Class Assignment

It was now late afternoon, and they ordered the volunteers to take a snatch of food and set out. They also bound the guide and turned him over to the volunteers, and made an agreement with them that in case they should capture the height, they were to guard it through the night and give a signal at daybreak with the trumpet; then those on the height were to proceed against the enemy who were holding the visible way out, while the main army was to come to their support, pushing forward as fast as it could. This agreement concluded, the volunteers, about two thousand in number, set out on their march; and there was a heavy downpour of rain; at the same time the general with the rearguard began advancing toward the visible way out, in order that the enemy might be giving their attention to that road and that the party taking the roundabout route might, so far as possible, escape observation. But as soon as the troops of the rearguard were at a gorge which they had to cross before marching up the steep hill, at that moment the barbarians began to roll down round stones large enough for a wagon-load, with larger and smaller ones also; they came down with a crash upon the rocks below and the fragments of them flew in all directions, so that it was quite impossible even to approach the ascending road. Then some of the captains, unable to proceed by this route, would try another, and they kept this up until darkness came on. It was not until they imagined that their withdrawal would be unobserved that they went back to dinner—and it chanced that they had had no breakfast either. The enemy, however, never stopped rolling down their stones all through the night, as one could judge from the noise.

Meanwhile the party with the guide, proceeding by a roundabout route, found the guards sitting around a fire, and after killing some of them and chasing away the others they remained at the post themselves, supposing that they held the height. In fact, they were not holding it, for it was a round hill above them and past it ran this narrow road upon which the guards had been sitting. Nevertheless, from the place they did hold there was a way of approach to the spot, upon the visible road, where the main body of the enemy were stationed. At this place, then, they passed the night, and when day was beginning to break, they took up their march silently in battle array against the enemy; for there was a mist, and consequently they got close up to them without being observed. When they did catch sight of one another, the trumpet sounded and the soldiers raised the battle cry and rushed upon the enemy. And the enemy did not meet their attack, but abandoned the road and took to flight; only a few of them, however, were killed, for they were agile fellows. Meanwhile the other general and his command, hearing the trumpet, charged immediately up the visible road; and some of the other generals made their way without following any road from the points where they severally chanced to be and, clambering up as best they could, pulled one another up with their spears; and it was they who were first to join the troops that had already gained possession of the place.

But the general with half the rearguard set out by the same route which the party with the guide had followed, because this was the easiest route for the baggage animals; and behind the baggage animals he posted the other half of the rearguard. As they proceeded they came upon a hill above the road which had been seized by the enemy, and
found themselves compelled either to dislodge them or be completely separated from the rest of the soldiers; and while, so far as the troops themselves were concerned, they might have taken the same route that the rest followed, the baggage animals could not get through by any other road than this one by which the general was proceeding. Then and there, accordingly, with words of cheer to one another, they charged upon the hill with their companies in column, not surrounding it, but leaving the enemy a way of retreat in case they chose to use it. For a while, as the soldiers were climbing up by whatever way they severally could, the barbarians discharged arrows and other missiles upon them; they did not let them get near, however, but took to flight and abandoned the place. No sooner had the soldiers passed by this hill, than they saw a second one ahead similarly occupied by the enemy, and decided to proceed against this one in its turn. The general, however, becoming apprehensive lest, if he should leave unoccupied the hill he had just captured, the enemy might take possession of it again and attack the baggage train as it passed (and the train stretched out a long way because of the narrowness of the road it was following), left three captains upon the hill; while he himself with the rest of the troops proceeded against the second hill, which they captured in the same fashion as the first.