

THE YELLOW DOVE

PRELUDE

RIFTS of sullen gray in the dirty veil of vapor beyond the reaches of dunes, where the sea in long lines of white, like the ghostly hosts of lost regiments, clamored along the sand . . .

A souging wind, a shrieking of sea-birds, audible in pauses between the faraway crackle of rifle-fire and the deep reverberations of artillery—familiar music to ears trained by long listening. A shrill scream of flying shrapnel, a distant crash and then a tense hush . . .

Silence—nearly, but not quite. A sound so small as to be almost lost in the echoes of the clamor, an impact upon the air like the tapping of the wings of an insect against one's ear-drum, a persistant staccato note which no other noise could still, borne with curious distinctness upon some aërial current of the fog bank.

And yet this tiny sound had a strange effect upon the desolate scene, for in a moment, as if they had been sown with dragon's teeth, the sand dunes suddenly vomited forth armed men who ran hither and thither, their hands to their ears, peering aloft as though trying to pierce the mystery of the skies.

"The blighter! It's *'im* agayn."