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TWO TECHS ABROAD. IN FIVE CHAPTERS.

CHAP. IV.—AT THE GREAT BREACH. (Continued.)

The captain, fireman and two deck-hands had gone on shore, but the Chinese engineer and cook were on board.

Some time near midnight we were awakened by a bumping and rocking of the launch. Frost, who had been lying on the cushions of one of the narrow cabin divans, stepped out and spoke to the engineer. It was quite dark.

Wright and I got up and went out. At a distance below, we could hear confused outcries blended with a roaring noise that seemed momentarily to increase in volume.

"It's a crevasse!" Frost exclaimed. That meant a break in the embankment. Frost

ordered the engineer to make steam as quickly as he could.

The night was too dark to see well, but the alarm was spreading on all sides. Many laborers climbed the dike from the land side, and fled along the top of it up the river.

Now came a great rumbling sound from below, and immediately the launch tugged at her shore lines, for the current was drawing on her heavily.

Lee Wung, who had been tucked cozily up in the little state-room, stumbled out. We told him what had evidently taken place. He would have jumped ashore if the distance to the brow of the bank had not been too wide.

This might have been the safer course for us all; but Wright and I, as well as Frost, felt confident that we could steam away across the river as soon as the boiler could be fired.

Moored above us was a row of junks loaded

with timber for facing the dike. Soon several of these broke loose with the current, and swung down against us. Snap went our bow line—a junk still pressed us—snap went our stern line, too. Launch and junks drifted along down the embankment.

Wright and I seized boat-hooks, and by dint of fending and pushing, at length got clear. Meantime Frost, by liberal use of oil in the furnace, had generated steam enough to turn the screw. Now we hoped to escape.

But there was then another great rumbling, probably caused by the sudden giving way of a long section of the levee. This sound was close at hand, and accompanied by the crash of timbers. In five seconds the current was a torrent. From that moment we lost all control of the launch.

The river had burst down upon the country. We were sucked into the breach, and went toss-

