save Captain Fitinhoff, who was lying on the floor of the conning-tower. Commander Durkin shouted an order through a megaphone:

“Lower the boats. It’s our only chance.”

The “Navarin” had a strong list to starboard, but this was increasing so slowly that there would have been plenty of time to lower all the row-boats and steam pinnaces, which could have accommodated most of the crew of seven hundred men. Panic had, however, taken possession of them, and the fear of death put an end to discipline. No one bothered any longer to think of the distinction between officers and men. Few, therefore, heeded the commander’s order, and even these bungled matters. The largest steam pinnacle was lowered one end first, and sank. The other was dealt with more cautiously, but, as soon as she was safely in the water, she was so hopelessly overcrowded that she, too, went to the bottom.

Sedoff, having lashed on his cork mattress, stayed on the bridge beside Helmsman Mikhailoff, ready to jump overboard the moment this should become necessary. A cold shiver ran down his back as he listened to the noise made by the men who had gained the upper deck and were in search of anything that might help them to keep afloat. Cork mattresses, oars, planks, the covers of wooden boxes, crates—anything lighter than water. Late arrivals tried to seize what the first-comers had got hold of. On the fore-deck, several men were fighting for a life-belt.

“I got it first,” cried one.

“Liar, it was I,” shouted another.

They fell to the deck, struggling for their prize, and, owing to the list, rolled to starboard. The same sort of thing was going on in other parts of the ship.

By now the "Navarin" was lying almost along the water. The muzzles of the starboard guns were dipping into the sea, while those of the port guns pointed skyward. They were useless, even if the gunners had been at their posts. The Japanese realised that the iron-clad was defenceless. One of their craft came close to the port beam, no longer afraid of the cannon.

Our men cried:

"She's going for us!"

"Fire at her!"

"Jump overboard!"

Officers and men were leaping into the sea, as if driven by an invisible force.

The destroyer was so close that those on board the "Navarin" could see the launching of the torpedo.

Sedoff, who was on the port side of the bridge, clung to the rail, and tensed his body. A few seconds passed, and then he was almost blinded by the explosion. Water spurted as high as the masts, hundreds of tons fell back upon the deck, drenching the signalman. On all fours he scrambled along the port beam, ready to clamber on to the keel as the "Navarin" capsized. He saw her turn over, submerging two row-boats filled with men. Then she went under with a "glug-glug," dragging him down in the suck; but the cork mattress brought him back to the surface.

Finding himself amid a number of men struggling in the sea and clutching at one another, he hastened to swim out of reach. He had difficulty in evading the long arms of Senior Paymaster's Steward Koznyakoff, while another man, swimming nearby, shouted threateningly:

"Keep away. If you touch me, I'll kill you."

From the sunken battleship there bobbed up various wooden objects—beams, planks, and crates. But the sea was rough, and many were struck and injured by these heavy objects.

The Japanese destroyers steamed off without saving any one. The remainder of the night was terrible, and seemed unending. There was nothing for it but to go on swimming, with little or no hope of rescue, amid the darkness and the bitterly cold waters.

At sunrise, Sedoff found himself surrounded by dead men as well

as living. One shipmate had had his brains dashed out by a beam, but was kept afloat by a life-belt. Others had tied on their cork mattresses too low, had turned feet uppermost, and been promptly drowned. The feet of these dead men stuck gruesomely out of the water. Before the war there had been no safety drills to instruct the men in the proper use of life-belts and cork mattresses.

Thus dawn brought little happiness. The sky had cleared, and the waste of waters was brilliantly lit by the oblique rays of the sun. Sedoff joined a company of about thirty survivors, who did their best to keep together.

One of these was Lieutenant Pukhoff, projecting a long way above his life-belt. A little farther off, five seamen were clinging to a crate.

At about eight in the morning a ship appeared on the horizon—a Japanese destroyer. With glad hearts, expecting rescue, the men began to shout for help. But she continued on her course, passing them at a distance of from two to three cable lengths, and scrutinising them through binoculars. The unhappy Russians followed her longingly with their eyes until she was lost to sight.

Now one of the seamen wearing a cork mattress went mad. Swimming up to Pukhoff, he seized the lieutenant by the neck, and tried to push the poor man's head under water.

The terrified officer exclaimed:

“Leave me alone. What harm have I ever done you?”

The seaman yelled at him ferociously, while Pukhoff defended himself as best he could. Sedoff was extremely sorry for the lieutenant, who had always behaved kindly to the men, so he swam to the rescue and dragged away the assailant. The latter's cork mattress became displaced in the struggle, whereupon he turned feet uppermost and was instantly drowned. One of his feet was booted, the other bare; these feet jerked convulsively in the air for a minute or two, and then were still.

Lieutenant Pukhoff, who was dying of cold and exposure, did not long survive; he thrashed the water with his arms, as if still trying to repel the now defunct adversary, muttered some incoherent words, and then his jaw dropped. All was over.

Sedoff swam to the crate which was supporting five other men, and which gave him, likewise, something to cling to. His comrades in misfortune, exhausted, livid, and with staring eyes, continued to call for help although there was no help within sight. Some cursed, while others prayed.

Their grip on the crate was becoming enfeebled by cold and hunger, so that one after another they dropped off and were drowned. Sedoff's other companions, who were supported by cork mattresses, also perished, one by one, of cold, but continued to float, silent, and with drawn faces. The arm of one of these corpses was so firmly clasped round the neck of another, that the waves could not separate the pair.

By 4 o'clock, Sedoff was the sole survivor of this group of thirty, and felt that his end, too, was near. As his outliving the others showed, he had an extremely vigorous constitution, but he was almost at the end of the tether. Chilled to the bone, he began even to be numbed to his sufferings. His head, feeling like lead, drooped on to his chest, and his eyes closed. Knowing that sleep brought on by cold was likely to be the prelude of death, he did his utmost to keep awake; and, not abandoning hope, continued to survey the deserted ocean. Gulls were flying overhead, uttering plaintive cries. One of them perched on a dead man's knee, and contemplated Sedoff with dark red-rimmed eyes, as if awaiting the end of this last of the living. Sometimes it seemed to Sedoff as though the sun were dancing in the sky, and as though he himself were about to take wings and fly; or as though some monster had seized his legs in order to drag him down into the depths. He made feeble convulsive movements, aware that he was nearly done for. But at this very moment when his strength was giving out, and when he had almost ceased to think, he caught sight of a grey smoke-trail on the horizon. Little more than a point to begin with, it rapidly enlarged, for the ship from which it issued was approaching. His heart began to beat furiously; the air he breathed seemed to be scorching his lungs; his head buzzed as if with the noise of a thousand dynamos. Coloured lights flashed before his eyes, and amid a cascade of stars there danced a huge emerald-green sun. Then, like the transformation scene in an old-fashioned pantomime, there was a sudden change in the prospect, and, instead of the sea, meadows stretched round him as far as eye could reach. Amid the green grass, smoking vigorously from all her funnels, moved the "Navarin." Then the battleship had not sunk after all? But why had she only three funnels instead of four? Sedoff tried in vain to remember. Surely she had had four? The change alarmed him. Anyhow, the ironclad was making straight for him. He waved his arms as if to repel a spectre, and shouted hoarsely:

"Help! Help!"

Unknown hands seized the signalman, pulled him from the water, stripped off his wet clothes, and rubbed him vigorously to restore the circulation; and all the while he was seeking among them his shipmates of the "Navarin," failing to understand that he was on the deck of a Japanese destroyer.¹

IV

The cruiser detachment of the second Pacific squadron was under the command of Rear-Admiral Oskar Adolfovich Enkvist. No one knew what considerations induced the Ministry for Marine to assign him so important a post. Certainly he had an assured look, was thick-set, broad-shouldered, with a huge, grey beard. During the voyage out, the old boy frequently appeared on the bridge wearing a white cap, white trousers, and a white tunic cut like a blouse. Had he not had gilt buttons and gilt epaulets adorned with the black imperial eagles, no stranger would have guessed him to be an admiral of the Russian navy. In his gait, his carriage, and his mode of speech, Enkvist resembled a good Russian landlord of the old school, one of those who were loved by their serfs for their calmness, gentleness—and stupidity. Under a "barin" of this type, the serfs had a better time of it than under abler and more energetic territorial magnates.

In the squadron he was familiarly known as "the planter."

From 1895 to 1899 he was captain of the cruiser "Duke of Edinburgh." This was a training-ship, a wind-jammer, on which non-commissioned officers learned their job. Thus Enkvist did not become a steamer-sailor in the proper sense of the term. Before the war, not merely had he never commanded a detachment of modern warships, but had not even cruised on an ironclad or unarmoured craft furnished with up-to-date technical appliances. From 1899 down to the outbreak of the war he was naval governor of Nikolaev, where his amiable character made him a general favourite. Then the High Command put him in charge of the cruiser detachment of the second Pacific squadron which was sent out to the Far East to get control of the Sea of Japan, and re-establish the fallen fortunes of Russia. Looks notwithstanding, he was hesitant, devoid of self-confidence,

¹ We learned afterwards that of the ship's complement of the "Navarin," seven hundred in all, only two were saved besides Sedoff: the gun-layer Kuzmin and the stoker Dergacheff. This pair were picked up by a British steamship and taken to Tien-Tsin, where they were handed over to the care of the Russian consul.

and was wont when he had given an order to follow it up with the phrase:

“Do you think that will be all right?”

His chief flag-officer, Lieutenant von Dehn, would thereupon invariably reassure him by saying:

“A splendid idea, Admiral.”

Von Dehn, an aristocrat, able and firm of purpose, had much influence in the detachment. Enkvist was invariably guided by his advice. For practical purposes, von Dehn was in command until the detachment joined the main body of the squadron outside the Bay of Van Fong. There Enkvist transferred his flag to the first-class cruiser “Oleg,” and thenceforward the captain of that craft, Dobrotvorsky by name, acquired a commanding position in the counsels of the detachment. Captain Dobrotvorsky was very tall and strong, his face swollen like a rubber toy-balloon, but largely hidden by an immense, grizzled, black beard. Full of self-confidence, he regarded himself as past-master in matters of modern naval technique, and was extremely intolerant of contradiction. Von Dehn was forced into the background, while Enkvist became a mere echo of Dobrotvorsky’s opinions. The junior officers used to make jokes about the matter, saying:

“Dobrotvorsky steers our admiral as the helmsman steers a ship.”

In youth Dobrotvorsky had been very sympathetic towards the party of the People’s Will, but by degrees his Red convictions faded as a piece of red cotton fades in the sunlight. Now he thought only of his career. All the same, his officers regarded him as a liberal, for he was extremely critical of old-fashioned naval ways. He was sarcastic about his own command, the “Oleg,” saying:

“No one but an idiot would have sent such a craft to fight in the Far East. She’s only good for scouting and the work of a commerce-destroyer. Her 6-inch guns are in turrets or casemates. Well and good. But she has no armour-plate to protect her sides. One may say that such a cruiser is like a naked man wearing gauntlets.”

Dobrotvorsky’s appearance had earned for him in the fleet the nickname of “the elephant.”

The officers of the cruiser detachment, when talking of Enkvist, were accustomed to say:

“Our planter, starting a zoo, has provided himself with an elephant.”

The admiral never summoned a council of his various captains. What had he to discuss with them?

He had not sufficient intelligence to give them any guidance, and he had himself received none from the admiral-in-chief. Very rarely did he visit any of the ships under his command. There was between him and them no liaison such as is indispensable for success in a naval engagement. His subordinates liked him well enough—as people like an amusing anecdote.

Gently and quietly, giving no trouble to anybody, as one gives no trouble to the ikon of St. Nicholas, protector of mariners, Enkvist made his way to the Straits of Tsushima.

General instructions as to the work of the cruiser detachment had, indeed, been issued by Rozhestvensky long before the battle. The second-class cruisers "Izumrud" and "Zhemchug" were to protect the first-class cruisers against torpedo-attacks. The "Svetlana," a first-class cruiser commanded by Captain Shein, and the auxiliary cruiser "Ural" with the second-class cruiser "Almaz," were to guard the transports. The "Oleg" (Rear-Admiral Enkvist's flagship), the "Aurora," the "Dmitri Donskoy," and the "Vladimir Monomakh"—all rated as first-class cruisers—were likewise to convoy the transports, but in case of need were to be detached from this duty and come to the aid of the principal units of the fleet. On May 13th, however, Rozhestvensky issued fresh orders to the effect that the "Donskoy" and the "Monomakh" were to stand by the transports, thus leaving only two cruisers at Enkvist's disposal for independent action. The convoys previously specified and the remaining warships were to keep on whichever side of the transports the enemy might appear, backing up the ironclads, but as far as possible out of range.

On May 14th, when the enemy scouts loomed in the offing, Enkvist was on the bridge of the "Oleg." Looking at the Japanese craft, the admiral said to his subordinates:

"Seems to me, we ought to go for those beggars, and sink them if we can. But can we venture to do so without orders from Vice-Admiral Rozhestvensky?"

Dobrotvorsky had similar doubts, for he said:

"I don't think the vice-admiral would approve of our doing anything of the kind. He's got a plan of his own, though he hasn't thought fit to tell us. We're quite in the dark. If we were to take independent action, we might run counter to his schemes."

When the main force of the Japanese appeared to port, our cruisers and transports, in obedience to Rozhstvensky's signals, put on speed and steamed to starboard of the line of Russian ironclads. The "Oleg" and the "Aurora" were in front of the transports; astern of them (the transports) was the scouting detachment; while the "Donskoy" was to port and the "Monomakh" to starboard. Now the Japanese light cruiser "Idzumi" appeared from the east (to starboard), and opened fire from about forty cable lengths on the transports, but speedily withdrew under a heavy bombardment from our warships. Half an hour later the look-out men on the "Oleg" saw that the third and fourth Japanese detachments were steaming up from the south to attack the Russian transports. The enemy craft had armoured decks, being the "Kasagi," flying the flag of Vice-Admiral Deva, the "Chitoze," the "Otova," and the "Niitaka;" together with the "Naniva," under the flag of Vice-Admiral Uriu, the "Takasago," the "Akashi," and the "Tsushima." These craft began to bombard our rear transports and cruisers.

"We must go to their aid," said Admiral Enkvist.

But Dobrotvorsky had already issued the necessary orders on his own initiative. The "Oleg" put about, heading for the Japanese, followed by the "Aurora," the "Donskoy," and the "Monomakh."

"Do you think that will be all right?" asked Enkvist, using his favourite phrase.

"We shall find out by-and-by," answered Dobrotvorsky, somewhat nettled.

The interchange of shots took place at a range of less than thirty cable lengths. The gunners on these subsidiary Japanese warships were not such good marksmen as those in the main fleet. Nevertheless, the Russian cruisers and transports began to suffer, so that those in charge of them were "nervy," and the ships got out of line. Soon the enemy divided, and were firing on the Russians from both sides. Then another Japanese detachment arrived, the fifth: the "Itsukushima," flying the flag of Vice-Admiral Kataoko, with the "Chin-Yen," the "Matsushima," and the "Hashidate;" while a little later appeared on the scene the sixth detachment; the "Suma," under the flag of Vice-Admiral Togo, Junior, the "Chioda," the "Akitsushima," and the "Idzumi." The enemy force had been doubled. Therewith a grave defeat of the Russians became inevitable. The transports scattered in all directions, and the cruisers had repeatedly to change their course in order to avoid collisions. The

movements of the Russian ships became so confused that, if traced on paper, they would look like an inextricable tangle.

While our transports and cruisers were in such hopeless disorder, the Russian ironclads were steadily advancing. Out of line, however, was the flagship, "Suvoroff," spouting flames. Distressed at the sight, Enkvist ordered the "Oleg" and the "Aurora" to go to her aid. This was the first energetic action taken by the rear-admiral. But when the cruisers drew near the flagship, they perceived that some of the battleships were already trying to succour her. They therefore withdrew towards the transports, followed by the "Izumrud" and the "Zhemchug," which had hitherto remained close to the ironclads.

The four Japanese detachments maintained a fierce fire upon the Russian cruisers and transports, which were completely outclassed. The "Oleg" and the "Aurora" were breached in several places near the water-line, a number of their compartments being flooded. The "Zhemchug" had sustained a good many hits when still close to the main body of the squadron. The "Svetlana" was down by the head, but kept up an active fire. The Russian cruisers, having no common plan, crowded together like sheep frightened by dogs, instead of behaving as properly trained warships. In the confusion, the "Ural" rammed the stern of the "Zhemchug," damaging the blades of the latter's starboard propeller, and demolishing the torpedo-launching apparatus on the same side. The torpedo, which was ready for discharge, fell into the water, without exploding. Soon the "Ural" was hit by so many shells that she hoisted a signal: "Have a leak with which I cannot cope. Sinking imminent." The tugboats "Rousse" and "Svir" and the transport "Anadyr" drew alongside to take off her men. The Japanese continued their fire while this was going on. Amid the turmoil, the "Anadyr" rammed the "Rousse," which quickly sank. The crew were taken on board the "Svir." Meanwhile the steering-gear of the repairing-ship "Kamchatka" had been badly damaged, so that she could not keep on her course. The "Ural," which, in a panic, had been abandoned too soon, went on floating for a couple of hours, and had the Japanese known there was not a soul left on board they could have towed her away as a prize. She was eventually sunk by some of the larger enemy craft, which happened to pass within range.

In these circumstances the Russian cruisers and transports would have been quickly finished off, had not the battleships of the second

Pacific squadron come to their rescue. The main force of the enemy lost sight of them, and, heading south, they passed between the Russian cruisers and the Japanese. At this time the latter had sustained considerable damage. The "Kasagi," escorted by the "Chitoze," quitted the field of action. The "Matsushima" also got out of line, and could not rejoin her detachment before nightfall. The "Takasago" and the "Naniva" likewise had a rough time.

Towards six in the evening, the Japanese cruisers withdrew towards the south-west, and soon disappeared.

The Russian ironclads turned north, and resumed their fight with the main force of the enemy. This was the last phase of the artillery combat of May 14th. The cruisers were to port of the ironclads, at a distance of about thirty cable lengths. Since they were no longer under fire, Enkvist managed to restore some semblance of order to his detachment. His cruisers formed in line, on either side (absurdly enough) being the transports. Still farther to port were the destroyers. One of these, the "Bezuprechnyi," steamed at top speed towards the sternmost cruisers flying the signal: "Admiral Rozhestvensky hands over the command to Admiral Nebogatoff. Make for Vladivostock." This signal was repeated by the "Oleg" and the other cruisers.

At sunset, when the main force of the enemy steered away into home waters, the Japanese destroyers appeared on the horizon. Our ironclads, breaking line, steamed at top speed to port of this new adversary, heading south. The cruisers and transports likewise put about, and were thus ahead of the battleships. Darkness came on quickly, and the torpedo-attack began. Now had come the moment when the main units of the squadron were most in need of help from the cruisers. If during the day the latter had given no effective aid to either transports or ironclads, the time had surely arrived for them to show their prowess. However, throughout the voyage to the Far East, every one in the squadron, from the admiral-in-chief to the lowest ratings, had been firmly convinced that the supreme danger was to be expected, not from artillery fire, but from a torpedo-attack. The results of this panicky fear were now to become manifest. By Captain Dobrotvorsky's orders, the "Oleg," leading the column, went full speed ahead. Only the "Aurora" and the "Zhemchug" could keep up with the flagship. The "Dmitri Donskoy," the "Vladimir Monomakh," and the "Svetlana," which had been considerably battered and were down by the head, soon fell behind. The

"Izumrud" rejoined the battleships. The "Almaz" made for the Japanese coast, in the belief that by hugging this she would have a better chance of getting to Vladivostock. The transports and destroyers dispersed in various directions. By the time the last glimmer of twilight had faded, the second Pacific squadron had ceased to exist as an entity, having broken up into numerous detachments and scattered craft.

The "Oleg" pursued her southward course at a speed of eighteen knots, leaving far astern the noise of the cannonade. As to using her own guns, it was very difficult to take aim, or to know what she was shooting at. From time to time Japanese destroyers loomed up, and launched their deadly missiles, but these were successfully avoided by zigzagging.

Enkvist grew restive, and said:

"We're steaming so fast that we shall lose touch with the battleships. Do you think that will be all right?"

Dobrotvorsky answered confidently:

"Otherwise, Your Excellency, the Japanese will certainly torpedo us. We mustn't give them any chance of aiming at us abeam, but only astern; then the wash in our wake will divert the torpedoes. That's a first principle of naval tactics."

The admiral raised no further objection for the moment. But when, later in the evening, no sound of gunfire could any longer be heard, he raised the question once more:

"Don't you think we ought to put about, and rejoin the battleships?"

Dobrotvorsky objected:

"No doubt our battleships are steaming on the same course as ourselves. If we make a right-about turn and encounter one of them, she'll probably take us for Japs. A few 12-inch shells would annihilate this pasteboard cruiser."

Nevertheless, the admiral was not convinced, and spoke more and more urgently of the need for putting about. The order, "Make for Vladivostock," was continually buzzing in his head. At length the captain had to give way. Twice that evening the cruiser detachment headed for the north, but each time encountered enemy destroyers. Towards nine, scattered lights appeared, probably those of fishing-smacks. But there was a panic on the bridge.

"The whole Japanese fleet is after us," said the officers in alarm.

Again the "Oleg" steamed steadily south, while the admiral, uneasy in his mind, argued with Dobrotvorsky.

“What’s the use of making for Vladivostock?” said the latter. “When we were still at Camramh, I heard that the Japanese had invested the port. Besides, Rozhestvensky’s orders were to make for Vladivostock as a united force. We’re not a united force any longer, but hopelessly dispersed. Then Your Excellency must have seen that the battleships were steering south. Those that remained! Now that we’ve lost several ironclads, there’s no sense in trying to reach Vladivostock. Obviously what’s left of the squadron will endeavour to reach Shanghai, where six of our transports have already gone. Any Russian craft that try on their own to force a way to Vladivostock will simply be blown out of the water. Surely it will be better to have the remains of our fleet interned in a neutral port, rather than sacrifice it to no purpose?”

Enkvist sighed, and made no answer.

Towards morning the “Oleg” reduced speed to fifteen knots. The torpedo-attacks were over. Work was continued on the mending of leaks and pumping water out of the compartments.

At dawn on the 15th the only ships in sight were the “Aurora” and the “Zhemchug.” No smoke-trails on the horizon. To economise fuel, speed was further reduced to ten knots.

Signals were exchanged regarding casualties. On the three cruisers there had been 32 killed and 132 wounded.

At noon the admiral transferred his flag to the “Aurora,” taking with him his staff, which consisted of Navigating Flag-Lieutenant de Livron, Senior Flag-Officer von Dehn, Junior Lieutenant Zorin, look-out men, signalmen, and orderlies. Enkvist decided to assume personal command of the cruiser, for Captain Egorieff had been killed and Senior Officer Nebolsin severely wounded.

At 3 p.m. the course was set for Shanghai, S. 48° W., at a speed of eight knots.

The admiral had ceased asking his customary question: “Do you think that will be all right?”

On the contrary, he did what he could to calm himself and his subordinates, saying:

“Perhaps the squadron will overtake us to-morrow. You know how slowly we’re travelling, but they will steam twelve knots at least.”

On the morning of May 16th it was reported to the admiral that a small steamship had been sighted on the horizon. Soon she was made out to be the tugboat “Svir,” steering for Shanghai. The ships

of the cruiser detachment stopped their engines while she overhauled them, and by 9 o'clock she was close to the "Aurora." Enkvist, who was on the bridge, hailed the tugboat through a megaphone:

"Captain, where is our squadron, and what has happened to it?"

Lieutenant Shirinsky-Shakhmatoff, who had been one of the officers of the "Ural," answered in loud and distinct tones:

"You ought to know best, Your Excellency, what has become of our squadron."

Enkvist, lowering his megaphone, blushed. He understood that the officers regarded him as a chief who had deserted on the battle-field. Confusedly, without looking any one in the face, he muttered an order:

"The 'Svir' is to go to Shanghai and send us a collier, so that we can fill our bunkers. When we have coaled, the detachment will make for Manila. The American authorities will treat us better than the Chinese, and will allow us to get the necessary repairs made without disarming our cruisers."

Then the admiral left the bridge, and secluded himself in his cabin.

The cruiser detachment steamed towards the Philippines at the most economical speed.

Three days later, off Luzon, the largest island of that archipelago, they spoke a German steamer, which informed them by signal that the Russian auxiliary cruiser "Dniepr" had been sighted in 19° north latitude and 120° east longitude. Thanking the captain for his information, the detachment continued on its course.

On May 20th it touched at Port Seul, but found neither coal, nor provisions, nor dockyards. The Americans had abandoned the place. The cruisers, therefore, steamed on southward. On the 21st, when they were only a hundred miles from Manila, they saw five smoke-trails ahead, and then made out five warships, advancing towards them in line. Apparently the Japanese had guessed what port Enkvist would make for, and were determined to destroy the remnants of the second Pacific squadron.

News of the approach of the enemy spread like wildfire through the "Aurora." How could three seriously damaged ships put up an effective fight against five that were presumably in good condition? Escape by flight was impossible, since the bunkers were almost empty. Officers and men looked like persons prostrated by tropical fever.

Admiral Enkvist had not left his cabin since the previously recorded conversation with the "Svir." He did not know that the "Vladimir Monomakh," the "Admiral Nakhimoff," the "Sisoy Veliky," and the "Navarin" had been torpedoed and sunk by the Japanese. Still, he could not fail to guess that a large part of the squadron must have been finished off during the destroyer attack of the night of May 14th-15th. He himself had deserted the fleet at the moment of utmost peril, and would be supposed to have done so simply in order to save his own skin. He had betrayed his country, which had granted him distinctions and decorations. Before the Battle of Tsushima, having had able subordinates to advise him in critical moments, he had been regarded by the naval authorities as one of their best admirals. At Tsushima he had been so unwise as to allow himself to be guided by Dobrotvorsky, who had really been to blame. Enkvist remained in solitude, brooding over these things.

But when he was informed that a Japanese detachment was approaching, he seemed highly delighted. With a lively step he mounted to the bridge. His pinched features assumed a resolute expression hitherto unknown in him. Seizing binoculars, he examined the oncoming warships, apparently undisturbed by the prospect of imminent catastrophe. Turning to his underlings he spoke in an authoritative way which was unfamiliar to them.

"Whistle all hands on deck," he commanded.

The deck of the "Aurora" was speedily crowded with men. The admiral made them a fiery speech, which none of them would ever have expected of him, and, as he spoke, his long, grey beard wagged. The men and the officers kept on turning round during his address, to look at the morning sun which was not shining for them, at the blue tropical waters disclosing beauties (as far as they were concerned) perhaps for the last time, at the landscape of Luzon where they had hoped to find respite and safety. Their faces were pale, and their eyes saddened as they contemplated an inevitable doom. Enkvist, however, appealed to them to show courage:

"The audacious enemy has pursued us even into American territorial waters. Well, if we cannot avoid a fight, we will meet it bravely. Let us die for the honour of our country, inflicting the utmost possible damage on the Japanese. We shall go on using our guns so long as we have any ammunition. Then we shall continue the struggle in the old-fashioned way, by boarding them. Yes, lads, by boarding them!"

He shouted the last words with all the passion which had been accumulating in him for days, and, with his right arm, waved a circle in the air.

Midshipman Eimont, junior navigating officer, sniggered as he said under his breath:

“Hurrah for this glorious relic of wind-jammer days!”

Holding himself proudly, the admiral ordered:

“Sound the signal, ‘Action stations!’”

As the drums beat and the bugles shrilled the men hurried to their posts. Tense silence followed.

Only the officers on the bridge beside the admiral conversed with him in low tones:

“They seem to be armoured cruisers, Your Excellency.”

“Yes, I expect its Kamimura himself who has come to intercept us.”

“But why doesn’t he open fire?”

At this moment the look-out man in the fore-top cried in a voice like that of a young rooster:

“They’re not Japanese, after all!”

A minute later, Senior Flag-Officer von Dehn was able to confirm this statement beyond the shadow of a doubt. The approaching warships were American, under the command of a vice-admiral. Voices were no longer hushed on the “Aurora’s” bridge. Throughout the ship, and into its deepest compartments, joy permeated. The cruisers which had been cleared for action were restored to their normal trim. Instead of high-explosive shells, salvoes of friendly, blank, saluting charges were exchanged. The U.S. squadron put about, and steamed southward parallel with the Russian, but farther from the shore. The Americans (it was afterwards explained), having learned by telegram that remnants of the shattered Russian fleet were making for Manila, had dispatched two ironclads and three cruisers as a protective force, in case the Japanese should pursue their enemies into American waters.

Enkvist alone did not share the general delight. Gloomy of countenance, he changed back from admiral into “planter.” He lacked the vigour which would have enabled him to blow out his brains; but had been ready to face death at the hands of the enemy, hoping thus to regain his lost honour. This was not granted him, so he returned to the solitude of his cabin, there to endure the pangs of conscience.

In the evening the ships of the Russian cruiser detachment and their American companions anchored in Manila Bay.¹

Like the "Oryol," the ironclad "Borodino" came straight from the naval dockyard to form part of the second Pacific squadron. Thus she began her long voyage to the Far East before there had been time to discover and remedy numerous defects of construction. The result was that she was full of trouble. Sometimes her steering-gear went wrong, so that often she got out of line or was in danger of colliding; sometimes defects showed themselves in the engine-room or the stoke-hole. The fresh-water pipes that fed the boilers were leaky, causing much waste. She was unstable, especially when heavily laden with coal. In storms, she would have such a list to starboard or to port that old salts aboard her would shake their heads and say: "She'll come to a bad end."

Hardly a day passed without a reprimand being signalled to the "Borodino." Rozhestvensky regarded her as the worst ship of the squadron. Furthermore, he had a great dislike for Captain Serebrennikoff, her commander, for Serebrennikoff was a very independent fellow. In youth, like the captain of the "Oryol," the captain of the "Borodino" had been a member of the organisation known as the "People's Will," and had even been imprisoned as a "political."

"A brainless nihilist," the admiral would say of him; "perhaps fit to command a Finnish barque, but certainly not an ironclad."

The men under his command took a totally different view of Captain Serebrennikoff. He understood their psychological peculiarities, treated them as human beings, ministered to their needs. They were better fed and better clad than the foremast hands on other ships of the second Pacific squadron. When leaving Russia he supplemented the crew's book fund by a sum provided out of his

¹ The U.S. authorities compelled the Russian cruisers to disarm. When the war was over, the Russian Government did not know what to do with Enkvist and his officers: whether to court-martial them for disobeying the order to make for Vladivostock; or to reward them for having saved three ships. In the end, they were left to their own devices.

Soon afterwards, Enkvist threw up his commission, retired to Gatchina, and led the life of a recluse. He did not even emerge to attend his wife's funeral. Despair consumed him, and he wasted away without the doctors being able to say what was the matter with him, or to give him relief. The end came in 1911, and he was buried at Kronstadt.

own pocket. He distributed among them the newspapers that reached him in the course of the voyage. Thus he was regarded with true affection, and work on the "Borodino" was exceptionally well done.

On the day of the Battle of Tsushima, when, after dinner, the main force of the Japanese hove in sight, the ship's complement was summoned to the quarter-deck. Captain Serebrennikoff delivered a short speech in which he urged his hearers to maintain the honour of the ship. Among them was the topman Semyon Yushchin. Born in the government of Tambov and brought up in the huge forests of the district of Temnikoff, he was distinguished from his shipmates by his great stature and by shoulders so broad as to give him the torso of a Hercules. He wore a heavy moustache, whose points were waxed and turned upward. Though almost illiterate, he was intelligent as well as courageous. While listening to Serebrennikoff's address he kept his eyes fixed on the captain with the devotion of a fervent believer contemplating an ikon.

Now the "action stations" was sounded.

Topman Yushchin hastened to the bow casemate where the duty assigned to him was that of second gunner's mate to the 75-mm. gun. Here were assembled about a dozen men, including Gunner Chepakin and Lieutenant Count Benningsen. The latter, the officer in command of the casemate, was laying his guns in accordance with instructions from the conning-tower.

The ironclad was shaken as she discharged her ordnance.

Not, to begin with, however, did she suffer much from the enemy fire, which was concentrated on the Russian flagships, the "Borodino" being apparently ignored. For the first hour, she sustained no serious damage. Her superstructure was hit by a few shells, and some conflagrations were started, but were soon got under.

Yushchin did his work vigorously, without a thought of the risks he was running. In fact, the sea-fight was, so far, less terrible than he had expected. Inspired with patriotic fervour, he thought only of his duty to inflict as much damage as possible on the enemy. His face was flushed, and dripping with sweat.

Suddenly the "Borodino's" fire ceased. Looking for the reason, Yushchin perceived that the ironclad had got out of line, turning to starboard, and steaming in isolation. "I suppose something has gone wrong with the steering-gear," thought the topman; "probably in the conning-tower." Within about a quarter of an hour, the

trouble had been remedied. When the "Borodino" was getting back to her place in the column, Yushchin looked out through the gunport. About ten cable lengths away, also out of line, was the "Oslyabya" spouting flames, and down by the head as far as the hawse-holes. Lieutenant Benningsen likewise saw this, and remarked (as if to himself):

"She won't float much longer."

"We ought to kill the lot of them, Sir, these damned Japanese," shouted Yushchin, as though drunk.

Lieutenant Benningsen did not answer, for at this moment shouts were heard outside the casemate:

"Stretcher-bearers to the conning-tower. Quick! Quick!"

A seaman came down into the casemate. His face was scorched and blackened, and the skin of one cheek had been torn away from mouth to ear. Shaking his poor, injured head, he cried:

"Oh, the fiends, the fiends."

Yushchin supposed that he was looking for the sick-bay, and was unable to find it. The gunner's mate offered to guide him, but he only shouted: "Let me alone," and quickly returned to the deck.

Soon afterwards, the stretcher-bearers told the gun-crews in the bow casemate what had happened in the conning-tower. A large-calibre shell had struck the bridge just beside it. The bridge was utterly demolished, Chief Navigating-Lieutenant Chaikovsky and Junior Navigating-Lieutenant de Livron were killed, being literally blown to bits. Captain Serebrennikoff's right hand was torn off. Chief Torpedo-Lieutenant Gerken had been carried to the sick-bay insensible. Senior Artillery-Lieutenant Zavelishin had climbed down unaided from the shattered bridge, but his entrails were protruding, and he fell dead within a few minutes. The telephonists and the helmsmen were killed. The captain had been taken to the sick-bay.

All the apparatus in the conning-tower, the steering-gear, the engine-room telegraph, and the speaking-tubes, had been put out of action. The senior officer, Commander Makaroff, had taken charge, and was conning the ship from the central post.

Casualties rapidly increased in number; more and more guns were silenced by the enemy fire; the ammunition hoists, etc., were broken; numerous shell-holes were made in the hull. It was found very difficult to con the ship from the central post. To see what was going on, and give the necessary orders, the commander had to be on the battery deck or in one of the turrets. He communicated by speaking-

tube with the central post, and thence his directions were transmitted by one of his officers, through other speaking-tubes, to the requisite quarters. The thunder of guns, the explosion of enemy shells, the shouts of men engaged in fire-fighting work, the screams and groans of the wounded, were extremely disconcerting to Commander Makaroff. His orders were frequently misunderstood, or he was asked to repeat them. Then, in his exposed position, he was wounded, and a substitute had to be found from among the superior officers. This happened several times, and whenever such a change of command took place, the ironclad was, for a while, without guidance.

By now the "Suvoroff" and the "Alexander III" had been knocked out, and the "Borodino" was at the head of the line. She steamed on, replying as best she could to the enemy fire, and commanded (more or less) by such midshipmen as were left alive and had not been seriously wounded. Then came shouts from the deck:

"Torpedo attack!"

From the bow casemate, Semyon Yushchin could see several Japanese destroyers. They were subjected to a heavy cannonade, and soon retired, without having done any harm to our craft.

Twice the Japanese lost sight of us. Towards six, when the artillery bombardment was interrupted for a second time, the "Borodino" was able to repair damages a little. The survivors began to come on deck from the compartments below the water-line. Several men got together in the bow casemate. They were joined by Lieutenant Benningsen, who, seriously wounded some time before, had had his hurts dressed in the sick-bay. He said:

"Well, Brothers, how are things going?"

"Not very grand, Your Honour," answered Yushchin. "If the Japs return to the attack, they'll finish us off pretty soon."

Shaking his head dolefully, the lieutenant replied:

"I'm afraid you're right. I never thought they'd be such damned good marksmen."

Then, looking out through the gun-port, he went on:

"But where are the 'Suvoroff' and the 'Alexander'?"

The men explained that these battleships had left the fighting line frightfully battered and both on fire, and that no one knew what had become of them.

The lieutenant sighed:

"Well, we showed ourselves a fine set of dunderheads to pick a quarrel with the Japanese."

The "Borodino" had a list to starboard. Some one called out that a tarpaulin had been brought. Where was the leak, and how big was it? Yushchin did not know, and got to work upon his gun, which had been wedged by a shell splinter. While he was thus engaged in making the piece fit for service once more, six enemy warships appeared to starboard. There was dead silence in the bow casemate, where every one felt that the end was approaching.

The battle was resumed, with the "Borodino" heading the column.

Following their usual tactics, the Japanese concentrated their fire upon the leader. Hitherto, though hit many times, and having had many casualties on board, the "Borodino" had remained in tolerably good condition. Her stern 12-inch turret and her three starboard 6-inch turrets were in working order. There had been no hits below the water-line. But now, attacked by six Japanese warships simultaneously, she experienced a terrible time. Her men felt as if she were being pounded by steam-hammers. In several places she blazed as furiously as might a wooden house, so that all the upper works were filled with suffocating fumes.

Semyon Yushchin, repairing his gun, stifled. His eyes streamed, and his throat was strangled. From moment to moment fresh explosions were heard in the interior of the ironclad.

Lieutenant Benningsen cried:

"It's no use, lads, firing at them with pop-guns like these. We'll seek better cover."

Suddenly he clutched his chest, groaning, and said:

"Oh! Oh! . . . Hot! Hot!"

Then, spinning round, he collapsed on the floor of the casemate.

At this moment a look-out man rushed in, his shirt torn and his face splashed with blood.

"Where are the officers?" he shouted, looking round.

"Here's a dead one," answered a member of the gun-crew. "Just finished off. What d'you want an officer for?"

"There's not one of them to be found. We've hunted everywhere. All killed or wounded. No one to take command of the ship."

The look-out man ran off towards the stern.

The "Borodino" continued to steam ahead, shaken from moment to moment by enemy shells. There were no officers in charge. The fire of her guns gradually slackened. Whither was she steering? No one had any clear idea, not even the helmsman, but as long as her engines worked, she could keep on a course of some sort. She was

followed blindly by the squadron, by ships on which there were numerous captains and three admirals. It had been the same when the squadron followed the "Alexander III." Things happened thus because, before the battle, Admiral Rozhstvensky had issued a general order that if the front warship in the line should be put out of action, the game of "follow my leader" should still be played—No. 2, and then in turn No. 3, becoming the leader.

All the men remaining in the bow casemate, with Gunner Chepakin at their head, now made for safer quarters below the armoured deck. There they found a number of wounded whose hurts had already been dressed in the sick-bay. Topman Yushchin asked:

"How's the captain?"

"Surgeon's keeping him flat. Continually asking how the battle goes. He can't take command. Lost too much blood."

"Where's Commander Makaroff?"

"He was wounded, too, from what I've heard; but he's not been to the sick-bay for a dressing, and no one knows what's become of him."

Gunner Chepakin, much disturbed in mind, swore.

"What the devil does it all mean? There's not an officer left to command the battleship. I don't know what we're to do. Better get ready for our voyage to kingdom-come. The Japs are making us their chief target because we head the line. The 'Borodino' has had such a drubbing that I think it's her turn for a rest. But if we put about, the whole bally lot of them will follow us."

At this moment shouts were heard from above.

"All hands on deck. Every man for himself, and devil take the hindmost."

The men scurried up the ladders. Thirty seconds later, Gunner Chepakin, Topman Yushchin, and several others were back in the bow casemate. They were all talking at once, trying to make out who had shouted and why, and what new danger threatened. The battleship was keeping her course, and replying feebly to the Japanese guns. Suddenly there came a tremendous explosion, blinding and deafening every one in the casemate. Yushchin was hurled several feet into the air, and then fell back upon the deck. He had the impression that the "Borodino" was capsizing. For a moment or two he could not believe that he had been fully safeguarded by the inward projections from the wall of the casemate, so that not a single shell-splinter had touched him. To his horror he saw a detached head

rolling at his feet. "Is it mine?" he asked himself confusedly, feeling to make sure that his own head was still on his shoulders. The sole survivor besides himself was Gunner Chepakin, who had been similarly sheltered. Through the smoke they could see that all the guns had been dismantled, and that the flames which had broken out in the casemate were drawing near the shells that had been brought up from the magazine. Chepakin began to fling these shells overboard, and shouted to Yushchin:

"Run astern and fetch some of the men. We can't get this fire under by ourselves. Look, there's smoke coming up out of the ammunition hoist."

"Run astern" was easier said than done. There were signs of destruction everywhere: masses of scrap-iron, fragments of shattered ladders, splintered bulkheads, and what not. Shell-holes, not only in the sides of the hull, but also in the decks. The interior fittings lay in ruins. Amid this chaos were mutilated corpses. Trying still to get astern, Yushchin reached the officers' cabins, which were shattered and ablaze. The flames scorched his eyes. Everything was so devastated that he could scarcely recognise where he was. Peering down a hatchway where the ladder was broken, he saw beneath him the battery deck. He hesitated to scramble down. There was not a soul within sight, and panic had evidently driven his shipmates into the bowels of the ship. But perhaps he was the sole survivor (except for Chepakin) upon this ironclad steaming no one knew whither and steered by an invisible helmsmen? The thought made Yushchin's flesh creep. Then it occurred to him to climb on to the upper deck. Why? He did not know. Night was falling. The list to starboard steadily increased. The superstructure was even more bashed to pieces than the place where he stood. The masts had snapped; the yards hung in splinters; the funnels were on the verge of going by the board; the boats had been shot to flinders; the gangway leading to the poop-deck stood upside-down. The whole stern of the ship was a raging furnace. Yet the enemy fire continued, the shells bursting as they struck the water to throw up mountains of spray. Astern of the "Borodino" he picked out the "Oryol," enveloped in smoke; while yet farther in the wake silhouettes of several warships could be discerned. Why should the squadron thus follow the "Borodino," which was about to sink?

Yushchin hurried back to the casemate to tell Chepakin what he had seen. But the gunner had vanished. At this moment the ironclad

was hit by several shells at once, and she began to lie along the water to starboard. Yushchin, who was close to a gun-port, caught hold of a pipe to steady himself.

He had only a confused memory of what immediately followed. The battleship capsized while he was still in the bow casemate, invaded by water. Tearing off his clothes, he dived through the gun-port. He distinctly remembered being under water for what seemed an interminable time, having been pushed down to a great depth. Yet he was confident that he would bob up again, totally nude, except for his boots, which (being rather tight-fitting) he had in his hurry not hitherto been able to remove.

Yet he is confident that during this time, which could not possibly have lasted more than two minutes, he had felt no fear. When he opened his eyes above water, it was to see the "Borodino" still afloat, but keel uppermost. Both her screws were revolving, and thrashed the waves. On the surface of the sea he distinguished the heads of a number of his shipmates. About a dozen, however, had clambered on to the huge inverted hull, and waved their hands to him, shouting. One, pulling off his shirt, reached it down to Yushchin, while clinging fast to the keel, and said:

"Catch hold, Semyon, and climb up here beside us."

Yushchin gripped the sleeve; but a wave struck him at that instant, and nothing was left in his hand but a torn piece of flannel. The wrecked ironclad had way on her still, and, since he was in danger of being struck by the blades of the propeller, he swam aside. He chanced to get hold of the mast of one of the boats, and decided to cling to this so long as life and strength lasted.

He did not see how the "Borodino" sank, for his attention was concentrated on the other ships of the squadron, and on the chance of being rescued if he succeeded in attracting attention. The "Oryol" passed close to him, flaming like a huge torch, and still bombarded by the Japanese. The skies were roaring; the sea howled, and spouted jets of fire; puffs of smoke drifted across the waves. It seemed as if the end of the world must be at hand. Meanwhile, the "Nicholas I" was putting on speed to get ahead of the "Oryol," and lead the squadron.

The main forces of the enemy ceased fire at nightfall. Not so the Russians, which were probably shooting at destroyers. One after another, the "Apraksin," the "Senyavin," the "Ushakoff," the "Sisoy Veliky," and the "Navarin" steamed by. Semyon hailed each

ship by name, but they paid no heed. Then, last of the squadron, came the "Admiral Nakhimoff;" but this, too, ignored him. No more ships now, and he struggled alone in the waters. For a moment he fancied that the "Nakhimoff" had heard his cries, and turned in his direction; but soon she, likewise, vanished.

"Curse you! I wish you were all at the bottom of the sea," cried Semyon in a frenzy.

He closed his eyes, and for a moment was on the point of releasing his grip of the mast and dropping off into the abyss; then he re-opened them, and clung tightly once more. The craving to live was still strong. It was now quite dark, and he could no longer distinguish sea from sky. Time and again he saw gun-flashes in the distance; then they ceased. He listened. No sound of human voices. He was alone in the waste of waters, and had no notion of the passing of time, as he continued to exhaust his strength in a struggle with the elements. The sea was choppy, and the waves buffeted him, sometimes breaking over his head. He fancied now and then that he was being attacked by a savage crowd which pummelled and kicked him. He swallowed salt water involuntarily, coughed, panted and took advantage of moments of temporary calm to fill his lungs with fresh air. His legs swelled inside his boots, and were numb with cold. His body stiffened, his strength was failing, and he was on the verge of losing consciousness.

Unexpectedly, Yushchin saw the darkness illumined by gun-flashes and the parabolic rays of search-lights, while the noise of shots broke the silence. Was the squadron coming back? The lights drew nearer. Soon, at a distance of two or three cable lengths, he could make out the vague forms of ships. He thrashed his arms, and shouted, while the shadowy shapes, drowning his cries with the thunder of their guns, glided by, leaving him once more alone in the darkness.

Finally, at one in the morning, a Japanese destroyer fished a totally nude Russian out of the sea. It was the topman, Semyon Yushchin, sole survivor of the nine hundred who had manned the "Borodino."

VI

The voyage to the Far East was especially difficult for the destroyers of the second Pacific squadron. Their complement consisted of about seventy men each. These men were very closely packed, and,

since there were no refrigerators, they seldom had fresh meat. When the sea was in the least rough, although the larger craft were unaffected, the destroyers pranced about so violently that the cooking of hot meals became impossible. This would sometimes go on for a week or more, during which officers and men were fed exclusively on tinned meat and ship's biscuit. If there was a serious storm, matters were still worse. The hatches were battened down, and nevertheless water seeped through, so that the interior was both fuggy and damp. The destroyers danced like empty barrels on the surface of the sea. Great fortitude was requisite.

It was difficult for light craft to make sufficient headway in such circumstances, so that sometimes they were towed by the transports. Nevertheless these tiny warships were successful in completing the voyage of 18,000 miles, and thus earned the admiration of the world. Having arrived, they showed the utmost heroism, but the admiral-in-chief had not the sense to employ them as a fighting unit during the Battle of Tsushima.

Neither the "Blestyashchy" nor the "Bodryi," nor any of the other destroyers, were assigned a specific task by Rozhestvensky. Only just before the sea-fight opened did the admiral issue orders that they were to be attached to the cruisers "Oleg" and "Svetlana."

When the battle began, Commander Shamoff, who was in charge of the "Blestyashchy," took up his station on the bridge, and kept close watch on the enemy craft. There was nothing distinguished or aristocratic about his appearance, for his face was round and adorned with a red moustache, while his thickset frame made him look like an intelligent and sober-minded peasant dressed up as a naval officer. Perhaps that was why he had been slow to secure promotion, though he knew his job thoroughly well, carried out his duties loyally, and was kind and just to the men under his command. At the outset of the battle he considered it his chief task to avoid having his little craft, which might be useful when night came, disabled by enemy fire. Close to his feet, frightened by the cannonade, were his two dogs: "Bobby," a tiny beast, tremulous, with a curly tail, given to him as mascot by his children; and a huge St. Bernard, bought as a puppy just after the war broke out, and christened "Banzai"—a Japanese salutation to the emperor, meaning, "May you live ten thousand years," but for practical purposes equivalent to the shout "Victory!"

Looking at the pair, the commander said gravely:

"Well, my bold fellows, do your duty like men."

Scarcely had he finished speaking, when to every one on the bridge it suddenly seemed that the whole of the bottom of the destroyer must have dropped out. Several of the officers and men fell down. The commander staggered, but managed to retain his footing. The dogs barked furiously, venting their wrath against an unseen enemy. The "Blestyashchy," for a moment, was wreathed in flames and smoke, and heeled over considerably, but kept afloat. Her upper deck was riddled with holes. One might have fancied, not so much that gases and shell-splinters had been at work, but that some invisible wrong-doer with a hundred arms had set fire to the wheel-house, dragged the log-book off the table, tearing out its leaves and scattering them hither and thither, broken the engine-room telegraph and the steering-wheel, disabled one of the turbines and one of the boilers, and severely wounded many of the men. Stoker Kovaleff, one of whose legs had been carried off, writhed on the deck, crying:

"Help, comrades. Where's my leg gone? I was standing up alright a moment ago."

This damage was done by a 9-inch shell, meant for one of the Russian cruisers. In falling, it exploded two boxes of shells for 47-mm. guns which were standing on the main deck.

Calls were sounded for fire and pump parties to assemble. The flames soon subsided; but the leak in the port beam was more difficult to deal with, for the tarpaulin which covered it was carried away owing to the destroyer's high speed. The water flooded the front half of the little craft, and the helmsmen had to make use of the hand steering-geer.

The "Blestyashchy" hastened towards the spot where the "Oslyabya" had foundered, to help in the rescue of the battleship's crew. She could only take eight men on board, for the Japanese bombardment became so fierce that she had to seek the protection of the squadron.

At this moment Commander Shamoff was standing on the poop, close to the steering-wheel. Enemy shells struck the water all round. Seeing some of his men needlessly exposed on the deck, he said:

"Get under cover, lads. You'll be killed or wounded to no purpose otherwise."

Then he addressed Midshipman Loman:

"Take the wheel. I'm going on to the bridge to watch out for floating mines."

With his usual brisk gait, Shamoff strode along the starboard side of the destroyer, followed by his dogs, and accompanied by Midshipman Zuboff, an energetic and devoted young officer. In front of the stern funnel, the commander encountered Boatswain Fomin, who, though able, humorous, and excellently trained as petty-officer, now looked anxious and worried.

"Well, Frenchy, how goes it?" asked Shamoff, who always called Fomin by that name, although the boatswain did not look in the least like a Frenchman.

"Things are in pretty bad shape, Sir," replied Fomin. "We can't get the better of that leak; and it seems to me that we shall soon head for the bottom."

The commander halted and, looking reproachfully at the boatswain, said:

"I'm surprised to hear you talk like that, Frenchy—you who always pull yourself out of a difficulty, even when you are drunk. This is not a moment to show the white feather."

"Well, Sir, how can I help being uneasy? We're driving the pumps for all they are worth, and are even using relays of buckets as well, but the water gains on us, and the bow water-tight bulkhead may give way at any moment. We're doing our best to shore it up—but——"

"Get some more of the crew to help you. You know what's to be done. Hurry along!"

Fomin ran off to obey this order, but he had not taken ten paces when he rolled on the deck. This time a shell had exploded in the starboard coal-bunker. Boiler no. 2 was also put out of action, and steam roared as it escaped from a burst steam-pipe, drowning the cries of Stoker Kontsevich, who was badly scalded. Fomin, uninjured, jumped to his feet as quickly as he could, and had a look round. On the deck, which had been pierced in several places, men were in agony. Stoker Ermolin had lost an arm, and was almost motionless. Junior Look-out Man Sirenkoff had been so hideously wounded in the body that he was torn almost in twain. These two were still standing by the 47-mm. gun. Not far from them lay Commander Shamoff, with the two dogs, Banzai and Bobby, all three killed. Midshipman Zulloff had been hurt in the leg, but was able to rise and walk away to the dressing station.

The uninjured seamen gathered round the corpse of the commander, and his orderly remarked:

"I'm sorry the barin has been finished off; he was a good man. As for the dogs, they're no great loss. They were continually fouling the deck, and I always had to clean up after them."

The only signalman on board, a Latvian named Vizul, had also been wounded. He was making for the sick-bay when one of the surviving officers ordered him to signal to Admiral Enkvist the death of Commander Shamoff. Knowing himself to be the sole person on the "Blestyashchy" competent to do this, he hastened to the flag chest and arranged the required signal, which he hoisted—though he had a shell-splinter in one leg, had lost a finger, and had a wound in the palm of the other hand. Clenching his teeth with pain, while his blood stained the flags, he fulfilled his duty, and then tottered away to have his wounds attended to.

Midshipman Loman took over the command.

Soon the "Blestyashchy" got out of the zone of fire and rejoined the cruisers, staying with them till nightfall. Then came the Japanese torpedo-attack, and the cruiser detachment steamed so fast that the Russian destroyer, in her battered condition, could not keep pace with it. Soon she was left alone in the darkness. Water flooded the stoke-hole, and the "Blestyashchy" was in imminent danger of breaking in two where the 9-inch shell had struck. The men were utterly exhausted by their struggle to save the destroyer.

Midshipman Loman, having taken counsel with his juniors, headed for Shanghai.

At about eleven in the evening a small craft loomed astern. The "Blestyashchy's" crew, prepared for the worst, made ready to fire at her, but their fears were relieved when flashlight signals announced that the follower was the Russian destroyer "Bodryi."

Loman remarked:

"This greatly improves our chances. We have got out of the enemy's reach, and have found a consort. If we're sinking, we can transfer to the 'Bodryi'."

The "Blestyashchy" continued working her pumps, but the water gained ground, and the bow stoke-hole was increasingly flooded. That night neither officers nor men got a wink of sleep. At dawn, Boatswain Fomin reported to Midshipman Loman:

"The game's up, Sir; the destroyer may part amidships any moment."

Loman made a general inspection, and, after further consultation with his juniors, signalled to the "Bodryi":

"About to sink; please take us aboard."

The two destroyers drew alongside and were lashed together. Commander Ivanoff of the "Bodyri," an authoritative elderly man with a huge grey beard, standing on the bridge of his destroyer with as much self-assurance as if he had been an admiral, asked:

"But where is Sergei Alexandrovich Shamoff? Why doesn't he show up?"

"Dead, Sir," answered Loman. "There's his body on the deck."

"Sorry, awfully sorry. We were such good friends. . . . But look here, I've very little coal left."

"We can transfer ours before we abandon ship."

First of all the wounded on the "Blestyashchy" were sent aboard the "Bodyri." Then the removal of the coal began, together with that of anything of value: sextant, chronometers, wireless outfit, machine-guns, the remains of the torn log-book, etc. Also a few sugar-loaves. The rest of the provisions had been flooded, and were under water.

While this was going on briskly, Poponin, the wireless operator of the "Bodyri" came up to Commander Ivanoff and reported:

"Your Honour, we're picking up unintelligible signals. Presumably Japanese."

Very soon, a smoke trail appeared on the horizon. In the belief that this must come from an enemy ship, Ivanoff had the work stopped, though no more than thirty sacks of the "Blestyashchy's" coal had been transhipped to the "Bodyri." The former's men were ordered aboard the latter, except for a few who remained to see to the sinking of the "Blestyashchy." These opened the scuttles, the torpedo-ports, etc., while Boatswain Fomin was tying the bodies of Commander Shamoff and the two dogs to guns, that they might be sure to go down with the ship, and not be torn to pieces by sharks. Loman removed Shamoff's wedding-ring, in order to take it home to the commander's family. Then the remaining men went aboard the "Bodyri"; the "Blestyashchy" was cast adrift, and slowly sank.

The "Bodyri" resumed her course towards Shanghai, gradually increasing speed. Nothing was now to be seen on the horizon. At length the tired men could rest.

VII

Commander Ivanoff, in a talk with the surviving officers of the sunken destroyer, gave his impressions of the Battle of Tsushima.

"We put up a very good fight. True, we were defeated, but the Japanese did not get off lightly. They lost two ironclads, one two-funnelled and the other three-funnelled. Besides that, three of the eight enemy cruisers left the scene of action, and probably they, also, went to the bottom."

One of the "Blestyashchy's" officers put in a courteous demurrer:

"Well, Sir, as far as we could see, our fire made practically no impression on the Japanese."

"You must be a short-sighted lot. I saw with my own eyes that two of their ironclads sank."¹

The commander went on talking about the Japanese losses, but nobody believed him. His officers had a poor opinion of him, and his relations with the crew were very different from those of Commander Shamoff. There had been a lot of ill-feeling on this destroyer because the men were execrably fed.

During the Battle of Tsushima, under so incapable a command, the "Bodryi" played no active or commendable part. She did not even participate in the saving of men from the ships that were sunk. Only one man was rescued, when she steamed near him while he uttered despairing cries for help. Badly handled, she took half an hour to fish him out of the water. A short, tubby fellow, he was so breathless that the seamen on whose arms he was leaning thought he was going to die of exhaustion. Recovering, he looked round, smiling with blue lips. Afterwards he was found to be an Esthonian, helmsman on the tugboat "Rousse." He was provided with clothes, given a glass of rum, and sent down into the petty-officers' mess-room, where he promptly fell asleep.

When this happened, the "Bodryi" was making at full speed for the protection of the cruiser detachment. On the way she was hit by a small shell, which killed one man and wounded several others, also doing a certain amount of material damage, speedily repaired. However, Commander Ivanoff decided to get out of the zone of fire.

After taking the "Blestyashchy's" men on board, the "Bodryi" steamed at top speed towards Shanghai, sighting no craft throughout the day. All eagerly awaited the coming of darkness; but when night fell fresh anxieties supervened, for the men fancied they could see the lights of enemy ships in every quarter of the compass. To avoid

¹After the war, Commander Ivanoff continued to insist that the Japanese had sustained heavy losses, and even sent in an official report to that effect.

an encounter with the Japanese, the "Bodryi" repeatedly changed her course; and next morning doubts arose in which direction to head. There was also an ominous change in the weather, signalised by a rapid fall in the barometer. The wind freshened to a gale. To increase the stability of the destroyer, the four guns were dismantled and lowered into the bunkers. It was necessary to steam up wind, in order to decrease the roll, which was so considerable as to be dangerous. Fuel running out, the men, armed with axes, scoured the ship in search of anything combustible. From midnight onward the furnaces were kept going with chopped up benches and tables, the wooden lining of cabins, crates, and what not. Soon, however, this supply was likewise at an end, pressure in the boilers fell, and the propellers ceased turning. The "Bodryi" drifted at the mercy of winds and waves. Commander Ivanoff thought of anchoring, but soundings showed that the depth was too great.

That night it seemed that hope of survival must be abandoned. Next morning the wind blew less violently. Bearings were taken, and it appeared that the distance to Shaveishan Lighthouse, which marks the entrance to the Shanghai river, was ninety miles.

But how to get there? The "Bodryi" tried rigging sails, but she was not built for sailing, and could not be kept on her course. Then, fresh soundings showed that it was possible to anchor. The anchor would be raised whenever the tide was setting in a favourable direction. But the plan was not very successful. A sandbank stretched away towards the coast. This fact had its good and its bad side. The shallows made the aforesaid use of the anchor possible; but, on the other hand, because of them, this part of the sea was unfrequented. Worse still, supplies of food and drinking water were almost exhausted.

The salving of the "Blestyashchy's" crew had frightfully overcrowded the "Bodryi." A thick fog came on, and this depressed the men's spirits yet more. Such fresh water as remained was that in one of the boilers. Lukewarm, stained with rust, it was nauseating. However, the boiler was guarded by two armed sentries and two glassfuls per man were served out every twenty-four hours.

As to food, the men were put on short commons, and a few small biscuits took the place of the customary ration of bread. Dinner consisted of tinned meat boiled in sea-water, and was extremely unpalatable. Yet every one knew that the hardships were only beginning. By the plan of up-anchoring when the tide was favourable,

the progress made was from five to seven miles in twenty-four hours. Unless outside help came, the prospect was horrible.

Another day passed, and intense gloom prevailed. No one could think or talk of anything but Shanghai—far off and invisible like the Promised Land.

Day followed day. The men of the "Blestyashchy" and the "Bodryi," who had at the outset of their adventure been at one with their officers in the determination to reach the mainland of China as quickly as possible, were beginning to show signs of discontent and insubordination. They even uttered threats against the officers. The gulf between chiefs and subordinates continually widened. In view of this state of affairs, on the evening of May 20th the commander had all the small-arms on board conveyed to the officers' mess-room. Then Ivanoff sent for the chief torpedo-hand, Sergei Rudneff, and said to him affably:

"Look here, my friend, I've something important to tell you. We may be attacked unexpectedly by the Japanese, and I shall blow up the 'Bodryi' rather than surrender. Please make the necessary arrangements. Run a cable from the magazine to the officers' mess-room and fix a switch there, so that, when the moment comes, I can do my duty."

"Very good, Sir. I'll see to it at once."

Rudneff did the job as best pleased himself, and then gave away the show to his chum Boatswain Volkoff.

"Do you know what this really means?" asked Rudneff.

"Well, what?" answered Volkoff.

"It's all my eye about the Japs. The officers are afraid of us, afraid we may chuck them overboard—especially the commander. I'm not such a fool as he takes me for. I've run the cable along and fixed the switch as he directed. He's not an electrician, and they'll fool him if he examines them. But if he turns the switch—there'll be no juice, and no explosion."

On the morning of May 20th the fog cleared. Gulls swooped and shrieked as they circled overhead. Land could not be far off. But the "Bodryi" was still drifting. Scarcity of food and water made the men gaunt and lean. Their apathy increased. Some were alert enough, however, to keep a close watch on the horizon.

"Look, look! What's that?"

All turned to see what the man was pointing at. Two big, white sails, those of Chinese junks, were rapidly approaching, at first steering

directly towards the destroyer. Soon, however, it was evident that they had changed their course, and would pass at some distance. The "Bodyri" hoisted a signal of distress. From the decks, the bridge, and the top, shouting men waved hands and caps to attract attention.

But the junks sailed on, unheeding. Thereupon Master-Gunner Smolin said to the commander:

"With your permission, Sir, we'll lower a boat, capture one of those junks, and get some wood for our furnaces. If they pass a ship in distress so unfeelingly, I don't see why we should stand on ceremony with them."

But Commander Ivanoff replied:

"No, no, we can't do that; we're not pirates. Sound three strokes on the ship's bell, and fire some blank cartridges."

This was done, unavailingly, and after a while the junks vanished in the distance.

A little later there came two more junks, which passed in the same fashion, regardless of distress signals, cries for help, and the firing of blank cartridges. Evidently the Chinese were afraid of the St. Andrew's flag.

In the galley, during the last three days, to prepare the men's dinner the cook had used wood stripped from the partitions in the stoke-hole. This supply was now exhausted, so some of the more disorderly fetched three chairs from the officers' mess-room and gave them to the cook saying:

"Burn these. To-morrow we'll bring you the officers' sofa."

When sights were taken at noon, it appeared that the "Bodyri" was still sixty-five miles from Shaveishan Lighthouse. At the present rate of progress another ten days would be needed to get there. Besides, the wind might rise again, blowing strongly off shore. Then the destroyer would drag at her anchor, and be driven miles farther away. Perhaps she would be captured by the Japanese. Or, still worse, a dead craft, manned only by dead men, she would drift for ages like Vanderdecken's "Flying Dutchman." The men kept on talking in this gloomy strain, until at length one of them came to the inevitable conclusion:

"It seems to me that cannibalism is the only way out."

"Yes, we'll draw lots, and eat one another by turns, fair play and no favour," rejoined a second.

The ghoulish utterance of what many had been thinking was

followed by a silence, which the rough voice of Torpedo-hand Osadchenko broke:

"No need to draw lots. We'll begin with the commander. It's his fault we're in this fix. Besides, he's the fattest, and shall be the first to go into the cooking-pot."

"Good!" chimed in other angry voices. "And then will come the turn of the rest."

Commander Ivanoff, who overheard these remarks, grew pale, and retired to the officers' mess-room.

Next day the daily ration of water was reduced to one glass per man.

Towards evening, a breeze rose. The destroyer, dancing on the choppy sea, was inclined to drag at her anchor. Dreading an attack, the officers shut themselves up in their own quarters, and ceased to appear on deck. The seamen, overwhelmed with despair, were left to their own devices.

The boatswain of the "Bodyri" fell sick, and his place was taken by Fomin, who had been boatswain of the "Blestyashchy," a sturdy and resolute fellow. For practical purposes he now became commander. He encouraged his shipmates, telling them to be patient and hopeful. At nightfall, without troubling to ask Commander Ivanoff about the matter, he hoisted two red lanterns at the mast-head. They were a silent, persistent, widely radiating signal of distress. The storm raged. Fomin, as he walked up and down the bridge, was thinking of the morrow. Should the sea be calm enough, he had determined to set out with Midshipman Loman in a six-oared boat to seek aid. He had already got things ready: a small barrel of water, a sack of biscuits, etc.

But he felt very tired. To gain strength for the next day, at ten in the evening he handed over the watch to Boatswain Bugorkoff, and, rolling himself in a tarpaulin, lay down on the bridge. He had hardly closed his eyes when Bugorkoff roused him, saying:

"Get up, Ivan Abramovich. There's a light on the horizon."

Fomin sprang to his feet. Yes, there really was a white light, rapidly approaching. Soon the red and green side-lights of a steamship could be made out. Bugorkoff hurried off to the officers' quarters, whence Commander Ivanoff returned with him to the bridge, and issued his orders:

"Load the guns. Get the torpedo-tubes ready. Send up rockets. Light Bengal fires."

First the Bengal flares were lighted, and then two rockets, like luminous serpents, pierced the darkness.

Now could be distinguished the outlines of a small cargo-boat, from which some one hailed the "Bodryi" in English. But no one on the destroyer knew that language, so the answer was shouted in Russian:

"Russian destroyer, in distress; we are starving."

Then the same announcement was made in French, but no one on the cargo-boat understood. Various hails were exchanged with no better result, and the officers on the destroyer's bridge were terrified lest the captain of the British steamer might lose patience and continue on his course. What was to be done?

Suddenly some of the seamen remembered that the Esthonian helmsman who had been picked up after the sinking of the "Rousse" had told them about his voyagings in many foreign craft. Since there are more British ships afloat than of any other nationality, he was likely to speak English. Yes, he could speak English! Having slowly mounted the bridge he took the megaphone and hailed the steamer. An answer came. He interpreted to Commander Ivanoff:

"British S.S. 'Kweilin'; bound for Shanghai; captain wants to know how he can help us."

"Ask him if he can let us have some coal; tell him also we're perishing for lack of food and water."

But the sea was too rough for the "Kweilin" to come near the "Bodryi." Indeed, the wind howled so loud that the Esthonian had to shout at the top of his voice to make himself heard through the megaphone. The conversation took a long time. The hungry and thirsty men on the destroyer grew impatient. A hundred pairs of eyes were fixed on the Esthonian, whom circumstances had made the hero of the moment. At length he said that the captain of the "Kweilin" refused to try and tranship coal, but would anchor near the "Bodryi," and would take her in tow at dawn next day.

Great was the delight both of officers and men, whose hunger and thirst were forgotten for the moment. A lively conversation ensued. All crowded round the Esthonian, eager to shake the hand of this linguist who had been their saviour. Smiling but bashful, he returned quickly to the lower deck.

Next morning the "Kweilin" took the "Bodryi" in tow, and set out for Shanghai.

EPILOGUE

WE were detained eight months as prisoners of war by the Japanese. At length came the day for leaving the camp just outside Kumamoto. We travelled by rail to the port of Nagasaki, where the S.S. "Vladimir," belonging to the Russian Volunteer Fleet, was awaiting us. We promptly installed ourselves in her spacious holds, specially arranged for the transport of troops. The "Vladimir" was held up, however, for some days more, pending the arrival of further consignments of prisoners, mostly seamen, but also about twenty officers, some of the army and some of the navy.

We had left Russia on October 2 (15 N.S.), 1904, and got home again towards the end of January 1906.

While we were at Nagasaki the Russian Government paid us off, reckoning our time of captivity and that which would be occupied by the return journey as time spent on active service. Thus each of us had a considerable sum of money in hand. We were also supplied with sheepskin coats, felt boots, and fur caps. Apart from food on the journey, our accounts with the Russian treasury were thus settled. Once more we began to feel ourselves, more or less, free men.

The town of Nagasaki is at the head of a bay several miles long, and half a mile wide (more in places). There are numerous lateral fiords, the whole being surrounded by picturesque green hills, pine-clad here and there, and ranging up to six or seven hundred feet in height. A wooded island at the mouth of the harbour forms a natural break-water, so that, except when a typhoon blows from the south, the anchorage is calm and safe. On the west side of the head of the bay, opposite the residential quarters (Japanese and European), are the huge shipbuilding yards and engine works of the Mitsu Bishi Company. There are always many ocean-going steamers and warships of various nationalities in the harbour, and the little Japanese rowing boats (sampan, high-necked craft that look like sea-birds) ply busily among them. The Japanese are a talkative people, and the smooth waters of the bay resound with the clamour of human voices. Northward of the town, at the extreme end of the harbour, among green and rocky hills, lies the village of Inosa, well known to the Russian fleet. Here, some years before the war, our Government had

leased land, built boat-houses, small repairing-shops, and a hospital. Above these constructions was the sailors' club, which boasted the possession of billiard tables and a well-stocked library. The walls were adorned by portraits of famous Russian admirals. On a neighbouring hill was a two-storeyed building, a Japanese tea-house which proudly styled itself the Neva Hotel. Eastward of the hamlet was a Russian naval cemetery. The officers used to call Inosa "the Russian village." Every one of them on the Far Eastern station looked forward to visiting the place, where he could gamble, go on the loose, or "marry" a Japanese girl—for the duration of his ship's stay. Many of these temporary unions were fruitful, so that a half-caste population grew up. Naturally such intimate relationships gave the Japanese ample opportunity for studying Russian naval organisation, and the customs and modes of thought of those who were destined in due time to become their enemies.

At the stone landing-steps, which ran down into the water, began the town; first the sea-front, the "bund," with its European houses, then the Japanese quarter, much larger, containing numerous tea-houses and foreign restaurants. (Europeans and Americans in Japan are wont to speak of themselves as "foreigners.") In the streets, even far away from the foreign quarter, one would encounter, not only Japanese (some in kimonos, others in coats and trousers), but also British, Germans, Frenchmen, Chinese, and negroes. A cosmopolitan city, where many tongues were spoken. But the houses in the Japanese quarter were, with few exceptions, built in the Japanese style; frail-looking two-storeyed erections, the ground-floor being a shop or office, and the first floor a dwelling. The shops were open-fronted, until the shutters were drawn at night, so that passers-by had full view of the wares: tortoiseshell, fans, hanging scrolls, ceramics, cloisonne, multi-coloured silks. This gave a stranger the impression that he was visiting an exhibition of Japanese folk-art. The villas and temples scattered on the declivities that surmounted these thickly populated business quarters, made Nagasaki an exceedingly beautiful town.

From the restaurants, tea-houses, and gambling saloons came the sound of music, Japanese and foreign. These strains were a lure to mariners from all parts of the world, bronzed by sunshine and sea-air, weary of long voyages and monotonous occupations. Among them were Russian officers and men just set free from prison camps. They were distinguishable by their air of release from tension; they

sang at the tops of their voices as if it were carnival time, and they drove about in rickshas.

The Japanese seemed to take this merriment as a matter of course. Indeed they themselves, both men and women, looked cheerful. One would have thought them truly gay, people who could take life easily, were content with the established form of government and the prevailing social conditions. The facts belie this, for extreme poverty is widespread throughout Japan; but, in accordance with convention, the Japanese hide their afflictions skilfully. It is also a great error to suppose them to be the most peaceful people in the world, simply because, for centuries, they have made a cult of good manners and outward displays of amiability.

Meanwhile, though my thoughts turned continually towards a Japanese woman whom I had loved and left behind me in Kumamoto, my observant disposition led me to take a passionate interest in the variegated life of Nagasaki.

Let me go back, however, to Kumamoto. In the prison camp there I struck up a close friendship with a Japanese interpreter. He had a wonderful command of Russian, and a great admiration for our literature. We would spend hour after hour discussing the works of Russian writers, both classical and recent. That was the bond between us, and after a while he invited me to visit him at his home in Kumamoto. He had a sister named Yoshiye, a girl of twenty, small and slender, with a lustreless face, but a mysteriously attractive expression in her dark eyes. Love takes its own course, regardless of wars and racial distinctions. At our first meetings, Yoshiye was shy and perpetually on guard like a wild bird that watches the fowler; but after I had paid a few visits to the house, we began to draw together. I talked to her through the instrumentality of her brother. Then, finding that she knew a little English, I began to study that tongue, naturally devoting myself to acquiring the phraseology of love. Sometimes, carried away by my feelings, I addressed her passionately in Russian:

“Darling Yoshiye, far north, within the Arctic Circle, the night lasts three months. When, after this long polar night, a man sees the edge of the sun peep above the horizon, though only for a few minutes, his heart is filled with rapture. Thereafter, day by day, the orb mounts a little higher, and shines more brightly, producing in him the sensations that have been awakened in me by your crossing my path through life.”

I chose the most poetical images I could think of, and evidently she grasped their meaning. She smiled at me, showing her brilliantly white teeth. With her Mongolian eyes, slanting upwards and outwards, she looked at me appealingly. In my turn I could understand a little when, throwing back her head crowned by its strangely dressed black hair, she spoke to me in her own language. The Japanese do not use the letter "l," and when they utter any foreign words containing that sound they replace it by "r." Yoshiye, therefore called me "Aryosha" instead of "Alyosha." How delightful it sounded from her lips!

When I told Yoshiye's brother I wanted to marry his sister, he agreed—all the more readily, perhaps, because they were orphans. At that time it did not seem possible that I should ever return to Russia, for the authorities had marked me down as a political agitator. I explained in the introduction, how I had been further implicated by my association with Dr. Russell, a Russian refugee who had come from Hawaii to distribute "subversive" literature among the prisoners. Well, I would take Yoshiye with me to the United States, for only a poverty-stricken existence would be open to us in Japan. In the New World, with such a helpmate as Yoshiye, I could make a career for myself. I would learn English, take out naturalisation papers as an American citizen, revisit Russia from time to time, and there would be new developments which would enable me to play an active part in the struggle for political and economic emancipation. Such was my Alnaschar dream. Youthful enthusiasts are prone to these illusions, especially when love spurs them on the way.

In the autumn news reached Japan that the Russian Government had amnestied all political offenders. This brought about a complete change in my plans, for now I was free to return to Russia. After prolonged hesitation, I decided to separate from Yoshiye.

The day before my departure, I went to say good-bye. She received me with a radiant smile, and looked particularly attractive in her blue silk kimono tied behind with a broad obi (sash). I had prepared some English and Japanese phrases to make her understand as well as I could that I was leaving for Russia, and that, since there was a revolution, I could not take her with me. Her thin shoulders shook, and she waved the wide sleeves of her kimono as if about to use them as wings, but remained seated before me on the tatami (straw mats). Her lids, fringed by thick black lashes, closed to hide her tears. Suddenly she turned towards me and began to speak in

Japanese, too rapidly and volubly for me to understand, perhaps cursing the day on which we had met, and looking at me with alternate beseeching and hatred. Then she jumped up and flung her arms round my neck.

"Aryosha," she cried, in a guttural tone which burned me to the heart.

Small and slight though she was, there was a magic power in her voice, her smile, the glance of her bright eyes. She weakened my will as ivy weakens the tree it strangles. Yet I held to my purpose, and our parting brought intolerable suffering to us both. When I left her, I felt as if the heart were being torn out of my living body.

Now I was far from Yoshiye, in the busy hive of Nagasaki, and my memories of her were those of an unfinished love-song.

Unexpectedly, Engineer Vasilieff came aboard the "Vladimir," and took possession of a cabin. We had frequent talks, sometimes in his quarters, sometimes when he came down among the men. My messmates, like myself, were eager to hear what he had to say about events in Russia.

One day when he visited us, we discussed the admirals, and especially Rozhestvensky.

"Well, how goes it with the hero of Tsushima?" asked Boatswain Voevodin, who, was flushed with abundant potations of scalding tea.

"Fully recovered from his wounds," answered Vasilieff, "but as much of a martinet as ever. I had a bit of a brush with him. He was told that I was talking to my fellow-officers about Tsushima in a way which did not please the old boy at all. Through the instrumentality of one of the flag-officers, he tried to wheedle me into supporting the version of the affair which it suits him to put before the public, but I wasn't having any. I wouldn't call to pay my respects. He was greatly annoyed, especially when he heard I knew Dr. Russell, and was helping that refugee disseminate 'subversive' pamphlets. He sent me an official order to present myself. I went in mufti, and took so independent a line that he lost his temper, and could hardly speak, except to tell me that I should be clapped into a fortress if I dared return to St. Petersburg."

"It seems that Rozhestvensky fancies that he will escape dry even from the deep waters of the Sea of Japan," I remarked.

"Certainly he does," answered Vasilieff. "He did not put the wind up on me, but many of the naval officers are still very much afraid of him. To strengthen his position, his toady Commander Semenov

has spread an ingenious rumour to the effect that Rozhestvensky will be reappointed head of the naval staff. Semenoff and men of his kidney are doing all they can to prevent the true story of the admiral's behaviour before, during, and after the battle becoming generally known."

Vasilieff went on to tell us that even if the squadron had reached Vladivostock safely Rozhestvensky would have been deprived of his command, being now a confirmed invalid. Admiral Birilioff was to take his place, and Rozhestvensky had been informed of the fact by cable from the minister for the navy. While our craft were being bombarded and sunk at Tsushima, Birilioff and his staff were already at Vladivostock, hopefully awaiting the appearance of thirty-eight fighting units, over and above four auxiliary cruisers which had been dispatched from Vladivostock as commerce-destroyers to work havoc along the Japanese coast. Birilioff believed that, after taking command of the second Pacific squadron, cleaning and refitting the ships, etc., he would inflict a crushing defeat on the Japanese naval forces. Then, having gained control of the sea, he would enable the Russian land forces to invade Japan. No doubt he let his fancy roam concerning the rewards and distinctions the tsar would bestow on him for his services. Probably he would receive a golden sword as recompense for his signal victory; and unquestionably his renown as a fighting admiral would make the tour of the world. What a disappointment when only three units of the second Pacific squadron got through to Vladivostock: the destroyers, "Groznyi" and "Bravyy;" and the practically useless second-class cruiser, "Almaz!" Birilioff returned to St. Petersburg by the Trans-Siberian Railway.

In conclusion, Vasilieff added:

"You know how inadequately supplied our squadron was in respect of materials. Well, Birilioff was responsible. He has not been court-martialled, however. On the contrary, he has been able, like a beetle, to crawl under the door, and get into the Ministry for Marine. Of course such a thing was only possible under the peculiar conditions now prevailing in Russia."

Just before the "Vladimir" sailed from Nagasaki, Vasilieff sent an orderly for me. I found him engaged in packing.

"What are you doing, Vladimir Poliektovich? Whither away?"

"There has been a change in the situation. We officers can draw our travelling allowances here in Nagasaki, and go home by whatever route we please. Many prefer to steam through the Indian Ocean,

and thus to avoid the discomforts of the Trans-Siberian Railway in mid-winter. I am crossing the Pacific, taking train through the U.S., and then ship once more over the Atlantic. Thus I shall go right round the world."

"Lucky for you," I cried.

Vasilieff handed me a piece of paper on which was written something in his steady handwriting.

"Here's my home address. Give it to those of your comrades whom you can trust, and make a note of their names and addresses for me. We mustn't lose sight of one another. Now clear out, and get your friends together in the fore-castle. As soon as I've got my travelling allowance, I'll come."

"Alright," I answered.

Everything was carried out as he had arranged. We assembled in the fore-castle. Of the "Oryol's" crew there were present: Stoker Baklanoff, Petty Officer Gromoff, Artificer Tsunaeff, Petty Officer Osip Fedoroff, Sergeant Murzin, Boatswain Voevodin, Electricians Shtareff, Golubeff, and Alferenko, and many others. Vasilieff arrived.

He told us the latest news about Russia, gleaned from English newspapers. Then, on the basis of these facts, he drew a picture of what was really going on at home. We were greatly moved. As I looked at him, I was impressed by the smartness of his appearance. He wore a blue serge suit, a well-starched collar, a black neckband tied in a bow, and highly polished brown boots. His thoughts and actions matched the neatness of his attire. Every phrase he uttered struck as clearly as if he were reading from a carefully written book. Speaking of the Battle of Tsushima, he dwelt on the causes of our defeat. These had long been known to me; but, when described by him, they stood out vividly before my mind as if printed in bold type.

The Russian fleet was only half as strong as the Japanese, and the Government must have been crazy to send it into foreign waters.

Our organisation was grossly defective.

We had received no proper training in naval manœuvres, and, during the battle, our ships spun round and round like dancing der-vishes, so that they could be bombarded without any possibility of effective reply.

Then, while many of our craft were venerable antiques, fit only for a naval museum, the modern and swift units had to steam in line with the slow and obsolete ones, at a speed reduced to nine knots.

The ironclads were so heavily laden that their armour-plate was

largely submerged. Thus they ceased, for effective purposes, to be ironclads at all. The boats, the woodwork in the cabins, and the furniture provided material for the conflagrations which caused so much disaster.

The transports were nothing but a nuisance, hampering the mobility of the fighting fleet.

The Japanese had a range-finder in every turret and every casemate. We had only two range-finders for each ship. Our guns, imperfectly rifled, with inefficient sights, supplied with dud shells, in turrets that easily got out of order, and served by untrained gunners, could inflict no damage on the enemy.¹

The "upper" grades and the "lower" did not join forces until just before the battle, in face of their common peril. Till then the most venomous class hatred prevailed throughout the squadron.

If the squadron was to reach Vladivostock the last course to choose was that by Korea Strait, where the Japanese had established their chief naval bases.

When approaching Tsushima Island, our fleet made no reconnaissance whatever, ignoring the adversary as completely as if engaged in a naval review.

Neither the captains of the various ships, nor even the vice-admiral and his staff, had studied the strategy and tactics of the impending battle. None of the captains were informed as to the admiral's plans—and, indeed, it is doubtful if Rozhstvensky had formed any plan at all. Surely this was something altogether exceptional in the history of naval campaigns.²

It was subsequently revealed, that during five and a half hours of this decisive sea-fight, not one of the admirals was in command of

¹ Why were the shells duds? This was explained afterwards by the famous academician Kryloff. Some genius in the Ministry for Marine thought that the long voyage through the tropics would have too drying an effect upon pyroxylin, the high explosive with which they were charged, so that spontaneous explosions might result. Consequently the proportion of moisture in the pyroxylin was increased from the normal 10 or 12 to 30 per cent. A year later, in 1906, when the fortress of Sveaborg near Helsingfors was in revolt, it was bombarded by the ironclad "Slava," which had not been ready in time to sail with the second Pacific squadron, but had been supplied with the same shells. When the fortress surrendered, the naval gunners found that hardly any of their shells had exploded; but the matter was hushed up by the authorities.

² But the fact was plainly disclosed at the Commission of Enquiry, by the evidence of Admiral Nebogatoff, Admiral Enkvist, Flag-Captain Clapier de Colongue, and even Admiral Rozhstvensky himself, who actually declared:

"The admirals were never called together to discuss a detailed plan of battle, and, speaking generally, no such plan was drawn up."

the second Pacific squadron, which continued to play the game of follow my leader, while the leading battleship was under the orders of officers whose names remain unknown, and even under those of some petty officer or ordinary seaman. A squadron so absurdly organised did not need to be outclassed (as it was) in order to be defeated.

The foregoing causes of the Russian defeat, and many subsidiary ones were known to a great many of the survivors among the foremost hands immediately after the battle. But Vasilieff now gave us a number of new details. What astonished us most, perhaps, was a comparative table concerning the artillery fire.

Number of shots fired per minute: Russian, 134; Japanese, 360. Weight of metal fired per minute: Russian, 20,000 lbs.; Japanese, 53,000 lbs. As to the difference in the high-explosive contents of the respective shells, this was barely credible: a Russian 12-inch shell contained 15 lbs. of pyroxylin; a Japanese 12-inch shell, 105 lbs. of "shimose." The Russian squadron fired 500 lbs. of high-explosive per minute; the Japanese squadron, 7500 lbs.

"But apart from this, Comrades," said Vasilieff, "and apart from the superior marksmanship of the Japanese, you have to remember that shimose is a much more powerful explosive than pyroxylin."

Giving a glance round, to see what impression he had made, Vasilieff went on:

"What conclusion, Comrades, must we draw from the foregoing facts? Russia, with her obsolete feudal system, and suffering from the curse of tsarist autocracy, did not meet the tests imposed by the battle. She is senile, whereas capitalist Japan, rejuvenated by reforms introduced from the West, has subdued the warlike pride of our admirals and generals. What is to blame for our defeat? Not individuals, but our whole political system. We have had our Tsushima in other places besides Korea Strait. The Japanese bested us no less effectively on land. We have sustained a Tsushima defeat also, perhaps less glaring, but no less indubitable, on our railways, in our factories, our naval dockyards, our education—the whole misconducted and disorderly life of our country. Yet Japan has conquered, not the working masses of Russia, but the detested and corrupt Government of our country. She will never again win such a victory over us, if power in Russia passes into the hands of another class. Meanwhile she has done us a good turn. She has opened the eyes of the humblest and most illiterate among us. Fortunately our soldiers have turned their weapons

against those who sent them needlessly to death. The war has led to the revolution. We, the survivors of Tsushima, have no longer any reason to be afraid."

The "Vladimir's" whistle sounded, to show that she was about to start.

Vasilieff's speech was thus brought to a close, and, having taken the names and addresses of a number of trusty comrades, he departed amid shouts of applause. Five minutes later he came out of his cabin on to the upper deck, and crossed the gang-plank to the quay just as the "Vladimir" was casting off from the bollards.

Our transport steamed southward to clear Nagasaki harbour, and then headed for Vladivostock. There was a fresh breeze from the north, raising white horses on the sea, while drifts of cloud hurried astern.

For a long time I stood alone on the poop, unwilling to go below, despite the cold. I took my last glimpse of Nagasaki. Should I ever return to this charming place embayed in green hills, with its mild climate, its light-footed geishas, its exotic flavour—a place both smiling and mysterious?

Daylight was fading. The coast of Japan grew indistinct, and it was hard to distinguish land from sky, or cloud from water. Behind us a ray flashed from the lighthouse.

At length the cold sent me below. My comrades were talking of their families, of the women they loved, of war and revolution. Some one was playing a gay tune on the concertina, and whistling an accompaniment. Others were humming popular songs.

Next morning, in a violent northerly gale, with a falling barometer, we passed close to the isle of Tsushima. Most of the men mounted to the upper deck. With anguished eyes, those who had lost friends and comrades scrutinised the turbulent waters, but there was no trace now of the terrible battle which had ensanguined the sea eight months earlier. Some one took off his cap, and, as if at the word of command, the others followed his example. For a minute or two we stood in silence, pale and gloomy, listening to the roar of the wind, which seemed to be sobbing over an enormous tomb.

Then a conversation began. These men, giving free utterance to their sentiments, were not those I had known before the war. Never had they let themselves go like this. The old dread of "constituted authority" had been quelled.

Electrician Golubeff, taking a manuscript book out of his pocket, brandished it in the air and said:

"Look here, in this book I've full notes about the Japanese fleet and ours. A simple statement of facts."

I knew what he was going to talk about. I had the same facts inscribed among my papers. There are few battles in which the victors do not sustain heavy losses. But the Battle of Tsushima was an exception. In that battle, and when our fleet made its disastrous sortie from Port Arthur, the Japanese destroyed the first Pacific squadron and the second—practically the whole Russian fleet—while actually increasing their own naval strength. Not long since, the emperor of Japan held a naval review, when a number of captured Russian warships, bearing new names, had flown the Japanese flag. Ships sunk at Port Arthur, but subsequently raised were: the ironclads "Pełesvet," "Poltava," and "Retvizan;" the cruisers, "Pallada," "Varyag," "Bayan;" and the destroyers "Silnyi" and "Rachitelnyi;" also the torpedo-cruisers "Veadnik" and "Haidamak." Then there were the surrendered ironclads of the second Pacific squadron: the "Nicholas I," the "Oryol," the "Apraksin," and the "Senyavin;" also the destroyer "Bedovyi." Throughout the war and during the blockade of Port Arthur, the Japanese lost only two ironclads, the "Yashima" and the "Hatsuse," and two or three minor craft. In a word, while annihilating the Russian naval forces, the Japanese increased their own by 57,955 tons. As regards merchant-ships, the Japanese lost 35, with a total tonnage of 55,652. In place of these, they captured at Port Arthur or refloated there 59 Russian merchant-steamers having a gross tonnage of 138,438.

Electrician Golubeff began by reading aloud from his manuscript book, but, before he had finished his enumeration, excitement carried him away, and he shouted:

"D'you call that a war? It was a massacre. The Japs finished us off as sealers butcher defenceless seals on the ice. Are we still to put up with such a Government as ours?"

The "Vladimir" was burying her nose deeply in the waves, and torrents of water flowed aft along the upper deck, wetting our feet. But the men stood their ground, listening to one another's revolutionary talk, while the officers on the bridge timidly contemplated the inexplicable anger on the faces of these rebellious and liberated serfs.

We all knew that at the bottom of the sea in this Strait of Tsushima lay the greater part of the second Pacific squadron, that we were steaming over a huge graveyard containing the bones of more than

5000 seamen; and we knew that in the same encounter the Japanese had lost only 115 men.

Stoker Baklanoff strode to the middle of the deck, and, stepping on to a closed hatch, planted himself there firmly. His square-chinned face, moistened by droplets of sea-water, had an expression of self-confidence. He spoke now in a booming bass:

"Dear shipmates of Tsushima, you witnessed here the sad fate of our comrades. Why did they go down to death? Who was to blame? We know well enough. I can't tell how you feel about the matter, but for my part I should like to wring the bloody necks of the guilty, and get on with the job so long as my heart continued to beat. Next time we go to war, it won't be for the forest of Korea, but to win a better sort of life for ourselves. We'll go for the enemies at home. Just as the Japanese sunk our ships here, so we will drown in blood the whole tsarist system."

"Bravo!" came the hearty response.

"We'll send it back to the devil, its begetter," shouted others.

Stoker Baklanoff went on:

"Throughout the country, we will extirpate our sometime rulers as one digs up the stumps of felled trees in a forest."

The wind wailed as the "Vladimir" ploughed her way northward through mountainous seas. On the pitching deck the men raised their fists in the air and uttered threatening cries.

We already knew that tidings of Tsushima had spread far and wide across Russia, arousing alarm, excitement, and distress. The country was in a ferment. A month after the loss of the second Pacific squadron, the ironclad "Potyemkin," as if in answer, had hoisted the Red Flag in the Black Sea. A mutiny on the cruiser "Ochakoff," and similar disturbances in the naval ports of Kronstadt and Sevastopol had been reported. There were strikes in the factories. An agrarian revolution had begun, and the red cock was crowing over the mansions of the great landowners. The tsar, to save his throne, had had to issue a ukase granting a democratic constitution. But the people speedily realised that this was humbug. Barricades had been set up in the streets of Moscow. The storm-wind of revolution blew strongly athwart Russia.

What I had learned from the newspapers of these happenings in my homeland, was mingled with the impressions of the gale through which the "Vladimir" was labouring. It was so new, so extraordinary, that my heart trembled. As I looked at the faces of my comrades and

listened to their eager words, it seemed to me that the war which had just ended and the revolution which had just begun were but preludes to events yet more formidable.

The isle of Tsushima, covered with forests and surrounded with reefs, lay to port of us, and could now be divined rather than distinguished in the murky weather. To my febrile imagination, it seemed a monster covered with humps, a silent witness of the tragedy that was being played. On the summit of the island, which is but a mountain jutting out of the sea, is a peak cleft in twain, and known to mariners as "the donkey's ears." Henceforward this Peak of the Donkey's Ears will remain an everlasting memorial over the tomb of the tsarist regime, dishonoured for all time, a regime of darkness and of silence.

APPENDIX

COMPARATIVE TABLE OF RUSSIAN AND
JAPANESE FLEETS

RUSSIAN FLEET
FIRST PACIFIC SQUADRON

Ordinal Number	Name of Vessel	Year when Launched	Displacement in Tons	Speed in Knots	Guns					Torpedo Tubes	Fate of Vessel	
					12"	10"	8"	6"	120 mm.			Smaller
IRONCLADS												
1	Petrovavlovsk . . .	1894	11,400	16.5	4	—	—	12	—	38	5	Sunk at Port Arthur, March, 1904
2	Poltava . . .	1894	11,000	16	4	—	—	12	—	40	6	
3	Sebastopol . . .	1895	11,800	16	4	—	—	12	—	40	6	
4	Peresvet . . .	1898	12,700	18.5	—	4	—	11	—	48	5	
5	Pobeda . . .	1900	12,700	18.5	—	4	—	11	—	49	5	
6	Retvizan . . .	1900	12,900	18	4	—	—	12	—	52	6	
7	Tsarevich . . .	1901	13,200	18.5	4	—	—	12	—	40	6	
FIRST-CLASS CRUISERS												
1	Varyag . . .	1899	6500	23	—	—	—	12	—	22	5	Sunk at Chemulpo, Jan. 27, 1904 Sunk in the Sea of Japan, Aug. 1, 1904
2	Kyurik . . .	1892	11,700	18.5	—	4	16	6	—	12	6	
3	Bayan . . .	1900	7700	22	—	2	8	—	—	27	5	Sunk at Port Arthur
4	Pallada . . .	1899	6300	19	—	—	8	—	—	32	3	
5	Askold . . .	1900	5900	23.5	—	—	—	—	—	22	6	Interned at Shanghai
6	Bogatyr . . .	1901	6680	24	—	—	—	—	—	30	4	
7	Rossiya . . .	1896	13,700	19.5	—	—	4	16	—	57	5	Remained at Vladivostok
8	Gromoboy . . .	1899	13,900	20	—	—	4	16	—	48	4	
9	Diana . . .	1899	6700	19	—	—	—	8	—	32	3	Interned at Saigon, July 1, 1904
SECOND-CLASS CRUISERS												
1	Novik . . .	1900	3100	25	—	—	—	—	—	6	8	Sunk at Port Korsakovsk, April 7, 1904 Sunk at Talien-wan
2	Boyarin . . .	1901	3200	22	—	—	—	—	—	6	1	

TORPEDO CRUISERS										
1	Veadnik	1893	410	20	—	—	—	9	2	} Sunk at Port Arthur
2	Haidamak	1893	435	20	—	—	—	9	2	
GUNBOATS										
1	Koreëts	1886	1300	13	—	2	1	10	1	} Sunk at Chemulpo, Jan. 27, 1904 Interned at Shanghai
2	Mandzhyr	1886	1400	13	—	2	1	10	1	
3	Sivuch	1884	1100	10.5	one old	—	6	11	—	} Sunk at Port Arthur
4	Bobr	1885	1200	11	9" gun	—	6	11	—	
5	Gilyak	1897	1300	11.5	—	—	—	9	—	} Sunk at Port Arthur
6	Grenyashchy	1892	1700	13	one old	—	1	14	2	
7	Otvazhnyi	1900	1900	13	9" gun	—	1	14	2	
CLIPPERS										
1	Dzhigit	1873	1334	12	—	—	2	15	—	} Sunk at Port Arthur
2	Razboinik	1878	1786	13.2	—	—	2	15	—	
3	Zabiyaka	1878	1236	14.2	—	—	2	15	—	
DESTROYERS										
1	Condor	1902	250	27.5	—	—	—	4	2	} Sunk at Port Arthur
2	Rachitelnyi	1902	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
3	Rezyashchy	1901	240	27	—	—	—	4	2	} Sunk at Port Arthur Sunk at Port Arthur Rammed at Chefoo
4	Ractoropnyi	1901								
5	Reshitelnyi	1901	240	26.5	—	—	—	4	2	} Taken prisoner by the Japanese at Chefoo Sunk at Port Arthur Rammed at Chefoo, December 18th Interned at Kiao-Chow
6	Silnyi	1901								
7	Serdityi	1901	240	26.5	—	—	—	4	2	} Sunk at Port Arthur Sunk at Port Arthur Rammed at Chefoo, Dec. 18th
8	Smelyi	1901								
9	Storozhevoy	1901	240	26.5	—	—	—	4	2	} Sunk at Port Arthur Sunk at Port Arthur Rammed at Chefoo, Dec. 18th
10	Steregushchy	1901								
11	Skoryi	1901	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

RUSSIAN FLEET—FIRST PACIFIC SQUADRON (continued)

Ordinal Number	Name of Vessel	Year when Launched	Displacement in Tons	Speed in Knots	Guns					Torpedo Tubes	Fate of Vessel		
					12"	10"	8"	6"	120 mm.			Smaller	
DESTROYERS (cont.)													
12	Strashnyi . . .	1901	240	26.5	—	—	—	—	—	4	2	Sunk at Port Arthur Fled from Port Arthur to Chefoo, where they were interned Sunk at Port Arthur	
13	Stroinyi . . .	1901											
14	Statnyi . . .	1901											
15	Boevoy . . .	1899	344	27	—	—	—	—	—	6	2	Interned at Kiao-Chow	
16	Bditelnyi . . .	1899											
17	Besposhchadnyi . . .	1899											
18	Besstrashnyi . . .	1899	350	26	—	—	—	—	—	6	2	Fled to Kiao-Chow Sunk off the Shantung Peninsula	
19	Besshumnyi . . .	1899											
20	Boiky . . .	1902											
21	Burnyi . . .	1902	250	30	—	—	—	—	—	4	2	Sunk in Takhe Bay	
22	Lieutenant Burakoff . . .	1902											
23	Vnimatelnyi . . .	1900											
24	Vkretnyi . . .	1900	312	26	—	—	—	—	—	6	2	Interned at Chefoo, Dec. 18th Fled to Shanghai after battle of July 28th	
25	Grozovoy . . .	1900											
26	Vnushitelnyi . . .	1900											
27	Vynostivyi . . .	1900	312	26	—	—	—	—	—	6	2	Sunk at Port Arthur	
TORPEDO-BOATS													
	Nos. 201, 202, 203 . . .	1887	77	18	—	—	—	—	—	2			2
	Nos. 205, 206 . . .	1887	120	19	—	—	—	—	—	2			
	Nos. 209, 210, 211 . . .	1898	120	18.5	—	—	—	—	—	2			
MINE-SWEEPERS													
1	Enisey . . .	1898	4700	17.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Sunk at Port Arthur	
2	Amur . . .	1898											

RUSSIAN FLEET—SECOND PACIFIC SQUADRON (continued)

Ordinal Number	Name of Vessel	Year when Launched	Displacement in Tons	Speed in Knots	Guns						Torpedo Tubes	Notes	
					12"	10"	9"	8"	6"	Small			
COAST-DEFENCE IRONCLADS													
1	Admiral Apraksin . . .	1896	4126	16	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	4	
2	Admiral Ushakoff . . .	1893	4648	16	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	4	
3	Admiral Senyavin . . .	1894	4126	16	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	4	
FIRST-CLASS CRUISERS													
1	Oleg . . .	1903	6675	23	—	—	—	—	12	—	—	22	2
2	Aurora . . .	1900	6731	20	—	—	—	—	8	—	—	32	3
3	Svetlana . . .	1898	3727	21	—	—	—	—	6	—	—	13	—
4	Dmitri Donskoy . . .	1885	6200	16.5	—	—	—	—	6	4	34	5	5
5	Vladimir Monomakh . . .	1882	5593	15.5	—	—	—	—	6	6	26	3	3
SECOND-CLASS CRUISERS													
1	Zhemchug . . .	1903	3106	24	—	—	—	—	—	—	8	6	5
2	Izumrud . . .	1903	3106	24	—	—	—	—	—	—	8	6	5
3	Almaz . . .	1903	3285	19	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12	—
DESTROYERS													
1	Bedovyi . . .	1902	350	26	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6	2
2	Blestyashchy . . .												
3	Bezuprechnyi . . .												
4	Bodryi . . .												
5	Buinyi . . .												
6	Bystriyi . . .												
7	Bravyi . . .												

CONSPICUOUS OF THE JAPANESE FLEET

Ordinal Number	Name of Vessel	Year when Launched	Displacement in Tons	Speed in Knots	Guns					Torped Tubes	Notes	
					12"	10"	8"	6"	120 mm.			Smaller
IRONCLADS												
1	Fuso	1877	3800	13	—	4	—	11	4	—	3	
2	Chin-Yen	1882	7300	14	—	—	—	4	—	—	3	
3	Fuji	1896	12,600	18	—	—	—	10	—	—	5	
4	Yashima	1896	12,500	18.5	—	—	—	10	—	—	5	Sunk near Port Arthur
5	Shikishima	1898	15,100	18	—	—	—	14	—	—	4	
6	Hatsuse	1897	15,200	19	—	—	—	14	—	—	4	Sunk near Port Arthur
7	Asahi	1899	15,400	18.5	—	—	—	14	—	—	4	
8	Mikaza	1900	15,400	18.5	—	—	—	14	—	—	4	
LARGE (ARMoured) CRUISERS												
1	Itsukushima	1889	4300	16	—	—	—	—	12	12	4	
2	Matsushima	1890	4300	16	—	—	—	—	12	12	4	
3	Hashidate	1892	4300	16	—	—	—	—	12	12	4	
4	Asama	1898	9900	21.5	—	—	4	14	—	—	5	
5	Tokiva	1898	9900	21.5	—	—	4	14	—	—	5	
6	Yakumo	1899	9800	20	—	—	4	12	—	—	5	
7	Idzumo	1899	9900	20.5	—	—	4	14	—	—	4	
8	Ivate	1899	9900	20.5	—	—	4	14	—	—	4	
9	Adzuma	1899	9500	20	—	—	4	12	—	—	5	
10	Nisin	1903	7700	20.5	—	—	4	14	—	—	4	
11	Kasuga	1903	7700	20	—	1	2	14	—	—	4	

SMALL (LIGHT) CRUISERS		1883	3200	17	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	6	6	3	
No.	Name														
1	Idzumi	1883	3200	17	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	6	6	3	
2	Naniva	1885	3700	18	—	—	—	—	—	—	8	6	6	4	
3	Tokaniho	1885	3700	18	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	—	6	4	
4	Chitoda	1900	2400	19	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	—	15	3	
5	Akitsushima	1892	3200	19	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	6	10	4	
6	Yoshino	1892	4200	22.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	6	8	12	5	
7	Suma	1895	2700	20	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	6	12	2	
8	Kasagi	1898	5000	22.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	10	17	6	
9	Chitoze	1898	4800	20	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	17	6	
10	Takasago	1897	4200	22.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	17	6	
11	Akashi	1897	2800	19.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	6	12	2	
12	Tsushima	1903	3400	20	—	—	—	—	—	—	6	—	14	—	
13	Niitaka	1903	3400	20	—	—	—	—	—	—	6	—	14	—	
14	Otowa	1903	3000	21	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	6	6	—	
DISPATCH-BOATS															
1	Tatsuta	1894	900	21	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	4	5	
2	Chihaya	1900	1300	21.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	10	5	
3	Yayama	1889	1600	20	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	8	2	
MINE-LAYER															
1	Tyobashi	1883	4100	12.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	4	—	
GUNBOATS															
1	Sako	1866	600	7.5	A few small-calibre quick-firing and machine-guns						—	—	—		
2	Chinhoku	1879	450	8											
3	Chinnan	1879	450	8											
4	Chinsen	1879	450	8											
5	Chinto	1879	450	8											
6	Chimpan	1881	450	8											
7	Chinhiu	1881	450	8											

Sunk through a collision with the "Kasuga"

CONSPICUOUS OF THE JAPANESE FLEET (continued)

Ordinal Number	Name of Vessel	Year when Launched	Displacement in Tons	Speed in Knots	Guns					Torpedo Tubes	Notes	
					12"	10"	8"	6"	120 mm. Smaller			
GUNBOATS (cont.)												
8	Amagi	1887	900	10	—	—	—	—	4	6	—	
9	Ivaki	1878	700	10	—	—	1	—	1	2	—	
10	Tsukushi	1881	1400	14	2	—	—	—	4	3	—	
11	Akagi	1886	622	10	—	—	—	—	4	6	—	
12	Maya	1886	622	10	—	—	2	—	—	4	—	
13	Chokot	1887	622	10	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	
14	Arago	1887	622	10	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	
15	Heven	1887	2200	10	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	Sunk at Port Arthur
16	Oshima	1897	840	13	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	
17	Uzi	1900	600	12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
COAST-DEFENCE VESSELS												
1	Tsukuba	1871	2000	8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
2	Kaimon	1882	1400	12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
3	Terminu	1878	1500	12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
4	Kondo	1877	2300	13	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
5	Hiyei	1877	2300	13	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
6	Sayen	1883	2500	15	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
7	Katsuragi	1885	1500	12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
8	Yamato	1885	1500	12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
9	Musashi	1886	1500	12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
10	Takao	1883	1800	15	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
A few 6-inch or 8-inch guns and some small-calibre guns												
Sunk June 28th by Russian mine												
Sunk at Port Arthur												

Ordinal Number	Name of Vessel	Displacement in Tons	Speed in Knots	Armament	Notes
	DESTROYERS				
1	Akabono	311	31	Each equipped with two torpedo-tubes, one 75-mm., and five 57-mm. guns	
2	Ikazuchi				
3	Inazuma				
4	Sazanami				
5	Oboro	279	30		
6	Marakumo				
7	Shinonome				
8	Shiranui	381	31		
9	Yugiri				
10	Kagero				
11	Uryugomo				
12	Shirakumo	381	29		
13	Akashiyo				
14	Akatsuki				
15	Kasumi				
16	Harusame	381	29		
17	Hayatori				
18	Asagiri				
19	Myrasame				
20	Fubuki				
	TORPEDO-BOATS				
1	Fukuryu	152	20	Each with two or three torpedo-tubes and one or two small-calibre guns	
2	Kotaka		19		
3	Shiratako		20		

CONSPICUOUS OF THE JAPANESE FLEET (continued)

Order of Battle	Name of Vessel	Displacement in Tons	Speed in Knots	Armament	Notes
	TORPEDO-BOATS (cont.)				
4	Hayabuza	—	—	Each with two or three torpedo-tubes and one or two small-calibre guns	
5	Kassagi	152	29		
6	Manazuru				
7	Chidori	—	—		
8	Aotaka	—			
9	Hata	—	—		
10	Hibari	—			
11	Kari	152	29		
12	Kiji				
13	Tsubane	—	—		
14	Kamone				
15	Sagi	152	29		
16	Uzura				
17	Hashitaka	—	—		
18	Otori	—			
19	Arare	—	—		
20	Ariake	—			

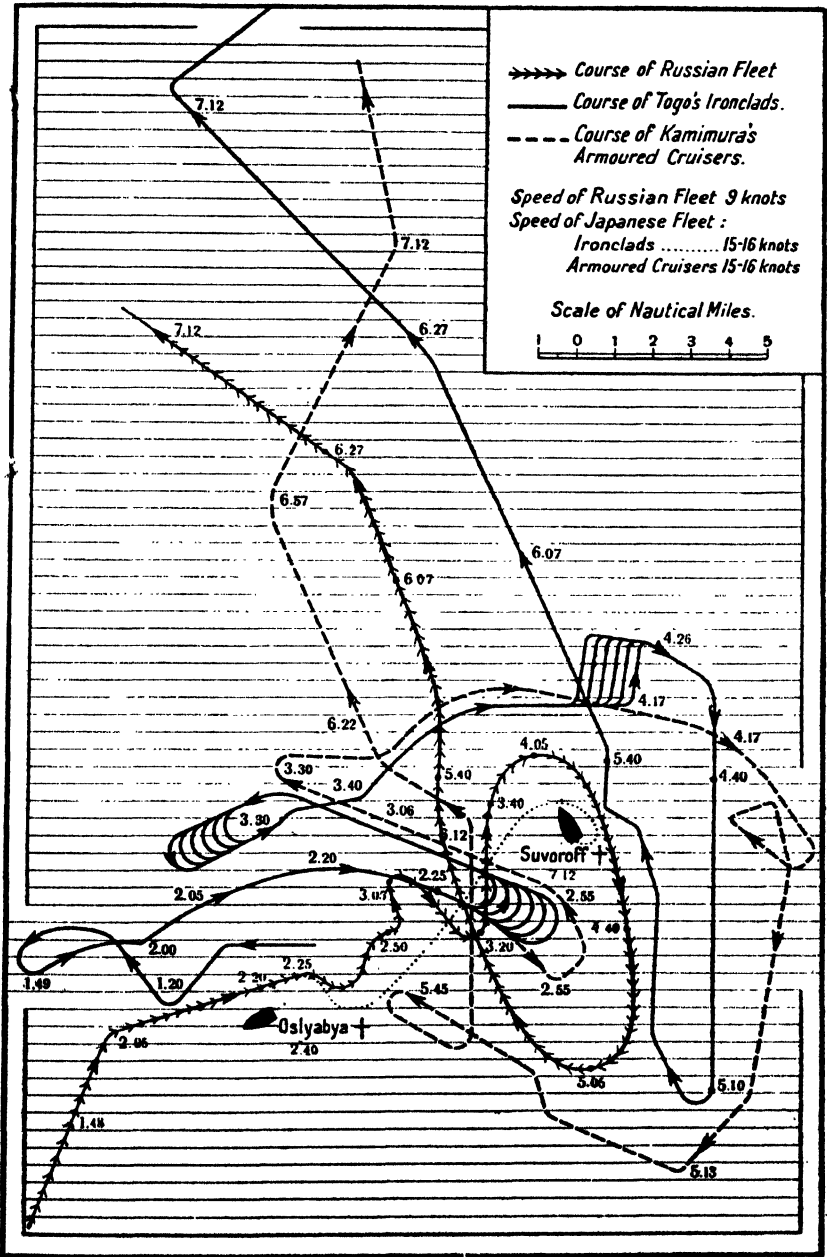
In addition the Japanese had over 100 small mine-layers, each with one or two small-calibre guns.

Also 27 auxiliary cruisers, converted merchant-steamers, with displacements ranging from 4500 to 7500 tons, and a speed of about 17 knots. These were armed with two 76-mm., two 57-mm. and four 47-mm. guns, each.

Also 3 auxiliary gunboats, each of 600 tons displacement, a speed of 10 knots, armed with two 76-mm. guns and four guns of smaller calibre.

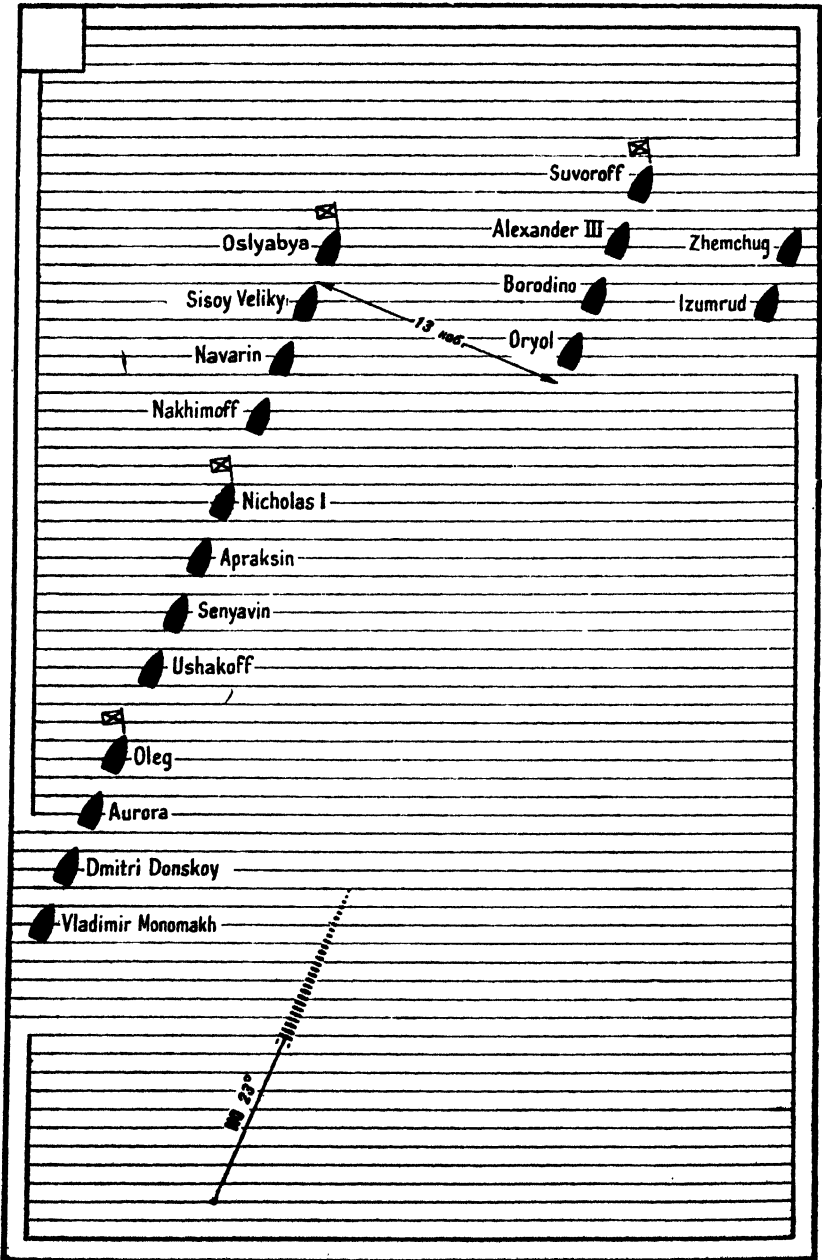
Also 2 hospital-ships, launched in 1900, each of 2600 tons displacement, and having a speed of 13.5 knots.

MOVEMENTS OF CONTENDING FLEETS IN THE BATTLE OF TSUSHIMA,
MAY 15TH (O.S.), 1905.

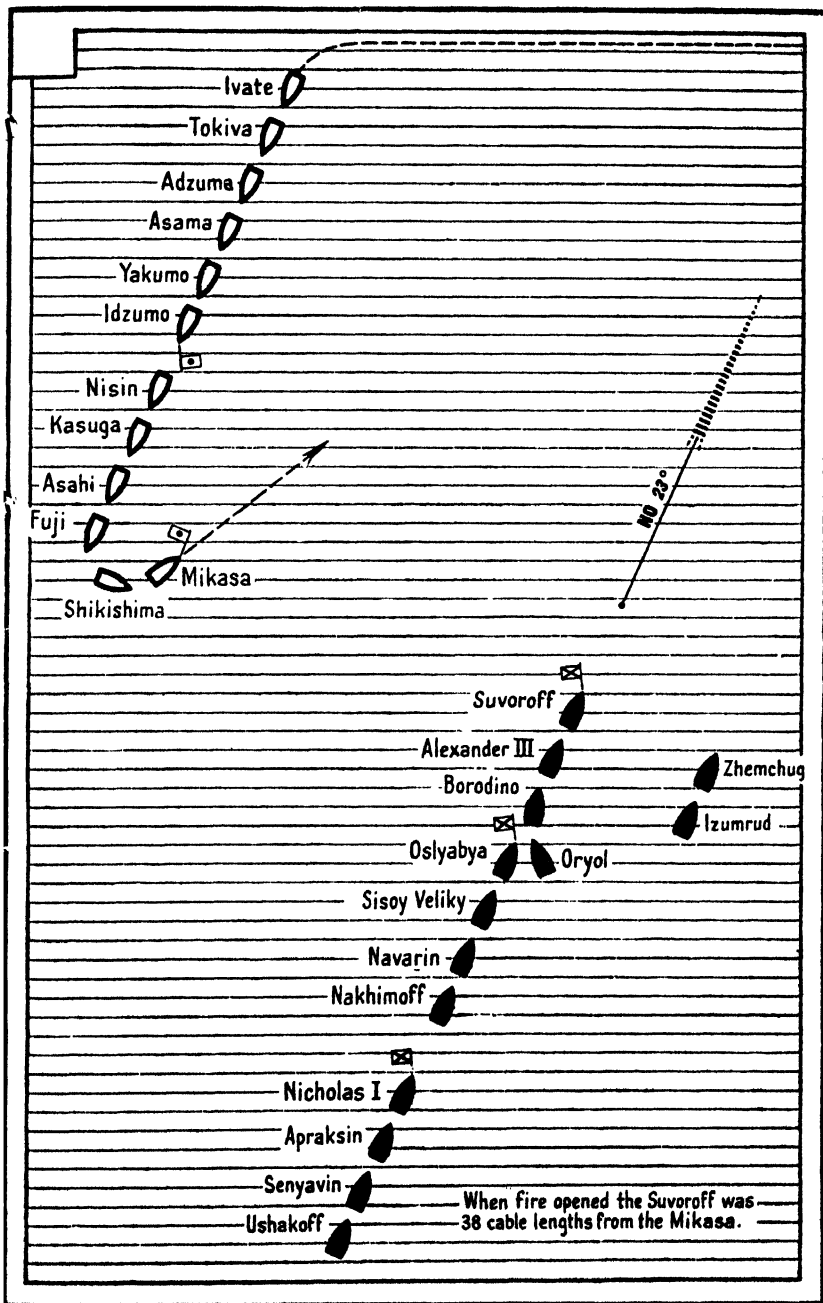


THE BATTLE OF TSUSHIMA

POSITION OF RUSSIAN FLEET AT 1.15 P.M.

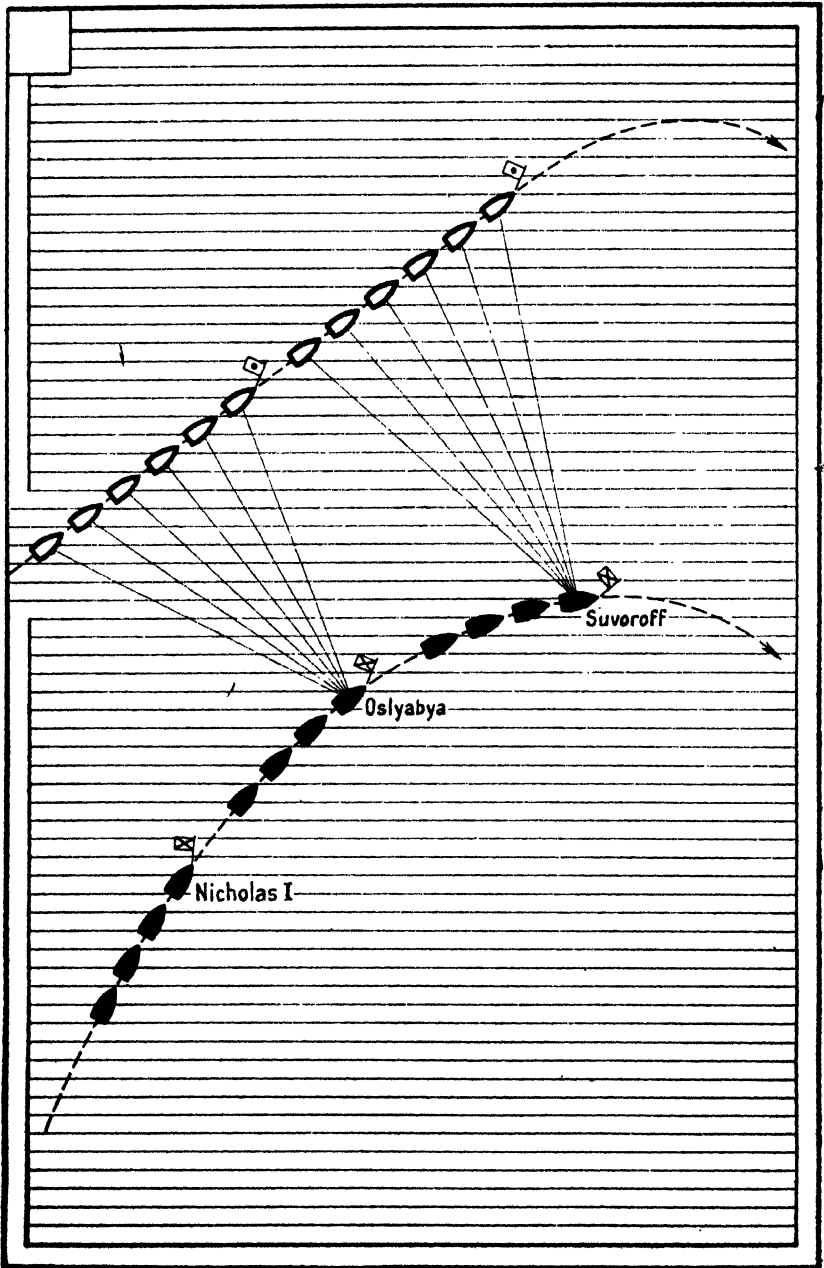


POSITION OF FLEETS AT 1.50 P.M.



THE BATTLE OF TSUSHIMA

2.5 P.M. JAPANESE FIRE CONCENTRATED ON SUVOROFF AND OSLYABYA.



POSITION OF FLEETS FROM 2.50 TO 3.10 P.M.

