

to a long, stretching gallop, on and on and on!

The lines of an old poem came back to him. He had been made by his father to learn it by heart. Had hated it, as boys will. Yet had never forgotten it.

Now here, in a foreign land, riding through the night, away from the Germans, on to the French, the truth of the poet's words struck him with an almost physical blow:

"Up from the South at break of day,
Bringing to Winchester fresh dismay,
The affrighted air with a shudder bore,
Like a herald in haste, to the chieftain's door,
The terrible grumble and rumble and roar
Telling the battle was on once more,
And Sheridan twenty miles away."

"Twenty miles away," murmured Tom. "But, by Ginger, we'll make it. Git up there!"

As he rode on he met with no more German outposts or marching columns, since the skeleton divisions that were making the feint attack from Thionville had deployed to the north while the Metz divisions that were expected to smite the French lines in front of Verdun with a sudden, massed, unexpected blow, were still far in the rear.

Yet, occasionally, there was the sharp, thin flash and staccato report of a rifle, hurriedly fired and immediately echoed by other flashes and reports, showing that scouting parties of the opposing armies must have come into contact with each other.

Once the terrible hysteria of overstrained nerves, of overtaxed waiting and expectancy must have struck one of the Metz brigades, for quite suddenly, from the east one of their field batteries belched into action, shooting at nothing in particular. A great gun gave