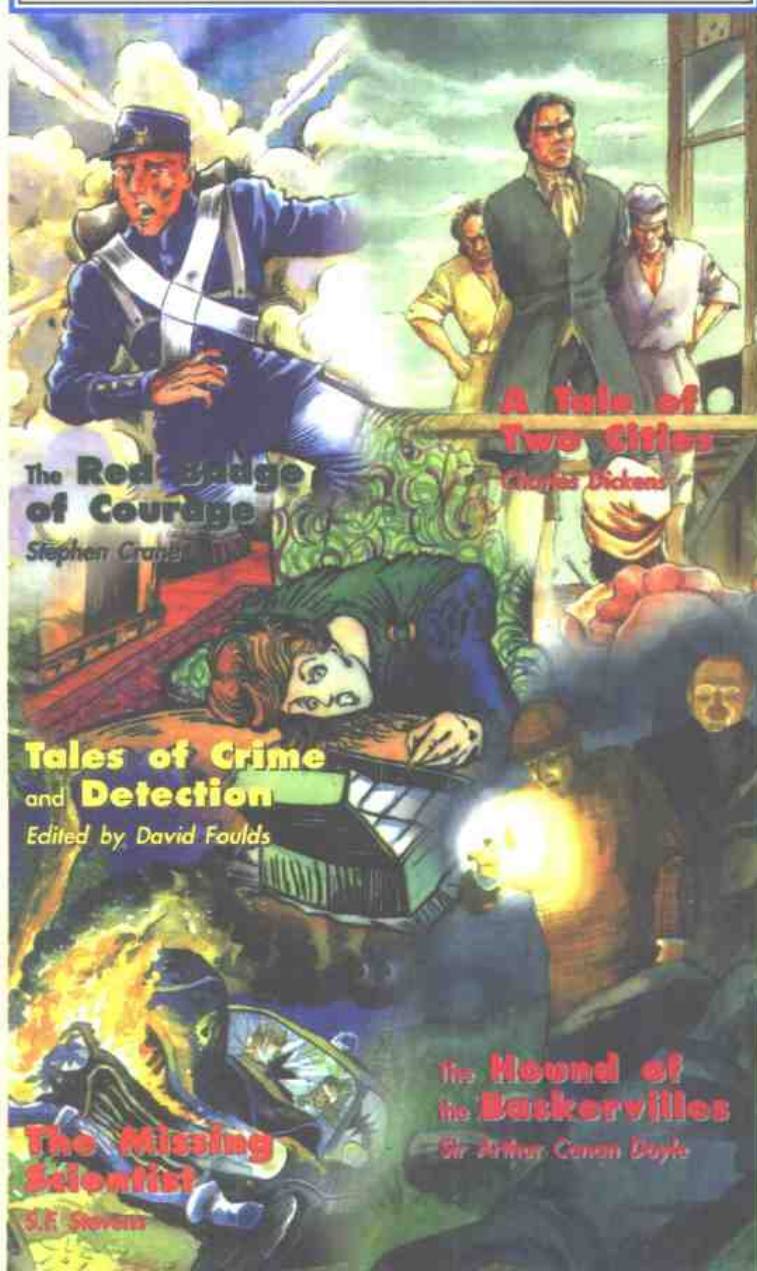


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The Red Badge of Courage

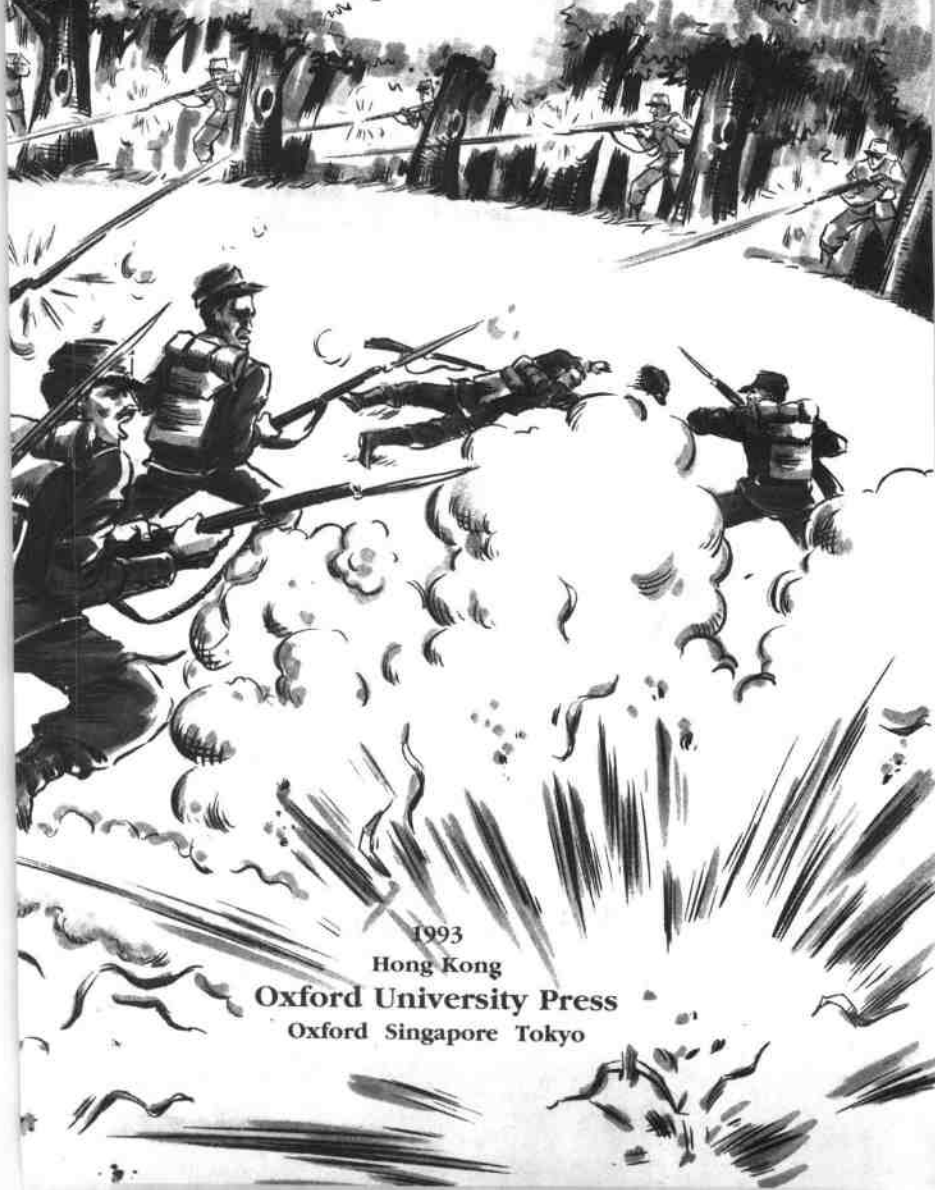
红色英勇勋章

Stephen Crane
Syllabus designer: David Foulds
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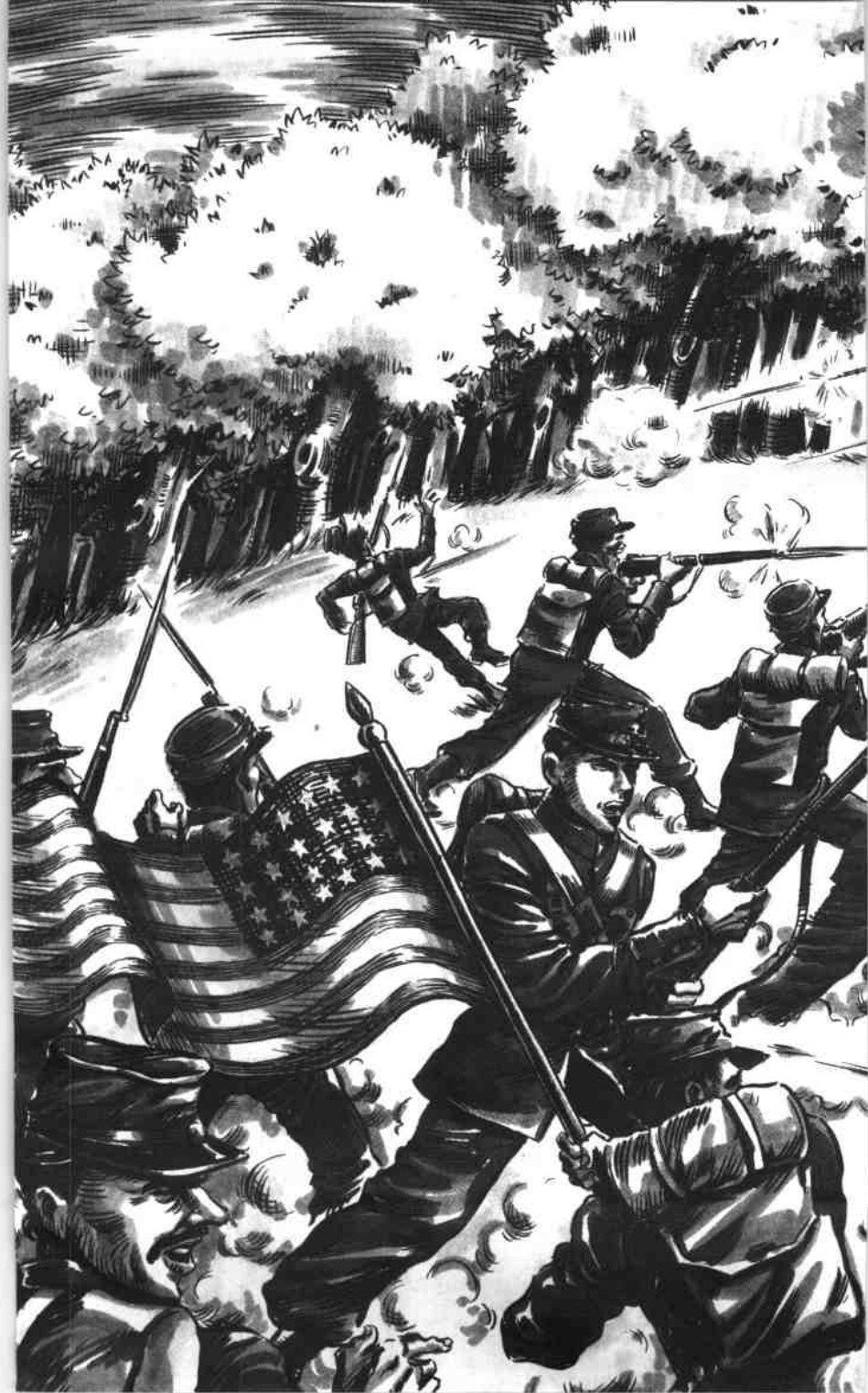


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The Red Badge of Courage

红色英勇勋章

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THE REGIMENT

Waiting

At last, winter left the earth. The fog rolled away, and all the army was seen stretched out on the hills, resting. As the spring sun changed the grass from brown to green, the army woke from its winter sleep. It began to tremble with eagerness as stories flew around. The soldiers watched the roads. All through the winter these roads had been like muddy streams; now they were dry enough to use again. 5

At the foot of the camp there was a river. Across it, at night, the men could see the fires of the enemy camp among the distant hills. 10

'We're going to move tomorrow!' a tall soldier told his companions. 'We're going to go up the river, cross it, and come back behind the enemy.' 15

He described the whole plan to them. When he had finished talking, the men in their dark blue uniforms began to argue.

'It's a lie!' said one soldier loudly. He jumped to his feet. His smooth face was red with anger. 'I don't believe this stupid old army will ever move. We've got ready to move eight times in the last two weeks, and we still haven't moved!' 20

The tall soldier felt that he must defend his story. He and the loud one nearly had a fight about it. 25

Another soldier began to curse. 'I just made a wood floor for my hut. Now I suppose I'll have to leave it,' he said.

A real battle at last

A young soldier listened eagerly to all of this. Then he went into his hut. He had a lot to think about, and he wanted to be alone.

- 5 So we are all going to fight at last, he thought to himself. Tomorrow, perhaps, there will be a battle. And I shall be in it.

He could hardly believe it. All his life he had dreamed of battles. In his imagination, he had taken part in them, and saved many people through his courage. But when
10 he was awake, he did not really believe in battles. They were something that happened in history.

From his home, he had heard about what was happening, but he didn't really believe there could be
15 a war in his own country. It couldn't be a real war; they didn't have those any more. Men were kinder now, or less brave, or better educated.

All the same, he had tried several times to join the army. Stories of great fighting shook the land. Perhaps
20 these battles were not quite like the ones in history books, but he longed to see the fighting for himself. His busy imagination drew it all for him in bright, fierce colours.

Henry's decision

- 25 His mother did not encourage him. She knew hundreds of good reasons why her son was far more important on the farm than on the field of battle. His mother was usually right.

At last, however, he decided to join. The stories in
30 the newspapers, the talk in the village, and his own imagination were stronger than his mother's arguments. There was fighting and glory, and he wanted his share.

'Ma,' he said one night. 'I'm going to join the army in the morning.'

'Don't be a fool, Henry,' said his mother. Then she turned her face to the wall and said no more.

The next morning, Henry went to the nearest town and joined the army. When he came home, his mother was milking the brown cow. 'Ma, I've done it,' he said. There was a short silence. 'I'll pray for you, Henry,' she said at last, and went on milking the cow. 5

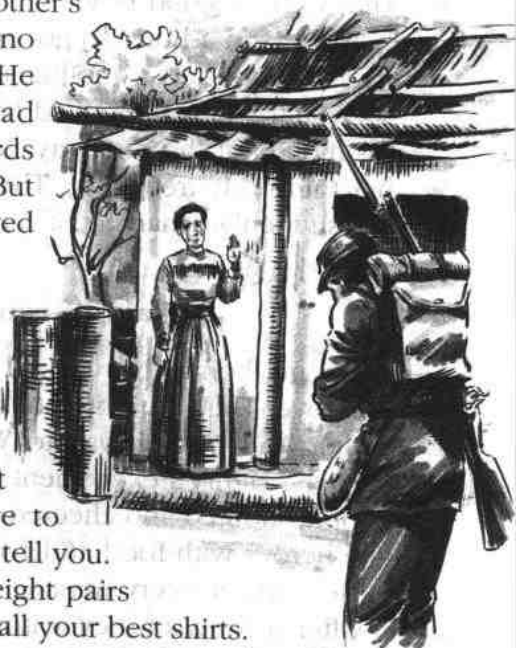
A mother's tears

10

Later, he stood in the doorway with his uniform on his back and the light of excitement in his eyes. Then he saw two tears on his mother's thin cheeks. Still, she said no words of praise or blame. He was disappointed. He had planned comforting words and a loving goodbye. But what she said next destroyed all his plans.

'You be careful, Henry,' she said. 'Don't think you can beat the whole rebel army by yourself, you can't. You're just one small person among a lot of others, and you'll have to keep quiet and do as they tell you.'

'Henry, I've made you eight pairs of socks. And I've packed all your best shirts. I want my boy to be as warm and comfortable as anyone in the army. When you get holes in your clothes, send them straight back to me. I'll mend them.'



'And always choose your company carefully, Henry. There are lots of bad men in the army. They love to lead a young lad into bad ways and teach him to drink and use bad language. Don't go near them, Henry. And
5 never do anything that you'd be ashamed to tell me about. Always behave just as you behave in front of me, and I guess you'll be all right.

'There's one more thing, Henry. Do your duty, son, and don't think about me. If a time comes when you
10 have to choose between death and doing something shameful, Henry, don't hesitate. You just do the right thing, and don't think about me. God will take care of us all. Don't forget about the socks and the shirts, child. I've packed a home-made cake for you, too. Goodbye,
15 Henry. Be a good boy.'

He was in a hurry to go, and this was not at all what he had expected a mother to say to her brave young son. Still, when he looked back from the gate, he saw his mother at the doorway, her face wet with tears and
20 her thin body trembling. Then he bowed his head and felt suddenly ashamed of himself.

Afraid of running away

From his home, he walked to his old school to say
goodbye. The admiring looks of the girls made him feel
25 better. And on the way to Washington with the other soldiers, Henry's excitement grew. At every station, the people shouted and cheered. The soldiers were greeted like heroes with food and coffee and warm smiles, and he felt braver every minute.

30 After a long journey with many stops, Henry spent many months of boring life in a camp. The army did little except try to keep warm. Perhaps I was right after all, thought Henry. There are no more real battles.

The only enemy soldiers he ever saw were some guards along the river bank. They did not do much shooting. Old soldiers told him terrible stories about the rebels, but Henry did not believe them. The old soldiers loved to frighten the younger ones, and laugh at them. 5

However, Henry now realized that it did not much matter what the old soldiers said. Everyone agreed that the rebel soldiers were good fighters. Here was Henry's big problem. He lay on his bed thinking about it. He was trying to prove to himself that he would not run away. 10

He had never worried about that before. He had never doubted his own courage. But now, quite suddenly, he had to admit that here was a part of himself that he did not know — it worried him a lot. 15

This fear of running away grew in Henry's mind. As his imagination marched forward to a fight, he saw dreadful possibilities. He tried in his imagination to see himself bravely in the middle of the battle. He failed. He tried to call back his old dreams of glory, but they were lost in the shadow of a real war. 20

He jumped up and walked about the room. 'Dear God, don't let me do anything to make Ma ashamed of me.'



Sharing his doubts

After a time, the tall soldier — the one who had been spreading the story about their move — came into the hut. The loud soldier followed. They were still arguing.

5 Henry looked at the tall soldier. 'So you think there's going to be a battle, Jim?' he said.

'Of course there is. You just wait till tomorrow. You'll see plenty of fighting.' He sounded like someone who had arranged a show for everyone to enjoy.

10 'Huh!' said the loud one from a corner.

'Well,' remarked Henry, 'I don't suppose there's much truth in the story — remember all the other stories!'

'It's true, all right,' said Jim. 'The officers have had their orders.'

15 'Rubbish!' said the loud one.

Henry was silent for a time. Then he spoke to the tall one again. 'Jim,' he said, 'do you think our regiment will fight all right?'

20 'Oh, I expect so,' said Jim. 'Everyone's been laughing at our regiment because it's so new. There are so many young soldiers who have never fought before. But they'll fight all right, I guess.'

'Do you think any of our boys will run away?' said Henry.

25 'A few, perhaps, but there are men like that in every regiment, especially when they see their first battle. You can't be sure of anything. But I think our boys will do all right, as soon as the shooting starts.'

30 'What do you know about it, Jim Conklin?' shouted the loud soldier. An angry argument soon followed. Meanwhile, Henry was busy with his own thoughts.

At last he interrupted them. 'Did you ever think that you might run away, Jim?' he asked, with an anxious, little laugh. The loud soldier laughed too.

'Well,' said Jim, 'if a lot of our boys ran, perhaps I'd do the same. But if everyone was standing, and fighting — I'd stand and fight too. I'm sure of that.'

'I'm not!' laughed the loud one. But Henry felt grateful for Jim's words. He had thought everyone else was quite confident and sure of themselves. He now realized that others shared his doubts, and he felt better.

True feelings

The next morning, Henry discovered that Jim's news was all a mistake. They were not moving after all. Henry was still worried, however. Now there was no chance to prove his own courage. For days he thought and wondered. At last, he decided that there was only one way to find out about himself. And that was in battle. He would have to wait for that.

Meanwhile, he tried to compare himself to his companions. Jim made him feel better. The tall soldier's calmness gave Henry confidence. He had known Jim since they were boys together. In all that time, Jim had never done anything that he, Henry, could not do too. If Jim was brave, then so was he. But then Henry thought that perhaps his friend was wrong about himself. Or perhaps Jim, who was so ordinary in peace time, would be a shining hero in war.

Henry longed to find someone else who had the fears. He tried to talk to his companions. But if anyone felt the same way, he did not show it. Henry did not dare to tell anyone his true feelings. He was afraid they would laugh, or call him a coward.

Sometimes, Henry thought they were all heroes except him. Perhaps they had secret supplies of courage that he, Henry, did not. At other times, he felt quite sure that everyone else was privately trembling and wondering, just like he was.

THE SUDDEN NOISE OF GUNS

Time for action

The following day, the army stayed where it was. A few days later, however, they began to prepare for action. They woke up very early. In the darkness before dawn,
5 their uniforms glowed purple. From across the river, the fires still glittered in the rebel camp. The eastern sky was beginning to get lighter. Against it, Henry saw the huge black shape of their officer on his horse.

The regiment stood and waited. How long now,
10 wondered Henry. He was tired of waiting. At last he heard the sound of a horse's feet. Orders, he thought. A rider stopped in front of the colonel, the chief officer of the regiment. The two held a short conversation. The soldiers struggled to hear their words.

15 A moment later, the regiment began to move off into the darkness. It was like a huge animal with many feet. The men marched along, arguing as they went. They still did not know what was happening.

They came to a wide road. Another dark regiment
20 moved in front of them, and from all around, they could hear the sound of many marching men. The yellow light of day brightened behind them.

When the sun at last rose, Henry saw two long, thin,
black columns of men marching ahead of him. He
25 looked back; the columns stretched a long way behind. They were like two snakes crawling along.

Henry feels lonely

Henry could not stop thinking about his courage. He looked ahead, expecting to hear gunfire at any moment.

But the two long snakes crawled slowly from hill to hill without any loud noise or smoke. A grey cloud of dust floated away to the right. The sky above was a pure, clear blue.

Henry studied the faces of his companions for signs of any doubts like his own. He saw none. There was excitement in the air. It made Henry feel lonely and sad. Jokes were passed along the lines. The army marched to the tune of laughter. 5

All day they marched. When night fell, the column broke up into regiments again, and the regiments went into the fields to camp. Tents grew like strange plants. Camp fires shone like red flowers in the night. 10

Henry stayed quiet and alone. In the evening, he wandered away from the firelight and lay down in the grass. The moon was up, and the night was soft and still. He felt very sad and sorry for himself. He wished with all his heart that he was at home again, on the farm. I'll never be a soldier, he thought. I'll never be brave and sure of myself, like the others. 15 20

He heard a movement in the grass. It was the loud soldier. 'Oh, Wilson!' called Henry. 'Is that you?'

'Hullo, Henry — what are you doing here?'

'Thinking,' replied Henry. His companion sat down and carefully lit his pipe. 'You seem sorry for yourself, lad. What's the matter?' 25

'Oh, nothing,' said Henry.

Wilson is confident

Wilson began to talk about the coming battle. 'We've got those rebels now!' he said. 'We'll beat them — you'll see!' His young face was bright with eagerness. 30

'You were complaining about this march a while ago,' said Henry.

'I don't mind marching, if there's a good fight at the end of it,' said Wilson. 'But I don't like moving about, here and there and everywhere, with nothing to show for it except sore feet.'

5 'Well, Jim says we'll get plenty of fighting this time.'

'He's right, I guess. And we're going to win. We'll hammer them!' He got up and walked excitedly backwards and forwards. Henry watched him.

'You'll be a hero, I suppose!' said Henry bitterly.

10 The loud soldier blew a cloud of smoke from his pipe. 'I don't know,' he said calmly. 'I expect I'll do as well as the others. I'll try, anyway.'

'How do you know you won't run away?' asked Henry suddenly.

15 'Run?' said the loud one. 'Of course I won't run!' He laughed, and walked off.

Henry felt lonelier than ever. Did no one feel the way he did? He went slowly to his tent and lay down beside Jim. The tall soldier was already peacefully asleep.

20 Henry lay in the dark and thought of himself shaking with fear while others fought bravely for their country. As he struggled with his thoughts, he heard the calm voices of the men in the next tent playing cards. At last, tired out by his worries, Henry fell asleep.

25

Facing the enemy

Another night came, and more nights after that. The army marched and slept and marched again, but the enemy did not attack.

30 One grey dawn, however, Henry was kicked awake by Jim. Suddenly he found himself running down a woodland road with a crowd of other men. His rifle and water-bottle banged against his body as he went. He could hear whispers all around him:

‘What’s all this about?’ ‘Why are we running?’ ‘Billy — keep off my feet. You run like a cow!’ ‘What are they in such a hurry for?’ cursed Wilson beside him.

From the distance came a sudden noise of guns. As he ran with his companions, Henry tried to think. But he could think of only one thing: if he fell now, the others would run over him. He did his best to stay on his feet. He felt that the anxious crowd was carrying him along with it.

The sun rose, and he could see the other regiments. The time has come, thought Henry. I am going to be tested. For a moment he felt weak with fear. He looked round for a way out.

He saw at once that there was no way to escape. The regiment was all round him. He was in a box. At once he was filled with self-pity. He forgot that he had chosen to join the army. I never wanted to be a soldier, he thought. They made me join. And now they’re driving me to my death.

The regiment slid down a bank and splashed across a little stream. As they climbed the hill on the other side, again they heard the noise of the big guns. Suddenly, Henry felt curious. He struggled up the bank towards the strange, new noise.

He expected a battle scene. There were some little fields with woods all around. On the grass and among the trees, small groups of soldiers — skirmishers — were running and shooting.

