One of the Six Hundred



By James Grant

LONDON: GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS

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Title: One of the Six Hundred: A Novel
Creator: James Grant

Release date: July 23, 2017 [eBook #55179]
Language: English
Other information and formats: www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/55179
Credits: Produced by Al Haines

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ONE OF
THE SIX HUNDRED

A Novel

BY JAMES GRANT

AUTHOR OF "THE ROMANCE OF WAR."

"Half a league, half a league,
Half a league, onward,
Into the Valley of Death,
Rode the Six Hundred!"
TENNYSON.

LONDON:
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS
THE BROADWAY, LUDGATE
NEW YORK: 416 BROOME STREET
1875

ONE OF THE SIX HUNDRED.

CHAPTER I.

To be handsome, young, and twenty-two,
With nothing else on earth to do;
But all day long to bill and coo,
It were a pleasant calling.—THACKERAY.

I was just in the act of humming the above verse, when the following announcement was put into my hand—

"Regimental Orders.—Head-quarters, Maidstone, December 31st.

"As the regiment is to be held in readiness for foreign service in spring, captains of troops will report to Lieutenant and Adjutant Studhome, for the information of the commanding officer, on the state of the saddlery, the holsters and lance-buckets; and the horses must be all re-shod under the immediate inspection of the veterinary surgeon and Farrier-Sergeant Snaffles.

"Leave of absence to the 31st proximo is granted to Lieutenant Newton Calderwood Norcliff, in consequence of his urgent private affairs."

"Hah! this is what most concerns *me*," I exclaimed, as I read the foregoing, and then handed the order-book, a squat vellum-bound quarto, to the orderly-serjeant who was in waiting.

"Any idea of where we are likely to go, sir?" he asked.

"The East, of course."

"So say the men in the barracks; for the present, good-bye, sir," said he, as he wheeled about on his spurred heel, and saluted; "I wish you a pleasant journey."

"Thanks, Stapylton," said I; "and now to be off by the night train for London and the north. Ugh! the last night of December; I shall have a cold journey of it."

Despatching my man, Willie Pitblado—of whom more hereafter—to the mess-house to report that I should not dine there that evening, I proposed at once to start for home, resolved to make the most of the favour granted me—leave between returns, as it is technically termed.

I propose to give the story of my own adventures, my experiences of life, or autobiography (what you will); and this I shall do, in the face of a certain writer, who asserts, with some truth, doubtless, that she does not "believe that there was, or could be in the world, a wholly true, candid, and unreserved biography, revealing all the dispositions, or even, without exception, *all the facts of any existence*. Indeed," she adds, "the thing is next to impossible; since, in that case, the subject of the biography must be a man or woman without reserve, without delicacy, and without *those secrets* which are inevitable even to the most stainless spirit."

With all due deference to this fair writer, I beg to hope that such a candid spirit may exist; and that, without violating the delicacy of this somewhat (externally) fastidious age on the one hand, and without prudish or hypocritical reserve on the other, I, Mr. Newton Norcliff, will relate the plain, unvarnished story of a cavalry subaltern's life during the stirring events of the last ten years.

My regiment was a lancer one. I need not designate it further; though, by the way, it has always struck me as somewhat peculiar in our cavalry of the line, that while we have our Scottish corps, the famous old Greys, and no less than three Irish, we have not one English regiment, provincially designated as such.

I despatched a note of thanks to the colonel, handed over my cattle to the care of my friend Jack Studhome, the adjutant, and had a hasty interview with Saunders M'Goldrick, our Scots paymaster—not that I

wish the reader to infer that he was my chief factor and reliance (heaven help those in a dragoon regiment who find him so!).

Glad to escape, even for the brief period of a month, from the monotony of routine parades, the stable duty, the barrack life, and useless hurly-burly of Maidstone—to be free from all bother, mess, band, and ball committees, courts-martial, and courts of inquiry; from having to remember when this parade took place, and when that particular drill, and all that sort of thing—glad, I say, to escape from being saluted by soldiers and sentinels at every turn and corner, and to be once again lord of my own proper person, I relinquished my gay lancer trappings, and resumed the less pretending mufti of the civilian—a suit of warm and strong heather-mixture tweed—and about nine o'clock P.M. found myself, with some light travelling baggage, my gun-case, railway rugs, &c. (in care of Willie Pitblado, who was attired in very orthodox livery—boots, belt, and cockade), awaiting the up train for London, at the Maidstone station, and enjoying a last friendly chat and a cigar with Studhome, as we promenaded to and fro on the platform, and talked of the different work that would soon be cut out for us, too probably, about the time my short leave expired.

The British fleet was already in the Bosphorus; the field of Oltenitza had seen the terrible defeat of the Russians by the troops of Omar Pasha, generalissimo of the Porte, avenge the recent naval massacre at Sinope. Ere long, the Turks were to be again victorious at Citate. General Luders was about to force his way into the Dobrudcha; Britain, France, Russia, Turkey, and Sardinia were gathering their hosts for the strife; and amid these serious events, that absurdity might not be wanting, the sly broad-brims and popularity-hunters of the Peace Society sent a deputation to the Emperor Nicholas, to expostulate with him on the wickedness of his ways.

"Egad! if the weather proves cold here, what will you find it at home, in Scotland?" said Studhome, as we trod to and fro; for there is no knocking the idea out of an Englishman's head that the distance of some four hundred miles or so must make a more than Muscovite difference in soil and temperature; but it was cold—intensely so.

The air was clear, and amid the blue ether the stars sparkled brightly. Snow, white and glistening, covered all the roofs of the houses and the line of the railway, and the Medway shone coldly, like polished silver, under the seven arches of its bridge, in the light of the rising moon; and now, with a shrill, vicious whistle, and many a rapidly iterated grunt and clank, came the iron horse that was to bear me on my way, as it tore into the station, with its mane of smoke, and its red bull's-eyes that shed two steady flakes of light along the snow-covered line of rails.

The passengers were all muffled to their noses, and their breath coated and obscured the glasses of the carefully-closed windows.

Pitblado brought me *Punch*, the *Times*, and "Bradshaw," and then rushed to secure his second-class seat; Studhome bade me farewell, and retired to join Wilford, Scriven, and some others of the corps, who usually met at a billiard-room, near the barracks, leaving me to arrange my several wrappers, and enjoy the society of one whom he laughingly termed my railway belle—a stout female with a squalling imp, whom, notwithstanding my secret and confidential tip of half-a-crown, the deceitful guard had thrust upon me; and then, with another shriek and a steady and monotonous clanking, the train swept out of the station. The town vanished with its county court house, barracks, river, and the fine tower of All Saints' Church; and in a twinkling I could survey the snow-covered country stretching for miles on each side of me, as we scoured along the branch line to the Paddock Wood, or Maidstone Road Junction, of the London and Dover Railway, where I got the up train from Canterbury.

Swiftly went the first-class express. The fifty-six miles were soon done, and in an hour I was amid the vast world, the human wilderness of London, even while worthy Jack Studhome's merry smile and hearty good-bye seemed to linger before me. How glorious it is to travel thus, with all the speed and luxury that money in these our days can command!

A hundred years hence how will they travel—our grandchildren? Heaven alone knows.

I was now four-and-twenty. I had been six years with the lancers, and already the novelty of the service—though loving it not the less—was gone; and I was glad, as I have said, to escape for a month from a life of enforced routine, and the nightly succession of balls, card and supper parties among the garrison hacks or *passé* belles, whose names and flirtations are standing jokes at the messes of our ungrateful lancers, hussars, and dragoon guards, wherever they are stationed, from Calcutta to Colchester, and from Poonah to Piershill.

A day soon passed amid the whirl of London, and night saw me once more seated in the *coupé* of a well-cushioned carriage for the north.

This time I was alone, and had the ample seat all to myself, thereon to lounge with all the ease of a sybarite; and with the aid of a brandy-flask, cigars, and warm wrappers and plaids, prepared for the dreary journey of a winter night.

On, on went the train!

Lights, crimson and green, flashed at times out of the darkness. Here and there the tall poplars of the midland counties stood up, like spectres in the moonlight, above the snow-clad meadows. Hollowly we rumbled through the subterranean blackness of a tunnel; out in the snow and moonlight again, amid other scenes and places. Anon, a hasty shout from some pointsman would make me start when just on the eve of dropping asleep; or it might be a sudden stoppage amid the lurid glare of furnaces, forges, and coalpits, where, night and day, by spells and gangs the ceaseless work went on. Then it was the shrill whistling and clanking of the train, the bustle, running to and fro of men with lanterns, the banging of doors, tramping, and voices, with the clink of hammers upon the iron wheels, as their soundness was tested, which announced that we were at Peterborough, at York, or Darlington.

But every station, whether we tarried or rushed past it, seemed wonderfully alike. There were always repetitions of the same glazed advertisements in gilt frames; the same huge purple mangold-wurzel, with its tuft of green leaves; the same man in the hat and surtout, with the alpaca umbrella, under the ceaseless shower of rain; Lea and Perrin's

sauce-bottles; somebody else's patent shirt; the florid posters of *Punch*, the *Illustrated News*, and the *London Journal*; and the same parti-coloured volumes of railway literature.

Rapidly we rushed through England. Yorkshire and its Ridings were left behind, and now the Borders, the old land of a thousand battles and a thousand songs, drew near—the brave green Borders, with all their solemn hills, upheaved in the light of the faded stars.

Grey dawn of the coming day saw us traversing the fertile Merse, with glimpses of the gloomy German sea, tumbling its whitened waves upon bleak promontories of rock, such as Dunbar, Fastcastle, and the bare, black headland of St. Abb. Then, as I neared home, and saw the sun brightening on the snow-covered summits of Dirlton and Traprainlaw, many an old and long-forgotten idea, and many a sad and affectionate thought of the past years, came back to memory, in the dreary hour of the early winter morning.

I have said I was but four-and-twenty then. When I had last traversed that line of rail, it was in the sweet season of summer, when the heather was purple on the Lammermuirs; and a sea of golden grain clothed all the lovely valley of the Tyne. I was proceeding to join my regiment, a raw, heedless, and impulsive boy, with bright hope and vague ambition in his heart, and with a poor mother's tears yet wet upon his cheek.

I had been six years with the lancers, and four of these were spent in India. While there, my dear mother died; and the memory of the last time when I saw her kind and affectionate face, and heard her broken voice, as she prayed God to bless my departing steps, came vividly, powerfully, and painfully before me.

It was on the morning when I was to leave home and her to join the corps. Overnight, with all a boy's vanity and glowing satisfaction, I had contemplated my gay lancer trappings, had buckled on my sword, placed the gold cartouche-belt and glittering epaulettes on my shoulders.

At that moment I would not have exchanged my cornetcy for the kingdom of Scotland. These alluring trappings were the last things I thought of and looked on ere my eyes were closed by slumber, and the

grey dawn of the next eventful day saw them still lying unpacked on the floor, when my poor mother, pale, anxious, unslept, and with her sad eyes full of tears, and her heart wrung with sorrow, stole softly into my room, to look for the last time upon her sleeping boy, and her mournful and earnest face was the first sight that met my waking eyes, when roused by a tear that dropped upon my cheek.

I started up, and all the consciousness of the great separation that was to ensue—the terrible wrench of heart from heart that was to come—burst upon me. Then sword and epaulettes, cap and plume, and the lancers, were forgotten; and throwing my arms around her neck, as I had done in the days of childish grief, I wept like the boy I was, rather than the man I had imagined myself to be.

I was going home now; but I should see that beloved face no more, and her voice was hushed for ever.

In that home were others, who were kind and gentle, and who loved me well, awaiting my arrival, and to welcome me. And there was my cousin Cora Calderwood—she was unmarried still.

Cora I was about to see again. It seemed long, long since we had last met, though we had frequently corresponded, for my uncle had a horror of letter-writing; and certain it was that she had inspired the first emotion of love in my schoolboy heart, and during my sojourn in India, and amid the whirl and gaiety of barrack-life at Bath, at Maidstone, at Canterbury and elsewhere, her image had lingered in my mind, more as a pleasing memory connected with ideas of Scotland and my home, rather than with those of a passionate or enduring attachment.

Indeed, I had just been on the point of forming that elsewhere; but now, having no immediate attraction beside me, I began to wonder whether Cora had grown up a beauty; how tall she was, whether she was engaged, and so forth; whether she still remembered with pleasure the young playmate who had left her sorely dissolved in tears, half lover and wholly friend.

As we progressed northward, and crossed the Firth of Forth, the snow almost entirely disappeared, save on the lofty summits of the Ochil mountains, whose slopes looked green and pleasant in the meridian sun;

and my friend Studhome, had he been with me, might have been much surprised in finding the atmosphere warmer north of Stirling Bridge than we found it at Maidstone—so variable is our climate.

We changed carriages at Stirling, where I was to imbibe some hot coffee, while Pitblado looked after my baggage, and swore in no measured terms at the slowness of an old, cynical, and hard-visaged porter, on whose brass badge was engraved a wolf—the badge of Stirling.

"Now then, look alive, you old duffer!" I heard Willie shouting.

"Ou, aye!" replied the other slowly, with a grin on his weather-beaten and saturnine face; "ye think yoursel' a braw chiel in your mustaches and laced jacket—there was a time when I thocht mysel' one too."

"What do you mean?" asked Pitblado, whose dragoon air even his livery failed to conceal.

"Mean!" retorted the other; "why, I mean that at the point o' the bayonet I helped to carry Badajoz and Ciudad Rodrigo to boot; and now, for sax baubees, I'm thankfu' to carry your bag. Sae muckle for sodgerin'!"

"It is not very encouraging, certainly," said my man, with a smile.

"Ten years' service, two wounds, and a deferred pension of threepence per diem," growled the other, as he threw my traps, with an oath, on the roof of the carriage.

"What regiment, my friend?" I inquired.

"The old Scots brigade, second battalion, sir," he replied, with a salute, as I slipped a trifle into his hand.

"The weather seems open and fine here."

"Aye," said he, with another saturnine grin; "but a green yule maketh a fat kirkyard."

In five minutes more we were *en route*, sweeping along the little lonely branch line, that through grassy glens, where the half-frozen runnels oozed or gurgled among withered reeds and bracken bushes, led us into the heart of Fife—"the kingdom," as the Scots call it; not that it ever was so in any time of antiquity, but because the peninsular county

contains within its compact and industrious self every means and requisite for the support of its inhabitants, independent of the produce of the whole external world—at least, such is their boast.

I was drawing nearer and nearer home; and now my heart beat high and happily. Every local feature and casual sound, the little thatched cottages, with rusty, antique risps on their doors,[*] and the clatter of the wooden looms within, were familiar to me. We swept past the quaint town, and the tall, gaunt castle of Clackmannan, where its aged chatelaine—the last of the old Bruce line—*knighted* Robert Burns, with the sword of the victor of Bannockburn, saying, dryly, that she "had a better right to do it than *some people*," and ere long I saw the spires that overshadow the graves of Robert I. and many a Scottish monarch, as we glided past Dunfermline, old and grey, with its glorious ruined palace, where Malcolm drank the blood-red wine, and where Charles I. was born, and its steep, quaint streets covering the brow of a sloping ridge that ends abruptly in the wooded glen of Pittencrief.

[*] The old Scottish tirling-pin—to be found now nowhere save in Fife—in lieu of bells and knockers.

My delight was fully shared in by Willie Pitblado, my servant, the son of old Simon, my uncle's keeper. He was a lancer in my troop, for whom I had procured a month's furlough; thus the hedgerows where he had bird-nested, the fields where he had sung and whistled at the plough, the farm-gates on which he had swung for hours—a truant boy from school—the woods of Pitrearie and Pittencrief, the abbey's old grey walls, and the square tower that covers Bruce's grave, were all hailed by Willie as old friends; and strange to say, his Doric Scotch came back to his tongue with the air he breathed, though it had been nearly well-nigh quizzed out of him by our lancers, nearly all of whom were English.

He was a smart, handsome, and soldier-like fellow, who bade fair to be "the rage" among the servant-girls at the old house, the home-farm, and the adjacent village, and a source of vexation to their hobnailed country admirers.

A few miles beyond the old city I quitted the train, and leaving him to follow with my baggage in a dog-cart, I struck across the fields by a near path that I remembered well, and which I knew would bring me straight to Calderwood Glen, the residence of my uncle, Sir Nigel—save Cora, almost the last relation I had now on earth.

CHAPTER II.

Pure as the silver wreath of snow
That lies on yonder wintry hill,
Are all the thoughts that peaceful flow,
And with pure joy my bosom fill.

Soft as the sweet spring's morning breath,
Or summer's zephyr, forth they roam;
Until my bosom grows more kind,
And dreams of thee and all at home.

The winter day was cold and clear, but without frost, save on the mountain tops, where the snow was lying. Though vegetation should have been dormant, the swelling uplands, the pastoral hills and braes of Fife, looked green and fertile; and there was a premature budding of young shoots, which the bitter frost of to-morrow might totally destroy.

Fires glowed redly through the little square windows of the wayside cottages, and from their massive stone chimneys the smoke ascended into the thin air in heavy volumes, that told of warmth, of comfort, and industry within. Ere long I could see the woods, all bare and leafless,

that covered the slopes of Calderwood Glen, and the vanes of the old house shining in the light of the setting sun, which streamed along the green slope of the western Lomond.

I passed unnoticed through the secluded village which stood, I knew, upon the verge of my good uncle's property, and where the old signboards of the smithy, the bakery, and alehouse were familiar to me. The clock of the old Gothic kirk struck the hour of three, slowly and deliberately, as only such clocks do in the country.

Many years ago, in boyhood, I remembered the familiar voice of that village monitor. What changes had taken place since then, in myself and others, and even in the scene around me! How many, whose daily routine, and whose labours—the heritage of toil—were timed by its bell and dial, were now in other lands, or sleeping in their humble graves beneath the shadow of the spire, and yet the old moss-grown clock ticked on!

Since then I had grown to manhood, had seen many of the dearest of my kindred die. Since then I had become a soldier, and had served in India, and on the staff in the late Burmese war. At the bombardment of Rangoon, I received a wound in the night attack made by the enemy on our camp at the heights of Prome.

Thousands of stirring scenes and strange faces had flitted before me. I had traversed twice the great Atlantic and Indian oceans, and had twice passed the Cape, on the first occasion looking with anxious eyes and envious heart at every homeward-bound sail; and now all these events seemed as a long dream, and as if it were but yesterday when last I heard the voice of the old village clock.

In that timeworn fane, Row, the Covenanter, had preached, and the great archbishop, too—Sharpe, the recreant, or the martyr (which you will), who died on Magus Muir; and, that the marvellous may not be wanting, there is a legend which tells us that, in the year before the Covenanters invaded England, and stormed Newcastle, thereby seriously injuring the London coal market, there used to issue from the empty loft where, in old Catholic times, the organ stood, the sound of such an instrument in full play, together with the voices of the choristers singing

a grand old Gregorian chant. These sounds were only heard in the night, or at other times when Calderwood kirk was empty, for the moment any one entered they ceased, and all became still—still as the dead Calderwoods of the Glen and of Piteadie, stretched in effigy, each upon his pedestal of stone, in St. Margaret's aisle; but this marvel was universally believed to portend the ultimate return of prelacy.

So rapidly and totally does the speed of the railway annihilate alike the extent of time and space, that it seemed difficult to embody the fact that, but four-and-twenty hours ago, I had been in my quarters at Maidstone barracks, or amid the splendour of a fashionable hotel in London; and yet it was so.

Treading deep among the last year's crisp and withered leaves, I proceeded down the sombre and winding avenue, with a heart that beat quicker as I drew near a man, whose figure I remembered instantly, for he was my early friend, my second father, my maternal uncle, good old Sir Nigel Calderwood. Occupied with a weeder, which he always carried, and with which the ends of all his walking-sticks were furnished, he was intent on up-rooting some obnoxious weed; thus I could approach him unobserved. He seemed as stout and hale as when I saw him last. The grey hair, that was wont to escape under his well-worn wide-awake, was thinner and more silvery, perhaps; but the old hat had its usual row of flies and fishhooks, and his face was as ruddy as ever, and spoke of high health and spirits. He stooped a little more, certainly; but his figure was still sturdy, and clad, as usual, in a rough suit of grey tweed, with his stout legs encased in long brown leather leggings, that had seen much service in their time among the turnips and heather in the shooting season, and in the trouting streams that traverse the fertile Howe of Fife.

An old, half-blind, and wheezing otter terrier crept close to his heels as I came up. With a polite bow the worthy baronet surveyed, but failed to recognise me, and waited, with a glance of inquiry, until I should speak; for, sooth to say, in the tall, rather well-knit figure, bronzed face, and heavy moustaches I exhibited, he could scarcely be expected to

recognise the slender and beardless lad, whose heart was so heavy when he was conveyed away from his mother's arms, to push his way in the world as a cornet of cavalry some six years before.

"Uncle—Sir Nigel!" said I, in a voice that became tremulous.

"Newton—my dear boy, Newton—am I blind that I did not recognise you?" he exclaimed, while he grasped my hand and threw an arm round me; "welcome back to Calderwood—welcome home—and on the second day of the New Year, too! may many many joyous returns of the season be yours, Newton! What a manly fellow you have become since I saw you last in London—quite a dragoon!"

"And how is Cora—she is with you, of course?"

"Cora is well; and though not a dashing girl, she has grown up an amiable and gentle little pet, who is worth her weight in gold; but you shall see—you shall see, and judge for yourself. The house is full of visitors just now—I have some nice people to present you to."

"Thanks, uncle; but you and Cora were all I cared to see."

"But how came you to be here alone, and on foot too?"

"I left the train at Calderwood station, and wished to come quietly back to the old house, without any fuss."

"To steal a march upon us, in fact?"

"Yes, uncle, you understand me," said I, looking into his clear dark eyes, which were regarding me with an expression of great affection, which recalled the memory of my mother, his youngest and favourite sister. "Pitblado will drive over with my traps before dinner."

"Ah, Willie, the old keeper's son?"

"Yes."

"And how is he?"

"Quite well, and become so smart a lancer, that I fear there will be a great pulling of caps among the housemaids. I am loth to keep him out of the ranks, but the worthy fellow won't leave me."

"Many a good bag of grouse from yonder fields and the Lomonds, and many a good basket of trout from the Eden, has poor Willie carried for me. But, come this way; we shall take the near cut by the keeper's lodge to the house; you have not forgotten the way?"

"I should think not, uncle; by the Adder's Craig and the old Battle Stone."

"Exactly. I am so glad you have come at this time; I have such news for you, Newton—such news, boy."

"Indeed, uncle?"

"Yes," he continued, laughing heartily.

"How?"

"Calderwood Glen is a mere man-trap at present."

"In what manner?"

"We have here old General Rammerscales, of the Bengal army, who has come home with the liver complaint, and a face as yellow as a buttercup, and his pale niece—a girl worth heaven knows how many sacks or lacs of rupees (though, for the life of me, I never knew what or how much a lac is.) We have also Spittal of Lickspittal and that Ilk, M.P. for the Liberal interest (and more particularly for his own), with his two daughters, rather pretty girls; and we have that beautiful blonde, Miss Wilford, who has a cousin in your regiment—a Yorkshire heiress, whom all the men agree would make such a wife! We have also the Countess of Chillingham, and her daughter, Lady Louisa Loftus, really a very charming girl; so, as I told you, Newton, the old house is baited like a regular man-trap for you."

Had my uncle's perception been clearer, or had he been less vigorously using his weeder, as he ran on thus, he could not have failed to observe how powerfully the last name he uttered affected me.

After a pause—"In none of your letters," said I, "did you mention that Lady Loftus was here."

"Did I not? But Cora is your chief correspondent, and no no doubt she did."

"On the contrary, my cousin never once referred to her."

"Strange! Lord Chillingham left us a week ago in haste to attend a meeting of the Cabinet; but his women folks have been rusticating here for nearly three months. Charming person the countess—charming,

indeed; but the daughter is quite a Diana. You have met her before—she told us so, and I have made up my mind—ah, you know for what, you rogue—eh?"

What my uncle had made up his mind for was not very apparent; but he concluded his sentence by poking the weeder under my short ribs.

"To have me marry in haste and repent at leisure, eh, uncle—is it for this that your mind is made up?"

"I am a man of the old school, Newton; yet I hate proverbs, and everything old, except wine and good breeding."

"You are aware, uncle," said I, to change the subject, "that the lancers are under orders for Turkey?"

"Where women are kept under lock and key, bought, and secluded from society; just as in Britain they are thrust into it for sale."

"And so, my dear uncle, supposing that a lively young lancer will make a most excellent husband for your noble and beautiful *protégée*, you are resolved to make a victim of me, is it not so?"

"Precisely; but according to the old use and wont in drama and romance, you must not be a willing one; you must be prepared to hate her cordially at first sight, and to prefer some one else—of course, some amiable village damsel, of humble but respectable parentage," replied Sir Nigel, laughing.

"Hate *her*—prefer another!" I exclaimed; "on the contrary, I—I——"

I know not what I was about to say, or how far I might have betrayed myself. The blood rushed to my temples, and I felt giddy and confused, for the kind old baronet knew little of the hopeless passion with which the fair one of whom he spoke had inspired me already.

"You have met the Lady Lousia before, you say?"

"Nay, 'twas she who said she had met me," said I, glad to recall by this trifling remark that I was not forgotten by her.

"Ah, indeed—indeed; where?"

"Oh, at Canterbury, at Tunbridge Wells, Bath; all those places where people are to be met. In London, too, I saw her presented at Court."

"The deuce! You and she seem to have gone in a leash," said Sir Nigel, laughing, while the colour deepened on my cheek again; "but you must look sharp, for one of your fellows who is here is for ever dangling after her."

"One of *ours*?" I exclaimed, with astonishment.

"Yes; a solemn, dreary, dandified fellow, whom I met at Chillingham's shootings in the north, and invited to spend the last weeks of his leave of absence here, as we were to have you with us; and he spared no pains to impress upon me that he was a particular chum of yours."

"Is he Captain Travers—Vaughan Travers? He is on leave."

"No; he is Lieutenant De Warr Berkeley."

"Berkeley!" I repeated, with some disgust, and with an emotion of such inconceivable annoyance that I could scarcely conceal it; for decidedly he was the last man of ours whom I should have liked to find domesticated at Calderwood Glen.

Berkeley was well enough to meet with in men's society, at mess, on parade, on the turf, or in the hunting-field; but though handsome and perfectly well-bred, for his manners were generally unexceptionable, he was not a man for the drawing-room. He was master of a splendid fortune, which was left him by his father, a plain old Scotchman, who had begun life as a drayman, and whose patronymic was simply John Dewar Barclay. He became a wealthy brewer, and somehow his son like all such *parvenus*, despising his name, was gazetted to the lancers as De Warr Berkeley, and as such his name figured in the "Army List."

The carefully-acquired fortune of the plodding old brewer he spent freely, and without being lavish, though as an Eton boy, and afterwards as a gentleman commoner of Christchurch, he had plunged into dissipation that made his name proverbial. He was one of those systematic *roués* whom prudent mothers would carefully exclude from the society of their daughters, nathless his commission, his cavalry uniform, his fortune, his decidedly handsome person and bearing, which had all the "tone of society"—whatever that may mean.

Hence I was rather provoked to find that the kind and well-meaning but blundering old baronet had, as a favour to me, installed him at Calderwood, as a friend for my pretty cousin Cora, and an admirer of Lady Louisa. As I thought over all this, her name must have escaped me, for my uncle roused me from a reverie by saying—

"Yes; she is a charming, a splendid girl, really! A little too stately, perhaps; but I would rather have my little rosebud, Cora, with her peculiar winning ways. Lady Louisa may be all head—as I believe she is; but our Cora is all heart, Newton—all heart!"

"And Lady Louisa is all head, you think, uncle?"

"I could see that at a glance—yes, with half an eye; and yet there are times when I wish Cora had been a boy——"

My uncle leaned on his stick, and sighed.

His eldest son had been killed in the 12th Lancers, at the battle of Goojerat; the other had died prematurely at College—a double loss, which had a most fatal effect on their delicate mother, then in the last stage of a mortal disease. Now the affection of the lonely Sir Nigel was centred in Cora, his only daughter, the child of his declining years; and thus he had a great regard for me as the son of his youngest sister; but he sorrowed in secret that his baronetcy—one of the oldest in Scotland, having been created in 1625 by Charles I.—should pass out of his family.

Sir Norman Calderwood of the Glen, who had attended the Scottish princess, Elizabeth Stuart, to Bohemia, was the first patented among the baronets of Nova Scotia; and was therefore styled *Primus Baronettorum Scotiæ*, a prefix of which my uncle, as his ancestors had been, was not a little vain.

"The estates are entailed," said he, pursuing this line of thought; "they were among the first that were so, when the Scottish parliament passed the Entail Act in 1685; and though they go, as you know, to a remote collateral branch, the baronetcy ends with myself. Cora shall be well and handsomely left; for she shall have the Pitgavel property, which, with its coal and iron mines, yields two thousand per annum clear. And you, my boy, Newton, shall find that, tide what may, you are not forgotten."

"Uncle, you have already done so much for me——"

"Much, Newton?"

"Yes, my dear sir."

"Stuff! fitted you out for the lancers—that is all."

"You have done more than that, uncle——"

"I have lodged the purchase money for your troop with Messrs. Cox and Co.; but most of this money must, under other circumstances, have been spent on your cousins, had they lived. So, thank fate and the fortune of war, not me, boy, not me. But there are times, especially when I am alone, that it grieves me to think that instead of leaving an heir to the old title, one boy lies in his grave in the old kirk yonder; and the other, far, far away on the battle-field of Goojerat."

He shook his white head, and his voice became tremulous, his chin sank on his breast, and he added—

"My poor Nigel!—my bonnie Archie!"

The baronet was a handsome man, above six feet in height, and, though he stooped a little now, had been erect as a pike. He possessed fine aquiline features, a ruddy and healthy complexion; clear, and bright dark grey eyes; a well-shaped, though not very small, mouth; and a Scottish chin, of a curve that evinced perseverance and decision. His hair was nearly white, but there was plenty of it; his hands, though browned by exposure and seldom gloved—for the gun, the rod, the riding-whip, and the curling stone were ever in them by turns—were well shaped, and showed by their form and nails that he was a gentleman of good blood and breeding. His plain costume I have described, and he was without ornament, save a silver dog-whistle at his button-hole, and a large gold signet-ring, which belonged to his grandfather, Sir Alexander Calderwood, who commanded a frigate under Admiral Hawke, in the fleet which, in 1748, fought and vanquished the Spanish galleons between Tortuga and the Havannah.

A sturdy old Fifeshire laird, proud of a long line of warlike Scottish ancestors, uncrossed by any taint of foreign blood, he was fond of boasting that neither Dane nor Norman—the Englishman's strange

vaunt and pride—could be found among them; but that he came of a race, which—as our Highlanders forcibly phrase it—had sprung from the soil, and were indigenous to it.

But, indeed, the alleged foreign descent of nearly the whole Scottish aristocracy is a silly sham, existing in their own imagination, having arisen from the ignorance of the monkish Latin writers, who in rolls and histories prefixed the Norman *de* or *le*, in many instances, to the most common Celtic patronymics and surnames.

Sir Nigel had "paraded," to use a barrack phrase, more than one man in his youth, and enjoyed the reputation of being an unpleasantly good shot with his pistol. He could remember sharing in the rage of the high-flying Tory party among the Fife lairds, when Sir Alexander Boswell, of Auchinleck, was shot by James Stuart, of Dunearn, in a solemn duel, where personal and political rancour were combined, at Balmuto, for which the victor had to fly to England, and from thence to France.

"It seemed strange on reflection, Newton," I have frequently heard Sir Nigel, say, "that poor Boswell was the first to propose in Parliament the repeal of our old Scottish statutes anent duelling, and that, after all, he should fall by the pistol for a mere newspaper squib, in which Sir Walter Scott was, perhaps, as much to blame as he."

CHAPTER III.

Sing on, thou sweet mavis, thy song to the ev'ning,
Thou'rt dear to the echoes of Calderwood Glen;
Sae dear to this bosom, sae heartless and winning,
Is charming young Jessie, the flower o' Dunblane.
TANNAHILL.

"Here is the old house, and here we are at last, Newton," said my uncle, as an abrupt turn of the private path through the woodlands brought us suddenly in front of the ancient mansion, in which, after the early death of my father, I had spent my boyhood.

It stands in a well-wooded hollow, or glen, overlooked by the three Lomonds of Fife—a county which, though not renowned for its picturesque scenery, can show us many peaceful and beautiful landscapes.

Calderwood is simply an old manor-house, or fortalice, like some thousand others in Scotland, having a species of keep, with adjacent buildings, erected during quieter or more recent periods of Scottish history than the first dwelling, which had suffered severely during the wars between Mary of Guise and the Lords of the Congregation, when the soldiers of Desse d'Epainvilliers blew up a portion of it by gunpowder—an act terribly revenged by Sir John Calderwood of the Glen, who had been chamberlain of Fife and captain of the castle of St. Andrew's for Cardinal Beaton. Overtaking a party of the Bandes Françaises in Falkland Woods, he routed them with considerable slaughter, and hung at least a dozen of them on the oak trees in the park of the palace.

The latest additions had been made under the eye of Sir William Bruce of Kinross, the architect of Holyrood—the Scottish Inigo Jones—about a hundred and ninety years before the present period, and thus were somewhat florid and Palladian in their style, their fluted pilasters and Roman cornices and capitals contrasting singularly with the grim severity and strongly-grated windows of the old tower, which was founded on a mass of grey rock, round which a terraced garden lies.

Within this, the older portion, the rooms were strange and quaint in aspect, with arched roofs, wainscoted walls, and yawning fireplaces, damp, rusty, cold, and forlorn, where the atmosphere felt as if the dead Calderwoods of other times visited them, and lingered there apart from the fashionable friends of their descendants in the more modern

mansion; and within the tower Sir Nigel treasured many old relics of the palace of Dunfermline, which, when its roof fell in, in 1708, was literally plundered by the people.

Thus, in one room, he had the cradle of James VI., and the bed in which his son, Charles I., had been born; in another, a cabinet of Anne of Denmark, a chair of Robert III., and a sword of the Regent Albany.

The demesne (Scotice, "policy") around this picturesque old house was amply studded with glorious old timber, under which browsed herds of deer, of a size, strength, and ferocity unknown in England. The stately entrance-gate, bearing the palm-tree of the Calderwoods, a crusading emblem, and the long avenue, of two Scottish miles, and the half-castellated mansion which terminated its leafy vista, well befitted the residence of one whose fathers had ridden forth to uphold Mary's banner at Langside, and that of James VIII. at the battle of Dunblane.

Here was the well where the huntsman and soldier, James V., had slaked his thirst in the forest; and there was the oak under which his father—who fell at Flodden—shot the monarch of the herd by a single bolt from his crossbow.

In short, Calderwood, with all its memories, was a complete epitome of the past.

The Eastern Lomond (so called, like its brothers, from Laomain, a Celtic hero), now reddened by the setting sun, seemed beautiful with the green verdure that at all seasons covers it to the summit, as we approached the house.

Ascending to the richly-carved entrance-door, where one, whilom of oak and iron, had given place to another of plate-glass, a footman, powdered, precise, liveried, and aiguilletted, with the usual amplitude of calf and acute facial angle of his remarkable fraternity, appeared; but ere he could touch the handle it was flung open, and a handsome young girl, with a blooming complexion, sparkling eyes, and a bright and joyous smile, rushed down the steps to meet us.

"Welcome to Calderwood, Newton," she exclaimed; "may our new year be a happy one."

"Many happy ones be yours, Cora," said I, kissing her cheek. "Though I am changed since we last met, your eyes have proved clearer than those of uncle, for, really, he did not know me."

"Oh, papa, was it so?" she asked, while her fine eyes swam with fun and pleasure.

"A fact, my dear girl."

"Ah! I could never be so dull, though you have those new dragoon appendages," said she, laughingly, as I drew her arm through mine, and we passed into a long and stately corridor, furnished with cabinets, busts, paintings, and suits of mail, towards the drawing-room; "and I am not married yet, Newton," she added, with another bright smile.

"But there must be some favoured man, eh, Cora?"

"No," she said, with a tinge of hauteur over her playfulness, "none."

"Time enough to think of marrying, Cora; why, you are only nineteen, and I hope to dance at your wedding when I return from Turkey."

"Turkey," she repeated, while a cloud came over her pure and happy face; "oh, don't talk of that, Newton; I had forgotten it!"

"Yes; does it seem a long, or a doubtful time to look forward to?"

"It seems both, Newton."

"Well, cousin, with those soft violet eyes of yours, and those black, shining braids (the tempting mistletoe is just over your head), and with loves of bonnets, well-fitting gloves and kid boots, dresses ever new and of every hue, you cannot fail to conquer, whenever you please."

She gave me a full, keen glance, that seemed expressive of annoyance, and said, with a little sigh—

"You don't understand me, Newton. We have been so long separated that I think you have forgotten all the peculiarities of my character now."

"What the deuce can she mean?" thought I.

My cousin Cora was in her fullest bloom. She was pretty, remarkably pretty, rather than beautiful; and by some women she was quite eclipsed, even when her cheek flushed and her eyes, a deep violet grey, were most lighted up.

She was fully of the middle height, and finely rounded, with exquisite shoulders, arms, and hands. Her features were small, and perhaps not quite regular. Her eyes were alternately timid, inquiring, and full of animation; but, in fact, their expression was ever varying. Her hair was black, thick, and wavy; and while I looked upon her, and thought of her present charms and of past times—and more than all of my uncle's fatherly regard for me—I felt that, though very fond of her, but for another I might have loved her more dearly and tenderly. And now, as if to interrupt, or rather to confirm the tenor of such thoughts as these, she said, as a lady suddenly approached the door of the drawing-room, which we were about to enter—

"Here is one, a friend, to whom I must introduce you."

"No introduction is necessary," said the other, presenting her hand. "I have had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Norcliff before."

"Lady Louisa!" I exclaimed, in a breathless voice, and a heart that trembled with sudden emotion, as I touched her hand.

"I am so glad you have come before we leave. I shall have so much to ask you about our mutual friends—who are engaged, and who have quarrelled; who have come home, and who gone abroad. We have been no less than four months in Scotland. Meantime," she added, glancing at her tiny watch, "we must dress for dinner. Come, Cora; we have barely half an hour, and old General Rammerscales is so impatient—he studies 'military time,' and with a 'military appetite.'"

And with a bow and smile of great brightness and sweetness she passed on, taking with her Cora, who playfully kissed her hand to me as they glided up the great staircase into which the long corridor opened.

Lady Louisa was taller and larger in person than Cora. Her features were singularly beautiful, and clearly cut; her forehead was low; and her nose had the gentlest approach to the aquiline. She was without colour, her complexion being pale, perhaps creamy; while in strange contrast to this aristocratic pallor of delicacy, her thick, wavy hair, her long double eyelashes, and her ever-sparkling eyes, were black as those of a Spanish gitano or a Welsh gipsy.

To this pale loveliness was added a bearing alternately haughty and playful, but at all times completely self-possessed; an exquisite taste in dress and jewellery; a very alluring voice; a power of investing even trifles with interest, and of conversing fluently and gracefully on any subject—whether she was mistress of it or not mattered little to Lady Louisa.

She was about my own age, perhaps a few months younger; but in experience of the fashionable world, and in knowledge of the manners and ideas of the upper ten thousand, she was a hundred years my senior.

Suffice it to say that I had lost my heart to her—that I thought she knew it well, but feared or disdained to acknowledge a triumph so small as the conquest of a lieutenant of lancers among the many others she had won. So thought I, in the angry humility and jealous bitterness of my heart.

For a minute I felt as one in a dream. I was sensible that my uncle had said something about changing his costume, and, suggesting some change in mine, had apologised, and left me to linger in the corridor, or in the drawing-room, as I chose; but now a personage, who had been lounging on a *fauteuil* in the latter, intent on a volume of *Punch*, and the soles of whose glazed boots had been towards me, suddenly rose and approached, in full evening costume.

He proved to be no other than Berkeley of ours, who had been in the room alone, or, at least, alone with Lady Louisa Loftus. He came slowly forward, with his sauntering air, as if the exertion of walking was a bore, and with his eyeglass retained in its place by a muscular contraction of the right eyebrow. His whole air had the "used-up" bearing of those miserable Dundrearys who affect to act as if youth, wealth, and luxury were the greatest calamities that flesh is heir to, and that life itself was a bore.

"Ah, Norcliff—haw—glad to see you here, old fellow. Haw—heard you were coming. How goes it with you, and how are all at Maidstone?"

"Preparing for foreign service," said I, curtly, as the tip of his gloved hand touched mine.

"Horrid bore! Too late to send in one's papers now, or, by Jove, I'd hook the service. Don't think I was ever meant for it."

"Ere long many more will be of your way of thinking," said I, coolly.

Berkeley had a cold and cunning eye, which never smiled, whatever his mouth might do. His face was, nevertheless, decidedly handsome, and a thick, dark moustache concealed a form of lip which, if seen, would have indicated a thorough sensualist. His head was well shaped; but the accurate division of his well-oiled head over the centre of the caput gave him an air of intense insipidity. Mr. De Warr Berkeley never was a favourite of mine, though we had both joined the lancers on the same day, and it was with very ill-concealed annoyance I found myself compelled, with some apparent cordiality, to greet him as a brother officer and an inmate of my uncle's mansion.

"And—haw—what news from the regiment?" he resumed.

"I really have no news, Berkeley," said I.

"Indeed. You have got a month's leave?"

"Between returns, yes."

"Is the route come?"

"A strange question, when you and I are here."

"Haw—yes, of course—how devilish good."

"It has *not*," said I, coldly; "but we are under orders for foreign service, and may look to have our leaves cancelled by a telegram any day or hour."

"The devil—really!"

"Fact, though, however unpleasant it may be. So my uncle, Sir Nigel, met you at—where was it?"

"Chillingham's shooting-box, in the Highlands."

"I was not aware that you knew the earl."

"Losing my gillies—I think you call them in Scotland—one evening in the dark, I lost my way, and luckily stumbled on his lordship's shooting quarters, in a wild and savage place, with one of your infernally unpronounceable Scotch names."

"Oh, you think changes more euphonious at times; but I suppose your father, honest man, could have pronounced it with ease," said I, quietly, for Berkeley's, or Barclay's affectation of being an Englishman was to me always a source of amusement. "You have to learn Russ yet, and it will prove, doubtless, more unpalatable than the tongue your father spoke. In the north, did you appear *en montagnad*?"

"Hey—haw, the devil! no; as the Irish Gil Blas says, 'Every one's legs can't afford publicity,' and mine are among the number. Leather breeches, when I don the pink, must be all the length. I don't care about going, though Lady Louisa pressed me hard to join the Mac Quaig, the Laird of Mac Gooligan, and other natives in tartan at a gathering. I had a letter from Wilford yesterday. He writes of a famous match between Jack Studhome and Craven, on which the whole mess had a heavy book, that great stakes were pending, and that Craven won, scoring forty-two running off the red ball; and considering that the pockets of the table were not bigger than an egg-cup, I think Craven a trump."

"I heard something of this match at morning parade on the day I left; but being a bad stroke, you know, I seldom play billiards."

"Why was Howard's bay mare scratched at the last regimental race?"

"Don't know," said I, so dryly that he bit his nether lip.

"Some nice people visiting here," said he, staring at me steadily, so that his eyeglass glared in the light of the lustre, which was now lit; "and some very odd ones too. Lady Loftus is here, you see, in all her glory, and with her usual come-kiss-me-if-you-dare kind of look."

"Berkeley, how can you speak thus of one in her position?"

"Well, you-don't-dare-to-do-so-again sort of expression."

"She is my uncle's guest; not a girl in a cigar-shop or a casino!" said I, with growing *hauteur*.

"Sir Nigel's guest—haw—so am I, and I mean to make the best use of my time as such. Nice girl, Miss Wilford, from York—cousin of Wilford of ours—a doocid good style of girl; but have no intentions in that quarter—can't afford to chuck myself away, as I once heard my groom observe."

"You must learn to quote another style of people to make yourself understood here. You don't mean to infer that you have any intentions concerning Lady Louisa!" said I, with an air which was really impertinent.

"Why not?" he asked, failing completely to see it. "I have often such attacks, or affections of the heart, as she has given me."

"How?"

"Just as I had the measles or the chicken-pox in childhood—a little increase of the pulse, a little restlessness at night, and then one gets over it."

"Take care how you address her in this bantering fashion," said I, turning sharply away; "excuse me, but now I must dress for dinner."

And preceded by old Mr. Binns, the white-headed old butler, who many a time in days of yore had carried me on his back, and who now welcomed me home with a hearty shake of the hand, in which there was nothing derogatory to me, though Berkeley's eyes opened very wide when he saw our greeting, I was conducted to my old room in the north wing, where a cheerful fire was blazing, with two lights on each side of the toilette-table (the manor-house was amply lit with gas from the village), and there was Willie Pitblado arranging all my traps and clothes. But dismissing him to visit his family (to his no small joy), I was left to my own reflections and proceeded to dress. A subtle and subdued tone of insolence and jealousy that pervaded the few remarks made by Berkeley irritated and chafed me; yet he had said nothing with which I could grapple, or with which I could openly find fault. I was conscious, too, that my own bearing had been the reverse of courteous and friendly, and that, if I showed my hand thus, I might as well give up the cards. Suspicion of his native character, and a foreknowledge of the man, had doubtless much to do with all this; and while making my toilet with more than my usual care—conscious that Lady Louisa was making hers in the next room—I resolved to keep a lynx-like eye upon Mr. De Warr Berkeley during our short sojourn at Calderwood Glen. My irritation was no way soothed, or my pique lessened, by the information that for some

time past, and quite unknown to me, he had been residing here with Lady Louisa, enjoying all the facilities afforded by hourly propinquity and the seclusion of a country house.

Had he already declared himself? Had he already proposed? The deuce! I thrust aside the thought, and angrily gave my hair a finishing rasp with a pair of huge ivory-handled hair-brushes.

CHAPTER IV.

And, oh! the memories that cling
Around this old oak-panelled room!
The pine logs flashing through the gloom,
Sun sparkles from life's early spring.

After long years I rest again;
This ancient home it seems to me,
Wearied with travel o'er the sea.
Holds anodyne for carking pain.

As I surveyed my old apartment the memories of other years stole over me with somewhat of a soothing influence, for when I thought of the past, the littleness of the present, the evanescent nature of all things could not fail to impress me.

It was in that room I had the last vivid recollection of my dear mother's face, on that farewell morning, when with early dawn she stole in on tiptoe to look for the last time upon her boy as he slept, and before he went forth into the world beyond her maternal care for ever.

The thunder of a gong in the corridor cut short further reflections, recalling me to the present; and giving a finishing touch to my costume, which was not the blue lancer uniform, faced with white, and laced with gold, but the solemn funereal suit and white necktie of civil life—a horrid costume that has crept among us, heaven knows how—I descended to the outer drawing-room, where I found my uncle and cousin marshalling their guests, of whom there appeared to be a goodly number.

Berkeley had already monopolized Lady Louisa, with whom he was conversing in a low tone, while busy stroking his moustaches, which were darkened by the "Guards' dye," and the pointing and twirling of which afforded him endless employment.

There was no denying that the fellow looked well, and that the result of riding, drilling, dancing, and fencing had been to impart to him much of that unmistakable air which, I may say without vanity, belongs particularly to the officers of our branch of the service.

The odd minutes which precede dinner are seldom very lively, and rather depress than raise the spirits. To Cora I was a species of "lion;" and as such underwent, through her, a process of introduction to several people I cared not a jot about, and never would.

I discussed the weather with General Rammerscales, as if I kept a rain-gauge and barometer, and was own brother to Admiral Fitzroy; touched on politics with the M.P., and on clerical innovations with a divine; kissed Cora's hand in play, and drew near to Lady Louisa, nearer still to her awful mother, whom I felt the necessity of conciliating to the utmost. Every one talked in a monotone, except jovial Sir Nigel, who was always cheery, brisk and bustling about from guest to guest.

With the Countess of Chillingham (who accorded me a calm, but courteous bow), my uncle, whose costume was a suit of accurate black, led the way past Binns and a line of liveried and powered gentlemen drawn up in the corridor.

She was a stately woman, of ample proportions, with a diamond tiara glittering on her grey hair.

Her face was fine in feature, and very noble in expression, showing that in youth she must have been beautiful. Her costume was magnificent, being maroon-coloured velvet over white satin, trimmed with the richest lace. I rather dreaded her.

She had all the peerage—"the Englishman's second Bible"—committed to memory; and, through the pages of Burke and Debrett, knew all the available and suitable heirs presumptive by rote—their ages, rank, title, and order of precedence; for it was among the strawberry leaves she chiefly expected to find a husband for her daughter—a marquis at least; and as she swept out of the room, with a velvet train like a coronation robe, she cast a backward glance to see to whose care that fair lady was confided.

Seeing Berkeley paired off with Miss Wilford, I hastened towards Lady Louisa. With her I was sufficiently intimate to have offered my arm.

As I have stated, we had met frequently before, at Canterbury, Bath, and elsewhere. Her society had been to me a source of greater pleasure and excitement than that of any other woman in whose way chance had thrown me.

Her rank, as the daughter of an earl, and her rare beauty had dazzled me, while her coquetry had piqued my vanity; though I imagined that, without discovering the deep interest she excited in my heart, I had taught her to view me as an object of more interest than other men.

I approached, and she received me calmly, placidly, with a bright but conventional smile, from which I could augur or gather nothing.

In her there was none of the clamorous tremor which I felt in my own breast, where something of annoyance at the coldness of her mother's bow was rankling.

"Lady Louisa—permit me," said I, proffering my arm.

"Too late, Mr. Norcliff. I am already engaged," she replied, rising, and placing her pretty gloved hand on the arm of old General Rammerscales, who, bowing and smiling with gratified vanity, remarked to me in passing—

"Been to India, I presume?"

"Yes, general, and Rangoon, too."

"Bah! 'tisn't what it used to be in my time—the Indian service is going to the deuce."

"But I belong to the Lancers."

"Ah!"

A daughter of the liberal M.P., Spittal, of Lickspittal, fell to my lot—a pretty piece of muslin and insipidity; but luckily we were seated not far from Lady Loftus. Near us were Miss Wilford and Berkeley, who proved less inattentive than I during the dinner, which proceeded with more joviality and laughter than is usual in such society; but the guests, twenty-four in number, were somewhat varied, for on this occasion the minister, doctor, and lawyer of the parish, the provost of a neighbouring burgh, and other persons out of the baronet's circle, were present.

In that old Scottish château, the mode of life was deprived of all ostentation, though luxurious and even fashionable.

The great oak table in the dining-room was covered with plenty, and with every delicacy of the season; but in its details it partook more of the baronial hall than such apartments usually do.

It was floored with encaustic tiles, amid the pattern of which the arms of the Calderwoods were reproduced again and again; and at each end sparkled and glowed a great fire of coals from the baronet's own pits, with the smouldering remains of a great yule log that had grown in his own woods, and had been perhaps a green sapling when James V. kept court in Falkland.

In the centre of this dining-hall lay a soft Turkey carpet for the feet of those who were seated at table.

The chairs were all square backed, well cushioned with green velvet, and dated from the time of James VII.; the walls were of dark varnished wainscot, decorated with old portraits and stags' antlers; for there was here a curious blending of old baronial state with the comforts and tastes of modern times and modern luxury.

Above each of the great fireplaces, carved in stone, were the arms of the Calderwoods of Calderwood and Piteadie; *argent* a palm-tree growing out of a mount in base, surmounted by a saltire gules; on a chief

azure, three mullets, the crest being a hand bearing a palm branch, with the motto, "*Veritas premitur non apprimitur*."

Amid the buzz of tongues around me—for, sooth to say, some of my uncle's country guests made noise enough—I looked from time to time beyond the great épergne to where Lady Louisa sat, evidently bored and amused by turns with the laboured conversation of the old sepoy general.

It was impossible to refrain from turning again and again to admire that pale and creamy complexion, those deep black eyes and eyelashes, the small rosy mouth, the thick dark hair that grew in a downward peak, the lovely little ears with their diamond pendants, those hands and arms, which were perfection in colour, delicacy, and symmetry.

Twice her eyes met mine, giving me each time a bright glance of intelligence, and making my heart beat happily.

I fear that the young lady by whose side I was seated must have found me anything but a satisfactory companion, and her simple remarks concerning the coming war, our chances of going abroad, the latest novelty in music or literature—Bulwer, Dickens, Thackeray, and so forth—fell on a dull or inattentive ear.

The dinner passed away as others do; the dessert was discussed. The fruit came, and now, as this was but the second eve of the new year, the old family wassail-bowl was placed before my uncle. Thanks to railway speed, I was enabled to partake of this old-fashioned libation. The great silver vessel in which it was compounded was the pride of Sir Nigel's heart, having been taken by an ancestor at the storming of Newcastle by the Scots in 1640, when the "Fife regiment entered by the great breach in the fore wall." It had four handles of chased silver, each representing a long, lanky hound, with his hind feet on the bulb of the cup, and his nose and fore paws on the upper rim.

It held four bottles of port, which were spiced with cloves, nutmeg, mace, and ginger; the whites of six eggs well whisked and sugared; and six roasted apples were swimming on the top.

To prepare this potent draught was the yearly task of old Mr. Binns, the butler, and my cousin Cora. Sir Nigel rose, and filling his glass from the gigantic tankard, exclaimed, ere he drained it—

"A happy new year to you all, my friends! May the year that is gone be the worst of our lives, and may the new one, that opens full of promise, give joy to all!"

"A happy new year to all, Sir Nigel," went round the table, as we emptied our glasses; and as Binns replenished them from the wassail-bowl, the conversation became more free and unrestrained, for the celebration of the new year is a festival which has not yet fallen into desuetude in Scotland, though it has nearly done so in the sister kingdom.

Wherever Scotchmen go, they never forget the associations or the customs of their fatherland; thus, in England and Ireland, and still more amid the goldfields of Australia, or the rice-swamps of Hong Kong, in the cities, camps, and barracks of India and America—ay, and in our ships far out upon the lonely sea, ten thousand miles, perhaps, from Forth, or Tay, or Clyde, on New Year's morning there are claspings of toil-hardened hands, good wishes exchanged, with the thoughts of home, its familiar faces, and its old fireside; the heather hills, and the deep grassy glens, that some may never see more; but still, amid joy and revelry, and, perhaps, the songs of Burns, the new year is ushered in.

On that morning, as soon as the clocks strike twelve, a cheer passes over all the towns and hamlets of Scotland, from the German to the Atlantic sea; many a bottle is broached, and many a bagpipe blown; and though the wild orgies and uproar, and sometimes the discharge of firearms, with which it used to be welcomed at every market-cross, are passing away, still the New Year's tide is a time of feasting, merry-making, and congratulations with all.

Even that solemn "Dundreary," my brother officer, Berkeley, thawed under the jovial influence of the society around him; but I was provoked to find that it led simply to very animated conversation between himself and Lady Louisa across the table. It referred to a past hunting affair, in which they had had some adventures together.

"We—haw—had not been there more than half an hour before there was a find," said he; "you remember, Lady Louisa?"

"How could I forget?" she responded, with charming animation. "The fox, a dull, reddish fawn one, with black back and shoulders, broke cover from among some gorse at the foot of the Mid Lomond."

"The hounds were instantly in full cry, and away we went. By Jove, it was beautiful! We cleared some garden-walls, where we left the general up to the chin in somebody's hothouse; and after that we took the lead of the entire field."

"We?" said I, inquiringly.

"Lady Louisa and myself," replied Berkeley, with one of his quiet, deep smiles; "we were better mounted, and in riding I—haw—flatter myself that few—few even of your Fifeshire hunt will surpass me."

"Well?" I said, impatiently, crushing a walnut to pieces.

"The meet was at the base of the Mid Lomond; the morning was everything that could be desired; the field was very small, but select; Sir Nigel, the general, Mr. Spittal, Lady Louisa, Miss Calderwood, Miss Wilford, and—haw—a few others. The pack was in a most workman-like condition, and, as Lady Louisa remembers, they soon proclaimed a find, with open mouth."

"Yes," said she, with her dark eyes lighting up; "away we went at racing speed, through the park of Falkland, a two miles open run at least, on, on, over 'bank, bush, and scaur——'"

"But the fox was evidently an old one. He tried some old coal mines, and then some field drains; but they had been carefully stopped by old Pitblado, the keeper. Yet we lost him at a deep pool on the banks of the Eden."

"But for a time only, Mr. Berkeley," resumed Lady Louisa. "You remember how oddly he was found in a cabbage-garden, and how we cleared the hedges at a flying leap, you and I going neck and neck; you must remember, too, how Sir Nigel's shout made all our hearts rebound!"

"Quitting the river-side, he broke southward for two fields, and ran straight through the home farm of Calderwood; on, on we rode, and drove him right in Kinross-shire; but doubling on the dogs, he led us back. Doubling again, we pursued him once more into Kinross; what did you think of that, general?"

"Left to my own reflections among the melon-beds, ten miles in your rear, I thought it devilish poor work when compared to tiger-hunting," growled the general.

"In and out of each county he went no less than three times in as many half-hours," said Lady Louisa; "and but for the darkness of the December evening, he would have been compelled to yield up his brush, had we not lost him in a thicket near Kinies Wood, at Loch Leven side."

"We lost more," said Miss Wilford, with a very decided expression of mischief in her very beautiful blue eyes; "for when the whole hunt assembled, Lady Louisa and Mr. Berkeley were nowhere to be found—the keepers shouted, and horns were blown in vain. Having taken the wrong road, they did not reach the Glen till half-past nine, when a storm of snow was falling."

"Which compelled us, Miss Wilford, to take shelter in wayside cottages at Balgedie and at Orphil," said Lady Louisa, with a tone of real annoyance, while her eye, like a gleam of light, dwelt for an instant on me; but the hunting anecdote and its conclusion piqued—cut me to the heart.

With such opportunities could Berkeley have failed to press his suit?

I glanced at him. His temporary animation had subsided; his pale and impassive face wore its usual quiet and cold expression; yet his eyes were keen, restless, and watchful, even cunning at times. He smiled seldom, and laughed—so to say—never.

Whether it was simply the memory of that winter day's sport, with all its excitement and concomitant danger, in counties so rough and hilly as Fife and Kinross, or whether it was some particular incident connected therewith that inspired her, I know not; but a flush on the usually pale cheek of Louisa Loftus made her look radiantly beautiful—like a dash of rouge, lending a glorious lustre to her deeply-lashed dark

eyes. But now my Lady Chillingham, who evidently did not share her daughter's enthusiasm for field sports, exchanged an expressive glance with Cora, who, of course, occupied the head of the table, with the parish minister in the post of honour at her right hand.

Then we all rose like a covey of partridges, while the ladies retired in single file to the drawing-room, whither I longed to accompany them; but now the gentlemen drew their chairs closer together, side by side; Sir Nigel announced that "the business of the evening was only beginning;" the wine decanters and the claret jugs were replenished; Binns appeared with water steaming hot in an antique silver kettle, followed by a servant bearing liqueur-frames, filled with "mountain dew," for those who preferred toddy, the national beverage, to which fully half the company, including my jolly old kinsman, at once betook themselves.

Somehow those "trifles light as air," which are the torments of the jealous and the doubtful, were added to fears, to crush me now.

Even without the danger of a rival, I knew that "La Mère Chillingham," as the mess called her, would keep a sharp eye upon me, as the possessor of only my subaltern's commission in the lancers, with a couple of hundred or so per annum; for she believed that all men so circumstanced were little better than well-accredited sharpers, and, as such, certain to have nefarious designs upon her wealthy and beautiful daughter—designs which our plumes, epaulettes, and lancer trappings were every way calculated to render more dangerous.

I felt sure that, by such as she, even the wealthy parvenu, De Warr Berkeley, would be less dreaded than I; and as I looked round the old hall of Calderwood, and saw the grim portraits of those who had preceded me, looking disdainfully out of their stiff ruffs and long doublets, and thought of my rival's puerile character, and his father's beer vats, an emotion of real contempt for the cold-blooded and match-making countess stole into my heart.

Louisa Loftus was, indeed, a proud and glorious beauty. I knew not yet what were my chances of success with her, and, in short, I "had nothing for it but to wait and try my best to be sanguine."

The brave old axiom, that "no fortress is impregnable," is a valuable worldly lesson, and one ought never to forget that a storming party rarely fails.

There was some consolation in this reflection.

I took another glass of sparkling hock, another, and another, and somehow through their medium the world began to look more bright and cheering.

CHAPTER V.

Come, let us enjoy the fleeting day,
And banish toil, and laugh at care,
For who would grief and sorrow beat
When he can throw his griefs away?
Away, away! begone, I say!
For mournful thought
Will come unsought.
BOWRING'S "POETRY OF SPAIN."

"Provost," said my uncle to the jovial and rubicund magistrate who sat on his left hand, now that he had taken Cora's place at the head of the table, "try the Johannisberg. It is some given to me by Prince Metternich when I was at Vienna, and is from grapes raised in his own vineyards. Rare stuff it is for those who like such light wines."

"Thank you, Sir Nigel; but Binns, I see, has brought the three elements, so I'll e'en brew some whisky-toddy," replied the magistrate.

The conversation now became more noisy and animated. The approaching war, the treaty of neutrality between the Scandinavian and the Western Powers, whether our fleet had yet entered the Euxine, or

whether Luders had yet burst into the Dobrudscha, became the prevailing topics, and in interest seemed fully to rival that never-failing subject at a country table, fox-hunting.

The county pack, the meet of the Fifeshire hounds at the kennels, or on the green slopes of Largo; of the Buccleuch pack at Blacklaw, Ancrum, and so forth; their runs by wood and wold, loch and lee, rock and river, with many a perilous leap and wild adventure in the field, over a rough and hilly country, were narrated with animation, and descanted on with interest, though all such sank into insignificance beside the history of a hunt in Bengal, where General Rammerscales had figured in pursuit of a tiger (long the terror of the district), seated in a lofty *howdah* of basket-work, strapped on the back of an elephant, twelve feet high to the shoulder, accompanied by the major of his regiment, each armed with two double-barrelled guns.

The tiger, which measured nine feet from his nose to the tip of his tail, and five in height, had been roused from among the jungle grass, and was a brute of the most ferocious kind, yellow in hide, and striped with beautiful transverse bars of black and brown. He was well-known in that district. With his tremendous jaws he had carried off many a foal and buffalo; by a single stroke of his claws he had disembowelled and rent open the body of more than one tall dark sowar of the 3rd Bengal Light Cavalry; and as for sheep and goats, he made no more account of them than if they had been so many shrimps.

With a shrill, short scream of rage, on finding that he was brought to bay at last, he threw himself in cat-fashion on his back, belly upwards, his small and quivering ears close on the back of his head, his dreadful claws thrust out, his eyes glaring like two gigantic carbuncles, his wide, red mouth distended, and every wiry whisker bristling with rage and fury.

The general fired both barrels of his first gun. One shot failed; but the other wounded the tiger in the shoulder, and only served to make him more savage; though, instead of springing upwards, he lay thus on the defensive, gathered up in a round ball.

The major, an enormously fat man, weighing more than twenty stone, now leant over the *howdah* to take a cool and deliberate aim; but the elephant in the same moment happened to bend his fore-knees, for the claws of the tiger were inserted in his trunk.

Losing all balance by this unlucky motion, the poor major toppled headlong over the *howdah*, just as both barrels of his gun exploded harmlessly, amid a yell from the Indian hunters as they thought of his fate.

But, "with a mighty squelch," as the general phrased it, the major, with his twenty-two stone weight of flesh and bone, fell prone upon the fair, white, upturned belly of the tiger!

Terrified, breathless, and bewildered by an antagonist so ponderous, and by such an unexpected mode of attack, the tiger started up, and fled from the scene, leaving the major untouched and unharmed, but seated ruefully among the jungle grass, and with considerable doubts as to his safety and his own identity.

The parish minister fairly overmatched this story by the narrative of a fox which had been drowned by a mussel.

Prior to being appointed pastor of Calderwood Kirk, through the favour of its patron, Sir Nigel, he had been an assistant in a parish situated on the borders of one of the great salt lochs in the western highlands.

When riding one morning along the shore, opposite the Summer Isles, he was surprised to see a large grey fox busy among the basket-mussels, thick clusters of which were adhering to the dark whin rocks which the ebb tide had left dry. The sea was coming in fast; but, strange to say, Reynard seemed to be so much engaged in breakfasting on shell-fish that he was heedless of that important circumstance.

Dismounting, and tying his horse to a tree, the minister made a circuit to reach the place, and being armed with a heavy-handled riding-whip, he had no fear of the encounter; but by the time he arrived at the mussel-beds, the rapid tide had overflowed them, and the fox had disappeared. So, remounting, the minister pursued his way into the mountains.

Returning along the shore by the same path in the evening, when the tide had ebbed, he again saw Reynard in the same place, but lying quite dead, and, on examination, discovered that he was held fast by the tongue between the sharp shells of one of the basket-mussels, which are sometimes seven inches long, and adhere with intense strength to the rocks by the beard, known to the learned as a powerful *byssus*. Seized and retained thus, as if in the grasp of a steel vice, the fox, which had been in the habit of seeking the sea shore to feed on the mussels, had been held fast, until drowned by the advancing tide, which there flows rapidly in from the Atlantic.

This story elicited roars of laughter from the fox-hunters, who had never heard of a brush being taken in such a fashion; and Berkeley expressed astonishment that the anecdote had never found its way into the columns of *Bell's Life*, or other sporting journals.

The provost and minister gabbled about presbyteries and synods, the moderation of calls, elders, deacons, and overtures to the General Assembly, anent sundry ecclesiastical matters, particularly the adoption of organs, and other innovations that savoured of prelacy, making up a jargon which, to many present, and even to me, proved quite unintelligible; but now, as a military man, old Rammerscales seized me by a button, for there was no eluding being bored by him.

He had been so many years in India that he found a difficulty in assuring himself that he was not "up country" and in cantonments still.

Thus, if the rooms were warm, the general grumbled that there was no *punkah* to swing over his head, the baldness of which he polished vigorously, and muttered about "tatties of iced water."

He calculated everything by its value in rupees, and talked much of compounds and cantonments; of *batta* and marching money, of *chutney* and *chunam*, and all manner of queer things, including sepoys and *sowars*, *subadars*, *havildars*, and *jemidars*; thus the most casual remark drew forth some Indian reference.

The cold of last night reminded him of what he had endured in the mountains of Affghanistan; and the dark clouds of this morning were exactly like some he had seen near Calcutta, when a sepoy was killed by

his side by a stroke of lightning, which twisted up the barrel of his musket like a screw—"yes, sir, like a demmed corkscrew!"

Next, the gas offended his eyes, which had been so long accustomed to the oil lamps or oil-shades of his bungalow; and then he spoke to all the servants, even respectable old Mr. Binns (who had been for forty years like Sir Nigel's shadow) as if they had been so many *sycees*, grass-cutters, or tent-pitchers, making them start whenever he addressed them; for he seemed to bark or snap out his words and wishes at "the precious Griffs," as he termed them.

On the other hand, I was bored by the provost, who, like the M.P. (a peace-at-any-price man), by no means approved of the expected war, and informed Berkeley and myself that—

"Our trade—soldiering, to wit—was a deuced poor one—a speculation, a loss, and never profit to any one, individually or collectively."

Berkeley smiled superciliously, eyed the provost through his glass, and blandly asked him to repeat his remark twice over, professing that he did not understand the worthy man.

"If you mean that you disapprove of the intended war, my good friend," said he, "I—haw—quite agree with you, Why the deuce should I fight for the 'sick man' at Constantinople; or for the Turks or the Tartars of the Crimea? It's a horrid bore."

Amid all this uncongenial conversation, I longed for the time when the seniors would move towards the drawing-room, from whence the sounds of music and of voices sweetly attuned were heard to issue at times; for there my star was shining—Louisa Loftus, so beautiful to look upon, and yet whom it seemed so hopeless in me to love!

Lost in reverie, and full of her image, it was some time before I became aware that my distinguished brother in arms, Mr. De Warr Berkeley, was addressing me.

"I beg your pardon," said I, nervously; "did you speak?"

"I was remarking," he lisped, languidly, "that these good people here are—haw—very pleasant, and all that sort of thing; but have little of the —haw—the—haw——"

"What?"

"Oh—the *odeur de la bonne société* about them."

"The deuce!" said I, with some annoyance, for I was conscious that at our end of the table were really gathered the lions of my uncle's dinner party. "I hope you don't include our host in this—he represents the oldest line of baronets in Scotland."

"In Scotland—haw—very good," he drawled.

"Sir Nigel is my uncle," said I, pointedly.

"Yes, by the way, I crave pardon; so deuced stupid of me, when I know well that there are no such sticklers about precedence and dignity as your little baronets."

Coming from a conceited *parvenu*, the cool impudence of this remark was so amusing that I burst into a fit of laughter; and at that moment, by a singular coincidence, Sir Nigel, who had been engaged in an animated discussion, almost amounting to a dispute, with Spittal of Lickspittal, the M.P., now suddenly raised his voice, and without at all intending it, sent one random shot after another at my fashionable comrade.

"I can assure you, sir," he continued, "that such cosmopolitan views as yours, politically and socially, can never be endorsed by me. Thackeray says—and he says truly—that God has created no more offensive creature than a Scotch snob, and I quite agree with him. The chief aim of such is to be thought an Englishman (just as some Englishmen affect the foreigner), and a deplorable caricature he makes of the Englishman in language, bearing, and appearance. An English snob, in whatever his line may be, is, as Thackeray has shown us, a great and amusing original; but a Scotch snob is a poor and vile imitation, and like all counterfeits is easily discernible: Birmingham at once. I know no greater hot-bed of snobbery than our law-courts, sir, especially those of Edinburgh. Binns, pass the claret."

The M.P. bowed, and smiled deprecatingly, for he had long figured among the said courts as one who would joyfully have blacked the boots of the lord advocate or the ministry.

I felt almost sorry for Berkeley while my uncle spurred his hobby against the M.P.; the ugly cap fitted so exactly.

"I know," resumed Sir Nigel, "that in a nation of tuft-hunters like the British, whose Bible is the 'Peerage,' a man with a handle to his name, however small it may be, is a trump card indeed; hence the adoration of rank, which, as some one says, 'if folly in London, deepens into positive vice in the country.'"

"Then what do you say of your poor Scottish metropolis, whose aristocracy consists of a few psalm-singing—aw—bailies and young legal prigs of the bar, whose importance is only equalled by their necessities—boiled mutton and thin Cape Madeira?" said Berkeley, glad of an opportunity to sneer at something Scotch.

"I have known a few honest fellows—and men of first-rate ability, too—connected with the Scottish Parliament House," said Sir Nigel.

"But that, I suppose, was in the old Tory days, when all Edinburgh fell down in the mud to worship George IV., the first gentleman in Europe," said the M.P. as a retort, at which my uncle laughed loudly.

But thus, by his remarks at the fag end of some discussion, Sir Nigel had the effect of completely silencing, and unintentionally mortifying, Berkeley, who continued to sip his wine in silence, and with something of malevolence in his eye, till Binns announced coffee, and we repaired to the drawing-room.

CHAPTER VI.

No, tempt me not—love's sweetest flower
Hath poison in its smile;
Love only woos with dazzling power,
To fetter hearts the while.
I will not wear its rosy chain,

Nor e'en its fragrance prove;
I fear too much love's silent pain—
No, no! I will not love.

Through the cool and airy corridor, with its cabinets full of Sèvres jars, Indian bowls, and sculptured marble busts—on one side the Marli horses in full career crowning a buhl pedestal; on the other a bronze Laocoon, with his two sons, in the coils of the brazen serpents—we proceeded to the drawing-room, a merry and laughing party, for it was impossible to resist the influence of a good dinner, good wines, and jovial company.

On entering we found the ladies variously engaged. A graceful group was about the piano; the Countess of Chillingham was half hidden in the soft arms of a vast velvet chair, where she was playing indolently with her fan, and watching her daughter; others were busy with books of engravings, and some were laughing at the pencil sketches of a local artist, who portrayed the wars of the Celts and Anglo-Saxons, and other nude barbarians, while old Binns and two powdered lacqueys served the tea and coffee on silver trays.

I had hoped to meet Lady Louisa's eye on entering, but the first smile that greeted me was the sweet one of Cora, who, approaching me, put her plump little arm through mine, and said, half reproachfully and half jestingly—

"How long you have lingered over that odious wine, and you have not been here for six years, Newton. Think of that—for six years."

"How many may elapse before I am here again? Do you reproach me, Cora?" I was beginning, for her voice and smile were very alluring.

"Yes, very much," she said, with playful severity.

"Your papa, my good uncle, is somewhat of a stickler for etiquette, consequently I could not rise before the seniors; and then this is the festive season of the year. But hush; Lady Louisa is about to sing, I think."

"A duet, too."

"With whom?"

"Mr. Berkeley. They are always practising duets."

"Always?"

"Yes; she dotes on music."

"Ah, and he pretends to do so, too."

Spreading her ample flounces over the carved walnut-wood piano stool, Lady Louisa ran her white fingers rapidly and with some brilliancy of execution—certainly with perfect confidence—over the keys of a sonorous grand piano; while Berkeley stood near, with an air of considerable affectation and satisfaction, to accompany her, his delicate hands being cased in the tightest of straw-coloured kid gloves; and all the room became hushed into well-bred silence, while they favoured us with the famous duet by *Leonora* and the *Conde di Luna*, "Vivra! Contende il Guibilo."

Berkeley acquitted himself pretty well; so well, that I regretted my own *timbre* tones. But I must confess to being enchanted while Louisa sang; her voice was very seductive, and she had been admirably trained by a good Italian master. I remained a silent listener, full of admiration for her performance, and not a little for the contour of her fine neck and snowy shoulders, from which her maize-coloured opera cloak had fallen.

"Lady Loftus," said Berkeley, "your touch upon the piano is like—like——"

"What, Mr. Berkeley? Now tax your imagination for a new compliment."

"The fingers—haw—of a tenth muse."

She uttered a merry laugh, and continued to run those fingers over the keys.

"Homely style of thing, the baronet's dinner," I heard him whisper, as he stooped over her, with a covert smile in his eyes.

"Ah, you prefer the continental mode we are adopting so successfully in England?"

"The dinner *à la Russe*; exactly."

"Ah, you will get dinners enough of that kind in the Crimea, more than you may have appetite for," she replied, with a manner so quiet, that it was difficult to detect a little satire.

"Most likely," drawled Berkeley, as he twirled his moustaches, without seeing the retort to his bad taste; and then, without invitation, the fair musician gave us a song or two from the "Trovatore;" till her watchful mother advancing, contrived to end her performance, and, greatly to my satisfaction, marched her into the outer drawing-room.

"Cora must sing something now," said I; "her voice has long been strange to me."

"I cannot sing after Lady Loftus's brilliant performance," she said, nervously and hurriedly. "Don't ask me, pray, Newton, dear."

"Nonsense! she shall sing us something. We were talking about snobbish people in the other room," said honest, old blundering Sir Nigel. "I have observed it is a peculiarity of that style of society in Scotland to banish alike national music and national songs. But such is not our *rôle* in Calderwood Glen. A few of our girls certainly attempt with success such glorious airs as those we have just heard, or those from "Roberto il Diavolo" and "Lucia;" but I have heard men, who might sing a plain Scottish song fairly enough, and with credit, make absolute maniacs of themselves by attempting to howl like *Edgardo* in the churchyard, or like *Manrico* at the prison-gate—an affectation of operatic excellence with which I have no patience."

"To take out in fashion what we lose in genuine amusement and enthusiasm is an English habit becoming more common in Scotland every day," said the general.

"So, Cora, darling, sing us one of our songs. Give Newton the old ballad of 'The Thistle and the Rose.' I am sure he has not heard it for many a day."

"Not since I was last under this roof, dear uncle," said I.

This ballad was one of the memories of our childhood, and a great favourite with the old Tory baronet; so I led Cora to the piano.

"It will sound so odd—so primitive, in fact—to these people, especially after what we have heard, Newton," she urged, in a whisper; "but then papa is so obstinate."

"But to please me, Cora."

"To please you, Newton, I would do anything," she replied, with a blush and a happy smile.

I stood by her side while she sang a simple old ballad, that had been taught her by my mother. The air was plaintive, and the words were quaint. By whom they were written I know not, for they are neither to be found in Allan Ramsay's "Miscellany," or any other book of Scottish songs that I have seen. Cora sang with great sweetness, and her voice awakened a flood of old memories and forgotten hopes and fears, with many a boyish aspiration, for music, like perfume, can exert a wonderful effect upon the imagination and on the memory.

THE THISTLE AND THE ROSE.

It was in old times,
When trees composed rhymes,
    And flowers did with elegy flow;
In an old battle-field,
That fair flowers did yield,
    A rose and a thistle did grow.

On a soft summer day,
The rose chanced to say,
    "Friend thistle, I'll with you be plain;
And if you'd simply be
But united to me,
    You would ne'er be a thistle again."

The thistle said, "My spears
Shield me from all fears,
    While you quite unguarded remain;

And well, I suppose,
Though I were a rose,
I'd fain be a thistle again."

"Dearest friend," quoth the rose,
"You falsely suppose—
Bear witness ye flowers of the plain!—
You'd take so much pleasure
In beauty's vast treasure,
You'd ne'er be a thistle again."

The thistle, by guile,
Preferred the rose's smile
To all the gay flowers of the plain;
She threw off her sharp spears,
Unarmed she appears—
And then were united the twain.

But one cold, stormy day,
While helpless she lay,
No longer could sorrow refrain;
She gave a deep moan,
And with many an "Ohone!
Alas for the days when a Stuart filled the throne—
OH! WERE I A THISTLE AGAIN!"

Sir Nigel clapped his hands in applause, and said to the M.P.—

"Lickspittal, my boy, I consider that an anti-centralization song—but, of course, your sympathies and mine are widely apart."

"It is decidedly behind the age, at all events," said the member, laughing.

"You have a delightful voice, Cora—soft and sweet as ever," said I in her ear.

"Thanks, Cora," added Sir Nigel, patting her white shoulder with his strong embrowned hand. "Newton seems quite enchanted; but you must not seek to captivate our lancer."

"Why may I not, papa?"

"Because, as Thackeray says, 'A lady who sets her heart on a lad in uniform, must prepare to change lovers pretty quickly, or her life will be but a sad one.'"

"You are always quoting Thackeray," said Cora, with a little perceptible shrug of her plump shoulders.

"Is such really the case, Mr. Norcliff?" asked Lady Louisa, who had approached us; "are you gentlemen of the sword so heartless?"

"Nay, I trust that, in this instance, the author of 'Esmond' rather quizzes than libels the service," said I. "How beautiful the conservatory looks when lighted up," I added, drawing back the crimson velvet hangings that concealed the door, which stood invitingly open.

"Yes; there are some magnificent exotics here," said the tall, pale beauty, as she swept through, accompanied by Cora and myself.

I had hoped to have a single moment for a tête-à-tête with her; but in vain, for the pertinacious Berkeley, with his slow, invariable saunter, lounged in after us, and, with all the air of a privileged man, followed us from flower to flower as we passed critically along, displaying much vapid interest, and some ignorance alike of botany and floriculture. Without the conservatory, the clear, starry sky of a Scottish winter night arched its blue dome above the summits of the Lomonds; and within, thanks to skill and hot-water pipes, were the yellow flowering cactus, the golden Jobelia, the scarlet querena, the slender tendrils and blue flowers of the liana, the oranges and grapes of the sunny tropics.

"What is that dangling from the vine branch overhead?" asked Lady Louisa.

"Just above us?" said Cora, laughing, as she looked up with a charming smile on her bright girlish face.

"Haw—mistletoe, by Jove!" exclaimed Berkeley, looking up too, with his glass in his eye, and his hands in his pockets.

I am not usually a very timid fellow in matters appertaining to that peculiar parasite; yet I must own that when I saw Lady Loftus, in all the glory of her aristocratic loveliness, so pale and yet so dark, with cousin Cora standing coquettishly by her side, under the gifted branch, that my heart failed me, and its pulses fairly stood still.

"My privilege, cousin," said I, and kissed Cora, as I might have done a sister, ere she could draw back; and the usually laughing girl trembled, and grew so deadly pale, that I surveyed her with surprise.

Lady Louisa hastily drew aside, as I bent over her hand, and barely ventured to touch it with my lips; but judge of my rage and her hauteur when my cool and sarcastic brother officer, Mr. Berkeley, came languidly forward, and claiming what he termed "the privilege of the season," ere she could avoid it, somewhat brusquely pressed his well-moustached lip to her cheek.

Though affecting to smile, she drew haughtily back, with her nether lip quivering, and her black eyes sparkling dangerously.

"The season, as you term it, for these absurdities is over, Berkeley," said I, gravely. "Moreover, this house is not a casino, and that trophy should have been removed by the gardener long since."

I twitched down the branch, and tossed it into a corner. Berkeley only uttered one of his quiet, almost noiseless, laughs, and, without being in the least put out of countenance, made a species of pirouette on the brass heels of his glazed boots, which brought him face to face with the Countess, who at that moment came into the conservatory after her daughter, whom she rarely permitted to go far beyond the range of her eyeglass.

"Lady Chillingham," said he, resolved at once to launch into conversation, "have you heard the rumour that our friend, Lord Lucan, is to command a brigade in the Army of the East?"

"I have heard that he is to command a division, Mr. Berkeley, but Lord George Paget is to have a brigade," replied the Countess, coldly and precisely.

"Ah, Paget—haw—glad to hear it," said he, as he passed loungingly away; "he was an old chum of my father's—haw—doocid glad."

It was a weakness of Berkeley's to talk thus; indeed, it was a common mess-room joke with Wilford, Scriven, Studhome, and others of ours, to bring the peerage on the *tapis*, at a certain hour of the evening, and "trot him out;" but on hearing him speak thus of his father, who—honest man—began life as a drayman, it was too much for me, and I fairly laughed aloud.

The salute he had so daringly given Lady Loftus was to me a keen source of jealous anger and annoyance, which I could neither readily forgive nor forget, and had the old duelling fashion still been extant, the penalty might have proved a dear one. I had the bitter consciousness that she whose hand I had barely ventured to touch with a lip that trembled with suppressed emotion had been brusquely saluted—-actually kissed before my face—by one for whom I had rather more, if possible, than a profound contempt.

What she thought of the episode I know not. A horror of what all well-bred people deem a scene no doubt prevailed, for she took her mother's arm, and passed away, while Cora and I followed them.

Jealousy suggested that much must have passed between them prior to my arrival, otherwise Berkeley, with all his assurance, dared not have acted as he did. This supposition was to me a source of real torture and mortification.

"When love steals into the nature," says a writer, "day by day infiltrating its sentiments, as it were, through every crevice of the being, it will enlist every selfish trait into the service, so that he who loves is half enamoured of himself; but where the passion comes with the overwhelming force of a sudden conviction, when the whole heart is captivated at once, self is forgotten, and the image of the loved one is all that presents itself."

Sleepless that night I lay, tormenting myself with the "trifles light as air," that to young men in my condition are "confirmations strong as proofs of Holy Writ."

At last I slept; but my dreams—those visions that come before the sleeping mind and eye towards the hours of morning—were not of her I loved, but of my pretty and playful cousin, fair-skinned and dark-haired

Cora Calderwood.

CHAPTER VII.

What though our love was never told,
Or breathed in sighs alone;
By sighs that would not be controlled
Its growing strength was shown.
The touch that thrilled us with delight,
The glance, by heart untamed,
In one short moon, as brief as bright,
That tender truth proclaimed.
ALARIC WATTS.

Next morning I resolved that, if possible, it should not pass without some attempt being made to discover the state of Lady Louisa's heart—how she was affected towards me, and whether I had any chance, however remote, of reviving or securing the interest I trusted she had in me when last we met in England. But over night the snow had fallen heavily; it was six inches deep on the lawn, as Willie Pitblado told me. The Lomonds were clothed in ghastly white to their summits, and as we seemed fated to be caged up in doors all day, my chances of seeing Louisa alone would be remote indeed.

In the library and drawing-rooms I found all the guests of last night assembled, save the minister, doctor, and lawyer, who had ridden home, and save her I sought.

The snow caused universal regret, for various excursions had been in progress—some for visiting the ruined castle at Piteadie; some for riding as far as Lochleven; and others, farther still, to see the fragments

that remain of the old abbey of Balmerino.

The Countess and her daughter, arrayed in a charming morning toilette, appeared just as the roar of the gong summoned us to a Scottish breakfast; and of the splendours of such a repast, what gourmand hath not heard?

There were venison, mutton, cold grouse, and ptarmigan, rizzard haddocks from the Firth of Forth, salmon from the Tay, and honey from the Lomond hills; a *liqueur*-stand, containing whisky and brandy, stood at Sir Nigel's right hand. At one end of the table was tea, presided over by Cora; at the other, where Miss Wilford officiated, was coffee.

Over the snowy landscape a glorious flood of sunshine was pouring through the stone mullions of the oriel windows, casting shadows of the old and leafless trees far across the waste of dazzling white.

I had the pleasure of being seated by the side of Lady Loftus, and we chatted away pleasantly of people whom we had met, and places where we had been. The links of the old chain were being rapidly taken up, and every time I looked into the quiet depths of her dark eyes I felt a strong emotion pass over mine.

Berkeley sat on her other side, but I could perceive that she was politely reserved with him; so the art of impudence, an art which he had studied carefully, had availed him but little after the use to which he had put it last night.

"And you go to the East with pleasure?" she asked, casually, after a pause.

"With pleasure, and yet with one great regret," said I, as I lightly touched her hand.

"And this regret, is it a secret?"

"It cannot be spoken of here; and yet a little explanation—one word, it may be—shall send me away the happiest fellow in the Crimean expedition."

"Take courage," she said, in a low voice, that made my heart leap with hope and anticipation.

"Newton, what are you and Lady Loftus talking about so impressively? But, perhaps, I should not inquire," said my uncle, as he carved the cold grouse, and a faint shade of annoyance flitted over the pale face of my companion.

"Well, Sir Nigel," I replied, "I was simply about to say that ere we see such a breakfast as this again, we shall have had a rough turn with the Russians, and talked polyglot-wise with fellows of all nations in the allied camp; have drunk sherbet, perhaps, with the Sultan, ogled his ladies at the gilded lattices, and smoked a *chibouque* with Giafar, Mesrour, and other friends of the Commander of the Faithful."

The flow of my spirits contrasted somewhat with the ebb of Berkeley's. He sat silent, and pulled from time to time his long moustaches and whiskers, which were mingled together—the envy of our apple-cheeked cornets.

But now Mr. Binns came in with the household letter-bag—a leather case, which bore Sir Nigel's name and arms on a brass plate, and its contents (always so welcome at a country breakfast-table) were distributed amongst us.

There were newspapers and letters for all present but me, luckily. I say luckily, for I was hourly in fear of having my short leave cancelled, and receiving a summons from the colonel to head-quarters.

"Lord Slubber de Gullion expresses great surprise that we are staying so long in Scotland," said the Countess of Chillingham, as she rapidly read over a letter written in a large, round-text hand.

"An old bore, mamma."

"Don't say so, Louisa."

The name, which is as near the original as I dare give it, sounded oddly; but there came a time when it was to prove a sad name to me.

"You know Slubber?" said Berkeley, in a low voice, to me.

I shook my head. On which he resumed—

"He is an old peer of a good Anglo-Norman line, as the name imports; rich as a Jew, and sails one of the best yachts that ever loosed canvas at Cowes; a house in Piccadilly; a box at the opera; another of a different kind in the Highlands; a moor in Ireland—bog, some people

call it; an excellent stud, and pack of hounds; a glorious cellar. Rich old fellow, indeed; a great chum of my father's. His dinners are said to be—haw—perfection, from the caviare on sliced bread, *à la Russe*, to the coffee and curaçoa, the mocha and maraschino."

The ladies were all busy with their crossed and recrossed epistles from friends, gossips, and correspondents. My uncle was put in excellent humour by a missive from a meeting of the heritors and others interested in the county hunt, assigning to him the mastership of the hounds, with a couple of thousands per annum towards his expenses, and the defray of damages, if he undertook to hunt the country between the Firths of Forth and Tay.

"You have some jolly good hunters in the—haw—stables, Sir Nigel," said Berkeley, who was somewhat of a sporting man.

"Yes, fairish."

"Dunearn is a clean-limbed animal," said the general.

"Yes; but he was not improved by your gallop among the melon beds," replied Sir Nigel, laughing. "Cost me four hundred and fifty pounds, that horse did. Saline, the grey, with the dark fetlocks, is a better hunter for clearing fences, and crossing a stiff country, and yet cost me only two hundred and ten pounds."

After opening his third or fourth letter, Berkeley evidently received news that was not pleasant, for I heard him mutter almost an oath, as he said, uneasily—

"Jockeyed! Sold by the jockey, Trayner! A cheque on his bank for the amount; about as good as one on the Banks of Newfoundland."

"No bad news, Berkeley, I hope," said my uncle.

"Oh—haw—nothing, Sir Nigel," said he, and retiring into an oriel, he drew forth a memorandum book, and proceeded to consider the weights for a forthcoming race; and so absorbed was he that Cora laughed aloud on hearing him mutter in this fashion, pulling his long moustaches the while—

"Mail-train, five years, eight stone two pounds. Swish-tail, three years, six stone four pounds. Queen Victorina, aged, rather, six stone four pounds," and so on.

As we rose from the breakfast-table, and broke into groups, he dropped a letter in a female handwriting. I picked it up, and followed him. It was open, and the signature, "*Agnes Auriol*," caught my eye.

By that name I knew the writer, and could have crushed Berkeley's chances, perhaps, for ever; but as no such use could be honourably made of it, I touched him on the shoulder, simply saying—

"Pardon me, you have dropped this."

He changed colour painfully as he received the letter, walked to the fire, cast it in, and carefully waited until it was consumed.

I was not without hopes of luring Lady Louisa into the library, the conservatory, or some quiet nook, as a ride or a ramble out of doors was not to be thought of; but my uncle destroyed my chances, by suddenly announcing, with one of his loud and merry laughs, that the glass was rising, the day would yet be fine, and that gentlemen must kill their next day's dinner or go without. He was going to beat the thickets for a few birds, and he had guns for all the party.

The old general grumbled an unmistakable dissent, and Berkeley pocketed his betting-book, drawling out, as he looked at the snowy landscape and left the room—

"A horrid bore!"

"Come, general," said my hearty old uncle, who had not heard Berkeley's uncivil response, "don't think yet of substituting flannel bags for top-boots; Ascension turtle and pink champagne for patience and water gruel; hot fomentations for hot whisky-toddy! Come! put on your shot-belt; the gout is a long way off yet."

"Gad! I am not so sure of that, Sir Nigel; and then there is this cursed jungle-fever, which I got when up the country with the 3rd Bengal, and I have a horror of toast and water, even when flavoured with pale dry sherry."

"Where is Mr. Berkeley loitering; what is he about?"

"Making up his mind, papa, or what he considers to be such," said Cora.

"Fie, Cora," said the old baronet, "you should never quiz a guest."

Berkeley, re-entering, urged that he had letters to write, and so must remain behind; so said Mr. Spittal, the M.P. Thus the shooting party was reduced to Sir Nigel, the keeper, and myself.

Cora brought us each a flask of brandy, then a little packet of sandwiches cut by her own pretty hands in the housekeeper's pantry. These she stuffed into our pockets, and away we went to the keeper's lodge, I, for cogent reasons of my own, most unwillingly, though Lady Louisa smilingly kissed her hand twice to me from the drawing-room window; but as Cora and all the ladies did so at the same time, and waved their handkerchiefs, I could gather but little from that mark of her attention.

Pitblado's cottage was more than a mile distant. The snow was thawing fast, in the sunshine; but we were accoutred in stout leather leggings, and thick, warm shooting coats and caps.

My uncle's manner was fidgety, as we walked onward. He had evidently something on his mind, which he could not express in words, and I could give him no aid. After a pause—

"Newton, lad," said he, "I don't think that you take to your gun very willingly to-day."

"What leads you to think so, uncle?"

"You continued to look back at the house, as long as even the vanes of it were in view, as if the game there had more attractions than the birds out of doors."

"I merely looked back to bow to Lady Loftus and the others," said I, laughing.

"There it is! Why do you put Lady Loftus first?"

"Perhaps because her figure was tallest—I don't know—perhaps I should have named Cora, as the Lady of Calderwood," said I laughing, to hide my growing confusion.

"Newton Norcliff, you have a tenderness for Lady Chillingham's daughter," said Sir Nigel, gravely.

"Have I? Don't know that I have, sir," I repeated, actually flushing.

"Of course you have, and you know it," said he, emphatically.

"But who told you of this?"

"Cora."

"Cora?"

"Yes, with tears in her eyes, this morning."

"Tears! This is incomprehensible. I have only been a single night under the same roof with Lady Loftus."

"Yet Cora has discovered your secret. Girls are quick-sighted in such matters, I can tell you."

"But why had Cora tears?"

"Don't for the life of me know, unless it be that she fears your love will be but moonshine in the water. They are a cold, calculating, and ambitious family, Lord Chillingham's, and will fly their hawk at higher game than mere landed gentry."

"She is a good girl, Cora," said I, thoughtfully

"If you have any fancy for Louisa Loftus, I will back you to any amount," said my blunt uncle, stoutly; "but I don't think my lady mother would relish such a suitor as a lieutenant of cavalry. I have already heard her hint that Lord Slubber has made proposals, with offers of a brilliant settlement; but the man is older than I, and could no more hunt a country or march up a snow-covered brae, as we do now, than fly through the air. At all events, don't throw your heart away farther than is necessary, and what is more, in the meantime, look sharp, I say."

"Sharp!" I exclaimed, bewildered by this odd jumble of advice. "How —why?"

"Don't you perceive what is going on?"

"What, uncle?"

"That yaw-hawing donkey, Berkeley, is doing all he can to take the wind out of your sails."

"Uncle, I have indeed felt a dread of this. He has, you know, a handsome fortune."

"I would not let a fellow like that go neck and neck with me," said Sir Nigel. "I'd cut in and win at a hand gallop. It is your talking, pushing, forward men—seeming always confident of what they say, never acknowledging an error or confessing a defeat, that are too often allowed

to take the lead in life. With average ability, and ten times the average amount of assurance, they often reach the goal that bashful merit never gets a sight of. So cut in, I say, and win, if you want her."

While he was running on thus, I could not but admire, at his years, the hale, sturdy figure, and bluff, hearty bearing of Sir Nigel, in his old shooting toggery. He was always a crack shot, and in youth and middle life had been one of the keenest curlers and golfers between the West and East Neuks of Fife.

It was his great boast that he could yet, if he chose, strike a golf ball from the street over each of the tallest spires of St. Andrew's. A fair hand, too, with the pistol, he had, as I have stated, winged more than one political antagonist, in squabbles about the old Reform Bill, in the days of Brougham, Grey, and Russell. Throw your glove in the air, and he would shoot any finger off it you named; and he would hit a cricket ball, were it cast ever so high, with a single rifle bullet. Thus in his hands I was sent to join the lancers somewhat of a master-of-arms, and certainly a complete horseman.

Sir Nigel, withal, had much the air of a Scotch man-about-town; in Edinburgh a different style of man from he of the same genus in London —he of the glazed boots and carefully-trimmed whiskers, exquisitely solemn and unimpressionable, as if he had seen all the world, and found there was nothing in it.

The "dandy" who hovers about the New Club in Princes-street is usually a six-foot man, bronzed and sunburnt (he has served somewhere —in India generally), and heavily moustached. He carries a huge stick; he wears rough Tweed suits, and double-soled brogues, with toe-pieces and rows of hobnails, as if ever ready for facing the hills and the frozen heather. He may be a snob, like his English brother Dundreary; but he has something rough and service-like in his bearing that is suggestive of climbing rocks, fishing, hunting, and shooting.

But now Sir Nigel's warning, Cora's sharp discovery of my secret, and the knowledge that Berkeley remained behind in full possession of the field, filled me with anxiety and annoyance. The shooting excursion bored me, and I looked for the end before we had well begun.

What might those hours of absence from her cost me?

We reached the gamekeeper's cottage, which was situated amid a dense copsewood, beside a wimpling burn, and near King James's Well. Moss of emerald hue covered all the thatched roof, and in summer green trailers and scarlet-runners made all the white-washed walls and little windows gay.

Now the former were ornamented by ghastly rows of half-decayed hawks, wild cats, fiumarts, and weasels, while the white, bare skull of a stag, with its gallant antlers outspread, was fixed above the door. Along the garden paling the dead hawks hung in dozens, as a regular war was waged between them and old Pitblado, who spent half his days in baiting traps; thus the breeze that passed his cottage was laden with odours, but not those of "a bank of violets."

He was a fine, hale old man, with a weather-beaten aspect, short, grizzled hair, and keen grey eyes, that glistened and grew moist as he warmly shook my hand, and welcomed me to the glen again.

Though respectful and kind, his bearing was not without a native dignity, for he was proud of considering himself the last representative of an old line of Fifeshire lairds, the Pitblados of Pitblado and that ilk, who had lost their land and position long ago; but in his old velveteen coat of no particular colour, his blue bonnet, network game-bag, and long, greasy overalls, Pitblado looked just as I had seen him last. Though "as soldiers in the march of life, we may never learn to mark time, time never fails to mark us."

"It was kind ond thochtfu' o' you, Maister Newton, to bring my laddie, Willie, hame to see me ere ye baith gaed to the wars; and when there, I hope you ond he will tak' a' the care o' ilk ither ye can, for I could as ill spare him as Sir Nigel could spare you; and gang where ye may, Maister Newton, ye'll ne'er ha'e a truer or a sibber friend than Willie Pitblado."

While the old man ran on thus, the dogs came bounding forth.

"Here," said my uncle, "is your old favourite pointer, the white and tan, alive yet."

"But he's a *dis*-appointer noo, Maister Newton, being blind, or bleared a bit; yet I ha'e na the heart, or rather want o' heart, to put the puir beast awa'."

"And here is Keeper, too—brave old Keeper, that I played with when a boy," I exclaimed, as a grand old mastiff, which knew my voice, sprang upon me with joy, whining and barking the while—a dog that was always gentle with children; that wagged his aristocratic tail at all ladies and gentlemen, but howled and growled fearfully at all beggars and poorly-clad folks.

There in that cottage old Willie now lived alone with his dogs and a tame otter. This was a somewhat remarkable animal. He had found it as a cub in a pond near Calderwood Glen, and gradually made it so domesticated that it responded to his voice, followed him about, and employed its talents in fishing for him, bringing each fish regularly to his feet, and at a signal diving in for more; and, strange enough, the terriers that hunted other otters never molested this one.

A pair of brisk young pointers were selected. We loaded, capped, shouldered our guns, and set forth. This was but the beginning of the day's sport, and I sighed with impatience for the end.

"Shall we try the belt of pines on the Standing Stane Rig?" said I.

"It used to be a braw cover for patricks (partridges), and in my father's day for grouse," said Pitblado; "but those Roosians, the weasels, the piots, the hawks, and the shepherd's collies, ha'e played the de'il wi' it. At yon belt o' neeps, where ye see the shaws aboon the snaw, the deer often come out o' the pine wood to ha'e a feed, so that we may chance to get a pot shot at one to-day."

"Come on, then," said Sir Nigel, impatiently. "Blaze away while you can, Newton. In the first week of next month partridge and pheasant shooting ends."

"By that time, uncle, in these swift days of steam, I may be sabreing or potting the Russians."

"Then sabre and pot with a will, boy."

It was from old Pitblado I had received all my early lessons in shooting and fishing, in the art of casting bullets and making flies; and I remember one special piece of advice he always gave me concerning salmon.

"Aye *droon* your salmon before ye land it, Maister Newton, for the dunt on the heid spyles the quality o' the fish; ond if ye hook a grilse, keep its tail up and well in the water till it's clean deid."

We saw no deer that day, and I shot so wildly and queerly, and generally bang into the centre of every covey, without selecting or covering the outside birds, that Sir Nigel was bewildered, and old Pitblado lost all patience with me.

I traversed the snow-covered fields with them as one might do in a dream. I heard an occasional shot from my uncle's gun, the birds rose whirring in the air, and then one or two came tumbling down, to beat the snow with their wings, and stain it with their blood, ere Pitblado thrust them into his ample bag.

I heard his deep impressive voice saying from time to time, "Mark!" when the coveys rose, and to watch where they alighted; then "Seek dead" to the pointers usually followed the bang! bang! of Sir Nigel's barrels; but my mind was completely absorbed in reverie. I saw only the face of Louisa Loftus, with Berkeley hovering about her.

I imagined him having achieved the tête-à-tête I had failed to procure. I imagined him opening the trenches by apologies, in set phraseology, for the offence he had perpetrated in the conservatory; and if he succeeded with such a basis for his operations, where might the matter end? Heavens! for all I knew to the contrary, in a solemn engagement, pending mamma Chillingham's consent, for his lordship, the earl, was somewhat of a cypher in these matters, and in his own house generally. How ingeniously one can torment oneself when afflicted by jealousy! and thus much real misery was mine during that day's weary shooting, and right glad was I when the sun of January, declining beyond the western Lomond, warned my indefatigable uncle that it was time for us to return homeward, after having traversed in our peregrinations some fifteen miles of country.

He had shot four hares, and eighteen brace of birds, four of which were beautiful golden pheasants; while I had knocked over only two partridges—a result at which Cora and Lady Louisa laughed excessively, and each declared they would have the said birds specially cooked for themselves.

CHAPTER VIII.

The heavens were marked by many a filmy streak
E'en in the Orient, and the sun shone through
Those lines, as Hope upon a mourner's cheek
Sheds, meekly chastened, her delightful hue.
From groves and meadows, all empearled with dew,
Rose silvery mist, no eddying wind swept by;
The cottage chimneys, half concealed from view
By their embowering foliage, sent on high
Their pallid wreaths of smoke unruffled to the sky.
BARTON.

Next day the snow had entirely disappeared; the country again looked fresh and green; and when we met for breakfast, and while the ladies were exchanging their morning kisses lightly on each cheek—à la Française, rather than à l'Ecossaise—various excursions were again projected.

Among others, Cora urged that we should visit the ruined Castle of Piteadie, which belonged of old to a branch of my uncle's family now extinct.

It stands on the slope of a gentle eminence, some distance westward of the famous "long town" of Kirkaldy, a pleasant ride of ten miles or so from the glen; and was a place we frequently rode to in the days of my boyhood, when my feats in the saddle were performed on a shaggy, barrel-bellied Shetland pony; so I longed to see the old ruin again.

A message was sent to the stable-yard after luncheon, and horses were ordered for the party, which was to consist of Lady Louisa, Cora, Miss Wilford, Berkeley, the M.P., and myself.

The ladies soon appeared in their riding-habits; and, to my perhaps partial fancy, there seemed something matchless in the grace with which Louisa Loftus held, or draped up, the gathered folds of her ample dark blue skirt in her tightly gloved left hand.

There was the faintest flush on her usually pale cheek, a furtive glancing in her long-lashed dark eyes, as she threw her veil over her shoulder, gave a last smoothing to the braids of her black hair, and tripped down the front steps, leaning on the arm of her courteous old host, to where our cavalry stood, pawing the gravel impatiently, arching their necks, and champing their bright steel bits.

We were soon mounted and *en route*. Cora and Lady Louisa, who were resolved on having a little private gossip, after merrily quizzing me about my dragoon seat on the saddle, rode at first together; and, as we paired off down the avenue, followed by my man, Willie Pitblado, and another well-mounted groom, I found myself alongside of Berkeley, after Sir Nigel, who had a county meeting to attend at Cupar, left us.

"Your uncle's stables make a good turn-out of cavalry," said Berkeley; "this grey is a good bit of horseflesh."

"'Treads well above his pasterns,' is rather a favourite with Sir Nigel," said I, coldly, for he had a patronizing tone about him that I did not relish. I could laugh with Lady Louisa when she spoke of Sir Nigel as "a queer old droll," or "a dear old thing;" but I could ill tolerate Berkeley, when he ran on in the following fashion—

"He is certainly a trump, Sir Nigel, but droll, as Lady Loftus says—exquisitely droll! If he—haw—spills salt, no doubt he remembers Judas, and throws a pinch over his left shoulder; knocks the bottoms out of his

eggs, lest the fairies make tugs of'em; and—haw, haw—would faint, I suppose, if he dined one of thirteen."

"I am not aware that Sir Nigel has any of the proclivities that you mention," said I; but, heedless that I was staring at him, Berkeley, with his bland, insipid smile, continued his impertinence.

"Things have—haw—changed so much within the last few years, that these old fellows are actually ignorant of the world they live in; and the—haw, haw—world goes so fast, that in three years *we* learn more of it, and of life (Gad! they know nothing of real life), than they did in thirty. As a young man, Sir Nigel was, I have no doubt, a buck in leather breeches and hair powder—haw—drove a Stanhope, perhaps, and wore a Spenser, *ultimus Romanorum*; paid his first visit to London in the old mail coach, with a brace of pistols in his pocket, and the thorough conviction that every second Englishman was a thief."

I listened with growing indignation, for on this man, who quizzed him thus, my poor uncle was lavishing his genuine, old-fashioned Scottish hospitality. I had every disposition to quarrel with Berkeley, and had we been with the regiment, or elsewhere, would undoubtedly have done so; but in my uncle's house, a *fracas* with a guest, more especially a brother officer, was the last thing to be thought of.

"You are somewhat unfriendly in your remarks, Mr. Berkeley," said I, haughtily.

"I am—haw—not much of a reader, Norcliff; but I greatly admire a certain writer, who says that 'Friendship means the habit of meeting at dinner—the highest nobility of the soul being his who pays the reckoning!'" replied Berkeley.

"And you always thought that axiom——"

"To be doocid good! Slubber is the only old fellow I ever knew who kept pace with the times."

"Indeed!" said I, with an affected air of perfect unconcern. "I have heard of him—he is said to have proposed to our fair friend in front."

"Ah, may I ask which of them?"

"For Lady Louisa."

"It is very likely—the families are extremely intimate, and I know that she has gone twice to the Continent in Slubber's yacht."

Berkeley said this with a bearing cooler even than mine; but I was aware that the fellow was scanning me closely through his confounded eyeglass.

"His fortune is, I believe, handsome?"

"Magnificent! Sixty thousand a year, at least—haw! His father was a reckless fellow in the days of the Regency, going double-quick to the dogs; but luckily died in time to let the estates go to nurse during the present man's minority. I have heard a good story told of the late Lord Slubber de Gullion, who, having lost a vast sum on the Derby, applied to a well-known broker in town to give him five thousand pounds on my Lady Slubber's jewels.

"'Number the brilliants,' said he, 'and put false stones in their places; she will never know the difference.'

"'You are mosh too late, my lord,' replied he of the three six-pounders, with a grin.

"'Too late! What the devil do you mean, Abraham?'

"'My Lady Slubbersh shold the diamonds to me three years ago, and these stones are all falsh!'

"So my lord retired, collapsed with rage, to find that a march had been stolen upon him—doocid good, that!"

The snow, I have said, had entirely disappeared, save on the summits of the hills; but, swollen by its melting, the wayside runnels bubbled merrily along under the black whins and withered ferns, reflecting the pure blue of the sky overhead. At a place where the road became wider, by a dexterous use of the spurs, I contrived to get my horse between the pads of Cora and Lady Louisa, and so rid myself of Berkeley.

We chatted away pleasantly as we rode on at an easy pace, and ere long, on ascending the higher ground, saw the wide expanse of the Firth of Forth shining with all its ripples under the clear winter sun, with the hills of the Lothians opposite, half shrouded in white vapour.

I would have given all I possessed to have been alone for half an hour with Louisa Loftus, but no such chance or fortune was given me; and though our ride to the ruined castle was, in itself, of small importance, it proved ultimately the means towards an end.

One old woman, wearing one of those peculiar caps which Mary of Gueldres introduced in Scotland, with a black band—the badge of widowhood—over it, appeared at the door of a little thatched cottage, and directed us by a near bridle-path to the ruin, smiling pleasantly as she did so.

"Newton," said Cora, "you remember old Kirsty Jack?"

"Perfectly," said I; "many a luggie of milk I have had from her in past years."

Cora always wondered why people loved her, and why all ranks were so kind to her; but the good little soul was all unaware that her girlish simplicity of manner, her softness of complexion and feature, her winning sweetness of expression and modulation of voice, were so alluring. Had she been so, the charm had, perhaps, vanished, or had become more dangerous by the exercise of coquetry. Often when I looked at her, the idea occurred to me that if I had not been dazzled by Lady Louisa, I should certainly have loved Cora.

The cottage bore a signboard inscribed, "*Christian Jack—a callender[*] by the hour or piece*," an announcement which caused some speculation among our English friends; and ignorant alike of its origin and meaning, or what is more probable, affecting to be so, Berkeley laughed immoderately at the word, simply because it was not English.

[*] Literally a mangle, from *calandre*, the French. The term has been common all over Scotland for centuries. In Paris there is a street named Rue de la Calandre.

"Christian Jack—Presbyterian John, I should suggest," said he, as we cantered along the bridle-path, in Indian file, Cora at our head, with a firm little hand on her reins, her blue veil and her skirt, and two long black ringlets, floating behind her.

Lady Louisa followed close, her jet hair gathered up in thick and elaborate rolls by the artful fingers of her French *soubrette*; her larger and more voluptuous figure displayed to the utmost advantage by her tight riding-habit; and now, in a few minutes, the old ruin, with all its gaping windows, loomed in sight.

It was not an object of much interest, save to Cora and myself, for it had been the scene of many a picnic and visit in childhood, and had been long the seat of a branch of the Calderwoods now extinct and passed away.

Some strange and quaint legends were connected with it; and Willie Pitblado, old Kirsty at the Loanend, and Cora's nurse, had told us tales of the old lairds of Piteadie, and their "clenched hand," which was carved above the gate, that made us feel far from comfortable in the gloomy winter nights, when the vanes creaked overhead, and when the wind that howled down the wooded glen shook the cawing rooks in their nests and made the windows of old Calderwood House rattle in their sockets.

The little castle of Piteadie stands on the face of a sloping bank to the westward of Kirkaldy, and a little to the north of Grange, the old barony of the last champion of Mary Queen of Scots; and no doubt it is founded on the basement of a more ancient structure, for in 1530, during the reign of James V., John Wallanche, Laird of Piteadie, was slain near it, in a feudal quarrel, by Sir John Thomson and John Melville of the House of Raith.

The present edifice belongs to the next century, and is a high, narrow, and turreted pile. The windows are small, and have all been thickly grated, and access is given to the various stories by a narrow circular stair.

Within a pediment, half covered with moss, above the arched gateway in the eastern wall, is a mouldered escutcheon of the Calderwoods, bearing a saltire, with three mullets in chief; and a helmet surmounted by a clenched hand—the initials "W.C." and the date 1686.

Pit is a common prefix to Fifeshire localities. By some antiquarians it is thought to mean Pict; by others a grave.

Cora drew our attention to the clenched hand, and assured us that it grasped something that was meant to represent a lock or ringlet of hair.

Whether this was the case or not, it was impossible for us to say, so much was it covered by the green moss and russet-hued lichens; but she added that "it embodied a quaint little legend, which she would relate to us after dinner."

"And why not now, dear Cora?" said Lady Loftus. "If it is a legend, where so fitting a place as this old ruin, with its roofless walls and shattered windows?"

"We have not time to linger, Louisa," said Cora, pointing with her whip to the great hill of Largo, the cone of which was rapidly becoming hidden by a grey cloud; while another mass of vapour, dense and gloomy, laden with hail or snow, came heavily up from the German Sea, and began to obscure the sun. "See, a wintry blast is coming on, and the sooner we get back to the glen the better. Lead the way, Newton, and we shall follow."

"With pleasure," said I; and giving a farewell glance at the old ruin I might never see again, I turned my horse's head northward, and led the way homeward at a smart canter; but we had barely entered Calderwood avenue when the storm of hail and sleet came down in all its fury.

Dinner over, I joined the ladies early in the drawing-room, leaving the M.P. to take the place of Sir Nigel, who was still absent. The heavy curtains, drawn closely over all the oriels, rendered us heedless of the state of the weather without; and while Binns traversed the room with his coffee-trays, a group was gathered in a corner round Cora, from whom we claimed her story of the old castle we had just visited, and she related it somewhat in the following manner.

CHAPTER IX.

"Is there any room at your head, Emma?
Is there any room at your feet?
Is there any room at your side, Emma,
Where I may sleep so sweet?

"There is no room at my side, Robin;
There is no room at my feet.
My bed is dark and narrow now;
But, oh! my sleep is sweet."
OLD BALLAD.

During the time of King Charles I. and the wars of the great Marquis of Montrose, his captain-general in Scotland—that terrible period when the civil war was waged in England, and Scotland was rent in twain between the armies of the Covenant and of the Cavaliers—William Calderwood of Piteadie was the lover of Annora Moultray,[*] daughter of Symon, the Laird of Seafield; a tower which stands upon the seashore, not far from Kinghorn.

[*] Pronounced "Moutrie" in Scotland.

Both were young and handsome; both were the pride of the district at kirk, market, and merry-meeting; and a time had been fixed for their marriage when the troubles of the Covenant came. Calderwood adhered to the king, and the father of his bride to Cromwell, and the Puritan English.

So the poor lovers were separated; their engagement deemed broken by the parents of Annora, who were dark, gloomy, and stern religionists—true old Whigs of Fife; but on the day before William Calderwood departed to join the great Marquis, who was advancing from the north at the head of his victorious Highlanders, he contrived to have

a farewell interview with his mistress at the little ruined chapel of Eglise Marie, which stood, within a few years ago, at Tyrie, in the fields near Grange.

In those days of ecclesiastical tyranny and social espionage, little could escape the parish minister; so the Reverend Elijah Howler promptly apprised Symon of Moultray of his daughter's "foregathering" with the ungodly one at that relic of Popery, the chapel of Mary. They were surprised by the furious father, who exclaimed—

"Sackcloth and ashes! ye graceless limmer, begone to your spindle, and thou, mansworn loon, draw!"

Unsheathing his sword, he rushed upon Calderwood, and would have slain him, notwithstanding the sanctity of the place, but for the interference of his youngest son, Philip, who accompanied him, and parried the threatening sword.

He hurled, however, the deepest and most bitter reproaches upon Calderwood, as "an apostate from the kirk of God; the adherent of a king who had broken the Covenant; a leaguer with the mansworn and God-forsaken James Grahame of Montrose, and his murdering gang of Highland Philistines; the representative of a false brood, among whom no daughter of his should ever mate without a father's curse resting on her bridal-bed," with much more to the same purpose.

The young gentleman strove to deprecate his anger; but, "Away!" the fiery old man resumed; "hence, ye troubler o' Israel, who hast hearkened unto the devil and his prelates; and beware how ye cross the purpose o' Symon o' Seafield, for all the powers o' hell may fail to balk my vengeance!"

Under his shaggy brows his eyes glared at Calderwood as he spoke; and fiercely he drew his blue bonnet over them, as he hurled his broadsword into its scabbard, struck its basket-hilt significantly, and, grasping his terrified daughter by the wrist, dragged her rudely away. A farewell glance, mute and despairing, was all that the parted lovers could exchange. As for the injurious reproaches of the irate old man, Willie Calderwood heeded them not. He only mourned in his heart this civil

and religious war, that had engendered hate and rancour in the breasts of those at whose board he had long been a welcome guest, and who certainly, at one time, loved him well.

If Symon of Seafield was rancorous in his animosity, his wife, the Lady Grizel Kirkaldie of Abden, was doubly so. Thus the poor Annora, as she sat by her side, guiding the whirling spindle, or spinning monotonously at her wheel, was compelled, in the intervals of prayer, bible reading, catechizing, and mortification of the body and spirit, to hear the most insulting epithets heaped upon the name of her young and handsome lover, whose figure, as she saw him last at Eglise Marie, with his long, black cavalier plume shading his saddened face, and his scarlet mantle muffling the hilt of the rapier he dared not to draw on *her* father, seemed ever before her.

To prevent their meeting again, Annora was secluded and carefully watched in the upper storey of Seafield Tower; and by her brothers' fowling-pieces many a stray pigeon was shot, lest a note might be tied under its wing. The tower forms a striking feature on the sea-beaten shore, midway between the Kirkcaldy and Kinghorn-ness. It rests on one side on a mass of red sandstone rock; on the other it was guarded by a fosse and bridge, the remains of which can yet be traced. To the seaward lie the Vows—some dangerous rocks, on which, on a terrific night in the December of 1800, a great ship of Elbing perished with all her crew.

A roofless and open ruin now, exposed to the blasts which sweep up the Firth from the German Sea, it has long been abandoned to the seamew, the bat, and the owl, or the ugla, as it was named of old in Fifeshire.

But the seclusion of Annora was not required; for, on the very day after the interview which was so roughly interrupted at Eglise Marie, Willie Calderwood, at the head of sixteen troopers, all sturdy "Kailsuppers of Fife," well mounted and accoutred in half armour—*i.e.*, back, breast, and pot, with sword, pistol, and musketoon—had departed for the king's host, and joined the Marquis of Montrose, whose troops,

flushed with their victorious battles at Tippermuir, Alford, Aldearn, and the Brig o' Dee, came pouring over the Ochil mountains, to sack and burn the Castle of Gloom.

Tidings of this advance spread rapidly from the West to the East Neuk of Fife. Great numbers of the Whig lairds repaired to the standard of Baillie, the covenanting general; and among others who drew their swords under him at the battle of Kilsythe, were Symon of Seafield and his three sons.

The latter, fiery and determined youths, had but one object or idea—to single out and slay without mercy William Calderwood, on the first field where swords were crossed.

The parting injunction of their father to Dame Grizel was to leave nothing undone to urge on the marriage of Annora with the Reverend Elijah Howler, a sour-visaged saint, in Geneva cloak and starched bands, with the lappets of a calotte cap covering his grizzled hair and cadaverous cheeks, who, during the troubles that seemed to draw nearer, had taken up his residence in that gloomy tower, which was half surrounded by the waves.

At another time, had she dared, Annora, who was really a merry-hearted girl, with curling chestnut hair and clear bright hazel eyes, might have laughed at such a lover as this "lean and slippered pantaloon," who now, in scriptural phraseology, culled chiefly out of the Old Testament, besought her to share his heart and fortunes; but the dangers that overhung her affianced husband and her father's household, whichever side conquered in the great battle that was impending, and the monotony of her own existence, which was varied only by the long nasal prayers and quavering psalmody in which the inhabitants of the tower (chiefly old women now) lamented the iniquity of mankind, and "warsled wi' the Lord"—prayers and psalms that mingled with the cries of the sea-birds, and the boom of the ocean on the rocks around the tower, all tended to crush her naturally joyous spirit, and corrode her young heart with artificial gloom.

She was frequently discovered in tears by Dame Grizel; and then sharp, indeed, was the rebuke that fell upon her.

"Oh, mother dear," she would exclaim, "pity me!"

"Silence! bairn, and greet nae mair," the lady would reply, sharply. "Hearken to the voice of ane that loves ye; but not after the fashion of this miserable world—the Reverend Elijah. Bethink ye on whom your hellicate cavalier may e'en the now be showering his ungodly kisses. Bethink ye—

> That auld love is cauld love,
> But new love is true love.

Elijah loves ye weel, and, though the man be auld, his love is new and true."

Annora shuddered with anger and grief; while her stern mother, giving additional impetus to her spinning-wheel, as she sat in the ingle by the hall fire, eyed her grimly askance, and muttered—

"Calderwood, forsooth! There never cam' faith or truth frae one o' the line o' Piteadie since the cardinal was stickit by Norman Leslie, a hundred years ago. Are ye a daughter o' mine and o' Symon Moultray, and yet are hen-hearted enough to renounce God and his covenanted kirk, and adhere to bishops and curates?—to seek the fushionless milk that cometh frae a yeld bosom, sic as the kirk o' prelacy hath? Fie! and awa' wi' ye!"

"I forsake nae kirk, mother," urged the poor lassie; "but I will adhere to my Willie. Falsehood never came o' his line, and the Calderwoods are auld as the three trees o' Dysart."

"And shall be shunned like the de'il o' Dysart," replied her mother, beating the hearthstone with the high heel of her red shoe.

The cornfields were yellowing in the fertile Howe of Fife, and the woods were still green in all their summer beauty, when, about Old Lammas-day, in the year 1645, there went a vague whisper through the land—none knew how—that a bloody battle had been fought somewhere about the Fells of Campsie; that many a helmet had been cloven, many a blue-bonneted head lay on the purple heather; and that many a Whig Fife laird had perished with his followers.

Sorely troubled in spirit, the Reverend Elijah Howler took his ivory-handled staff, adjusted his bands and his beaver above his calotte cap, and, in quest of sure tidings, set forth to Kinghorn, at the market-cross of which he had heard the terrible intelligence, that the sword of the ungodly had triumphed—that Montrose had burst into the lowlands like a roaring lion, seeking whom he might devour; and all along the Burntisland Road Elijah saw the Fife troopers come spurring, with buff-coats slashed, and harness battered, bloody, dusty, and having all the signs of discomfiture and fear.

Ere long he learned that Symon of Seafield and his three sons were in safety (thanks to their horses' heels); but that the Marquis of Montrose had encountered the army of the covenant on the field of Kilsythe, where he had gained a great and terrible victory, slaying, by the edge of the sword, six thousand soldiers; that the killing covered fourteen miles Scottish—*i.e.*, twenty-five miles English—and that on the men of the Fifeshire regiments had fallen the most serious slaughter.

In fact, very few of them ever returned, for nearly all perished, and the terror of that day is still a tradition in many a hamlet of Fife.

Annora felt joy in her heart when her father and brothers returned; yet it was not without alloy, for where was he whom she had sworn to love, and a lock of whose dark brown hair she wore in secret next her heart?

Lying cold and mangled, perhaps, on the field of Kilsythe!

There one of her father's men, Roger of Tyrie, had found a relic of terrible import. It was a kilmaur's whittle; the blade was of fine steel, hafted with tortoiseshell, adorned with silver circlets. It was graven with the Calderwood arms, and spotted with blood; but whose blood?

Symon and his sons came home to the tower crestfallen, and with hearts full of bitterness. Symon's steel cap, with its triple bars, had been struck from his head by the marquis's own sword, and now he wore a broad bonnet, with the blue cockade of the Covenant streaming from it, over his left ear.

Long, lank, and grizzled, his hair flowed over his shoulders upon his gorget and cuirass. His complexion was sallow, his expression fierce, as he trod, spurred and jack-booted, into the vaulted hall of the tower, and grimly kissed Dame Grizel on the forehead.

"The godless Philistines have been victorious, and yet ye have a' come back to me without scratch or scar," she exclaimed, with Spartan bitterness.

"Even sae, gudewife—even sae; but for that day at Kilsythe vengeance shall yet be ours!"

"Yea, verily," groaned Elijah Howler; "for it was a day of woe, a day of 'wailing and of loud lamentation,' as the weeping of Jazer, when the lords of the heathen had broken down her principal plants; and as the mourning of Rachel, who wept for her children, and would not be comforted."

"Get me a stoup o' ale," said Symon, with something like an oath, as he flung aside his sword and gauntlets. "And thou, minion, after that day o' bluid, will ye cling yet to that son o' Belial, Willie Calderwood?" asked Symon, sternly, of his shrinking daughter. "Thrice I saw him in the charge, and covered him ilk time wi' my petronel; but lead availed not, and I hadna about me a siller coin that fitted the muzzle of my weapon, else he had been i' the mools this nicht. But horse and spear lads!" he added, turning to his sons. "Ere we sleep, we shall ride by Grange, and rook out Calderwood Glen wi' a flaming lunt!"

So Symon and his sons had a deep carouse in the old hall with their troopers, all sturdy "Kailsuppers of Fife," drinking confusion to their enemies.

Now it is an open ruin; then it was crossed by a great oak beam, whereon hung spears and bows. On the walls were the horns of many a buck from Falkland Woods.

Many an oak almerie and meal-girnel stood round; and rows of pots and pans, pell-mell among helmets and corslets, swords and bucklers, spits and branders, made up the decorations and the furniture; while a

great fire of wood and coal from "my Lord Sinclair's heughs" blazed day and night on the stone hearth, making the hall to seem in some places all red and quivering in red light, or sunk in sable shadow elsewhere.

It had but two chairs—one for the laird, and one for the lady—for such was then the etiquette in Scotland; thus even the Reverend Elijah had to accommodate his lean shanks on a three-legged creepie.

Dogs of various kinds were always basking before the fire on dun deer-skins; but the chief of them was Symon's great Scottish staghound, which was exactly of the breed and appearance described in the old rhyme—

> Headed lyke a snake,
> Neckèd lyke a drake.
> Footed lyke a catte,
> Taylèd lyke a ratte,
> Syded lyke a team,
> Chynèd lyke a beam.

On that night Symon and his sons, with Roger of Tyrie, and other followers, crossed the hill to Piteadie, and sacked and set on fire the dwelling of the Calderwoods, who, as adherents of the king, were deemed beyond the pale of the law by the Scottish government.

In the murk midnight, from the tower head of Seafield, the heart-sticken Annora could see the red flames of rapine wavering in the sky, beyond the woods of Grange, in the direction where she knew so well her absent lover's dwelling stood; and when her father and brothers came galloping down the brae, and clattering over the drawbridge of the tower, they laughingly boasted that, in passing Eglise Marie, they had defaced the family tomb of the Calderwoods, and overthrown the throchstone that marked where Willie's mother lay, under the shadow of an old yew tree.

"The nest is gane, Grizy," said Symon, grimly, as he unclasped his corslet, and hung his sword on the wall; "the nest is scouthered weel, and the black rooks can return to it nae mair."

"Would that we could lure the tassel to the gosshawk again," said Lady Grizel, with a dark glance at her daughter.

"For what end, gudewife?" asked Symon, with surprise.

"To make him a tassel on the dule-tree there without," was the cruel response.

Annora felt as if her heart was bursting; it seemed so strange and unnatural that all this savage hate should exist because her poor Willie adhered to the king rather than to the kirk.

A few weeks passed, and there was loud revelry, and many a stoup and black-jack of ale and usquebaugh drained joyfully in Seafield, for tidings came of the total rout of the Scottish Cavaliers at Philiphaugh, and of the flight of the great marquis and all his followers none knew whither; but rumour said to High Germanie.

Had Willie Calderwood escaped? asked Annora, in her trembling heart; or had he fallen at the Slainmanslee, where the Covenanters butchered all who fell into their hands, even mothers with their babes that hung at their breasts?

And these acts, and many other such, did her new lover justify by many a savage quotation from the wars of the Jews in the days of old. Now the kirk was triumphant, and, Judas-like, had sold its king, as old Peter Heylin said, even as it would have sold its Saviour could it have found a purchaser.

Winter came on—a cold and bitter one—the soft spray of the sea froze on the tower windows of Seafield, while the moss and the grass grew together on the hearthstones of Piteadie, and the crows had built their nests in the old chimneys and nooks of the ruined castle.

Hard strove father and mother with Annora; but—

> If a lass won't change her mind,
> Nobody can make her.

The Reverend Elijah Howler was a happy man in one sense; the cause of his beloved kirk was triumphant, though Cromwell's Puritans, who had succeeded the Cavaliers of Montrose as antagonists, bade fair to become sore troublers of Israel; and loud were the lamentations when, by sound of trumpet, the English sectaries warned the General Assembly to begone from Edinburgh, and to assemble no more. Yet the Reverend Elijah was unhappy in another sense. Annora heard his pious love-making with averted ear, and he might as well have poured forth his texts, his dreary talk, and intoned homilies, to the waves that beat at the rocky basement of the tower—at once Annora's prison and her home.

Meanwhile, she grew pale, and thin, and sickly. Her younger brother, Philip, pitied her in his heart, and, after making inquiries, learned that Willie Calderwood was now in France, where he had been wounded in a duel by the Abbé Gondy, but had become his friend, and now adhered to him when he had become famous as the Cardinal de Retz; and, as such, served and defended him in the wars of the Fronde, with a hundred other cavaliers of Montrose.

"Oh, waly, waly, my mother dear!" she exclaimed, using the bitterest old Scottish exclamation of grief, as she threw herself on the bosom of the unflinching Lady Grizel. "Pity me—pity me, for none love me here, and Willie is far far awa' in France owre the sea."

"A' the better, bairn—a' the better."

"But I may never see him mair!"

"A' the better still, bairn."

"Oh, mother dear," urged the weeping girl, "dinna say sae; ye'll rive my puir heart in twain amang ye. And this Fronde, and these Frondeurs, what is *it*, what are *they*?"

"What would it be but some Papist devilry, or a Calderwood wadna be in the middle o't?" was the angry response.

Poor Annora knew not what to think, for there were no newspapers in those days, and rumours of events in distant lands came vaguely by chance travellers, and at long intervals. Lothian and Fife were almost farther apart in those days than Scotland and France are now, in the matters of news and travel.

She felt like Juliet in the feud between the families—

> "Tis but thy *name* that is my enemy;—
> Though art thyself though, not a Montague.
> What's Montague? It is not hand or foot,
> Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
> Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
> What's in a name? That which we call a rose
> By any other name would smell as sweet.
> ——Doff thy name;
> And for that name, which is no part of thee,
> Take all myself.

Even as water dropping on a granite rock will wear that rock away in course of time, so, by the systematic tyranny of her parents, and by their reiterated assurances, and even forged proofs, that Willie Calderwood had fallen, sword in hand, at the battle of the Barricades, was Annora worn and wearied into a state of acquiescence, in which she accepted Mr. Elijah Howler as her husband.

This was the climax of years of a gloomy, sabbatical life, during which the Judaical rigidity of religious observance made Sunday a periodical horror, and Seafield Tower a daily hell.

So they were married, and he removed her from the tower to the adjacent manse, from the more cheerful and ungrated windows of which she could see in the distance the roofless turrets and open walls of Piteadie, where the crows clustered and flapped their black wings, for the ruin had become a veritable rookery.

The king was dead; he had perished on the scaffold, and Scotland, under Cromwell and the false Argyle, was quiet, as we are told in that poetical romance by Macaulay, entitled "The History of England."

On a Sunday in summer, in the year of Glencairn's rising in the north for King Charles II., Annora sat in the Kirk of Calderwood about the beginning of sermon. The reverend Elijah, with straight, lank hair,

and upturned eyes, Geneva bands and gown, after a glance at the dark oak pew where his young bride and victim sat, like the spectre of her former self, so pale, so crushed and heartbroken, twice repeated, in a dreary and quavering tone, the text upon which he was about to preach, with special reference to the rising in the north, inviting all sons of the Kirk to arm against the loyal Highlanders—

"*He saith among the trumpets, Ha! ha! and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains and the shouting! He is not affrighted, neither turneth he back from the sword; he goeth forth to meet the armed men.*"—Job xxxix.

Having given this warlike text, he adjusted his cloak, and turned the sand-glass, which, according to the fashion of those days, stood on the reading-desk. The rustle of Bible leaves, as of those that lie strewn in autumn, when gently stirred by the wind, passed through all the church; but from Annora's trembling and wan fingers, her Bible fell heavily to the ground.

At that moment a gaily-dressed young man, with the white rose in his plumed hat and on his laced mantle, with slashed doublet and boots, as he passed slowly up the aisle—the observed of all observers—as such cavalier fripperies were supposed to have passed away with Montrose and the king, stooped, and presented her with the fallen book.

Their haggard eyes met. He was pale even as death. A great wound, a sword-cut that traversed his face like a livid streak, in healing, had distorted the features; but like a glance of lightning that flashed into her soul, she recognized Willie Calderwood!

She would have shrieked, but lacked the power; a little sigh could only escape her, and so she swooned away.

There was a great commotion in the village kirk. She was borne forth into the air, and laid for a time upon a throchstane, or altar tomb, and was then conveyed to the manse, where she remained long as one on the verge of madness or the grave. The face of Willie, so sweet, so sad and earnest, but, alas! so sorely distorted, seemed ever before her,

together with his gallant air and courtly bearing, all of which were so different from those of the sour-featured Whigs by whom she was surrounded.

But she was informed by her younger brother, Philip, that she should never see that face or bearing more, as her lover had come home, sorely wounded and broken in health, not to seek vengeance on her or hers, but only to die among his kinsmen, the Calderwoods of the Glen; and that he had died there, three days after their meeting in the kirk; and was buried at Eglise Marie, in the tomb of the lairds of Piteadie.

It was in one of the last evenings of autumn, when after hearing this sorrowful narrative, and with it the knowledge that the only heart that ever truly loved her was cold in the grave, that Annora—in the craving for solitude and to be alone, left the old ivy-covered manse, and passing through the garden, issued into the glebe—a spacious park, surrounded by venerable trees—and seating herself upon a moss-grown stile, strove to think calmly, if possible, and pray.

Resplendent in gold and purple, the sky threw out in strong contour the summits of the Lomonds, from which the last rays of sunset had faded; and where she sat alone. The darkness had almost set in, the woods were so leafy and dense; yet in some places the twilight was liquid and clear. The trees were already yellowing fast, and the sear and russet leaves that had fallen before the strong gales that swept through the Howe, or great midland valley of Fife, were whirling about the place where she sat, as if to remind her that the year was dying.

Often in happier times had she wandered here with Willie, and the bark of more than one tree there bore their names and initials cut by his knife or dagger. The woodcock was seeking his nest in the hedges, and the snipe and the wild coot were among the reeds and rushes of the loch and burn; and Annora, as she gazed around her, thought sadly that it was the autumn of a year of married misery, and the winter of her aching heart.

Suddenly some mysterious impulse—for there was no sound but the sense of something being nigh, made her look round, and then a start, a shudder, convulsed her, rooting her to the spot; for there by the stile

whereon she sat was Willie Calderwood, looking just as she had seen him last, in his cavalier dress, with plumed beaver and white cockade, long rapier and short velvet mantle: but his features, when viewed by the calm, clear twilight, seemed paler, his eyes sadder, and the sword wound on his cheek more livid and dark.

He was not dead—he lived yet, and her brother Philip had deceived her!

She made a start forward, and then drew back, withheld by an impulse of terror, and holding up her poor thin hands deprecatingly, faltered out—

"Oh! come not nigh me, Willie. I am a wedded wife."

"And false to me, Annora. Is it not so?" he asked, with a voice that thrilled through her.

She wept, and laid her hands upon her crushed heart, while Willie's sad eyes, that had a glare in them, caused doubtless by his wound, seemed to pierce her soul; they seemed so bright, so earnest, and beseeching in the autumn twilight.

"They told you I was false to you, or slain in France, and you believed them?"

"I did, Willie," she sobbed, as she covered her face.

"I have lain on many a field, lassie, where the rain of heaven and the wind of night swept over me—fields where the living could scarce be kenned frae the dead, yet I was never slain."

"But, oh," she urged, "Willie, never, never will ye ken——"

"I ken a'! They told you that I was dead, too, and graved in yonder kirk."

"They did, Willie dear—they did."

"Yet I am here before you. I came home to wed you, lassie, and to join my Lord Glencairn in the north, and to fight against this accursed Cromwell and his Puritans, but it maunna be," he added, sadly, in a hollow tone.

"Oh, leave me, Willie, leave me. If you should be seen wi' me——"

"Seen!" he exclaimed, with a bitter laugh.

"Oh, leave me; for what seek ye here?"

"But a lock o' your bonnie hair, lassie—a lock to lay beside my heart."

Her scissors were at the chatelaine that dangled from her girdle; she glanced fearfully at the windows of the manse, where lights were beginning to glimmer; but undoing her hair, she cut a long and ripply tress, and handed it to Willie. As she drew near, the expression of his eyes again froze her blood, they seemed so sadly earnest and glazed; and as his fingers closed upon the coveted tress, and touched hers, they felt icy cold and clammy, like those of a corpse.

Then a shriek of terror burst from her, and falling on the grass, she became senseless, and oblivious of everything.

For days after this she raved of her meeting with Willie Calderwood, and of the lock of hair she had given him. Some thought her mind wandered; but others pointed significantly to the facts that her scissors had been found by her side, and to where a large tress had been certainly cut from her left temple.

The young laird of Piteadie was assuredly dead, and buried among his kindred in St. Mary's Chapel; but the age was one of superstition, of wraiths, and omens; and people whispered, and shook their heads, and knew not what to think, save that she must have seen a spectre.

Ere a week elapsed, Annora died quietly in her mother's arms, forgiving and blessing her; but adhering to the story of the gift to her dead lover. So strong at last grew the excitement in the neighbourhood that some began to aver that he was not dead at all, but was leading a troop of horse, under Glencairn, in the north.

Even those who had seen the funeral cortège issue from the House of the Glen were so sceptical on the subject, that the tomb was opened by order of the next heir, and there, sure enough, was the body of Willie Calderwood; but the leaden cerements were rent from top to bottom, the grave-clothes were all in disorder, and in the right hand was clenched a long and silky tress of Annora's hair![*]

[*] The plough has recently uprooted the last stone of this old chapel; but its name, corrupted into "Legsmalie," is borne by the field where it stood.

How it came there none could say, though many averred it had been buried with him at his own request, and was the gift of other years; but the next heir, his nephew, William Calderwood, whose initials we may see above the eastern gate of the old fortalice, when he repaired it in 1686, in lieu of the palm branch of his name, placed above the helmet an arm and clenched hand, which holds a lock of hair—the same crest we all saw this morning.

From that time the Moultrays of Seafield never prospered. The last of the family was killed during the insurrection of 1715. Their line passed away. It was long represented by the Moultrays of Rescobie, also now extinct, and their tower is a crumbling ruin by the sea-shore.

* * * * *

Such was Cora's strange story, to which we all, myself included, listened with attention, though, sooth to say, I had heard it frequently before. Berkeley declared it to be "doocid good, but doocid queer."

In another land I was yet to hear a story still more gloomy and improbable than this—a story to be related in its place, and in some points not unlike the legend of the clenched hand.

While Cora had been rehearsing her gloomy story of the two ruined towers, my eyes had scarcely ever wandered from Louisa Loftus, who, with Miss Wilford and I, was seated in the same flirting, or tête-à-tête chair, and who, on this night, was in all the pride of her calm, pale, aristocratic beauty.

She was in the zenith of her charms; her figure, finely rounded, was full—almost voluptuous; her features were remarkably expressive to be so regular; and her eyes and glorious hair were wondrously dark when contrasted with the pure whiteness of her skin.

Seated under the brilliant crystal gaselier, the fine contour of her head, and the exquisite proportions of her bare shoulders and neck, on which a circlet of brilliants sparkled, were seen to perfection, and I felt

bewildered while I watched her. Thus, I fear, Miss Wilford, in whose blue eyes a mischievous expression was twinkling, did not find me very entertaining company.

Down that fair neck a long black ringlet wandered, as if to allure, and at times it almost touched, my hand. Intoxicated by her beauty and close vicinity, I determined to do something to express my passion, even if I should do it—miserable timidity and subterfuge—under cover of a jest—a mockery.

Tremulously, between my fingers, unnoticed by others, I took the stray ringlet, and whispered in her ears—

"A strange story, that of my cousin's, Lady Louisa."

"And the lock of hair! such a terrible idea!" said she, shuddering, while her white shoulders and brilliants shone in the light together.

"Does it terrify you?"

"More than it gratifies me."

"As the chances are that I may be killed and buried in the East, will —will you give me *this* to lie in the trenches with me?" said I, curling the soft ringlet round my finger, with mock gallantry, while my heart beat wildly with hope and expectation.

She turned her dark, full eyes to mine, with an expression of mingled surprise and sweetness.

"Take it *now*, Mr. Norcliff, for heaven's sake, rather than come for it, as William Calderwood came," said the sprightly Miss Wilford, taking a pair of scissors from a gueridon table that stood close by; and ere Lady Loftus could speak, the dark ringlet was cut off, and consigned to my pocket-book, while my lips trembled as I whispered my thanks, and laughingly said—

"What says Pope?

> 'The meeting points the sacred hair dissever,
> From the fair head for ever, and for ever.'"

"This is all very well, Mr. Norcliff," said she, laughing behind her fan; "but I cannot submit to be shorn in jest, and shall insist on having that lock of hair from you to-morrow."

She had a lovely smile in her dark eyes, and a half-pout on her beautiful lip; but Cora—I know not why—looked on me sadly, and shook her pretty head with an air of warning, that seemed as much as to say I had erred in my gallantry, if not in my generalship.

That night my heart beat happily; I went to sleep with that jetty tress beneath my pillow; thus, for me, Cousin Cora had not in vain told her quaint old legend of "The Clenched Hand."

CHAPTER X.

I loved—yes. Ah, let me tell
The fatal charms by which I fell!
Her form the tam'risk's waving shoot,
Her breast the cocoa's youngling fruit.

Her eyes were jetty, jet her hair,
O'ershadowing face like lotus fair;
Her lips were rubies, guarding flowers
Of jasmine, dimned with vernal showers.
STONE TALK.

The next day was to see a crisis in my fate which I could not have anticipated, combined with the narrow escape from mutilation or death of more than one of our pleasant party assembled at the Glen.

With all the intensity of my soul, I wished to learn my chances of success with the brilliant Lady Louisa, yet trembled to make the essay.

Why, or how was this?

Timid and irresolute, fearing to know the best or the worst from the lips of a mere girl, I asked myself was it I—I, who, at the bombardment of Rangoon, at the storm of the Dagon Pagoda, and in the night attack on Frome, had feared neither the bullets nor poisoned arrows of the two-sworded barbarians whom it was our ill-luck to encounter in those tropical regions; I, who, without fear or flinching, was now ready to meet the Russians in Turkey, or anywhere else; was it I that could not muster hardihood to reveal the emotions, the honourable love, of an honest heart? It was; and, at times, I felt inclined to utter a malison on that which General Napier so truly and happily termed, "the cold shade of aristocracy;" for that it was which chilled and baffled me.

In the drawing-room the first who met me was my Cousin Cora, looking pale, but bright-eyed, with her pure complexion, and in all her morning prettiness.

"Lady Loftus, I presume, has not appeared yet?" said I.

"It is always Lady Loftus with you, Cousin Newton," said she, pettishly, "though you came here to see papa and me. What have you done with that celebrated lock of hair? Put it in the fire, eh?"

"In the fire, Cora! It is here, in my pocket-book."

"Doubtless you are very proud of it?"

"I cannot but be, Cora," said I, taking her hands in mine, and drawing her into the recess of an oriel window; "and she is herself so proud and reserved. I am sure that she knows what you have seen, Cora; at least, what my uncle says you have detected,—that—that——"

"What, Newton? How rambling and mysterious you are!"

"That I love her."

"You are sure she knows this?" asked Cora.

"Yes, my dear cousin; it is impossible that the regard with which she has inspired me could fail to be known, seen, or felt by her—I mean that it must have been apparent to her, by a thousand mute indications, since we first met in England. It is so to you, is it not?"

"Ye—yes," replied Cora, with her face averted, for no doubt she was smiling at my earnest simplicity.

"Do you think she would tolerate attentions that were valueless, or would trifle with me?"

"I cannot say."

"But you are her particular friend. Oh, Cora, be mine too!"

"What on earth do you mean?" asked Cora, showing me still only her pretty profile; "you cannot wish *me* to propose to her for you?"

"No; but you hide your sweet face, Cora. You are laughing at me!"

"Oh, no, I am not laughing," replied Cora, in a rich, low tremulous voice. "Heaven knows, Newton, how far my thoughts are removed from laughter."

"And—what is this, Cora dear? Your eyes are full of tears!"

"Are they?" she exclaimed angrily, as she withdrew her hands from mine.

"Yes—ah, I see it all," said I, bitterly; "you know Lady Louisa's heart better than I do, and deem my love for her a hopeless one."

"It is not so," replied Cora, while her cheek flushed, and, though her long lashes drooped, an air of hauteur stole over her usually gentle and lovable bearing. "I know nothing of the matter. Search her heart for yourself; assist you I cannot; and what is more, Newton Norcliff," she added haughtily, "I will not!"

"Cora!" I exclaimed, with surprise; "but be it so. Myself then must be my own advocate, and if my love for Lady Louisa——"

What I was about to add, or how I meant to finish the sentence, I know not, for at that moment she approached, with her calm, somewhat conventional, but beautiful smile, to kiss Cora, and present her hand to me. The rest of our party rapidly assembled.

Had she heard the *last* words of my interrupted speech? I almost feared, or rather hoped, that she had.

"This, I find, is to be the day of another expedition, Mr. Norcliff," she observed.

"So it appears. We are to see the Fifeshire hounds throw off at Largo House; and afterwards we are to drive home by a circuit, through half the country, to let Lady Chillingham see the scenery."

"In a January day!" drawled Berkeley. "Do we—aw—start before tiffin?"

"If by that you mean luncheon, I say after it, decidedly," said Lady Chillingham, in her cool, determined manner, which few—the earl, her husband, especially—could gainsay. "I have to write to my Lord Slubber and others."

"Pardon me, my dear Lady Chillingham, but this arrangement is impossible," said my uncle; "we must leave this in time to see the hounds throw off."

"And the hour, Sir Nigel?"

"Sharp twelve. Binns will take luncheon for us in the boot of the drag. Berkeley, you, I believe, are to don the pink, and ride with me. I shall cross the country to-night, but not in my official capacity, as I have not yet assumed all the duties appertaining to the honourable office of the master of the Fifeshire hounds. And now to breakfast. Lady Chillingham, permit me—your hand, and we shall lead the way."

"When I do take the hunting of the country into my own care," resumed my uncle, "I shall show you as noble a pack as ever drew cover; ay, dogs as smart as ever had their tails running after them, even before cub-hunting begins next season; and so compactly shall they go, that a tablecloth might cover them all when in full cry."

"By that time, uncle, I shall be testing the mettle of the Russian cavalry; but my heart will be with you all here in Calderwood Glen."

Lady Louisa's eyes were upon me as I said this; their expression was unfathomable, so I was fain to construe it into something sympathetic or of interest in my fate.

The day was clear and beautiful; the air serene, though cold, and the swelling outlines of the green and verdant hills were sharply defined against the blue of the sky, where a few fleecy clouds were floating on the west wind.

Our party lost no time in preparing for the expedition of the day, and, ere long, the vehicles, the horses, and even the ladies, were all in marching order. I had too much tact to attempt to engross Lady Loftus

at the beginning of the day; but resolved, as she was to be with "mamma" in the drag, to become one of its occupants when returning home, if I could achieve nothing better.

My man Pitblado, and other grooms, brought forth the saddled horses, and my uncle appeared in a red hunting-coat, boots and tops, with whip and cap complete, his cheek glowing with health and pleasure, and his eyes sparkling as if he were again sixteen.

"By the way, Newton," said he, slapping his boot-tops, "that lancer fellow of yours——"

"Willie Pitblado, my servant?"

"Yes, well, he has tumbled Lady Chillingham's French soubrette about, as if he had known her from infancy; and what suits the meridian of Maidstone barracks won't do at Calderwood Glen, so tell him. And now, Mr. Berkeley, here are Dunearn, Saline, and Splinter-bar. You can have your choice of cavalry; but shorten your stirrups. I always take the leathers up two holes for hunting."

"Aw—haw, thanks," drawled this Dundreary (whose fashionable hunting suit, in cut and brilliancy of colour, quite eclipsed the well-worn costume of the jolly old baronet), as he proceeded leisurely to examine the bridle and girths, observing the while to me—

"Louisa looks well this morning."

"Louisa!" I repeated, with astonishment: "is it the mare—her name is Saline, so called from some hills in Fife—or whom on earth do you mean?"

"Why, Lady Loftus, to be sure."

"And you speak of her thus freely or familiarly?"

"Ya—haw—yes."

"By Jove, you surprise me!"

"By what, eh?"

"Your perfect assurance, to be plain with you, my friend."

"Don't deem it such, my dear fellaw, though it is doocid dangerous when one comes to speak of so charming a girl by her Christian name; it shows how a fellaw thinks or *feels*, and all that sort of thing; do you understand?"

"Not very clearly; but consider, Berkeley, what you are about, and don't make a deucid fool of yourself," said I, with undisguised anger.

"No danger of that; but—haw—surely you are not spooney in that quarter yourself? Eh—haw—if I thought so, curse me if I wouldn't draw stakes, and hedge. You know that I like you, Newton; and your old uncle, Sir Nigel, is a doocid good kind of fellaw—a trump, in fact," he added, while lightly vaulting into his saddle, and gathering up his reins, but eying me like a lynx, through his glass, as if to read my most secret thoughts.

Disdaining to reply, I drew haughtily back.

"So-oh," said my uncle, who was now mounted. "I know that grey mare, Saline, well; so, Mr. Berkeley, by gently feeling her mouth, and grinding her up to the requisite pitch of speed, she'll soon leave the whole field behind her."

Our party was numerous; including my uncle's guests, some thirty ladies and gentlemen were about to start from the Glen. We were well off in conveyances. There was the great old family carriage, cosily stuffed, easily hung, pannelled and escutcheoned, with rumble and hammercloth; there was a stately drag of a dark chocolate colour, with red wheels, and a glorious team of greys; a dashing waggonette and tandem, with two brilliant bays, that, in the shafts, were well worth three hundred pounds each; and there was a dainty little phaeton, in which the general was to drive Cora and Miss Wilford, drawn by two of the sleekest, roundest, and sauciest little ponies that ever came out of Ultima Thule.

I was to drive the drag to the meet; and, after the hunt, Berkeley was to meet us at a certain point on the Cupar Road, and drive the vehicle home, if I felt disposed to yield the ribbons to him, which I had quite resolved to do.

Of the noise and excitement, the spurring, yelping, and hallooing, sounding of horns, and cracking of whips; the greetings of rough and boisterous country friends; the criticisms that ensued on dogs, horses, and harness; of how the cover was drawn, and the fox broke away; how

huntsmen and hounds followed "owre bank, bush, and scaur," as if the devil had got loose, and life depended on his instant re-capture, and of all the incidents of the hunt, I need give no relation here.

The afternoon was well-nigh spent before we saw the last of my uncle's companions; and to the luncheon provided by Mr. Binns we had done full justice, the roof of the drag being covered by a white cloth, and improvised as a dining-table, whereon was spread a *déjeûner* service of splendid Wedgwood ware, the champagne sparkling in the sun, and the long glasses of potash and Beaujolais foaming up for the thirsty; and Largo Law, a green and conical hill, verdant to its summit a thousand feet above the waters of the bay, was throwing its shadow to the eastward, when we made arrangements for our return; and, thanks to dear Cora's tact and management, rather than my own—for timidity and doubt embarrassed me—I contrived to get Lady Louisa into the tandem. After which, by giving a hint to Willie Pitblado, he managed to set the horses kicking and plunging in such an alarming fashion that it was necessary to give them their heads for a little way, as if to soothe their ruffled tempers, just as he adroitly had got into the back seat.

Lady Chillingham, the M.P., the Misses Spittal, and Rammerscales were all bundled into the drag; others were on the roof, great-coated or well-shawled, for a cool drive home, and the whole party set out for the Glen, *viâ* Clatto and Collessie, a twenty-five miles' drive.

It was past the hour of three before all was packed up and we were all ready to leave Largo. The grave old butler, Binns, looked at his watch, and said—

"Mr. Newton, you know the route we go by."

"Yes; round by Dunnikier Law."

"That is the road Sir Nigel wished us to drive; but you'll require to use your whip if we are to be home before dark."

"Never fear for that, Binns," said I, while leading the way in the tandem with Lady Louisa beside me, and no attendant or other companion, save Willie Pitblado, who had or had not ears and eyes just as occasion required, Mamma Chillingham believing the while that she was with other ladies in the close carriage.

"Keep a tight hand on the leader, sir," whispered Pitblado; "she's a blood mare, rather fresh from the stall, and overcorned a bit."

"She is hard-mouthed," said I, "and pulls like the devil."

"As for the wheeler, I think the splinter-bar is too low, and she kicks and shies at it; but the breeching is as short as we could make it. Keep a sharp look out on both, sir," said he, warningly, and then relapsed into apparent immobility.

For the *first* time since our introduction had I been alone with Lady Louisa—I say alone, for I did not count on my servant, who seemed wholly intent on looking anywhere but at us, and chiefly behind, as if to see how soon we could distance the four-in-hand drag and the rest of our party.

The vehicle we occupied was a hybrid affair, which my uncle frequently used, half gig and half dog-cart, four-wheeled, with Collinge's patent axles, lever drag, and silver lamps, smart, strong, light, and decidedly "bang up."

We went along at a spanking pace. My fair companion was chatty and delightfully gay; her dark eyes were unusually bright, for the whole events of the day, and the lunch *al fresco*, had all tended to exhilaration of spirits.

She forgot what her rigid, aristocratic, and match-making mamma might think of her being alone thus with a young subaltern of lancers; but though her white ermine boa was not paler than her complexion usually was, she had now a tinge, almost a flush, on her soft, rounded cheek that made her radiantly beautiful, and I felt that now or never was the time to address her in the language of love.

I knew that the crisis had come; but how was I to approach it?

CHAPTER XI.

The rocky guardians of the clime
Frown on me, as they menaced death;
While echoing still in measured time
The gallop of my courser's hoof,
They hoarsely bid me stand aloof.
Where goest thou, madman? Where no shade
Of tree or tent shall screen thy head.
Still on—still on; I turn my eyes—
The cliffs no longer mock the skies:
The peaks shrink back, and hide their brow,
Each other's lofty peaks below.

FROM THE POETRY OF MICKIEWICZ.

As if inspired by fortune, or my good genius, Lady Louisa began thus, in a low voice—

"By the way, Mr. Norcliff, you were to have shown me the house in which Alexander Selkirk—or Robinson Crusoe—was born in 1676, I think you said?"

"Oh; it is only a cottage, consisting of one storey and a garret; but the next time we come to Largo, I shall show you his flip-can, musket, and a lock of his hair."

"Ah, that reminds me, Mr. Norcliff, that you must return to me the lock of hair which you obtained when inspired with romance by Miss Calderwood's legend last night."

"Lady Louisa, I implore your permission to retain it," said I, in a low voice.

"To what end, or for what reason?" she asked, with a furtive smile.

"I am going far, far away, and it will serve as a memento of many happy days, and of one whom I shall never cease to remember, but with ——"

"Why, you don't mean to say that—that you are serious?" she asked, in a voice that betrayed emotion, while my heart rose to my trembling lips, and I turned to gaze upon her with an unmistakable expression of love and tenderness, which made her colour come and go visibly.

Reassuring herself, she began to smile.

"Perhaps your creed is a soldier's one?" said she, with a little convulsive laugh, as she tied her veil under her chin.

"A soldier's! I hope so; but in what sense do you mean?"

"'To love all that is lovely, and all that you can,' as the song has it."

I laid a hand lightly on her soft arm, and was about to say something there could be no misconstruing, while a film seemed to pass over my eyes, and my soul rose to my lips; but Pitblado, who, whether he was listening or not, had a sharp eye on the cattle, now said—

"Beg your pardon, sir, but I don't like the look of that leader."

"The blood mare with the white star on her forehead," said I, touching her lightly on the flank with the whip, and making her curvet; "she is usually very quiet."

"Perhaps so, sir; but she's always clapping her ears close down—throwing her eyes backward, and showing the whites. She's up to mischief, I'm certain."

"Jump down, then," said I, "shorten the curb, and lengthen the traces by a hole or two."

This was done in a trice; Willie sprang into his seat like a harlequin, and away we went from the Kirktoun of Largo at a rasping pace.

"She's a lovely animal, with pasterns like a girl's ankles; but she's clapping her tail a little too close in for my taste, sir, and she's up to some devilry," persisted Pitblado, and ere long his surmises proved correct.

"We've left the drag behind; distanced it clean already," said I.

"It's a heavier drag than the regimental one at head-quarters, sir," said Willie, taking the hint to look back now; but the sound of hoofs or wheels could no longer be detected in the still evening air behind.

Full of blood and ill-natured, over-corned, and anxious to get back to their stables, the speed of the animals increased to a pace that soon became alarming, and the light vehicle to which they were harnessed, as I have said, a tandem, swept along like a toy at their heels, while we flew eastward by Halhill; and, ere we reached the woods of Balcarris, where the road turns due north, and round by the base of Dunnikier Law, it was evident that they were fairly and undoubtedly off!

The leader had got the bit between her teeth, and, when descending a hill-side, the splinter-bar goaded the wheeler to madness. All my strength, together with Pitblado's, failed to arrest their mad career, and, while imploring Lady Louisa, who clung to me, "to hold fast, to sit still," and so forth, I bent all my energies rather to guide them along, and avoid collisions, than to attempt to stop them; and, to add to our troubles, the patent drag gave way.

Luckily, the road was smooth, and free from all obstruction.

"To the left, sir—to the left," shouted Pitblado, as we came to a place where two roads branched off; "that is Drumhead. Our way lies due west."

Pitblado might as well have shouted to the wind; the infuriated brutes took their own way, and tore at an awful pace due north. Horses pasturing by the wayside trotted to the rear, and sheep browsing in the fields fled at our approach; cattle kicked up their heels, and scampered away in herds. House-dogs barked, terriers yelled, and pursued us open-mouthed; children, ducks, cocks, and hens fled from the village gutters; peasants, at their cottage doors, held up their hands, with shouts of fear, while broad fields and lines of leafless trees, turf dykes, and hedges, drains, and thatched dwellings seemed all to fly past with railway speed, or to be revolving in a circle round us.

A shriek of commiseration burst from my affrighted companion, when, just as we swept past the base of Drumcarra Craig, in the cold, bleak, and elevated district of Cameron, poor Willie Pitblado, who had risen to give me the assistance of his hands in bearing on the reins, or for the last time to try and let down the faulty drag, fell out behind, and

vanished in a moment. And now before us spread Magus Muir, where the graves of Archbishop Sharpe's murderers lie in a field that has never been ploughed even unto this day.

Twilight had come on, and a brilliant aurora, forming great pillars of variegated light, that shot upward and downward from the horizon to the dome of heaven, filled all the northern quarter of the sky with singular but many masses of streamers. Thus, the brilliance of the atmosphere cast forward in strong and black outline the range of hills that bound the Howe of Fife, and terminate the valley through which the Ceres flows to join the Eden; and all this, I think, conduced to add to the terror of the horses.

Pitblado's fate greatly alarmed and concerned me, for he was a brave, handsome, and faithful fellow, and an old acquaintance; but I had another—a nearer, dearer—and more intense source of anxiety. If she who sat beside me, clinging to me, and embracing my left arm with all her energy—she whom I loved so deeply, and whom I had lured into the tandem, when she might have been safely in the drag or carriage, should lose her life that night, of what value would my future existence be, embittered with such a terrible reflection?

"If a linchpin comes loose, or a trace gives way," thought I, "all will be over with us both."

"Oh, Mr. Norcliff, Mr. Norcliff!" she exclaimed, while the tears, which she had no means of wiping away, streamed over her pale and beautiful face, and while her head half-reclined on my shoulder. "Heaven help us, this is terrible—most terrible! We shall certainly be killed!"

"Then I hope it shall be *together*," I exclaimed. "Lady Loftus—dear Lady Loftus—dearest Louisa (here was a jump) trust to me, and me only! (what stuff men will talk; who else could she trust to?) and if it is in the power of humanity to save you, you shall be saved, or I shall die with you. Louisa, oh, Louisa, hear me. I would not—I could not survive you; but—but sit still, sit close, grasp me and hold on for Heaven's sake. (D—

n that leader!) Oh, Louisa, I love you, love you dearly and devotedly. You must believe me when I say it at a time like this; when death, perhaps, is staring us face to face. Speak to me, dearest!"

I felt that the day, the hour, the moment of destiny had come; that time of joy or sorrow forever, and casting all upon it, committing the reins to my right hand, I threw my left arm round her, and pressing her to my breast, told her again and again how fondly I loved her, while still our mad steeds tore on.

"I know that you love me, Mr. Norcliff," she said, in a low and agitated voice, as her constitutional self-possession returned. "I have long seen it—felt it."

"My adorable Louisa!"

"And I will not—will not——"

She paused, painfully.

"What? Oh, speak."

"Deny that I love you in return."

"Heaven bless you, my darling, for saying so; for lifting a load of anxiety from my heart, and for making me so happy," I whispered, making an effectual effort to kiss her forehead.

"But then, Mr. Norcliff——"

"Alas! yes; but what?"

"There is mamma; you know, perhaps, her views concerning me—ambitious views; but we must take another time, if Heaven spares, to talk of that matter."

"What time so good as this?" I exclaimed impetuously, as we tore along, and Magus Muir, the Bishop's Wood, and Gullane's gravestone were left behind. "Poor me, a lieutenant of the lancers; and the earl, your father."

"Oh, dear papa—good, easy man—I don't think he troubles his head much in the affair; but if mamma knew all this, such a violation of her standing orders, heaven help us!"

She could almost have laughed but for the peril on which we were rushing, and a shrill little cry escaped her, as the leader suddenly quitted the hard highway, and, followed by the wheeler, passed throughan open

field gate, and continued at the same frightful speed across a large space of pasture land that sloped steeply down to where my forebodings told me the Eden lay, and there, sure enough, in less than a minute, we could see the river rolling among the copsewood, with its waters swollen by the snows that had recently melted among the Lomond hills.

Though a placid stream usually, and having a pretty level course, in that quarter the banks were rugged, and the bed full of fallen larches and large boulder stones. If the vehicle overturned, what might be the fate of her who had just acknowledged that she loved me?

A prayer—almost a solemn invocation—rose to my lips, when, with the rapidity of light, the thought occurred to me of heading the leader towards a little stone bridge that spanned the stream. It was a mere narrow footway for shepherds, sheep, and cattle, and not of sufficient breadth to permit the passage of a four-wheeled gig; but I knew that if the latter could be successfully jammed between the walls, the course of the runaways would be arrested.

There was no alternative between attempting this and risking death from drowning or mutilation in the rugged bed of the swollen stream.

Down the steep grassy slope our foam-covered cattle rushed straight for the narrow bridge; I grasped the rail of the seat with one hand and arm; the other was round Louisa, lest the coming shock might throw us off. In an instant we felt it, and she clung to me, half-fainting, as there was a terrible crash, a ripping and splitting sound, as wood was smashed and harness rent. Our course was arrested—the wheels and axle of the fore-carriage wedged between the stone walls of the narrow bridge, the wheeler kicking furiously at the splinter-bar and splash-board, and the leader, the blood mare, the source of all the mischief, hanging over the parapet in the stream, snorting, half-swimming, and for ought I cared, wholly hanging.

My first thought was my companion. We both trembled in every limb as I lifted her gently to the ground, and placed the seat-cushions on a stone, where she might sit and compose herself till I considered what we should do next, and where we were.

She was greatly agitated, but passively permitted me to encircle her with my arms, to assure her that she was safe, to press her hands, and to wipe away her tears caressingly. I forgot all about poor Pitblado, "spilt" on the road, all about my uncle's best blood mare hanging in the traces, and all about the half-ruined gig.

In short, I felt only the most exquisite joy that I had gained, as it were, life and Louisa together. It was that moment of intense rapture, when, combined with the natural revulsion of feeling consequent to escape from a deadly peril, I enjoyed that emotion which a man feels once, and once only, in a lifetime, when the first woman he loves confesses to a mutual regard; and, half-kneeling, I stooped over her, kissing her again and again, assuring her—of I know not what.

From one of her fingers I transferred to mine a ring of small value—a pearl set in blue enamel, leaving in its place a rose diamond. It was a beautiful stone, of the purest water, which I had found when our troops sacked the great pagoda at Rangoon, and I had it set at Calcutta by a jeweller, who assured me that it was worth nine hundred rupees, or ninety pounds, and I only regretted now that it was not worth ten times as much, to be truly worthy of the slender finger on which I placed it.

She regarded me with a loving smile on her pale face, and in the quiet depths of her soft dark eyes, as she reclined in my arms. I gazed on her with emotions of the purest rapture. She was now humbled, gentle and loving—this brilliant beauty, this proud earl's daughter—mine, indeed—all that a man could dream of as perfection in a woman or as a wife; at least, I thought so then; and I was not a little proud of the idea of what our mess would say—the colonel, Studhome, Scriven, Wilford, Berkeley, and the rest—of a marriage that would certainly be creditable to the regiment, though we had titles and honourables enough in the lancers; and already, in fancy, I saw myself "tooling" into Maidstone barrack-square in a dashing phaeton, with a pair of cream-coloured ponies, with Norcliff and Loftus quartered on the panels, and silver harness, and Louisa by my side, in one of the most perfect of morning toilettes and of marriage bonnets that London millinery could produce.

Poor devil! with only two hundred per annum besides my pay, and the war before me, I was thus acquiring castles in Airshire, and estates in the Isle of Sky.

Oblivious of time, while the woods and hills of Dairsie were darkening against the sky, while the murmuring Eden flowed past towards the Tay, and the ever-changing spears and streamers of the northern aurora were growing brighter and more bright, I remained by the side of Louisa, wholly entranced, and only half-conscious that something should be done to enable us to return home; for night was coming on—the early night of the last days of January, when the sober sun must set at half-past four—and I knew not how far we were from Calderwood Glen.

Suddenly a shout startled us; the hoofs of horses were heard coming rapidly along the highway, and then three mounted men wheeled into the field and rode straight towards us. To my great satisfaction, one proved to be my faithful fellow, Willie Pitblado, who, not a wit the worse for his capsize on the road, had procured horses and assistance at the place called Drumhead, and tracked us to where we lay, wrecked by the old bridge of the Eden.

"Poor Willie," said Louisa, "I thought you were killed."

"No, my lady," said he, touching his hat; "it's lang or the de'il dees by the dykeside."

Of this answer she could make nothing.

The gig was now released and run back, and though scratched, splintered, and started in many places by the shock to which it had been subjected, it was still quite serviceable. The wheeler was traced to it again, the leader, her ardour completely cooled now, was fished out of the stream, and harnessed again, and in less than half an hour, so able had been the assistance rendered us, we were bowling along the highway towards my uncle's house.

An hour's rapid driving soon brought us in sight of the long avenue, the lighted windows, and quaint façade of the old mansion, at the door of which I drew up; and as I threw the whip and reins to Willie Pitblado,

and, fearless now even of Mamma Chillingham, handed my companion down, tenderly and caressingly, I found myself an engaged man, and the *fiancé* of one of the fairest women in Britain—the brilliant Louisa Loftus!

CHAPTER XII.

It passed—and never marble looked more pale
Than Lucy, while she listened to his tale.
He marked her not; his eye was cold and clear,
Fixed on a bed of withering roses there;
He marked her not, for different thoughts possessed
His anxious mind, and laboured in his breast.
ELLIS.

Notwithstanding all that had passed, and that we had been carried so far in the wrong direction, we were not long behind the rest of our party in reaching Calderwood, where the history of our disaster fully eclipsed for the evening all the exciting details of the fox-hunters, though many gentlemen in scarlet, with spattered tops and tights, whom Sir Nigel had brought, made the drawing-room look unusually gay.

Lady Louisa remained long in her own apartment; the time seemed an age to me; yet I was happy—supremely happy. I had a vague idea of the new emotions that served, perhaps, to detain her there; but an air of cold reserve and unmistakable displeasure hovered on the forehead of her haughty mother.

When Louisa joined us, she had perfectly recovered her usual equanimity and presence of mind—her calm, pale, and placid aspect. She was somewhat silent and reserved; this passed for her natural terror of

the late accident, and though we remained some distance apart, her fine dark eyes sought mine, ever and anon, and were full of intelligent glances, that made my heart leap with joy.

Cora, who shrewdly suspected that there had been more in the affair than what Berkeley called "a doocid spill," regarded us with interest, and with a tearful earnestness that surprised us, after our return, and during the explanation which we were pleased to make. But whatever tales my face told, Louisa's was unfathomable, so from its expression suspicious little Cora could gather nothing; though, had she carried her scrutiny a little further, she might have detected my famous Rangoon diamond sparkling on the engaged finger of her friend's left hand.

Cora was on this night, to me, an enigma!

What had gone wrong with her? When she smiled, it seemed to several—to me especially—that the kind little heart from whence these smiles were wrung was sick. Why was this, and what or who was the source of her taciturnity and secret sorrow?—not Berkeley, surely—they had come home in the drag together—she could never love such an ass as Berkeley; and if the fellow dared to trifle with her—but I thrust the thought aside, and resolved to trust the affair to her friend and gossip, the Lady Loftus.

A few more days glided swiftly and joyously past at Calderwood Glen; we had no more riding and driving; but, as the weather was singularly open and balmy for the season, we actually had more than one picnic in the leafless woods, and I betook me to the study of botany and arboriculture with the ladies.

I enjoyed all the delicious charm of a successful first love! The last thought on going to repose; the first on waking in the morning; and the source of many a soft and happy dream between.

The peculiarity, or partial disparity, of our positions in life caused secrecy. Denied, by the presence of others, the pleasure of openly conversing of our love, at times we had recourse to furtive glances, or a secret and thrilling pressure of the hand or arm was all we could achieve.

Then there were sighs the deeper for suppression,

And stolen glances sweeter for the theft;
And burning blushes, though for no transgression,
Tremblings when met, and restlessness when left.

Small and trivial though these may seem, they proved the sum of our existence, and even of mighty interest, lighting up the eye and causing the pulses of the heart to quicken.

We became full of petty and lover-like stratagems, and of enigmatical phrases, all the result of the difficulties that surrounded our intercourse when others were present—especially Lady Chillingham, who was by nature cold, haughty, and suspicious, with, I think, a natural born antipathy to subalterns of cavalry in particular. Cora saw through our little artifices, and Berkeley, that Anglo-Scotch snob of the nineteenth century, had ever his eyes remarkably wide open to all that was going on around him, and thus the perils of discovery and instant separation were great, while our happy love was in the flush.

This danger gave us a common sympathy, a united object, a delicious union of thought and impulse. Nor was romance wanting to add zest to the secrecy of our passion. Ah, were I to live a thousand years, never should I forget the days of happiness I spent in Calderwood Glen with Louisa Loftus.

Our interviews had all the mystery of a conspiracy, though, save Cora, none as yet suspected our love; and there was a part of the garden, between two old yew hedges—so old that they had seen the Calderwoods of past ages cooing and billing, in powdered wigs and coats of mail, with dames in Scottish farthingales and red-heeled shoes—where, at certain hours, by a tacit understanding, we were sure of meeting; but with all the appearance of chance, though occasionally for a time so brief, that we could but exchange a pressure of the hand, or snatch a caress, perhaps a kiss, and then separate in opposite directions.

Those were blessed and joyous interviews; memories to treasure and brood over with delight when alone. In the society of our friends, my heart throbbed wildly, when by a glance, a smile, a stolen touch of the

hand, Louisa reminded me of what none else could perceive, the secret understanding that existed between us.

And yet all this happiness was clouded by a sense of its brevity, and by our fears for the future; the obstacles that rank and great fortune on her side, the lack of both on mine, raised between us; and then there was the certain prospect of a long and dangerous—alas! it might prove, a final separation.

"They who love," writes an anonymous author, "must ever drink deeply of the cup of trembling; but, at times, there will arise in their hearts a nameless terror, a sickening anxiety for the future, whose brightness all depends upon this one cherished treasure, which often proves a foreboding of some real anguish looming in the distant hours."

"Where is all this to end?" I asked of myself, as the conviction that something must be done forced itself upon me, for the happy days were passing, and my short leave of absence was drawing to a close.

One day, by the absence of some of our friends, and by the occupation of others, we found ourselves alone, and permitted to have a longer interview than usual, in our yew-hedge walk, and we were conversing of the future.

"I have two hundred a year besides my pay, Louisa." (She smiled sadly at this, and the smile went doubly to my heart.) "The money has been lodged for my troop with Cox and Co., and my good uncle means well concerning me; yet, I feel all these as being so small, that were I to address the Earl of Chillingham on the subject of our engagement, it would seem that I had little to offer, and little to urge, save that which is, perhaps, valueless in his aristocratic eyes——"

"And that is?"

"My love for you."

"Don't think of addressing him," said she, weeping on my shoulder; "he has already views for me in another quarter."

"Views, Louisa!"

"Yes; pardon me for paining you, dearest, by saying so; but it is nevertheless true."

"And these views?" I asked, impetuously.

"Are an offer made for my hand by Lord Slubber de Gullion."

My heart died within me on hearing this name, which, as I once before stated, comes as near the original as possible.

"Hence you see, dearest Newton," she resumed, in a mournful and sweetly-modulated voice, "were you to address my father, it would only rouse mamma, and have the effect of interrupting our correspondence for ever."

"Good heavens! what then are we to do?'

"Wait in hope."

"How long?"

"Alas! I know not; but for the present at least our engagement, like our meetings and our letters, if we can correspond, must be secret—secret all. Were the earl, my father, to know that I loved you, Newton (how sweetly those words sounded), he and mamma would urge on Lord Slubber's suit, and, on finding that I refused, there would be no bounds to mamma's wrath. You remember Cora's story of the 'Clenched Hand;' you remember the 'Bride of Lammermoor,' and must see what a determined mother and long domestic tyranny may do."

I clasped my hands, for my heart was wrung; but she regarded me kindly and lovingly.

"On your return home, as colonel of your regiment, perhaps, we shall then, at all hazards, bring the matter before him, and treat Slubber's offer with contempt, as the senile folly of an old man in his dotage. You, at least, shall propose for me in form——"

"And if Lord Chillingham refuse?"

"Though we English people can't make Scotch marriages now, I shall be yours, dearest Newton, as I am now, only that it shall be irrevocably and for ever."

A close and mute embrace followed, and then I left her in a paroxysm of grief, while my head whirled with the combined effects of love and joy, and of sorrow, not unmixed with anger.

"I wonder what the subjects are that lovers talk of in their tête-à-têtes," says my brother of the pen and sword, W. H. Maxwell, and the same surmise frequently occurred to myself, before I met or knew Louisa

Loftus.

We never lacked a subject now. The peculiarities of our relative positions, our caution for the present, and our natural anxieties for the future, afforded us full topics for conversation or surmise; but the few remaining days of my leave "between returns" glided away at Calderwood Glen; the time for my departure drew nigh; already had Pitblado divided a sixpence with my lady's soubrette, and packed up all my superfluous traps, and within six and thirty hours Berkeley and I would have to report ourselves in uniform at head-quarters, or be returned absent without leave.

It was in the evening, when I had gone as usual to meet Louisa at the seat where the close-clipped yew hedges formed a pleasant screen, that, to my surprise, and by the merest chance, I found it occupied by my cousin Cora.

The January sunset was beautiful; the purple flush of evening covered all the western sky, and bathed in warm tints the slopes of the Lomond hills. The air was still, and we heard only the cawing of the venerable rooks that perched among the woods of the old manor, or swung to and fro on its many gilt vanes.

Cora was somewhat silent, and I, being thoroughly disappointed by finding her there in lieu of Louisa Loftus, was somewhat taciturn, if not almost sulky.

Somehow—but how, I know not—Cora led me to talk insensibly of our early days, and as we did so, I could perceive that she regarded me earnestly from time to time, after I simply remarked that ere long I should be far, far away from her, and among other scenes. Her dovelike, dark eye became suffused, and the tinge on her rounded cheek died away when I laughingly referred to the days when we had been little lovers, and when Fred Wilford and I—he was now a captain of ours—used to punch each other's heads in pure spite and jealousy about her; but this youthful jealousy once took a more dangerous turn.

Among the rocks in the glen an adder of vast size took up its residence, and had bitten several persons. It had been seen by some to leap more than seven yards high, and was a source of such terror to the

whole parish, that my uncle, and even the provost of Dunfermline, had offered rewards for its destruction.

On this I boldly dared my boy-rival to face it; but Fred Wilford, who was on a visit to us from Rugby, had more prudence, or less love for little Cora, and so declined the attempt.

Flushed with boyish pride and recklessness, I climbed the steep face of the rock, stirred up the adder with a long stick, flung it to the ground, and killed it by repeated blows of an axe, a feat of which my uncle never grew tired of telling, and the reptile was now in the library, sealed up in a glass case, being deemed a family trophy, and, as Binns said, always kept in the best of spirits.

I sat with Cora's white and slender hand in mine, gazing at her soft and piquant features, her pouting lips and dimpled chin, and the dark hair so smoothly braided under her little hat, and over each pretty and delicate ear. Cora was very gentle and very charming; she had ever been to me a kind little playmate, a loving sister, and she sighed deeply when I spoke of my approaching departure.

"You go by sea?" she asked.

"If we go to Turkey—of course."

"Embarking at Southampton?"

"Embarking at Southampton—exactly, and sailing directly for the East, I suppose," said I, while leisurely lighting a cigar; "I shall soon learn all the details and probabilities at head-quarters; but the route may not come for two months yet, as red-tape goes."

"You will think of us sometimes, Newton, in those strange and dangerous lands? Of your poor uncle, who loves you so well, and—and of me?"

"Of course, and of Louisa Loftus. Don't you think her very handsome?"

"I think her lovely."

"My cigar annoys you?"

"Not at all, Newton."

"But it makes you turn your face away."

"You met often, I believe, before you came here?"

"Oh, very often. I used to see her at the cathedral every Sunday in Canterbury; at the balls at Rochester and Maidstone——"

"And in London?"

"Repeatedly! I saw her at her first presentation at Court, when the colonel presented me, on obtaining my lieutenancy, and returning from foreign service. She created quite a sensation!"

I spoke in such glowing terms of my admiration for Louisa Loftus, that some time elapsed before I detected the extreme pallor of Cora's cheek, and a peculiar quivering of her under lip.

"Good heavens, my dear girl, you are ill! It is this confounded cigar —one of a box that Willie got me in Dunfermline," I exclaimed, throwing it away. "Your hand is trembling, too."

"Is it? Oh, no! Stay! I am only a little faint," she murmured.

"Faint! Why the deuce should you be faint, Cora?"

"This bower of yew hedges is close; the atmosphere is still, or chill, or something," she said, in a low voice, while pressing a lovely little hand on her bosom; "and it seems to me that I felt a pang here."

"A pang, Cora?"

"Yes, I feel it sometimes."

"You, one of the best waltzers in the county! You have no affection of the heart, or any of that sort of thing?"

She smiled sadly, even bitterly, and rose, saying—

"Here comes Lady Louisa. Say nothing of this."

Her dark eyes were swimming; but not a tear fell from their long, black, silky lashes, that lent such softness to her sweet and feminine face. She abruptly withdrew her tremulous hands from mine, and just as Louisa approached, hurriedly left me.

What did all this emotion mean? What did it display or conceal? I was thoroughly bewildered.

A sudden light began to break upon me.

"What is this?" thought I. "Can Cora be in love with me herself? Oh, nonsense! she has known me from boyhood. The idea is absurd! Yet her manner——. This will never do. I must avoid her, and to-morrow I leave for England!"

Louisa sat beside me, and, save her, Cora and all the world were alike forgotten.

CHAPTER XIII.

Forget thee? If to dream by night, and muse on thee by day;
If all the worship, deep and wild, a poet's heart can pay;
If prayers in absence, breathed for thee to Heaven's protecting power;
If winged thoughts that flit to thee, a thousand in an hour;
If busy Fancy, blending thee with all my future lot;
If this thou call'st forgetting, thou, indeed, shall be forgot.
MOULTRIE.

I had but one, only one, meeting more with Lady Louisa, and it was, indeed, a sad one. We could but hope to meet again—near Canterbury, perhaps—at some vague period before my regiment marched; and prior to that I was to write to her, on some polite pretence, under cover to Cora.

This was certainly somewhat undefined and unsatisfactory for two engaged lovers, especially for two so ardent as we were, and in the first flush of a grand passion; but we had no other arrangement to make; and never shall I forget our last, long, mute embrace on the last evening, when, scared by footsteps on the garden walk, we literally tore ourselves

away, and separated to meet at the dinner-table, and act as those who were almost strangers to each other, and to perform the mere formalities, the politenesses, and cold ceremonies of well-bred life.

I could not help telling my good uncle of my success; but under a solemn promise of secrecy, for a time at least.

"All right, boy," said he, clapping me on the shoulder. "Keep her well in hand, and I'll back you against the field to any amount that is possible; but that gouty old peer, my Lord Slubber, is richer than I am; and then Lady Chillingham has the pride of Lucifer. Draw on me whenever you want money, Newton. Since Archie died at college, and poor Nigel at the battle of Goojerat, I have no boy to look after but you."

The last hour came inexorably. We shook hands with all. When that solemn snob, my brother officer, Mr. de Warr Berkeley, and I entered the carriage which was to take us to the nearest railway station, there were symptoms of considerable emotion in the faces of the kind circle we were leaving, for the clouds of war had darkened fast in the East during the month we had spent so pleasantly; and the ladies—the poor girls especially—half viewed us as foredoomed men.

Louisa was as pale as death; she trembled with suppressed emotion, and her eyes were full of tears. Even her cold and stately mother kissed me lightly on the cheek; and at that moment, for Louisa's sake, I felt my heart swell with sudden emotion of regard for her.

My uncle's hard but manly, hand gave mine a hearty pressure, and he kindly shook the hand of Willie Pitblado, who was bidding adieu to his father, the old keeper, and slipped a couple of sovereigns into it.

Sir Nigel's voice was quite broken; but there was no tear in the hot, dry eyes of poor Cora. Her charming face was very pale, and she bit her pouting nether lip, to conceal, or to prevent, its nervous quivering.

"An odd girl," thought I, as I kissed her twice, whispering, "Give the last one to Louisa."

But, ah! how little could I read the secret of the dear little heart of Cora, which was beating wildly and convulsively beneath that apparently calm and unmoved exterior! But a time came when I was to learn it all.

"Good-bye to Calderwood Glen," cried I, leaping into the carriage. "A good-bye to all, and hey for pipeclay again!"

"Pipeclay and gunpowder too, lad," said my uncle. "Every ten years or so the atmosphere of Europe requires to be fumigated with it somewhere. Adieu, Mr. Berkeley. God bless you, Newton!"

"Crack went the whip, round went the wheels;" the group of pale and tearful faces, the ivy-clad porch, and the turreted façade of the old house vanished, and then the trees of the avenue appeared to be careering past the carriage windows in the twilight, as we sped along at a rapid trot.

For mental worry or depression there is no more certain and rapid cure than quick travelling and transition from place to place; and assuredly that luxury is fully afforded by the locomotive appliances of the present age.

Within an hour after leaving Calderwood, we occupied a first-class carriage, and were flying by the night express, *en route* for London, muffled to the eyes in warm railway-rugs and border plaids, and each puffing a cigar in silence, gazing listlessly out of the windows, or doing his best to court sleep, to wile the dreary hours away.

Pitblado was fraternising with the guard in the luggage-van, doubtless enjoying a quiet "weed" the while.

Berkeley soon slept; but I prayed for the celebrated "forty winks" in vain; and thus, wakeful and full of exciting thoughts, I pictured in reverie all that had occurred during the past month.

Gradually the unwilling, but startling, conviction forced itself upon my mind that my cousin. Cora loved me! This dear and affectionate girl, from whom I had parted with such a frigid salute as that which Sir Charles Grandison gave Miss Byron at the end of their dreary seven years' courtship, loved me; and yet, blinded by my absorbing passion for the brilliant Louisa Loftus, I had neither known, seen, or felt it.

Her frequent coldnesses to me, and her ill-concealed irritation at the cool insolence of Berkeley's languid bearing, on more than one occasion, were all explained to me now.

Dear, affectionate, and single-hearted Cora! A hundred instances of her self-denial now crowded on my memory. I remembered now, at the meet of the Fifeshire fox-hounds at Largo, that it was she who, by a little delicate tact and foresight, contrived to give me that which she knew I so greatly coveted—the drive home in the tandem with Lady Louisa.

What must that act of self-sacrifice have cost her heart, if indeed she loved me? I could not write to her on such a subject, or even approach an idea that might, after all, be based on supposition, if not on vanity. More than this—I felt that the suspicion of having excited this secret passion must preclude my writing to Louisa under cover to Cora. Common delicacy and kindness suggested that I should not, by doing so, further lacerate a good little heart that loved me well.

But the next thought was how to communicate with Louisa, Cora being our only medium. Nor could I forget that when I was up the Rangoon river, and when my dear mother died at Calderwood, that it was Cora's kiss that was last upon her cold forehead, and Cora's little hand that closed her eyes for me.

Swiftly sped the express train while these thoughts passed through my mind, and agitated me greatly. To sleep was impossible, and ere midnight I heard the bells of Berwick-upon-Tweed announce that we had left the stout old kingdom of Scotland far behind us, and were flying at the rate of fifty miles an hour by Bedford, Alnwick, and Morpeth, towards the Tyne, and the land of coal and fire.

Every instant bore me farther from Louisa; and I had but one comfort, that ere long she would be pursuing the same route—perhaps seated in the same carriage—as she sped to her home in the south of England.

I dearly loved this proud and beautiful girl; and if human language has a meaning, and if the human eye has an expression, she loved me truly in return; but though the conviction of this made my heart brim with happiness, it was a happiness not untinged with fears—fears that her love was, perhaps, the fancy of the hour, developed by propinquity and the social circle of a quiet country house; fears that my joy and success were too bright to last; and that, after a time, she might see her

engagement with a nameless subaltern of cavalry in the light of a mésalliance, and be dazzled by some more brilliant offer, for the heiress and only child of the Earl of Chillingham could command many.

War and separation were before us; and if I survived to return, would she love me still, and still indeed be mine?

Her father's consent was yet to be obtained. In my impatience to know the best or the worst, I frequently resolved to break the matter by letter to his lordship; but, remembering the tears and entreaties of Louisa, I shrank from the grave responsibility of tampering with our mutual happiness.

At other times I thought of confiding the management of the affair entirely to my uncle; but abandoned the idea almost as soon as I conceived it: knowing that the fox-hunting old baronet was more hot-headed, proud, and abrupt than politic. In conclusion, I thought it might be better done by a letter from the East, when the earl might politely half entertain an engagement which a bullet might dissolve; or, should I leave the affair over till I returned?

Oh! might I ever return—and if so, how mutilated? And if I died before the enemy, in imagination I saw, in the long, long years that were to follow, myself perhaps forgotten, and Louisa, my affianced bride, the wife of—*another*.

CHAPTER XIV.

And why not death, rather than live in torment?
To die is to be banished from myself;
And Sylvia is myself: banished from her
Is self from self; a deadly banishment!
What light is light, if Sylvia be not seen?
What joy is joy, if Sylvia be not by?

Unless it be to think that she is by,
And feed upon the shadow of perfection.
SHAKSPEARE.

While yet half-slept, and wholly unrefreshed, after our long and rapid journey by train, we donned our uniforms, with sword-belt and sabretashe, duly reported ourselves to the colonel, who welcomed us back, and within an hour I found myself established in my old quarters, and once more falling into the every-day routine of barrack-life, just as if I had never left Maidstone, and as if my visit to Calderwood and my engagement with Louisa were all a dream. But I had her pearl ring, and the lock of jetty hair, which I had cut from her beautiful head in jest—a gift in solemn earnest now—and I lost no time in procuring a locket suitable for it, and which I might wear at my neck.

Again I had parades to attend, troop, guard, and stable duties to perform; but amid these, and all the bustle of Maidstone, the most tiresome and bustling cavalry barrack in the British empire, my heart and thoughts were ever with Louisa Loftus, amid the old woods of Calderwood Glen.

"War is not yet declared against Russia," said the colonel, the first evening parade after we joined; "but I have it in confidence from head-quarters that it will be ere long, and that we shall form part of the army of the East."

"Ah, and are there—haw—any infantry to accompany us?" asked Berkeley.

"I should think so," replied the colonel, laughing at so odd a question, which, as Berkeley asked it elsewhere, caused some amusement at Maidstone, as showing either his ideas of war, or of the strange individualism of the two branches of the service.

"The guards are already under orders, and embark at Southampton in a few weeks," resumed the colonel; "and we shall have tough work in getting ready for departure by the time our turn comes—though I am

glad to say the lancers are in high order and discipline, and fit for anything."

Our colonel spoke with pride and confidence; and under his orders, I felt that, with equal confidence, I could really go anywhere or face anything. I had served under him in India, and he had ever been in my eyes the model of a British cavalry officer, and of an English gentleman.

"There is no example of human beauty more perfectly picturesque than a very handsome man of middle age; not even the same man in his youth," writes one of the most graceful female pens of the present day. Most soothing this to all good-looking fellows, who approach that grand climacteric; and the idea that she is correct always occurred to me when I saw Colonel Beverley, for a handsomer man, though his moustache was becomingly grizzled, never drew a sword, and all the regiment admired and esteemed him.

In addition to sword and pistols, our corps was armed with the lance, which the famous Count de Montecuculi of old declared to be "la Reine des armes pour la cavalerie," and the adoption of which was vainly urged by the great Marechal Saxe in his "Reveries;" but it was introduced into the British army after the peace of 1815. The only regiment armed in this fashion which previously existed in our service was the British Uhlans, composed of French emigrants, formed out of the remains of the lancers of the French Royalist army. They were all destroyed in the ill-fated expedition to Quiberon, in 1796.

When charging cavalry the bannerofes attached to our lances are extremely useful in scaring the horses—after which the rider becomes an easy prey; and the extreme length of the weapon renders it more effective than the sword when charging a square of infantry; while, in addition to this, it is a weapon of great show, as all must admit who have seen a lancer corps, some six hundred strong, riding with all their red and white swallow-tailed banneroles fluttering in the wind.

We had in our ranks more G. C.[*] men, perhaps, than any other corps in the service; and, with the exception of one or two of those wealthy parvenus, like Berkeley, who are to be found in many regiments, but more especially in the cavalry, and whom I shall simply describe as

yaw-yawing, cold, but fashionable, solemn and unimpressionable military snobs, the officers of the lancers were unquestionably gentlemen by birth, breeding, and education, and formed altogether, at mess, on parade, in the ball-room, or on duty, a class of society far superior in tone and bearing to any I have ever had the fortune to be among; and unless it be those of whom I have hinted, every face and name come pleasantly back to memory now, when I think of my fine regiment as it prepared for the army of the East.

[*]Good Conduct Ring. We have four regiments of lancers—the 9th, 12th, 16th, and 17th.

We practised daily with our pistols and six-barrelled revolvers; the sword-blades and lance-heads were pointed and edged anew. Some of our mess actually tried bivouacking in the fields at night, to test their hardihood; but, as they were invariably taken for gipsies or housebreakers by the rural police, laughter on the one hand, and useless discomfort on the other, cured them of these pranks.

To be ready for anything and everything, and to make his lancers more active horsemen, Colonel Beverley had us all drilled to dismounting on the off-side, a practice which increases the skill of the men, and the steadiness of the horses, and which is simply done by reversing all the motions of dismounting, after the rider has well secured the lance, the reins, and mane in the right hand, while the left grasps the sword, and lays it across the front of the saddle, with the point to the right. He then dismounts on the off-side, with his lance at the carry in the right hand.

I remember, too, that he was careful in having the men cautioned against giving way to the weight of the lance when mounted, as this occasions bad consequences on long marches; hence it is very requisite to measure the stirrup leathers frequently, and let the men ride with the lance slung on the left arm. These items may seem trivial; but a day

came when his instructions and precautions proved of inestimable value, and that was when we—*the Six Hundred*—made our ever-memorable charge into the Valley of Death!

A cheque for a handsome sum came from my good old uncle, Sir Nigel, and it proved most seasonable, as we were beset by London Jews and army contractors, and I had, as the phrase goes, "no end" of unexpected things to provide—a few to wit:—

A brace of revolving six-chambered pistols, with spring ramrods, as the papers said, "the most complete and effective ever offered to the British public." A full Crimean outfit, comprising a waterproof cape and hood, camp-boots, ground-sheet, folding bedstead, mattress, and pair of blankets, a canteen for self and a friend, sponging-bath, bucket, and basin, brush-case, lantern, and havresack, all dog-cheap at thirty guineas, with a pair of bullock-trunks and slings at eight guineas more. Then there was a portable patent tent, weighing only ten pounds; an india-rubber boat, and heaven only knows how much more rubbish, all of which made a terrible hole in my cheque, and all of which were left behind at Varna, where, doubtless, some enterprising follower of the Prophet would make them his lawful spoil.

Amid those prosy preparations the month of February slipped away, and the twenty-eight days of that month seemed like so many years to me, as I never heard of Louisa Loftus; but, on the first of March, Pitblado handed me a little packet which had come by the mail from London.

It contained a morocco case with a coloured photograph—a photograph of Louisa!

It was done in the best style of a good London artist, and my heart bounded with joy as I gazed on it, studying every feature. The reader would deem me mad, perhaps, maudlin certainly, if I related all the extravagances of which I was guilty on receipt of this souvenir, this minor work of art, with which I was forced to content me, until a miniature—one of Thorburn's best—which I was resolved to procure, should follow.

Was she in London, or had she merely written to the artist (whose name was on the case) to send me a copy of her miniature, which she knew well I would prize, even as I prized life or health?

On the same day that this dear memorial came I was gazetted to my troop in the regiment, by purchase, Captain B——, whose ill health rendered him totally unfit for foreign service, retiring by the sale of his commission; and though my heart was full of gratitude to my uncle, I verily believe that I thought more of Louisa's miniature than of my promotion. Both, however, seemed ominous of a happy future. They made a fortunate coincidence. The same mail had brought them from London, and I seemed to tread on air, and committed so many extravagances, and played so many pranks that night at mess, that my old friends, Jack Studhome and Fred Wilford, had to take what they termed "the strong hand" with me, and march me off to my quarters.

In answer to my letter of thanks, I received a long and rambling one from Sir Nigel, whose literary efforts were frequently a curious medley.

The hunt, the county pack, the next meets were, of course, referred to first, and then came his private troubles. The black-faced sheep had been leaping the fences and eating in the stackyard of the home-farm; the Highland goats had been eating the yews in the avenue, and poisoning themselves; the deer had been overthrowing the beescaps on the lawn, and the patent powder to fatten the pheasants had been mislaid by old Pitblado, and was eaten by the rooks instead. Lieutenant James's famous horse-blister had been applied without effect to his favourite hunter, Dunearn, and my old friend Splinterbar had gone dead lame—£300 gone to the dogs!

He had just had a notice of "augmentation, modification, and locality of stipend (whatever the deuce it might all mean) before the Tiend Court," served on him by a —— Edinburgh writer to the signet, at the instance of the parish minister, whom he disliked as a sour Sabbatarian, and whom he had advised in his next sermon to expound and explain how "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked."

Not a word about Louisa! I read on with growing impatience:—

"I have just procured a lot of that stuff the English call mangel-wurzel, consisting of white globes and long yellows, to plant in belts about the thickets where the deer are; they are better for feeding at this time than the best of Swedish turnips, and for drawing the deer from the cover, for a quiet shot.

"Cora is working all kinds of comforters, cuffs, and muffetees for you to wear in the Crimea. I asked her to write for me; but she excused herself, so I have to act as my own secretary. I don't know what has come over the girl of late.

"General Rammerscales, the gouty old tiger-hunter, has gone to his place at the Bridge-of-Allan; and our friend the M.P., like a true Scottish one, is shieing at his Parliamentary duties, when he can't get upon a committee that pays, and takes especial good care never to be in the House when Scottish interests are on the tapis, unless whipped in when the Lord Advocate has some party or private end in view.

"Old Binns and Pitblado send you their remembrance. Why did your man Willie give the two sovereigns I gave him to his father? The old fellow is well enough off in his cottage, and lives like the son of an Irish king. He shot a magnificent silver pheasant before the Chillingham party left (they are gone then!) and Lady Louisa got the wings for her pork-pie hat.

"Cora seems pining to join the Chillinghams, who, as you, of course, know, have been for a month past at their place near Canterbury. She is in low spirits, poor girl, and goes south in a week, when I shall, perhaps, accompany her. Lady Louisa has written to her thrice since they left. She says that Mr. Berkeley has been frequently visiting them; but never mentions you. What is the meaning of that?"

I paused on reading this, for it embodied a vast deal for reflection! That the Loftuses should be at Chillingham Park unknown to me was not strange; neither was it strange that, situated as we were, poor Louisa should not mention me in her letters to Cora; but that Berkeley should be their frequent visitor, and omit to mention, or conceal that circumstance from me, was certainly startling!

Berkeley! So this accounted for what the mess had remarked—his frequent absences from that agreeable board, from parades, and the used-up condition of his private horses. Was there any sly game afoot? So far as he was concerned, could I doubt it? His reserve to me declared that there was; and this game had been played for a month, with or without success, how was I to learn? Ha! thought I, if they knew about Miss Auriol, his unfortunate mistress! But noble morality is frequently very opaque—and my pay and expectations were but moonshine, when opposed to his solid thousands per annum.

I was sorry to hear that Cora was coming so far south as Canterbury; for much as I loved and esteemed my cousin, I felt that I should rather avoid her now. I resume the letter.

"How does your affair with la belle Louisa progress—eh? Well, I hope; though I think, with Thackeray, that 'every man ought to be in love a few times in his life, and have a smart attack of the fever. You are the better after it is over.'

"So we are to have hostilities at last! I was in Edinburgh yesterday, anent the programme of the spring meeting at Musselburgh, and heard war declared by Britain against Russia. It was proclaimed at the market cross by the Rothesay, Albany, and Islay heralds, attended by the Kintyre, Unicorn, and Ormond pursuivants, all in their tabards, and a strong guard of Highlanders, with bayonets fixed, and colours flying. It was a quaint and picturesque sight, that did your old uncle's heart good, and set him thinking; for the same trumpets had many a time in the same place proclaimed war against England in the days of old."

So ended my uncle's rambling letter, which certainly had the effect of setting me to think too, and with a heart full of sudden trouble, anxiety, and irritation.

CHAPTER XV.

In aught that tries the heart, how few withstand the proof.

* * * * *

What is the worst of woes that wait on age?
What stamps the wrinkle deeper on the brow?
To view each loved one blotted from life's page,
And be alone on earth as I am now?
BYRON.

If Lady Louisa had not mentioned me in her letter to Cora, there was doubtless a secret and very good reason for the omission; but I thought it cold, and certainly uncourteous, that the countess, fresh from a long visit at Calderwood, should omit to invite me to her house; and that the earl should not have left his card for me at the barracks.

So Cora was going to Chillingham Park! Well, at all events, I would visit my cousin Cora, were it but to evince my regard for Sir Nigel. But to know that Louisa was now, and had been for a month past, within a few miles of me, and that I had neither seen nor heard from her, while Berkeley was a frequent visitor at her father's house, filled me with such mortification that I could barely control my emotion when in his presence. His silence on the subject, too, added to my suspicions, and inflamed my smothered wrath; yet it was a matter on which I had no right to question him.

Wounded vanity and self-esteem also sealed my tongue; and I actually despised myself when discovering that I could not help remarking his absence or his presence in quarters, and his going from the barracks to and fro.

In the old duelling days—ay, had we been so circumstanced only some ten years before, and ere so decided a change came over public opinion—I should have made short work of it with my esteemed brother officer, and unmasked his duplicity. He might be a suitor to whose suit

no response was made, even though Lady Chillingham seconded his intentions; but then she had, I knew, views regarding Lord Slubber. Louisa, however, could not have changed; or, if so, why send me the pretty miniature?

Vainly I strove to busy myself with the interior economy of my troop, its management and discipline. Vainly I sought to kill time by attending closely to the men's messes and equipment, their pay-books, accoutrements, and horses, counting the days as they passed; but no letters came. I frequently absented myself from the barracks between the parades, with that strange superstition and hope which many persons have, that if they go away for a little time they will find the longed-for answer when they return. But save tradesmen's bills—missives which became more urgent as the rumoured day of departure drew nearer—no enclosures ever came to me.

At last, finding suspense intolerable, one evening—I remember that it was the last of March—Beverley gave me leave from parades for two days. I mounted, and took the way by Sittingbourne—a quaint old Kentish town, which consists of one wide street bordering the highway, and by the village of Ospringe, to Canterbury, where I put up at the Royal Hotel; and, after having my horse corned, trotted him along the Margate Road, till I came to the well-known gate of Chillingham Park.

The lodge—a mimic castle in the Tudor style—was pretty, and already covered with green climbers; through the bars of the iron gate, which was surmounted by a gilded earl's coronet, I could see the carefully-gravelled avenue winding away with great sweeps between the stately old trees, and bordered by the smooth, velvet-like lawn of emerald green, towards the house, a small glimpse of the Grecian peristyle and the white walls of which were just visible. There she dwelt; and I gazed wistfully at the white patch that shone in the sunshine between the gnarled stems of her old ancestral trees. On hearing a horse reined up without, the lodge-keeper came forth, key in hand, and politely touched his hat, as if waiting my pleasure; but I waved my hand, and with a flushing cheek and an anxious heart, let the reins of my nag drop on his neck, and rode slowly and heedlessly on.

Unvisited and uninvited, I felt that to have left a card at Chillingham Park would have been an intrusion unwarranted by the rules of good society—rules which I warmly bequeathed to the infernal gods. I had come to Canterbury; but to what end?—unless I met Louisa on the road, or in the city, and such wished-for chances seldom fall to the lot of lovers.

There was the cathedral, where, doubtless, she and her family would be on a Sunday, in their luxuriously-cushioned pew, attended by a tall "Jeames" in plush, carrying a great Bible, a nosegay, and gold-headed cane; but to thrust myself upon her there was too humble a proceeding for my then mood of mind.

I longed with all my soul to see her, were it but for a moment; and yet I also longed for the route to the East, as a relief from my present torture; and come it soon would now. There was some consolation in that conviction.

War had already been declared against Russia by the Western Powers of Europe. On the 23rd of the last month the brigade of guards had departed from London, after taking farewell of the Queen at Buckingham Palace; the Baltic fleet had sailed from Spithead; many of our troops were already embarked; and the French fleet for the North Sea had sailed from Brest. All betokened earnest and rapid preparations for a protracted contest; so I felt assured that our days in Maidstone were numbered now.

How long, or how far I wandered on that evening, full of vague and most dispiriting thoughts, I know not—near to Margate certainly; and the sun was setting as I returned, keeping near the sea-shore, and in sight of the countless white sails and smoky funnels of the craft that were standing outward or inward about the mouths of the Thames and Medway.

The sun sunk beyond the horizon; but the twilight was strong and clear. The place was lonely and still; and, save the chafing of the sea on the rocks at the Reculvers, not a sound came on the calm atmosphere of the soft spring evening. I was there alone, with my own thoughts for company, and found it difficult to realise the idea that the roar of

London, with all its mingled myriads of the human race, was but sixty miles distant from where my horse nibbled the grass that grew by the sequestered wayside.

The whole scenery was intensely English. Against the rosy flush of the sunset sky, that old landmark for mariners, the Sisters, as the two spires of the ancient church are named, stood up sharply and darkly defined about a mile distant; near me spread an English park, studded with fine old timber, a model of beauty and fertility, the sward of the most brilliant green, and closely mown, as if shaved with a huge razor. The smoke of the quaint old Saxon village curled upwards far into the still air, and all seemed peaceful and quiet as the shades of evening deepened—quiet as the dead of ages in the graves that lie about the basement of the old church that marks the spot where St. Augustine—sent by Pope Gregory on the errand of conversion—first put his foot upon the Saxon shore; and as if further to remind me that I was in England, and not in my native country, the curfew bell now rang out upon the stilly air, tolling "the knell of parting day," for, as the Norman power stopped on the banks of the Tweed, the curfew is, of course, unknown in Scotland.

I had been lost in reverie for some time—how long I know not, while my horse shook his bridle and ears ever and anon at the evening flies, and cropped the herbage that grew under a thick old hedge, which bordered the flinty and chalky way—when the sound of voices roused me; and close by a rustic wooden stile, that afforded a passage through the hedge in question, I suddenly beheld a man and woman in parley—conversation it could not be termed, as the former was evidently confronting, and rudely barring, the progress of the latter.

On the summit of the stile her figure was distinctly seen in dark outline against the twilight sky.

She seemed young and handsome, with a smart little black-velvet hat and feather. Her small hands were well-gloved; one firmly grasped her folded parasol and handkerchief, and the other held up her skirt

prettily as she sought to descend the stile, showing more than no doubt was generally revealed of a well-rounded leg, a taper ankle, and tiny foot, encased in a fashionable kid boot.

Young and perfectly ladylike, her whole toilette was in keeping with her lithe and graceful figure; but her face was turned from me.

He who confronted her was a burly, surly, beetle-browed, and rough-visaged fellow, like a costermonger, with a slouched, broken hat, which he touched, half ironically, from time to time; a black beard of a week's growth bristled on his chin; a patch covered one of his discoloured eyes; he had a great cudgel under his arm, and an ugly bull-terrier, with a huge head and close-shorn ears, was close to his heels. His hand was held forth for charity, and he was fully prepared to enforce that good quality.

Alarmed by the appearance of the fellow, who might very well have passed for a twin brother of Bill Sykes, the young lady hovered with irresolution on the upper step of the stile, and said, timidly—

"Permit me to pass, if you please, sir."

"Not without giving me summut, marm; and I tell yer I ain't neither sir nor mister, but just Bill Potkins," growled the fellow. "I've a darned good mind to set this ere dog at your ankles!"

"But I repeat to you that I have left my purse at home," she urged.

"You have left it at whoam have yer; that is all gammon, for I knows yer, for all yer dainty airs, and the captain too, for the matter o' that. Shall I tell his name?" he asked with a scowl, while he surveyed her all over, as if looking for something to snatch ar wrench away; but she seemed destitute of ornaments.

"Yes, I have indeed left it; but for pity sake allow me to pass," she said, faintly, and then, gathering strength, added, "Moreover, fellow, you must."

"Criky; that's a good 'un—must I really now?"

"Yes, please," returned the young girl, in tears.

"Well, I sha'n't then—not till I've overhauled your pockets, and rummaged yer a bit, and that's all about it."

In a moment his ruffianly hands were upon her; the girl uttered a shrill scream and he a ferocious oath. I spurred forward my horse, reined him in with dragoon-like precision, and with the butt-end of my riding-whip dealt the would-be thief a blow which tumbled him in a heap at the foot of the stile.

With a terrible malediction, while the blood poured over his face, he staggered up, stooped his head, and thrusting his hat well over his eyes, was rushing on with uplifted cudgel, when I dexterously dealt him cut "one" full on the face, and made my horse rear for the purpose of riding him down. On this he uttered a yell, forced his way through the hedge, and taking to flight, disappeared, with his bull terrier barking furiously at his heels.

The young lady whom I had saved by such timely succour was still standing, pale and trembling, on the summit of the stile, irresolute which way to turn, when I dismounted, and throwing the reins over my arm, lifted my hat, and expressing the great satisfaction it afforded me to have been of such timely service, I offered my hand and assisted her to descend.

She thanked me in an agitated voice, and with a hurried manner, in language which was well chosen, but seemed perfectly natural to her.

I now perceived that she was older than her slender figure at first suggested. She seemed to be about five-and-twenty years of age, with a softly feminine and purely English face, long, tremulous eyelashes, and a perfect nose and chin. She was almost beautiful; but with an air of sadness in her charming little features, which, when her alarm subsided, was too apparent to fail to interest me.

"If you will not deem me intrusive," said I, lifting my hat again, and drawing back respectfully one pace, "I shall be most happy to escort you home."

"I thank you, sir."

"It is almost dark now, and your friends may be anxious about you."

"Friends?" she repeated, inquiringly, in a strange voice, while a cough of a most consumptive sound seemed to rack her slender form.

"Or permit me to escort you to where you were going. It was in this direction luckily, or I could only have taken my horse over the stile by a flying leap."

"But, sir——" she began, and paused.

"Consider, that fellow may be within ear-shot, and he may return again."

"True, sir. I do thank you very much. There was a time when I was not wont to be so unprotected; but I am so loth—"

"To incommode me; is it not so?"

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, do not say so. I am from the barracks at Maidstone, though in mufti, as you see, and trust you will permit me to be your escort. My time at present is completely at your disposal."

"I live about half-a-mile on this side of the village; and if you will be so very kind——"

"I shall have much pleasure," I replied, with a respectful bow; and leading my horse by the bridle, I walked onward by her side.

She conversed with me easily and gracefully on many subjects—of the oddness of her being abroad at such an hour alone; but in the country folks thought nothing of it. She had been visiting a sick fisherman's wife, or child, or something, at Herne Bay, and been detained; the roads were not unsafe thereabouts in general; but she must be careful for the future.

Then we remarked, of course, the beauty of the evening, the romance of the scenery along the coast, and its associations, by Herne Bay, the Reculvers, and Birchington; and my fair companion seemed well read, for she knew all about the old kings of Kent, and, pointing seaward, showed me that, where now the ocean rolled, there stood in other times a goodly Saxon town, with something about a king named Ethelbert, whose palace was close by the Reculvers; and so, chatting away pleasantly in a tone of voice that was very alluring, for there was a musical chord in it, we proceeded along the highway, until she suddenly paused at the iron gate of a pretty little rustic cottage that stood within a garden plot, back some fifty paces or so from the highway.

"Here, sir," said she, "is the gate of my home; at least, that which is now so; and, with my best thanks, I must bid you adieu."

The girl's voice, air, and manner were certainly charming, and there was a plaintive sadness about her that was decidedly interesting; but my mind was too full of a pure passion, an exalted love for Louisa Loftus, to have much enthusiasm about pretty girls then, or to have any taste for running after them, as in the days when I first donned my lancer trappings. Thus, quite careless of cultivating her acquaintance, I was about to withdraw with a polite bow, when she added—

"After the great service you have rendered, and so bravely too, I hope you do not deem me uncourteous in not inviting you to rest for a few minutes; but—but——"

"Papa might frown, and mamma have some fears of a light dragoon," said I, laughing. "Is it not so?"

"My papa!" she replied in a voice that was extremely touching. "Sir, of course you cannot know; but he is dead, and my dear mamma has lain by his side these seven years."

"Pardon me," said I, "if by a heedless speech I have probed a hidden wound—a sorrow so deep. But your friends, perhaps, might wish to discover the sturdy beggar from whom I saved you, and if I can be of any service, by sending a note to Maidstone barracks, addressed——"

At that moment the door of the cottage opened, and a comely old woman, dressed in good matronly taste, appeared with a lighted candle in her hand, and with an expression of alarm in her good-humoured face, as she exclaimed—

"La, miss! how late you are! I was quite alarmed for fear you had returned, as you often do, by the sea-shore, and met with an accident among the rocks."

"No, my dear friend, I am here in safety, thanks to this kind gentleman; but for whose fortunate intervention I might have had a very different thing to say."

And in a few words she related all that had taken place, caressing my horse the while kindly and gracefully with her pretty hands, and even without fear, kissing his nose, for although sad-eyed, the girl seemed

naturally playful.

The woman she addressed had all the appearance of a matronly servant or elderly nurse; she took the young lady in her arms kindly, kissed her, and thanked me very earnestly for my service. She then proposed that I should enter the cottage, and have at least a glass of cowslip or elder-flower wine, or some such distillation; but the girl looked rather alarmed. She did not second the invitation, and, finding that I was becoming *de trop*, I put my foot in the stirrup, and mounted.

"Do not deem us lacking either in courtesy or gratitude, sir," said she, presenting her hand, and looking up with her sad, earnest eyes, which were now full of tears; "but you do not know the—the peculiarity of my position here."

I bowed; but of course remained silent.

"She is, perhaps, a governess—some useful young person, some victim of a stepmother," thought I.

"I perceived that you were an officer, though out of uniform, and—and——"

"You don't take every officer for a sad rake, I hope?" said I, laughing.

"Nay, nay, sir; the scarlet coat is very dear to me!"

"Your father, perhaps, was in the army?"

"My poor father was a man of peace, and a man after God's own heart, sir. No, no; you mistake me," she replied, with an air of annoyance and wounded pride; "but you belong, I presume, to the cavalry?"

"Yes," said I, as her manner puzzled me more and more.

"The lancers?" she asked, impetuously.

"Yes, the lancers."

I could see, even in the twilight, that her colour deepened, while a painful sigh escaped her.

"Do you know any one in my corps?"

"Yes—no; that is, I never saw it; but I did know a—a——"

Who, or what she knew, I was not destined to learn, for, just at that moment, the postman passed with a lantern glimmering in his hand, a bag slung over his back.

"A letter. You have one for me, have you not?" she asked, in a clear and piercing voice, while holding forth her hands.

"No, miss, I am sorry to say," stammered the man, touching his cap, and passing abruptly on; "better luck in the morning, I hope."

"No letter, Nurse Goldsworthy, no letter yet," she muttered. "How cruel, how very cruel! or, nursie dear, is this but the way of the world—the world that he has lived in? Oh, it is cold—cold and selfish!" and, pressing her hands upon her breast, she tottered against the iron gate, and then a violent fit of coughing ensued.

"My good woman," said I, "the chill evening air is unsuited to such a cough as your young lady seems afflicted with."

"Yes, sir, yes, I know it," replied the nurse, while supporting the girl with one hand, she closed and locked the iron gate with the other; and, kissing her forehead the while, said, "Patience, my poor suffering angel, thou wilt get a letter in the morning I tell thee."

"Pray tell me if I can assist you. I am Captain Norcliff, of the —th Lancers; do please say if I can be of service?" I urged.

"Oh, no, sir, you cannot serve me in that which afflicts me most," replied the girl, weeping; "but a thousand thanks to you; and now, good evening."

"Good evening," I replied, and rode away, feeling strangely puzzled and interested in this girl, by her beauty, grace, and singular manner.

At the village inn, the signboard of which, I may mention by the way, actually bears the head of King Ethelbert, whose spirit seems somehow to hover still about his Anglo-Saxon *ham* of the Reculvers, I drew up on pretence of obtaining a light for my cigar, but in reality to make some inquiry concerning the pretty enigma who dwelt in the cottage on the Margate-road.

Just as I reined in, a man on horseback passed me at full speed, and from his figure, seat, and dress, I could have sworn that he was—Berkeley! And he was riding in the direction of Chillingham Park, too.

From two to three Kentish yokels, in hobnailed shoes and canvas frocks, I endeavoured, after the distribution of a few shillings for beer, to extract some information, and it was yielded cunningly and grudgingly,

and after much leering, grinning, and scratching of uncombed heads.

One informed me that she was "thowt to be, somehow, the wife o' vun o' them calavary chaps at Maidstone;" another "thowt as she was the vidder of a sea hossifer;" and a third, who thrust his tongue into his fat cheek, remarked "that as I had paid my money I might take my choice," on which I gave him a cut over the head with my whip, and rode away, followed by a shout of derisive laughter from these Anglo-Saxon chawbacons, who, as far as civilization was concerned, were pretty much as if his Majesty King Ethelbert were still upon his throne.

It seemed to me also that I heard among their voices that of the fellow Potkins, whom I had so recently thrashed at the stile.

CHAPTER XVI.

Still as a moonlight ruin is thy power,
Or meekness of carved marble, that hath prayed
For ages on a tomb; serenely laid
As some fair vessel that hath braved the storm,
And passed into her haven, when the noise
That cheered her home hath all to silence died,
Her crew have shoreward parted, and no voice
Troubles her sleeping image in the tide.
ALFORD.

My mind was a prey to great inquietude—shall I term it undefined jealousy?—as I galloped back to my hotel. I had left directions with Pitblado that, if any letters came for me during the two days I was to be

absent from barracks, he was to mount my spare horse, and bring them on the spur direct to Canterbury; but none had come, for he had not appeared.

I lingered over my wine alone, in my solitary room at the Royal, reflecting on the evening's adventures.

Was the horseman who had passed me really Berkeley?

If so, he was riding to Chillingham Park, and would just be in time for dinner—a fact that, if he was uninvited, argued considerable familiarity with that proud and exclusive family.

Then there was the girl whom I had rescued at the stile. What a puzzle she was! I reviewed all her conversation with me, and her strange bearing. Her literary information and education seemed to be of a very superior kind, and her manner was unexceptionable. She seemed gentle, too, and to have been on an errand of charity or mercy. Why was she so agitated when our corps was mentioned! Her love for a red coat might be natural enough; but who was "the captain" to whom the ruffian referred when threatening her? Then there was undisguised anxiety for a letter. That was natural also; and it was an emotion in which I could fully share.

Those yokels in frocks and hobnailed shoes had called her wife, and even widow; but the servant, or nurse, only named her as "miss."

What if she and her nurse, the old spider-brusher, were but a delusion and a snare? What if her modesty and trepidation, and the old woman's love and anxiety, were but a specious piece of acting!

Prudence suggested that such things were not uncommon in this good land of Britain.

Next morning I was up and breakfasted betimes, and the sunny hours of the forenoon saw me mounted, and, after passing the gate of Chillingham Park at a quick canter, I know not why, unless to soothe my mental irritation, slowly walking my horse in the neighbourhood of the Reculvers, and inhaling the pleasant breeze that came from the sea, whilom, as my companion of last night said, ploughed by the galleys of Cæsar, and along the same shore where the Kentish barbarians gathered, in their war paint, to oppose him.

The sunshine fell redly on the quaint spires of the old church and picturesque cottages of the secluded village. I passed the sign of King Ethelbert, and hovered for a moment at the gate of the cottage ornée, where I had been overnight. Its blinds were closely drawn; but a bird was singing gayly in a gilt wire cage that hung in the porch, which was covered with climbing trailers, already in full flower.

I passed on, and soon reached the rustic stile—the scene of last night's encounter with that interesting individual who had solicited alms with the aid of a black beard and a cudgel. It led to a narrow pathway through the fields and coppice to the sea. The birds were chirping, and some of the trees were already budding. The yellow blaze of noon streamed between their stems upon the green grass, and I could see the blue waves of the sea glittering in the glory of the sunshine far away.

On the summit of the moss-grown stile fancy conjured up the figure of the young girl; and I had a vague, undefined longing to meet her again, and learn something of her history, if she had one.

What was this girl to me, or I to her? Yet I had the desire to see her once more, and, as luck or fate would have it, something glittering among the grass caught my eye, and, on dismounting, I found it to be a little gold locket, containing a lock of brown hair, attached to a black velvet ribbon. It bore the initials "J.D.B." and the date, "1st June."

It had, no doubt, fallen, or been torn from the young lady's neck in the struggle of the night before. I resolved at once to restore it, and turned my horse's head towards the cottage, not without the unpleasant reflection that this was the 1st of April—All Fools' Day—and I might simply be courting a scrape of some kind.

Leaving my horse at the gate, I rang the bell, and the door was promptly opened by the old woman (whose face expressed such evident disappointment that I saw some one else had been expected), and whom I may as well introduce by name as Mrs. Goldsworthy.

She curtseyed very low, and eyed me doubtfully, as if the words of the mess-room song occurred to her—

> The scarlet coats! the scarlet coats!

They are a graceless set,
From shoulder-strap of worsted lace
To bullion epaulette.

The deuce is in those soldiers' tongues;
What specious fibs they tell!
And what is worse, 'tis so perverse,
The women list as well.

If such were her speculations, I remembered that the lancers wore blue, and the alleged seductions of the scarlet were inapplicable to one who was in mufti.

"My dear madam," said I, in my most insinuating tone, "passing by the stile this morning, where, last night, I had the pleasure of rescuing your young lady, I found this trinket, which, perhaps, belongs to her?"

"It do, indeed, sir, it do. Lawkamercy! she has well nigh cried her poor eyes out about it, the dear soul! Ah, me, don't you hear her a coughing now?" said the worthy woman, sinking her voice. "'Ow 'appy she will be to get it back again! ay, main 'appy! For whether it was lost by the seashore, or in the fields, or whether the thief had taken it, she never could ha' guessed by no means. Oh, sir, 'ow she would be a thankin' you!"

"I hope she has not suffered from her alarm last night?"

"No, sir," said the woman, eyeing me earnestly through a great pair of spectacles, which she carefully wiped with her apron, and put on for that purpose; "but she do have such a terrible cough, poor thing! Please, sir, just to wait a minute."

She hurried away, and returning almost immediately, invited me to enter, saying—

"My young missus will see you, Mr. Hossifer."

I was ushered into a prettily-papered and airy little parlour, the open windows of which looked seaward over the green fields. Another bird in a gilt wire cage hung chirping at the open sash, where the

spotless white muslin blinds swayed to and fro in the soft breeze of the April morning.

Everything was scrupulously neat and clean, though plain. There were a number of books, chiefly novels, on the side-table; a few landscapes in water-colour, in gilt frames, evinced the taste of the proprietor; an open workbox of elegant design stood on the centre table; and very tiny kid gloves with a few shreds of ribbon, showed that a worker had recently been busy there.

On the wall a garland of artificial flowers encircled the miniature of a lovely little golden-haired boy, whose face, somehow, seemed familiar to me.

On a small pianette, which was open, lay a pile of music. The two upper pieces were "La Forza del Destine," and "La Pluie de Perles," which were inscribed "To Agnes. From her dear Papa."

Everything bespoke the presence of a neat, brisk, and tidy female resident of elegant tastes; but in one corner I detected a cavalry forage cap, pretty well worn, and on the end of the mantelpiece, where it had evidently eluded Mrs. Goldsworthy's duster, the fag-end of a cigar.

I had just made this alarming discovery, when my friend of the last evening entered, and frankly presented me with her hand, half-smiling, and thanking me for the locket, which she at once proceeded to suspend at her neck, saying, as she kissed and hid it in her bosom, that for worlds she would not have lost it!

Ungloved now, I could perceive the delicate beauty of her small hands, and, moreover, that on the third finger of the left there was no marriage ring. Her face was very pale, but singularly beautiful, and her tightly-fitting dress revealed the full symmetry of her arms, waist, and bosom. Her eyes expressed extreme gentleness and sadness, and consorted well with the delicacy of her pure complexion. The extreme redness of her lips seemed rather unnatural, or at least unhealthy; but she coughed frequently, and the consumption, under which I greatly feared she was labouring, made her delicate loveliness still more alluring, and the earnest and searching gaze of her dark blue eyes more interesting and touching.

The common phrases incident to first introductions and everyday conversations were rapidly despatched, and, while I lingered, hat and whip in hand, I repeated that, but for the purpose of returning her locket, I, as a total stranger, would not have ventured to intrude upon a lady. I begged her to be assured of that.

"Be certain, sir," said she, nervously smoothing the braids of her rich, thick hair, and adjusting the neat white collar that encircled her delicate throat, and edged the neck of her plain grey dress; "be certain that it is no intrusion, but a great kindness, though I do live here almost alone, and—and——"

She paused, and coloured deeply.

"You were anxious about letters last night. I hope this morning has relieved your mind?"

"Alas, no, sir," said she, shaking her pretty head sadly. "The postman has always letters for every one but me. I have been forgotten by those who should have remembered me."

"I can fully share your feelings," said I, with a made-up smile. "I, too, am most anxious for letters that seem never likely to come."

"I am sorry to hear this; but I thought that you gay young men of the world had no sorrows—no troubles, save your debts, and your occasional headaches in the morning; the first to be cured by post-obits, and the second by brandy and seltzer-water."

"Is such your idea?" said I, smiling.

"Yes."

"Well, I have other and more heartfelt sorrows than these."

"How often have I wished that I were a man—a strong one, to fight with the world in all its wiles and strength; to wrestle and grapple with it, and to feel that I was powerful, great—greater than even destiny—instead of being the poor and feeble thing I am! Then could I show mankind——"

What she was about to say I know not. Her eyes were sparkling, and her cheek flushing, as she spoke; but a violent fit of coughing came on. She put her handkerchief to her lips, and when she took it away it was stained with blood.

"Permit me," said I, with kindness, and handed her to a chair.

This access of coughing so promptly brought Mrs. Goldsworthy in that I think she must have been listening outside the door. Her caresses and care soothed the young lady, though she lapsed into a flood of nervous tears, and, for a minute or so, withdrew.

"Your mistress seems extremely delicate?" I observed.

"Yes, poor thing! She will never again be the girl she was."

"Are you, may I ask, her mother?"

"Her mother? Lawkamercy, no! I ain't worthy to be more than what I am."

"And what is that, my friend?"

"Her servant, poor angel! Her mother is, I am sure, in Heaven."

"Pardon me. I remember that she told me last night that she was an orphan."

"Ay, poor child, a orphan indeed—a orphan of the 'eart," she added, shaking her head, as she became unintentionally poetic.

"I fear my visit excites you," said I, moving towards the door, as the young girl reappeared, and seemed to have quite recovered her composure. "Your cough requires the greatest care, and those open windows——"

"Oh, I should die without air," she exclaimed, while her eyes sparkled; "for there are times when even my own thoughts seem to stifle me."

"La, miss!" said her attendant, warningly, and glancing impatiently at me.

"A strange girl," thought I; "but can she be subject to flights of fancy —insane?"

"If I can at any time be of service, pray command me, though we shall not be long in Britain now, as we soon start for the Crimea."

"Very soon?" she asked, with her eyes and voice full of earnest inquiry.

"I cannot say exactly when; but soon, certainly."

She pressed her left hand upon her breast, as if to restrain her cough, and cast down her eyelashes. At that moment she seemed remarkably bewitching, soft, modest, and Madonna-like.

I was again about to go, and yet stayed, for I longed to learn, at least, her name.

"And you go cheerfully forth to face danger and death?" she asked, looking up with a mournful smile in her pleading eyes.

"Not cheerfully, for my path is not without its thorns; but for all that I don't dread death, I hope."

"Death!" she said, musingly, as if to herself, while looking at the blood spot on her handkerchief. "Daily I feel myself face to face with him, and shall bid him welcome when he comes nearer, for death has no terrors for me."

"Don't 'ee talk so, darling," said her follower, with a mixture of sorrow and irritation in her manner; "though he you weeps for is a bad 'un at 'art, and I knows it."

"Oh, don't break mine by saying so, nurse."

"I trust that you only fancy yourself worse than you really are," said I, with genuine sympathy in my tone and manner. "Remember, the long and sweet season of summer is before us. You are so young, and life must still be full of hope to you."

"Hope! oh, no, not of hope! My destiny has already been fulfilled!" she replied, with a strong bitterness of manner; "so hope has done with me."

"Pardon me; but may I ask your name—I told you mine," said I, laying my hand on hers.

She coloured deeply, almost painfully. It was but the hectic flush of a moment, and when it passed away she became pale as marble.

"Captain Norcliff, I think you said?"

"Yes; Newton Calderwood Norcliff—and yours?"

"Agnes Auriol."

"Good heavens!" I almost exclaimed, as the whole mystery of her life and manner burst with a new light upon me.

So my mysterious incognita was that poor girl of whom the mess had whispered. Berkeley's mistress—Agnes Auriol—the girl whose letter—a heart-breaking one, likely—he had dropped at Calderwood, and which he had burned so carefully when I restored it to him. So *his* were the initials that were on the gold locket at her neck, and *his* were the forage cap and cigar which had attracted my attention on first entering the cottage parlour.

It was certainly an awkward situation for me, this self-introduction and visit. If discovered there, I knew not how far it might compromise me with him, and still more with others whose opinion I valued.

And as thoughts of the Chillinghams and of the mess flashed upon me, I felt that I would gladly have changed places with Sinbad on the whale's back, or Daniel in the lion's den.

CHAPTER XVII.

Oh, for the wings we used to wear,
When the heart was like a bird,
And floated through the summer air,
And painted all it looked on fair,
And sung to all it heard!
When fancy put the seal of truth
On all the promises of youth!
HERVEY.

To have introduced myself abruptly to Mr. De Warr Berkeley's wedded wife, if he had one, might be explained away satisfactorily enough; but to present myself to Miss Auriol, related as she was to him, there could be

no palliation whatever, and in duelling days could have led to but one result—the pistol!

Something of what passed in my mind, together with an air of bewilderment, must have been apparent in my face, for the young lady, after gazing at me earnestly, as if her clear and bright, but dark blue eyes would read my very soul, looked suddenly down, and said, while her colour came and went, and her bosom heaved painfully—

"I can perceive, Captain Norcliff, that my name explains much to you; but not all—oh no! not all. There are secrets in my short but wretched life that you can never learn—secrets known to God and to myself alone!"

"It really explains nothing to me, Miss Auriol," I replied with a smile, being willing to relieve her embarrassment, by affecting ignorance of that which the whole mess knew—her ambiguous position; "for I am not aware that—that we ever met before."

"But you have heard, perhaps—you know Mr. Berkeley?"

"Of ours—yes; he was in Scotland with me a few weeks ago."

"That I know too well for my own peace," said the girl, coughing spasmodically, and applying her handkerchief to her mouth.

"He is frequently in this quarter, is he not?"

"Yes."

"At this pretty cottage, perhaps?"

"No, sir."

"Where then—the Reculvers?"

"At Chillingham Park. Since he has begun to visit there he scarcely ever comes here. Have you not heard—have you not heard," she repeated, making a fearful effort at articulation, "that he is to be married to the only daughter and heiress of Lord Chillingham?"

I felt that I became nearly as pale as herself, while replying—

"I certainly have not heard of such an alliance; it is probably the silly humour of a gossiping neighbourhood."

She shook her head sadly, and seated herself with an air of lassitude.

"Are you sure that Mr. Berkeley was not here after I escorted you home last night?"

"I am, unfortunately, but too sure. Why do you ask?" she inquired, looking up, while her eyes dilated.

"Because I could have sworn that I passed him on horseback in the dusk."

"Riding in this direction?"

"No, towards Canterbury."

"Ah, towards Chillingham Park, no doubt—there shines his loadstar now!"

"And mine too," thought I, bitterly.

This girl's intelligence, whether false or true, crushed my heart more than I can describe.

Aware, however, of the imperative necessity for retiring, I took up my hat and bade her adieu; but for the purpose of learning more of Berkeley's movements, I promised, when riding that way, to call again, and inquire for her health.

"The locket you have just restored was Mr. Berkeley's gift to me upon a fatal day," said she; "and, believe me, sir, that—that, whatever you may have heard of me, or whatever you may think, I have been 'more sinned against that sinning.'"

In another minute I was in the saddle, and on my way back to Canterbury.

Though she did not know it, nor could she know it, this unfortunate girl had been planting thorns in my breast. I could not believe in the reality of such perfidy on the part of Louisa—of such facility on the part of the haughty Countess, her mother—or of such rapid progress on the part of Berkeley with all his wealth, the hard-won thousands of the late departed brewer.

How I longed now for the arrival of Cora, who might solve or explain away some of the doubts that surrounded me!

My heart swelled with rage; and yet I felt that I loved Louisa with a passion that bade fair to turn my brain!

As Miss Auriol would be certain to know something of Berkeley's movements and as she and her faithful follower, old Mrs. Goldsworthy, might prove invaluable in acquainting me with what passed at Chillingham Park, for they had jealousy to spur on their espionage, I resolved to visit once or twice again the cottage at the Reculvers, when I could do so unseen. This I did, little knowing how greatly the poor girl would interest me in her sad fate, and still less foreseeing that the course I pursued was a perilous one. But the agony of my anxiety, the bitterness of my suspicions, and my love for Louisa, overcame every scruple, and blinded me to everything else.

She, on the other hand, was naturally anxious to learn the movements of Berkeley, whom, notwithstanding his cold desertion, she loved blindly and desperately. Thus we could be useful to each other.

My heart recoiled at times from such a mode of working; but I could have no other recourse till my cousin Cora came.

As I rode up to the door of the hotel, my heart leaped on seeing Willie Pitblado awaiting me there.

"A letter at last!" I exclaimed, as he came forward.

"From the colonel, sir," said he, touching his cockaded hat.

"The colonel?" I repeated in disappointment and surprise, as I tore open the note, the contents of which ran briefly thus:—

"MY DEAR NORCLIFF,—As the barracks here are becoming uncomfortably crowded, by the Indian depôts and so forth, your troop is detached to Canterbury for a week or two, to share the quarters of the hussars. You will remain there, probably, till the route comes. You need not return to head-quarters, unless you choose; but may report yourself to the lieutenant-colonel commanding the consolidated cavalry depôt at Canterbury. This is a stranger-day at mess. We are to have an unusual number of guests, and the band. Wish you were with us.

Believe me, &c., &c.,
LIONEL BEVERLEY, Lieut.-Col.

"P.S.—You will drill the troop once daily to the sword and lance exercise on horseback."

"How lucky!" thought I. "I shall have Canterbury for the basis of my operations, and the Reculvers for an advanced post; quartered here, and Chillingham close by!—When does the troop march in, Willie."

"To-morrow forenoon, sir, under Mr. Jocelyn."

"Good. You will take my card to the barrack-master, and my horses to the stables, and receive over my quarters. I shall remain at the hotel until the troop comes in."

I did not ride to the Reculvers on that afternoon, though I scoured every road in the vicinity of the city, by Sturry, Bramling, and Horton.

Next morning I went for a mile or two in the direction of Ospringe, and soon saw the troop advancing leisurely, with their horses at a walk, along the dusty Kentish highway, their keen lance-heads glittering with all their bright appointments in the sunshine, their scarlet and white banneroles, and the long plumes in the men's square-topped caps dancing in the wind, as I trotted up and joined them, though in mufti.

My lieutenant, Frank Jocelyn, and the cornet, Sir Harry Scarlett, were both pleasant and gentlemanly young men, and would have been a most welcome addition to my residence in Canterbury, but for the hopes, the fears, and plans which occupied me. They asked me how I liked the cathedral city, and there was a smile on their faces, which, when taken in conjunction with my secret thoughts, galled and fretted me. Yet I could not notice it.

Accompanied by a multitude of the great "unwashed," we proceeded straight to those spacious barracks which are erected for cavalry, artillery, and infantry, on the road that leads to the Isle of Thanet, and there the lancers were rapidly "told off" to their quarters, the horses stabled, corned, and watered.

We dined that evening with a hussar corps, of whose mess we were made honorary members while we remained in Canterbury, and from Jocelyn I learned incidentally that for the last three days Berkeley had

scarcely been in barracks. The hope that I had harrassed myself in vain passed away now, and fear alone remained.

While the first set of decanters were traversing the table, I slipped away unnoticed, and without changing my uniform, took the road at a rasping pace direct for the Reculvers. The moon was just rising from the sea, and the last notes of the curfew were dying away, as I drew up at the door of Miss Auriol's cottage.

She was alone, and sitting at tea, to which she bade me welcome, in a manner that showed she half doubted the honesty of my visit, and betrayed such emotions of shame, confusion, and awkwardness, I felt myself quite an intruder. But I simply asked if she had heard more of Berkeley.

She admitted that she had, and stated mournfully that for the last three days he had been constantly at the park, thus confirming what Frank Jocelyn had told me.

In the course of another visit or two, I gradually learned piecemeal all the poor girl's unhappy history, and how she became the victim, first of evil fortune, and afterwards of a cold-blooded man of the world like De Warr Berkeley.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Where are the illusions bright and vain
That fancy boded forth?
Sunk to their silent caves again,
Auroræ of the north!

Oh! who would live those visions o'er,
All brilliant though they seem,
Since earth is but a desert shore,

And life a weary dream!
MOIR.

She was the orphan daughter of the poor curate of a secluded village on the borders of Wales. Her mother, also the daughter of a curate, had died when Agnes was very young. She was thus left to be the sole prop and comfort of the old man's declining years, and he loved her dearly—all the more dearly that, with a little brother, a beautiful, golden-haired boy (the same whose miniature I remarked), she alone survived of all their children, ten in number.

The rest had perished early; for all possessed that terrible heritage, the seeds of which Agnes was now maturing in her own bosom—consumption.

One by one the old clergyman had seen them borne forth from his little thatched parsonage, under the ivy-clad lyke-gate of the village church, and laid by their mother's side, a row of little grassy graves, where the purple and golden crocuses grew in spring, and the white-eyed marguerites in summer, all as gaily as if the last hopes of a broken heart were not buried beneath them.

In the fulness of time the shadow of death again fell on the old parsonage, and the curate's white hairs were laid in the dust, close by the quiet little Saxon church in which he had ministered so long; and now the ten graves of the once loving household lay side by side, without a stone to mark them.

"In the days before this last calamity befel me, Captain Norcliff," said Miss Auriol, "when my poor father was wont to take my face caressingly between his tremulous old hands, and kissing my forehead, and smoothing my hair, would tell me that my name, Agnes, signified gentleness—a lamb, in fact—that it came from the Latin word *Agnus*; and when he would bless me with a heart as pure as ever offered up a

prayer to God, how little could I foresee the creature I was to become! Oh, my father—oh, my mother! what a life mine has been; and after my father died, what a youth!

"I have often thought of the words of Mademoiselle de Enclos, when, in the flush of her beauty, she exclaimed to the Prince of Condé, 'Had any one proposed such a life to me at one time, I should have died of grief and fright!'

"So my father passed away; the new incumbent came to take our mansion, with its humble furniture at a valuation. After paying a few debts, with a small sum, I found myself with my little brother, who was sickly and ailing, in London, seeking subsistence by exerting the talents I possessed—music, chiefly, for I am pretty well accomplished as a musician."

She continued to tell me of all her heart-breaking struggles, her perils and bitter mortifications, and of the acute sufferings of that little fair-headed brother, on whom all her love and hope were centred; and how, daily, in the fetid atmosphere of a humble lodging, far away from the green fields, the bright sunshine and the rustling woods of that dear old parsonage on the slope of the Denbigh hills, the poor child grew worse and more feeble; and how her crushed heart was wrung as her little store of money melted away like snow in spring; her few ornaments went next, and no employment came.

How misery depressed, and horrible forebodings of the future haunted her; how she remembered all the harrowing tales she had read—and such as we may daily read—of the poor in London, and how they perish under the feet of the vast multitude who rush onward in the race for existence, or in the pursuit of pleasure; and how thoughts and doubts of God himself, and of His mercy and justice, at times came over her, even as they came at times now, when the man she loved and trusted most on earth had deceived her.

Employed at last as a hired musician, she was out frequently to play the piano at balls and evening parties, for half a guinea per night, in London, and thus made a slender subsistence for the suffering child and for herself.

After receiving her fee from the hand of some sleepy butler or supercilious upper-servant, as she nightly wrapped her scanty cloak about her, and, quitting the heated and crowded rooms, hurried through the dark, wet, and snowy streets, to an almost squalid lodging, which even her native neatness failed to brighten, and to the couch where the poor, thin, wakeful boy, with his great, sad, earnest eyes, awaited her; ere long she began to find a cold and cough settling upon her delicate chest; and then the terror seized her that if she became seriously ill, and failed to obey her patrons at the nearest music-shop, where would the boy get food? And if she died—in a hospital, perhaps—what would be his fate, his end, in other and less tender hands than hers?

Then, as she wept over him in the silence of the night, and remembered the prayers her old father had taught her, she would strive to become more composed, and to sleep like that child that lay hushed in her bosom; but her dreams, if not full of terrors for the present, were ever haunted by the sad memories of the past; for the kind faces and sweet smiles of the dead came vividly before her, and the familiar sound of their voices seemed to mingle in the drowsy hum of the London streets without, or with the murmur of her native Dee, and the pleasant rustle of the summer leaves in the woods of the old parsonage she would never see again, or the green hills of Denbigh that overshadowed it.

Foreseeing and fearing that the child would be taken from her, she assumed her pencil, in the use of which she was very skilful and accomplished, and thus produced the likeness that hung in her little parlour. In this labour of love I was struck by the close resemblance it bore to herself.

On one occasion, at some West-end party, she remembered having seen me. On beholding me in uniform now the recollection came fully upon her; and it would seem that, on the night in question, when all else had forgotten the pale and weary musician amid the crush and merriment of the supper-room, I had sent her cake and wine, and the former she had secretly pocketed for her little brother; but of this casual rencontre I had no recollection whatever.

On another occasion, it happened that the neglected and lonely, but useful "young person," past whom youth, beauty, and merriment whirled in white satin and diamonds, lace and flowers, attracted the attention of Mr. De Warr Berkeley. Her soft and wistful glances at her former equals caught his watchful eye; and the graceful politeness with which she acceded to their contrary suggestions to play quicker or slower, together with the great brilliance of her execution, were all remarked by him.

It was on one of those nights, like some others, when old companions passed her by in the waltz and galop, and former friends too, without a smile or glance of recognition; yet, as she thought of the child at home, with a crushed and swollen heart she played on and on mechanically.

Some unusual slight had been put upon her, and while she played, in the bitterness of her soul, her hot tears fell upon the keys of the piano. At that moment for Berkeley to introduce himself was an easy matter. He did it so quietly, so respectfully, that the poor girl felt soothed. She never mistrusted him, and, as her evil fortune would have it, he met her three nights, almost consecutively, at three different places. An intimacy was thus established.

On the third, the rain was pouring through the desolate streets of a suburban district in torrents. The soaked shrubbery and the railings of the garden shone flickering through the lamp-light, and the dark clouds swept past in gloomy masses overhead. It was a wild night, or morning rather, and not even a policeman, in his oilskin cape, seemed to be abroad.

Gathering her threadbare shawl tightly round her, Agnes, terrified and bewildered, was setting forth afoot, timid and shivering, on her way home, having some miles of London to traverse, when Berkeley, who had artfully lingered to the last, respectfully offered her a seat in his cabriolet, and by setting her down where she mentioned, discovered her residence, and marked her for his prey.

Berkeley's attentions filled the girl with gratitude instead of alarm, and he soon inspired her with a passion for him. "The more a young girl believes in purity," says a writer, "the more readily she abandons herself,

if not to her lover, at least to her love; because, being without distrust, she is without strength; and, to make himself beloved by such a one, is a triumph which any man of five-and-twenty may secure himself whenever he pleases. And this is true, though young girls are surrounded by extreme vigilance and every possible rampart."

To trace the gradual and downward course she trod, and how artfully Berkeley gained an ascendancy over her by the interest he affected to feel in her little ailing brother, and how lavishly he supplied the means of such comforts as the poor child had never possessed even in his father's homely parsonage, can neither be for me to describe, nor my reader to know.

Suffice that the gentle Agnes fell into the snare, as our common ancestress did before, and became what I now found her to be.

* * * * *

From that hour she had never known real peace, and the memory of her parents, blended with the agonies of remorse, haunted her day and night. As a drowning wretch will cling to straws, so clung she to the desperate hope that Berkeley would love her while life lasted, and that he would redeem his promise by marrying her, for she loved him blindly and devotedly, with all the strength of her young heart, and of a first and only passion.

The change now, from work all day and music all night, with trudging to and fro, through rain or sleet, was doubtless great; but the change brought with it no joy, no peace of mind.

Had she a thousand caprices, in the first flush of her amour, her roué lover would have gratified them all; but, luckily, her tastes were simple, and she shrank from proffered boxes at the play or opera, from rural parties, and everything that made her public.

But retribution was coming now; her tears and sorrow fretted him, and he began to absent himself. The luxuries with which he surrounded her brought to her no happiness, and to her little brother no health, for the child died, passing peacefully away one night in his sleep, and was

buried—not in the pleasant green village burying-ground where his kindred lay—but in a horrid fetid London churchyard, amid the human loam of ages; and when the little silver-mounted coffin was carried away, Agnes Auriol, as she cast a bouquet of lily-of-the-valley on it, felt that now she had no real tie on earth, unless it was her lover, and from him even she shrank at such a time as this.

She stood alone by the little grave, the only mourner there. She had thought of asking Berkeley to accompany her; but, somehow, his presence would seem a species of pollution by the grave of the pure and sinless little boy, and the face of her father seemed ever before her.

Her unwelcome repentance fretted him, and without compunction he saw the agony of her spirit, and how the lustre faded from her eye, and the roses died in her cheek. Sedulously she endeavoured to conceal the sorrow that embittered her existence, as she perceived that it only served to disgust him. And as this sorrow grew, so did her strength diminish, and the hectic flush of consumption and premature decline spread over her delicate little face.

He was frequently absent from her now for weeks, and those periods seemed insupportable, for the love of him had become a habit; and to break that habit seemed as if it would snap the feeble tenure of her life.

He ceased, too, to supply her with money. Her former musical connections were completely broken. She was frequently without the means of subsistence save by the sale of her ornaments; and at last she had parted with all save her mother's wedding ring, which she wished to be buried with her.

In January last she discovered that Berkeley was at Calderwood Glen in Scotland. She wrote to him a most piteous letter, to which, however, he accorded no reply; and at that time she must have died, had her nurse, Goldsworthy—an old and faithful servant of her father's, not discovered and brought her to this cottage near the Reculvers.

When the lancers were at Maidstone, Berkeley had visited her from time to time, and pretended still his old views of marriage to amuse her, but trammelled with secrecy; and latterly he had derided her letters

entirely. Moreover, she had come to the bitter and stinging conclusion that he hated her, as she possessed letters of his which legally compromised him.

He who does another person an injury never forgives him for what he has endured. He alike hates and fears him; and in this spirit did Berkeley fear and hate the poor girl whom he had wronged.

Such was the plain, unvarnished story of Agnes Auriol, which she related in the intervals that were unbroken by a hard, consumptive, and undoubtedly, "churchyard cough."

"I have but one wish now," she added, as she lay back exhausted; "and that I cannot gratify."

"Is it so difficult to achieve?" I asked, in a low voice.

"There are insuperable difficulties."

"And this desire?"

"Is to leave this place for ever," she said, almost in a whisper, while the hot tears ran unheeded down her pale cheeks; "and—and——"

"Go where?"

"To look on poor papa's grave, and on dear mamma's, and then die."

"No, no, do not speak in this hopeless manner," I urged, feeling that I, a young officer of cavalry, was a very unfitting comforter or adviser at such a time; and I rose to retire, for the evening was now far advanced.

"This craving is so strong in the poor lamb's heart, sir, that she will be a dyin' as sure as we look on her, unless it be gratified, and athout a angel comes from heaven; I don't know how it is to be done," said Mrs. Goldsworthy, weeping noisily, like all people of her class, as she ushered me to the door, and to my horse, which was pawing the ground impatiently, with the dew on his coat and saddle.

"Take her there without loss of time, my good friend," said I.

"She divided her last crown with a poor fisherman yesterday, to get some comforts for his sick wife."

"Good heavens! Is she then without means?"

"Quite, sir; and if Mr. Berkeley——"

I struck my spurred heels into the gravel at the sound of his name, and exclaimed——

"Poor girl, I shall give her the means."

"You, sir?"

"Yes."

"Oh, sir—sir—but she'll never take it from you," said Mrs. Goldsworthy, sobbing into her apron with great vociferation.

"She must; and let her remember me in her prayers when I am far away. At eight to-morrow evening I shall be here again for the last time, my worthy friend, and will supply her with what she requires."

Before the nurse could reply I was in my saddle, and had closed the iron gate; but just as I rode off, I nearly trod down a man who was muffled in a poncho cloak, and who leant against the gate pillar—whether listening or asleep, I knew not; yet, had I looked more closely, I might have detected the moustached face of my quondam friend, Mr. De Warr Berkeley. For this loiterer, or eavesdropper, proved in the sequel to be no other than he.

To outflank me, and to place himself, his fortune (and his debts), at the complete disposal of Lady Louisa Loftus, was now the plan—the game—of my friendly brother officer; and with what success we shall see ere long.

I was full of thought while riding slowly home to the barracks on the Thanet Road; I longed for Cora's coming to unravel the mystery of Louisa's conduct, and yet dreaded to face my cousin or broach the matter to her. I was inspired with sympathy for the poor lost creature I had just quitted, and full of indulgence for her mode of life, and excuses for her fate and fall. Her singular beauty greatly aided emotions such as these, for the morbid state of her health lent a wondrous lustre to her dark blue eyes, and marvellous transparency to her lovely complexion; and I felt extreme satisfaction that it was in my power to gratify a wish that was, perhaps, her last one—to pay a pilgrimage to the resting-place of her parents.

The sweet verse of honest Goldsmith occurred to me—

> The only art her guilt to cover,
> To hide her shame from every eye,

To give repentance to her lover,
And wring his bosom is—to die!

At the same time I thought it very doubtful whether any such catastrophe would wring the padded bosom of Berkeley.

Had Agnes Auriol been a wrinkled crone, it may be a matter for consideration whether I—a young officer of lancers—would have been so exceedingly philanthropic in her cause. I hope I should.

On arriving at the barracks, my first task was to despatch Pitblado by the night train to head-quarters, with a note to M'Goldrick, the paymaster, for at least fifty pounds, saying I wanted the money, and must have it by noon to-morrow.

CHAPTER XIX.

But the spite on't is, no praise
Is due at all to me;
Love with me hath made mad no staies
Had it any been but she.

Had it any been but she,
And that very face,
There had been at least ere this
Twelve dozen in her place.
SIR JOHN SUCKLING.

Promptly, by an early train, Willie Pitblado arrived with the cash from M'Goldrick, and with that which alike puzzled and provoked me—a brief note from my friend, Jack Studhome, the adjutant, advising me that, from rumours he, Scriven, and Wilford had heard—rumours circulated insidiously, he knew not how or by whom, in the billiard-rooms we frequented, and indeed about Maidstone barracks generally—my visits to a certain romantic cottage near the Reculvers were well known. I might mean no wrong, certainly; but was it judicious or wise to get myself into a scrape with a brother officer?

There was no mistaking the object of this friendly epistle of Jack's, and it filled me with fresh anger against Berkeley. Who but he could insidiously spread those reports concerning what he alone knew or could affect an interest in! I knew his subtle and crooked mode of working; and his ultimate object was undoubtedly that this rumour against me should ere long reach Chillingham Park.

Yet, removed as I was from head-quarters, I could do nothing in the matter, and for the present had only "to grin and bear it."

Morning parade over, in obedience to Colonel Beverley's order, I was putting the troop through a course of sword and lance exercise personally, and was so earnestly engaged in the work of the moment, that I did not perceive a dashing phaeton, drawn by a pair of spanking grey ponies, attended by an outrider in livery, on a showy bay horse, that entered the barrack-yard, and drew up close by, as if its occupants wished to observe the progress of the drill.

After the lapse of a few minutes, Troop Sergeant-Major Stapylton trotted his horse forward, and said—

"Beg pardon, Captain Norcliff, but some friends of yours are waiting for you, sir."

Turning in my saddle, how great was my surprise to see Lady Louisa and Cora in the phaeton, which was driven by Berkeley, who was attired in a very accurate suit of forenoon mufti. Dismounting, I sheathed my sword, threw my reins to Stapylton, and saying to my lieutenant, Jocelyn —

"Frank, like a good fellow, finish off this piece of drill for me, please," advanced at once to greet my fair friends, whose visit, I felt, was due to Cora.

"How interesting this is!" said Lady Louisa, presenting her carefully-gloved little hand, with a brilliant smile, as she proceeded to imitate my last order, "Prepare to dismount! one; the lance to be raised out of the bucket, by the right hand sliding down to the extent of the arm; two—ah, I forget two; you are quite an enthusiast."

Under this banter I detected, or thought so, a deep glance of anxiety and hidden meaning, more especially as she added, "You evidently think more of this drill-sergeant's work than of me."

My heart was so filled with sudden joy that I knew not what I said; but I kissed Cora's hand to conceal my confusion.

"And what of good Sir Nigel, Cora?" I asked.

"Papa comes to England to see you go away, and to take me home," replied my cousin, in a calm voice; "home to Calderwood, when all is over."

"All is over?"

"I mean when the army departs."

"And you are on leave, I perceive, Berkeley?"

"Aw—haw—yes, for a day or so. Doocid bore the work at Maidstone," he drawled out.

I was obliged as yet to dissemble, though there was an ill-concealed air of smiling triumph about my comrade that gave me considerable uneasiness.

"And now, sir, what have you to say for yourself?" said Lady Louisa, tapping me on the epaulette with her parasol, and speaking with an air of mock severity. "So the rules of society are to be inverted to suit your lancer tastes; the ladies are to wait upon the gentlemen? Quartered actually in Canterbury, and yet you never came near us."

"Lady Louisa," I was beginning, yet not knowing what to say, as I could never imagine that she doubted the reason of my non-appearance at Chillingham.

"What am I to think of it?" she continued, smiling.

Berkeley laughed. I believe the fellow thought we were on the eve of a coolness.

"Remember my constitutional timidity," I urged.

"Timidity in a captain of lancers!" she exclaimed, laughing.

"I ventured to hope that the earl, at least, might have remembered me."

"You knew that I was at Chillingham Park, it appears?" she observed, with a pretty air of pique.

"Yes," said I, soothed by her glance of fond reproach; "Sir Nigel's letter told me so."

"Yet you never came even once to visit us, and I longed so much to see you, for I had a good deal to gossip about concerning our residence at Calderwood."

"But the earl omitted to leave a card, and your mamma never wrote; and then the rules of society!" I urged, still harping on my grievance.

"The rules of fiddlesticks! When did lovers ever heed them?" she asked, in a rapid whisper, while Berkeley addressed a few words to Jocelyn, and while her dark and sparkling eyes flashed a glance that made me forget all. "Well, here are the cards of papa and mamma, with an express invitation to Chillingham. You will dine with us this evening, won't you?"

"With pleasure."

"Papa and mamma are to dine at the Priory, but on another day you shall see them."

"And the hour?"

"Eight."

"Eight!" I repeated, for that was the very hour of my appointment with Agnes Auriol, and the park lay in an opposite direction from the barracks. Here was a dilemma! But I resolved, if possible, to keep faith with both, and said—

"Excuse me, pray; but on reflection I find it impossible to be present at that hour."

"Indeed!"

"But I shall present myself soon after in the drawing-room."

"What prevents you?" she asked, raising her dark eyebrows.

"Duty, unfortunately."

"In that case I must excuse you. Allegiance to me should not precede that which you owe to the Queen. Till this evening, then, adieu."

She presented her hand, and bowed with inimitable grace. I took it in mine, and lingering, would, I am sure, have kissed it, but for the troop close by, and dozens of idlers who were lolling at the barrack windows in their shell-jackets or shirt-sleeves. There was a glorious smile on her bright face that contrasted strongly with the sad and wistful glance of Cora's soft dark eyes; and, as the phaeton swept away from the barrack-square, I forgot to bid adieu to Berkeley, though I wished him in very warm quarters indeed. I forgot even to address Cora, or rejoin the troop. I forgot all about Studhome's letter and its import; and, leaving Jocelyn to finish the drill as he pleased, walked mechanically to my quarters, filled by a great revulsion of feeling, and remembering only that Louisa loved me—loved me still! Of that day's close could I have foreseen the end! I counted the hours that intervened between the time that I should be at the park. I resolved, if possible, to leave nothing undone to gain the good opinion of the earl and countess; and, on after thought, I regretted that I had excused my appearance at dinner, and believed that I might have paid my last visit to the cottage at the Reculvers an hour or so earlier, and performed my task of philanthropy, even at the risk of being seen; though, sooth to say, I rather dreaded that event, circumstanced as I was with Louisa; and since the clouds that lowered upon my horizon were dispersed now, the unfortunate victim of Berkeley could be of no further use to me.

Berkeley had been watching my interview with Louisa narrowly, and took in our whole situation at a glance, or thought he did so.

He feared that Lady Louisa's gaiety was a little too spasmodic to be real, in one who was usually calm and reserved; and, hence, that it cloaked some deeper emotion than met the eye. My sensation at her appearance, and during the whole interview, must have been apparent even to a less interested spectator than Berkeley, and his whole soul became stirred by emotions of jealousy, rivalry, and revenge!

Having had the full entrée of Chillingham Park for the last month and more, he had, as he conceived, made a fair lodgment, to use a military phrase, in the body of the place—that he had the cards in his own hands, and should lose no time in discovering how Lady Louisa was affected towards him.

Cool, vain, insolent, and unimpassioned, this blasé parvenu thought over his plans while the phaeton rolled along the Canterbury Road; and the aristocratic aspect of the coroneted gate and castellated lodge, the far extent of green sward stretching under the stately elms, closely shorn and carefully rolled—sward that had never been ploughed since the days, perhaps, when the Scot and Englishman measured their swords at Flodden and Pinkey, kindled brighter the fire of ambition with him, and made him resolve at all hazards to supplant me.

One fact he had resolved on—that, though the days of bodily assassination had gone out of English society, or existed only in the pages of sensational romance, if he failed to obtain Louisa Loftus, that I should never succeed.

CHAPTER XX.

Not thus the shade may pass,
That is upon thy heart,
There is no sun in earthly skies
Can bid its gloom depart;

For falsehood's stain is on it,
And cruelty and guile—
And these are stains that never pass,
And shades that never smile.
MISS LANDON.

The mansion of Chillingham is one of the stateliest in that part of England.

It consists of a great central block and peristyle, with two wings coming forward, forming a species of quadrangle. Detailed in the taste that existed about 1680, and erected by the second peer of the house, who had been created an earl at the Restoration, it was built entirely of red brick, save the eight Corinthian columns of the peristyle, the great flight of steps that ascended thereto, the elaborate cornices, corners, balustrades, and vases, which were all of white freestone, and in the style that is denominated Palladian.

Elaborately carved within the central pediment are the arms of the Loftus family—a chevron engrailed between three trefoils, supported by two eagles; the crest a hand grasping a battle-axe, with the motto, "*Prend mot tel que je suis*," or "Take me as I am."

It occupies a gentle eminence in the centre of the spacious park, and every embellishment has been added around to make the natural beauties of the somewhat flat and peaceful scene to harmonize. Though equally aristocratic in tone, it is very different in aspect from the bold and quaint, gloomy, embattled, and romantic mansion of Calderwood, with its turrets and loopholes for bullet or arrow; and is, in fact, a style of edifice almost entirely peculiar to England and Holland.

Cora and Berkeley were as yet the only guests at the park, and on handing the ladies from the phaeton, he begged a few minutes' interview with Lady Louisa, in the library or the conservatory, whichever she pleased, after luncheon.

She coloured deeply, almost with annoyance, at a request so odd, and looking at her watch, said—

"We lunch at two. Papa and mamma are in Canterbury; I have letters to write, but shall be in the library at six—that is, two hours before dinner."

"Thanks; after we have tiffed then," said he, lifting his hat, and passing after her and Cora into the marble vestibule, with a self-satisfied smile.

"What on earth can the man have to say in such a solemn fashion, Cora?" whispered Louisa.

"I cannot conceive," replied my cousin, thinking of something else.

The luncheon, at which those three were present, with a great whiteheaded and white-waistcoated butler, and three powdered and liveried servants in attendance, passed over almost in irksome silence, for all were fully occupied by their own thoughts or plans.

Berkeley, who gazed at Louisa from time to time with ill-concealed admiration and gratified vanity, felt that the absence of the earl and countess at this interesting juncture boded well for his success, opportunities for a tête-à-tête in that usually numerous and always aristocratic household being few and far between.

Lady Louisa, who more than half divined her admirer's hopes, was full of her brief and hurried interview with me, and, in anticipation of a scene, felt bored and worried; while poor Cora's thoughts were all her own; a little—no, it was a great sorrow, which none could know or sympathize with, filled her heart in secret, for she was not communicative, and thus, while she shared all the confidences and gossip of my Lady Louisa, gave but little of her own in return.

So the progress of tiffin was "dooced slow," as Berkeley thought it, and he felt somewhat relieved when Lady Louisa rose, and, with a smile, said to Cora—

"Excuse me, I am now going to write my letters;" adding to him, "I shall not forget," with another smile that, could he have read it aright, boded but little success to his cherished plans.

Punctually to the time, Lady Louisa sailed into the library, where Berkeley, whose courage had been alternately ebbing and flowing, was in waiting. He handed her a seat, and, after a few deprecatory remarks, by way of preface, took her right hand between his own, and, as she did not immediately withdraw it, he assumed fresh courage, and made a formal declaration of his love and admiration of her, and then, before she could

speak, he rambled on about his finances, his social habits, his income—some six thousand per annum—his further expectations, and a great deal more to the same purpose.

Lady Louisa remained perfectly silent, and this silence, as he had nothing more to say, caused him infinite confusion.

"You do not speak—you do not answer, dear Lady Louisa. Do you not understand me? I tell you that I love you with all the devotion of which the human heart is capable, and I pray you to pardon the—aw, aw—presumption of one in every respect so unworthy of you, in venturing to address you in the language of love; but who can control the—aw—emotions of the heart!"

Still she did not speak.

"Say that you pity—say that you—aw—understand me!" he urged.

"I understand, but cannot pity you," replied Louisa, calmly and without betraying the slightest flutter or embarrassment. "And I beg to assure you that—that, in this matter, you must——"

"Address the earl, your father, dearest Lady Louisa—aw, aw—in writing, or verbally?" was the cool and rapid question.

"Neither verbally nor in writing," said she, rising, and assuming a dignity of bearing that made Berkeley feel himself intolerably little.

"Aw, aw—the dooce! Then how?" he asked, having recourse to his eyeglass.

"I was about to say that I thank you, Mr. Berkeley—thank you very much indeed—for the great honour you do me in addressing me thus, and in making me such an offer; but you must strive to dismiss all such thoughts from your breast in future, as I could never, never love you! Pardon me an avowal so very painful, and permit me to leave you."

Her coolness, and almost unmoved bearing, piqued Berkeley, and wounded his self-esteem, which was inordinate.

"Your bridal flowers," said he, with a bitter smile, "must be blended with the faded strawberry leaves of some Anglo-Norman line, I presume?"

"Not so, sir. I have hopes, I admit, but they are not quite so high," she replied, with a calm and steady glance, though her short upper lip quivered with suppressed pride and anger.

"In—deed!" sneered Berkeley, as his habitual insolence came now thoroughly to his aid; "and so you once and for all actually refuse me, Lady Loftus?"

"I grieve to say, sir, that I do—once and for ever. Let us endeavour to forget this very unpleasant scene, and, if possible, be as before—friends."

"And for whom do you refuse me?" he demanded, as pride and jealousy rendered him blind to all future consequences.

"For whom, sir, matters not to you."

"I think it matters very much to me."

"Perhaps; but permit me to remind you, Mr. Berkeley, that I am unused to be questioned thus."

"Oh," said he, bowing low, "doocid good. I—aw—crave your pardon; but if you will not tell me your preference, Lady Louisa, shall I have the honour of telling you?"

"If you please," she replied, turning half away, and shrugging her shoulders, while her colour deepened, and her dark eyes gleamed with sudden anger.

"It is for one who is even now, perhaps, with a worthless creature, whose society he prefers to yours—haw! haw! the cast-off mistress of a brother officer!"

"It is false, sir!" she exclaimed, in an agitated voice, as she turned her flashing eyes full upon him, and drew her tall and glorious figure up like a tragedy queen; "it is false, and cannot be."

"Oh, no, it is not false, my dear madam; but unfortunately, is—aw—too true."

There was a pause, during which they regarded each other steadily.

"Why could he not dine here at eight this evening?" asked Berkeley.

"Because duty required his attendance elsewhere, if it is Captain Norcliff to whom you refer, sir; but I shall no longer bandy words here with you."

"Duty—doocid good! At that very hour this evening—eight—we shall find them together, if you choose to accompany me."

"I, sir, accompany you?" she repeated, disdainfully.

"Yes."

"To where he is—with her?"

"Yes."

"Dare you make such a proposition to me?"

"I do dare," he replied, with blind fury; "and I tell you further, Lady Louisa Loftus, that this fine and moral young gentleman, Captain Norcliff, has an affair with a girl well known to all our mess; as the French, happily would term her, *une femme entretenue*, of a brother officer—one who has a doocid flaw in her fair fame, and most decided kick in her gallop," he added, coarsely and maliciously, determined at all hazards to ruin me with Louisa, and even with my uncle and cousin, though he could gain nothing thereby.

"And you, his friend, tell me of this!" exclaimed Louisa, with withering scorn in her manner, as she played nervously with the rose diamond ring I had given her.

"Will you and Miss Calderwood accompany me this evening to the cottage near the Reculvers, and I shall have the pleasure of showing you how our modern Captain Bailey solaces himself in 'country quarters.'"

At the mention of this cottage Lady Louisa started, and changed colour visibly, and it was then Berkeley's turn to smile, for certain odd rumours concerning it and its beautiful occupant had reached her through the servants at the park, and more particularly her own attendant; but recollecting her position, she said, loftily and decidedly, while cresting up her haughty head—

"'Tis false, sir! I am indisposed to act the spy, and he will not be there."

"Oh, yes, he will be there, be true as a turtle-dove—exact as—haw—the clock at the Horse Guards. We shall find him mingling his tears with those of the Traviata; a philanthropic Howard in a lancer uniform—a very Joseph—haw—haw—'a man of snow?'"

"Sir!" exclaimed Lady Loftus, stamping her little foot.

"He's been devilish hard up of late—got fifty pounds this morning from the paymaster—so his man told mine; the girl's a dancer, and every one knows they are doocid expensive cattle to keep and shoe."

"Sir, you forget yourself!" exclaimed Lady Louisa, while her eyes flashed with an expression of rage, which even her long lashes failed to soften. "Papa and mamma are to dine at the Priory—so this evening I am free, and you shall drive us, that is, Miss Calderwood and me—to that odious cottage, and with my own eyes I shall prove who is false, you or he!"

"Agreed, I am quite at your disposal," said he, bowing low.

And so ended this singular interview. So ended Berkeley's hopes of all but gratified malice, and they separated, each with anger against the other sparkling in their eyes, and burning in their hearts.

* * * * *

Louisa at once sought Cora, and related all that had passed—the abrupt proposal and its singular sequel—little knowing that the latter portion of her narrative, like a double-edged sword, cut two ways at once, and how her words stabbed poor Cora to the heart; for the good girl would rather have heard that I was steady and faithful in my regard for her brilliant rival than that I was the creature Berkeley had striven to make me appear.

"I have loved your cousin Newton too much to cease doing so now, unless I find him unworthy, when I shall thrust his image from my heart as if I had never seen or known him! and I feel, Cora Calderwood, that I must either love or hate him!" exclaimed Louisa, with a strange energy that quite startled the quiet Scottish girl. "I have a craving to learn his truth or his falsehood, personally and undoubtedly. So you shall come with me, Cora. 'Tis only your cousin you seek!"

"Louisa Loftus," she exclaimed. "I cannot, and will not, believe, in this duplicity or depravity of my cousin Newton."

"We shall go to this vile woman's cottage, dear, in secret, and learn the truth for ourselves."

"Even at the risk of appearing guilty of espionage?"

"At all risks!" was the impetuous reply. "That cottage by the Reculvers! Aha! I remember that mamma's *soubrette* said something about the young person who resides there with an old woman, her mother, or aunt, or something equally veritable and creditable; and added that no one was ever known to visit her, save a gentleman like an officer—mark that, like an officer—who usually came on horseback, and at night."

"Oh, Louisa, you do not—you cannot—you shall not believe all those slanders about dear Newton," said Cora, vehemently, in a passion of tears, as she threw herself on the heaving bosom of her more fiery and energetic friend, who, however, wept also. "Did you not remark how pale, almost haggard, poor Newton looked when we saw him with his troop to-day?"

"Well, perhaps nocturnal rambles and late rides from the Reculvers ——"

"Now peace, Lady Loftus, if you would not break my heart," exclaimed Cora, arresting a cutting remark by a kiss on her rosy and tremulous lips.

About twilight the pony phaeton again set forth from Chillingham Park with the two young ladies. There was no outrider in attendance on this occasion; and their well-cloaked charioteer was Mr. De Warr Berkeley, who was very silent, to whom they never spoke, and who, to tell the truth, felt somewhat ill at ease now, and scarcely knew where the whole affair would end.

One fact he was certain of. He knew, from past experience, and my general character when serving in India, that I was not to be trifled with.

He would, perhaps, have backed out of the whole matter, could he have seen how to do so. Then Louisa was inflexible, though Cora was almost passive.

The ladies felt that, even were the information true, they should not the less hate and despise the informant, who gratified his spite and malice at the expense of a friend on the one hand, and of their peace on the other.

"We are doing wrong, dearest Louisa," Cora whispered, as the ponderous park gates clanked heavily behind them, and they bowled along the darkening road, towards where the spires of Canterbury were visible against the flush that lingered in the sky to the westward.

"I know that in one sense we are so," replied Lady Louisa, through her clenched teeth and closely-drawn veil; "but I am not the less determined to solve this matter, to probe it to the utmost, and to convict Captain Norcliff or Mr. Berkeley of perfidy. So take courage, and *allons*, my love!"

As they proceeded the April twilight deepened. Once or twice Cora spoke of returning; and then it was Berkeley who urged them to proceed.

"Aw—haw, doocid absurd—don't hang fire now, ladies, please," said he. "We shall draw the cover directly."

Yet he was not without unpleasant misgiving as to how he might figure after "the cover" was drawn, unless he could convey the ladies away instantly, before explanations took place, and this was a part of his intended programme.

"After having convincing proof that Captain Norcliff is here, you will, of course, not remain—aw—to upbraid, and all that sort of thing, Lady Louisa?" he asked, rather nervously.

"Proceed, sir, but do not question me," was the haughty response, which made his cheek flush with rage in the shade. For now Lady Loftus remembered, and felt fully, that in her anger and confusion she had been completely thrown off her guard; and that she had revealed and acknowledged our mutual engagement, and her passion for me, to Cora Calderwood (who had always suspected it), and, worse than all, to Berkeley, whom she heartily despised, and who, she feared, might make a dangerous use of the information he had won.

She had also been lured into committing an act of espionage, far from proper or becoming. But, nevertheless, she resolved to go through it now, and to probe the ugly affair to the end at all hazards—even to facing the fiery anger of her mother, the lofty indignation of the earl, and the vacant and senile astonishment of my Lord Slubber.

"How strange it is, Cora," she whispered, as they sat hand in hand, "that one impulse leads me still to love Newton, and yet another impulse lures me to hate him! Where is my constitutional, and where are my family pride and womanly modesty, when I stoop to an act like this, and drag you, poor child, into it, too? Oh, I must love him very much surely—and you, Cora—you——"

"I love him, too," was the calm and breathless response, under the closely-drawn veil.

"Of course you do—he is your cousin, and your old playmate."

Cora assented only by a little sigh.

They both, it appeared afterwards, hoped desperately that Berkeley might yet be mistaken in the whole affair, so far as I was concerned, for they felt bitterly the truth of the maxim, that "faith once destroyed is destroyed for ever, unless in a heart which is in itself intrinsically faithless."

In the dusk tears rolled unseen down the gentle face of Cora; but Louisa suppressed all appearance of emotion by biting her nether lip, and clenching her little white teeth, like the heroine of a French melodrama.

"Here we are at last! Hush! let us approach softly," said Berkeley, as they drew near the little cottage where Miss Auriol resided; and he turned the phaeton into a grassy lane, and between high hedges close by; threw open a private wicket, and assisted Cora to alight; but disdaining the assistance of his proffered arm, Lady Louisa sprang to the ground alone.

"This way—follow me, and softly, if you please," said Berkeley, as he drew forth a private latch-key for the back door—a means of entrance possessed by himself alone—and they traversed the little flower-garden which lay around the cottage.

My horse stood at the front door, with his bridle fastened to the porch; and to this circumstance he took care to draw their attention.

"It is Norcliff's black nag—his cover hack with the white star on the counter. You—aw—recognise it, ladies?" he whispered.

"A present to him from my poor papa," said Cora, reproachfully, as her heart beat painfully, and Louisa bit her lips as the agony of conviction stole upon her.

"Proceed, sir," said she, haughtily; "what next?"

"Voices in the parlour—it is there our birds must be; this way," said Berkeley, who, after a rapid inspection of the interior, between the green trailers, scarlet-runners, and white muslin curtains, had satisfied himself as to who were within, and felt assured that if he lost Lady Louisa, I, at least, should never win her, and that if, on one hand, he made me an enemy, on the other, he got handsomely rid of the unhappy girl of whose caresses he had long since grown weary, and whose importunities and reproaches bored and fretted him now.

Between him and me there would be no friendship wasted, no love lost; so he consoled himself by the dangerous maxim, "that all is fair in love or war," as he opened the door softly with his latch-key, and led his now agitated companions into the interior of the cottage.

CHAPTER XXI.

Such men are always the most unscrupulous in revenge. I have seen murder in his eyes a score of times in the last fortnight. If our lines had fallen in the pleasant Italian places, he would have invested twenty scudi long ago in hiring a dagger. As it is, civilization and the rural police stand our friends.—GUY LIVINGSTONE.

The day wore away, the shadows of evening came, and all unaware of the rod that was in pickle for me, and the awkward surprise that was preparing, after making a most careful toilet at the barracks, that I might keep my cherished appointment at the park, I stuffed Mr. Goldrick's remittance into my porte-monnaie, and set out in mufti for the cottage near the Reculvers. As I cantered along, anxious to perform my duty

there, and without loss of time to turn my bridle towards Chillingham Park, I contrasted the happiness and the hopefulness of Louisa's love and mine with the futile passion which the poor lost Agnes Auriol cherished for the worthless Berkeley; and while my heart, inspired by new and joyous impulses since the morning interview, sincerely mourned for her, it was at the same time soothed by the conviction that I could enable her to depart on that melancholy and filial pilgrimage to which she had dedicated her failing—it too surely seemed her last—energies.

I half hoped, too, that I might hear no more of her and her sorrows, and with the varied contingencies of foreign service in the field before me, there were ten chances to one against my ever doing so.

I had more than once asked of myself why this unfortunate young lady so deeply interested me; and with what object, if not pure benevolence, and to learn something of Berkeley's movements, I sought or continued her acquaintance.

To Louisa my love and constancy remained unshaken; and fanned anew by the morning's interview, they were stronger now than ever. Yet, to-night, some strange impulse urged me on this secret visit—one that I had already resolved should be the last—-when prudence should have made me pause, and even at the hazard of wounding Miss Auriol's feelings, have sent by the hand of Willie Pitblado the promised money to Mrs. Goldsworthy.

Berkeley, from the first hour we met together at the mess of the lancers, I had ever disliked, and I scarcely knew why; but, like the Chevalier Achille, I felt that, "if I had a star of destiny, and that man another, my star grew livid and pale when his crossed it." It was the old adage of Dr. Fell, and I had a conviction that he was predestined to work me mischief in some way, or in some fashion, and now the time had come.

I reached the cottage, left my horse at the little green trellis-work porch, and was duly ushered into the presence of Miss Auriol by her anxious and motherly old attendant. She was seated in an easy-chair,

half propped up by pillows, and so great was the languor oppressing her, that on this evening (for the air was remarkably close) she could scarcely rise to greet me.

A small scarlet shawl was spread over her head; and its bright hue, when taken in concert with the extreme pallor and purity of her complexion, and the blackness of her smoothly banded hair, made the girl's strange beauty more fascinating and piquante than ever.

There was a charm in her half blush, her smiling bow, and the timid grace with which she received me, which made me feel that, with all the faults of the past, there was a great degree of worth and sincerity in Agnes Auriol still, and that she merited a very different fate in life; but, anxious to keep my appointment at the park, I at once handed her the porte-monnaie containing the money, and without accepting the chair proffered to me by Mrs. Goldsworthy, or even laying aside my hat, I said —

"Miss Auriol, I have come in great haste, and am required elsewhere, almost at this moment. There you will find what you require for your purpose and immediate necessities."

"Captain Norcliff, this kindness is too much—too much. Nurse Goldsworthy told me that you had promised this gift; but I—I know not if I should accept—if I dare accept it from you——"

Tears choked her utterance, and then came on a paroxysm of her hard, dry, and racking cough.

I placed a hand caressingly on her head, and advised her to be careful of her health, for that terrible cough——"Is all the hope I have now of ultimate relief," said she, looking up, with her dark eyes swimming in tears, and with a sublime brightness in them. "My dear mamma died of consumption, and with just such a cough; so did all my little brothers and sisters; and the presentiment is strong within me that I shall join them ere long—hence my wish, to die near the place where they lie."

"You must not talk in this mournful way, Miss Auriol—you are too beautiful and too young to court such an early fate," said I.

"Yet my little golden-haired brother, for whom I toiled and starved myself amid the vast and selfish wilderness of London, died earlier. Oh, Captain Norcliff, I would that he and I had passed away together, and now one grave might have held us; but then I had Berkeley to live for—he had not as yet deceived me. Love gave me hope, and I had my father's fair name to redeem. I shall die soon—I know and feel it. Consumption was my only inheritance, and the agony of mind I have so long endured, since my days of toil and sin, has but served to encourage and develop that terrible disease."

As she said this, her teeth chattered, as if with cold, and I turned her chair nearer to the scanty fire that burned in the little grate.

"And this money, which you, sir, so kindly give me; I know not, as I said before, whether I should accept it—indeed, I should not——"

"Nay, don't offend me by a refusal," said I, taking her cold and slender fingers in mine, and closing them over the packet of notes.

"But, sir—sir," she urged plaintively, "even if I am spared to live a few years, I shall never be able to return it."

"Heed not that, Miss Auriol—you may outlive me; the end of this month will see me far away from Britain."

She gazed at me earnestly and wistfully, and said—

"Heaven bless and protect you, sir! My last prayers shall be for you and for your safety," and bowing her face upon my hand, she kissed it and wept, while I strove in vain to withdraw it; but at the same time placed the other kindly on her head, to soothe and reassure her.

At that moment the door of the little parlour was thrown violently open, and a cry of terror escaped Mrs. Goldsworthy. I looked up, and felt as if I had been thunderstruck.

There stood Lady Louisa Loftus, and Cora, and Berkeley. Those three here! I mentally wondered who the deuce would come next.

I drew hurriedly back from Miss Auriol, who looked up in alarm, and then her eyes wandered in bewilderment from the faces of her fair visitors, till they settled with a sad, haggard, and beseeching stare, upon the well-moustached face of Berkeley, who stood there with his usual unmeaning smile.

"Doocid good tableau—haw!" he muttered.

"So—so this is the duty which prevented us from having the pleasure of your company at dinner, Captain Norcliff?" said Lady Louisa.

"A pressing duty, doubtless," added Berkeley.

"Whence this intrusion?" I demanded, perceiving the whole network of treachery at a glance. "Whence this intrusion, Mr. Berkeley?" I fiercely reiterated, while my heart swelled with passion at my equivocal position, and I felt that my life, certainly the loss of Louisa's love, might pay the penalty of my supposed, and, for aught I knew, alleged intrigue with a poor creature whom I simply pitied.

I felt that I was outwitted and overmatched by a cold-blooded, cunning, and sarcastic parvenu; one of those padded and perfumed military snobs, who are among her Majesty's worst bargains, and who excite alike the contempt of the soldier and the ridicule of the civilian. I felt, too, all the peril of my position, and almost quailed before the strange, wild glitter of Louisa's eyes, as she surveyed me. They wore such a smile as might have lit up those of Judith, when she writhed her white fingers in the curly pate of the sleeping Holofernes.

"Did you hear me speak, Mr. Berkeley?" I thundered out.

"Aw—aw——" he was beginning.

"He will absolutely fight for this creature!" said Louisa, "Poor Cora, I am sorry that you have to blush for your worthy cousin."

Instead of blushing, poor gentle Cora wept profusely, and knew not what to think; terror seemed to be her prevailing emotion.

"What am I to understand by all this?" I resumed. "You here, Lady Loftus, and you, Cora? Mr. Berkeley's visit I might expect; but your appearance here, ladies, and at this hour, is not involuntary. Speak—explain—or rather, sir, I shall seek another place and time, and if—as I too surely believe—this scene has been planned and developed by you, Mr. Berkeley, woe to you, for your life shall pay the penalty."

He grew pale, and winced a little, and then resumed his eternal smile.

"Such a scene to figure in!" said Louisa, with lofty scorn; "but this cottage shall be pulled down—it stands on papa's land; and the steward should be careful whom he permits as tenants in the vicinity of Chillingham Park."

Crushed to the dust by shame, humiliation, and illness, poor Agnes Auriol covered her face with her handkerchief, on which the blood-spots increased with every fresh fit of coughing, and her old nurse, oblivious of us all, spread her fat arms caressingly and protectingly round her; but the hateful Berkeley looked coldly and pitilessly on.

"Hear me, Lady Louisa," said I; "and a few words will serve to explain why I am here."

"Oh, your purse in that creature's hand explains all, sir!" she replied, with a cutting smile.

"Oh, Newton, Newton!" sobbed Cora; "it seems all too true—why should you give that girl money?"

Berkeley was the object on which I should have turned; but Lady Louisa fascinated me, and her presence and Cora's alone prevented me from knocking him down, or giving him a cut across the face with my riding-whip. Louisa was, indeed, a picture!

Drawn up to the fullest extent of her tall figure, she stood with her stately head thrown well back, and her rounded form half turned away, as if in disdain. An ample Indian shawl of alternate black, gold, and scarlet stripes had half fallen from her shoulder; her dress—she had been preparing for dinner when she started on this unlucky and unseemly errand—a bright, maize-coloured silk, with trimmings and flounces of rich black lace, displayed the magnificent development of her bust and lithe waist, and accorded well with her complexion. Her haughty nose, with its slender pink nostrils, seemed to curl with anger, and her forehead appeared lower than usual, so heavily fell the rippling masses of dark hair over her face, which was paler than ever, though the blood did flow furiously under that transparent skin as her anger gathered.

Her lips, usually scarlet as the petals of the fuschia, were now colourless; the short upper one was defined and stern; the lower, full and pouting, trembled with the emotion which she strove to repress; and her glorious black eyes had in them a mingled expression of fierce anger, deep reproach, sorrowing love for me, and shame for the whole affair—such an expression as I hoped never to see in them again.

When her anger prevailed, it was no summer lightning that flashed from the dark eyes of Louisa—for even her great Saxon ancestor, Lofthus, who held that thanedom in Yorkshire, before England's conqueror came over at the head of his high-born housebreakers, had not a prouder or more fiery temper.

She gave me a deep, earnest, silent, and tearful glance, that said more than a thousand words, and, taking Cora by the hand, turned and retired from the cottage before I could speak—turned with the air of one alike convinced and resolved.

Berkeley, usually so cool and blasé, had also a strange light in his eyes; but it was such a glitter as one might expect to see in the carbuncly orbs of the hooded snake; and having, evidently, no desire to be left with me alone, he turned rather precipitately and followed the ladies.

Just as he was leaving the cottage, however, I made a spring after him, and grasping his shoulder, wheeled him fiercely round until he faced me.

"Mr. Berkeley," said I, in the hoarse, low voice of concentrated passion, "to-night, at head-quarters, this matter shall be arranged for a meeting to-morrow. Your life or mine must be the penalty of this little sensation scene, which your infernal malice has so skilfully contrived!"

"Aw—aw—don't understand, unless you mean——"

"That you must meet me, sir," said I, as with my leather riding-glove I struck him full across the face; "meet me on other ground than this."

His eyes flashed now, and he grew very pale, while his fingers twitched convulsively; but, resuming his smile, he said—

"You are warm, Captain Norcliff—out of temper, and rude, in fact; but—aw—bah! people don't fight duels nowadays, in our service, at least. Since Munro of the Horse Guards fought that doocid duel with Fawcett

of the 55th, a hostile meeting has become a hanging affair—a little matter for a coroner's jury and Calcraft's consideration. So—aw—keep your temper, and *au revoir*."

Lady Loftus and Cora, who had already sprung unaided into the phaeton, were calling upon him—upon him, and not upon me!—so he lifted his hat, with a bow of ironical politeness, and joined them, after which I soon heard the sound of the wheels die away in the distance.

For a moment I remained as if stunned by the suddenness and peculiarity of the whole affair; the next moment all my resolutions were taken.

I returned to the parlour, where Miss Auriol was still sobbing, but not violently—she was too weak for that.

"Mrs. Goldsworthy," said I, "you must have perceived the false position in which we have been placed to-night, and must be aware that I can return no more. Keep for Miss Auriol the money I have given her, and be as you have hitherto been, loving and faithful. So now good-bye."

I felt the impropriety and indelicacy of further protracting so unpleasant an interview, and, lightly pressing the passive hands of the girl and of her nurse, before either could speak I had left the cottage, and was in my saddle, spurring like a madman along the highway towards the barracks on the Thanet road, intent only on exposing Berkeley and avenging myself.

My subalterns, Frank Jocelyn and Sir Harry Scarlett, were too young and inexperienced to be consulted in the matter, so I resolved to start by the night train for Maidstone, and lay it before my older friends at head-quarters.

I gave my horse to my groom, Lanty O'Regan, and hurried to my rooms, and took out my pistol-case, as my only luggage. I felt hot, feverish, mad almost, and a goblet of well-iced champagne failed to soothe me. I heard the laughter, the clinking of glasses, and the joviality of the hussar mess ringing through the open windows as I crossed the dark barrack square on my way to the railway station; but when I was

about to issue from the main-guard gate Pitblado placed in my hand a little packet, which a mounted servant had just brought for me, and which seemed to contain a little box.

Trembling, I opened it by the light of the main-guard lantern, and found it to contain my ring—my famous Rangoon ring—*returned*.

I placed it quietly on the finger from whence I had drawn it when at Calderwood Glen, and thanking the sentry who held the lantern with some smiling remark, continued my way to the train, which soon bore me to Maidstone.

Though I knew it not, Berkeley was in another compartment of the carriage I occupied.

CHAPTER XXII.

Your words have took such pains, as if they laboured
To bring manslaughter into form, set quarrelling
Upon the head of valour:—
He's truly valiant that can wisely suffer
The worst that man can breathe, and make his wrongs
His outsides; wear them like his raiment carelessly,
And ne'er prefer his injuries to his heart,
To bring it into danger.
If wrongs be evils, and enforce us kill,
What folly 'tis to hazard life for ill!
TIMON OF ATHENS.

To write to Lady Louisa a full explanation of the affair was among the first of my resolutions; but would she believe me?—one against whom appearances, already, no doubt, coloured, distorted, and elaborated by

Berkeley's cunning insinuations, were so strong?

Without a word of inquiry, or hearing any exculpation, she and Cora had retired together, and with him, under his requested escort. What fatal use would he not make of the time thus given him! On, on went the swift train; but to me even the express seemed a laggard to-night!

Alas! that she I loved so deeply should think so meanly of me, as she undoubtedly did now.

If I called Berkeley out, and shot him, risking and breaking alike the civil and military laws of the land, I knew that my uncle would forgive, and that Cora would weep for me; I knew how Louisa would nervously shrink from the publicity of such an affair; but I knew also that none of them would forgive me for an alleged liaison with a creature apparently so worthless as the cast-off mistress of another—a liaison by which I lost the love of one so brilliant as the heiress of Chillingham. Of all such transactions, the old fox-hunting baronet, the mirror of honour, had a great horror, and within the seas that wash our shores there was no nobler heart than his. As yet, I could not see the end of the affair; my heart was swollen, and my head giddy, with rage; I longed only for friendly advice, and swift vengeance! If the story reached the ears of Sir Nigel, and he cut off my allowance, my pay as a captain of cavalry of the line—to wit, fourteen shillings and seven pence per diem—even with the contingent allowance of seventy or eighty pounds per annum (for burials and repair of arms, &c.), would never support me, even on service, in such an expensive corps as ours; thus, if I was a ruined man, it was all through the wiles of Berkeley! Pecuniarily I could not remain, and to retire, sell, resign, or exchange for India at such a crisis, when war was already declared in Europe, would be only to court disgrace and destruction.

Under any circumstances, to "send in my papers" was social ruin. I would sell my troop, and follow the regiment as a volunteer lancer, rather than not go to the seat of war in the East; and all this dilemma, this vortex of tormenting thought, this agony of anticipated shame, united with the loss of Louisa Loftus, I owed to the machinations, the hatred, and the jealousy of the only man I really disliked or despised in

the whole regiment. At last I reached the barracks (where the last trumpet of tattoo had long since sounded), and sought the quarters of Jack Studhome, whom, to my confusion, and somewhat to my annoyance, I found engaged with the colonel on military business. In fact, with the aid of a couple of decanters of very unexceptionable mess port, and a box of cigars, they were going over the "Description Book," which, for the information of readers not in the cavalry, I may mention is one of the sixteen ledgers kept by the regimental staff, being a register of the age, size, and description of the horses in each troop; the names and residence of the persons from whom they were bought, with the date of their purchase, and so forth, a column being appropriated for remarks, to show the manner in which each horse is disposed of.

"You here, Norcliff?" exclaimed Colonel Beverley, with surprise, as he closed the volume.

"Excuse me, colonel, I know that I should be at Canterbury; but I have ventured to head-quarters on a matter so very particular——"

"Now, Norcliff, what the devil is up?" interrupted Studhome, getting fresh glasses the while, and pushing the cigar-box towards me.

"Nothing wrong with your troop, eh?" said our lieutenant-colonel, lowering his eyebrows.

"No, colonel—a personal matter has brought me here," I replied, while they, perceiving that I was pale and agitated, exchanged glances of inquiry.

"We shall soon be off, Norcliff," said the colonel; "Travers and others have disposed of their spare horses; Scriven has sent his stud to Tattersall's; the drag we shall leave here with the depôt. Wilford's yacht rides at Cowes with the symbolical broom at her masthead. I have been changing the dismounted men every three days, so that, come what may, all shall be perfect lancers when the complete mount arrives; and we have had the horses inspected once in each week by the veterinary surgeon, to ascertain whether there is among them any contagious disease, as that, you know, would play the deuce with us on service. Dragoons without horses (poor Beverley foresaw not the horrors awaiting the cavalry before Sebastopol) would be like rifles without

locks. I also wish the corps to be supplied with water-decks,[*] but cannot get them; and now, Norcliff, that you have drawn breath, empty your glass, and say in what manner we can assist you."

[*] A piece of painted canvas, to cover the saddle, bridle, and girths of a cavalry horse, and sometimes pegged to the ground. The name of the corps was usually painted on the outside; and when the trooper was mounted for service, the deck was strapped over his portmanteau.

"You shall hear, colonel," said I, taking his proffered hand; "I sought Studhome to obtain his advice, as my oldest and one of my most valued friends in the regiment, and I shall gladly avail myself of yours, under the pledge of secrecy, as the name of a lady is concerned in what I shall have the honour to relate to you."

"Ah," said the colonel, throwing open his frogged surtout, and half closing his eyes, as he lounged on two chairs, with the air of one who waits and listens, "this prologue bodes something unpleasant."

Beverley's voice and manner were slightly affected, but withal were very pleasing. He was, as I have said elsewhere, a very handsome man, of middle age, with a keen dark grey eye, and close crisp hair, somewhat of a drawler in speech, but well and powerfully built, broad-shouldered, lean-flanked, and a good average dragoon officer. Under excitement his features and bearing changed; he became brief and rapid; his lips became decided, though his very black moustache concealed them.

I related succinctly the story of Miss Auriol, and the slanders concerning me circulated in Maidstone—slanders of which Studhome was quite cognizant; I adverted to my engagement with Lady Louisa, and detailed the trap I had fallen into, and the use Berkeley had made of it, adding that I had resolved to parade him—to call him out, and had told him so, face to face.

"Ah, and what did he say?" asked the colonel, knocking the ashes from his cigar with a jewelled finger.

"If you lived till the age of Methusaleh, Colonel Beverley, you would never guess."

"Well?"

"Putting his glass in his eye, he lisped out coolly, 'Bah! people don't fight duels now. In our service at least, since Munro's fatal affair with Fawcett,[*] hostile meetings have been hanging matters.'"

[*] The disastrous and reckless duel referred to—the last, I think, fought in our service—occurred in 1844, between the husbands of two sisters, in a quarrel about monetary matters—Lieutenant-Colonel David L. Fawcett, C.B., of the 55th Regiment, and Lieutenant and Adjutant Alexander T. Monro, of the Royal Horse Guards. The former was killed, and the latter, after suffering a short imprisonment, was restored to the service, but not to his regiment. The circumstances must be fresh in the memory of some of my readers.

"The greater pity, say I," continued Beverley.

"And he actually replied to you thus?" said Studhome.

"These were his words, or nearly so."

Beverley's brow knit, and a contemptuous smile curled his proud lip.

"Such cool impudence is delicious," said he, laughing.

"But the matter cannot end thus!" I exclaimed, impetuously.

"Of course not, my dear fellow—of course not. Yet if the affair comes before the mess or the public, how are we to keep the name of Lady Loftus out of it? Though he might relish the éclât of having his trumpery cognomen jingled with that of Lord Chillingham's daughter, and with yours, it is a very different matter for Lady Louisa. We must be cautious and circumspect, or we shall land you between the horns of a dilemma. Women make men's quarrels infernally complicated."

"I shall gladly avail myself of your advice, colonel, and Studhome shall act as my friend."

Jack summoned his servant by a rapid process peculiar to barracks, and despatched him to the main guard to inquire whether Mr. Berkeley had passed in.

The answer came promptly that he was in his quarters.

"How long has he been there?"

"About half an hour, sir."

"Egad, Norcliff, you have come by the same train from Canterbury," said the colonel, after the servant had withdrawn. "How if you had been in the same compartment?"

"I might have been tempted to throw him out of the window."

"Studhome, see Berkeley, and arrange this matter; but remember the honour of the regiment," said the colonel, "as well as that of your friend, for at all risks and hazards I will have no public scandal about us —no handle given to the wretched whipsters of the newspaper press, when we are on the eve of departure for the seat of war."

"Trust me, colonel," said Jack, as he lit a fresh cigar, donned his gold-laced forage cap very much over the right ear, took up his riding-whip from force of habit, and hurried away.

The time of his absence passed slowly. I was in a dilemma, out of which I did not clearly see my way; and the colonel continued to punish Jack's port, to smoke in silence, and peruse the "Description Book."

Deeply in my heart I cursed alike the amenities of civilized life and the laws of modern society, which deprived me of the means of swift and certain retribution, even at the risk of my own life and limbs. Such trammels, in these days of well-ordered police, luckily, perhaps, compel us to conceal our hates and animosities; to submit quietly to wrong, insult, and obloquy, for which the very laws that pretend to protect and guide us afford no due reparation; trammels that avail greatly the coarse, the cowardly, and the mean, who may thus sneer or insult with impunity, when in the old pistol days their lives would have paid the forfeit; and whatever may have been the folly, error, or wickedness of duelling as a system, there can be no doubt that, when men had the test of moral courage as a last resort, the tone of society was higher,

healthier, and better, especially in the army. Then practical jokes, rudeness, and quizzing were unknown at a mess-table; while an open wrong or insult bore with it the terrible penalty of a human life.

By the rules of the service I knew that no officer or soldier could send a challenge to any other officer or soldier to fight a duel, lest, if a commissioned officer, under the pain of being cashiered; if a non-commissioned officer or soldier, of suffering corporal punishment, or such other award as a court-martial might inflict.

The penalties of the civil law I knew to be still more severe; and yet John Selden, one of England's most able, learned, and patriotic lawyers, says that "a duel may still be granted by the law of England, and only then. That the Church allowed it once appears by this: in their public liturgies there were prayers appointed for the duellists to say; the judge used to bid them to go to such a church and pray, &c. But whether this is lawful? If you make war lawful, I make no doubt to convince you of it. War is lawful because God is the only judge between two that are supreme. Now, if a difference happen between two subjects, and it cannot be decided by human testimony, why may they not put it to God to judge between them, with the permission of the prince? Nay; what if we should bring it down—for argument's sake—to the sword. One gives me the lie: it is a great disgrace to take it; the law has made no provision to give remedy for the injury (if you can suppose anything an injury for which the law gives no remedy), why am not I, in this case, supreme, and may, therefore, right myself?"

While Beverley and I began to talk over such things, Studhome was, as he phrased it, "bringing Berkeley to book" in the affair.

He found that gentleman in rather a perturbed state of mind, soothing himself with a cigar, as he lounged in his vest and trousers on a luxurious sofa, in his elegantly-furnished room, the walls of which were covered with coloured engravings of horses and ballet-girls. A tall crystal goblet on the table bore evident traces of brandy and seltzer-water having been recently imbibed therefrom.

"So, after all that has occurred, you won't meet Norcliff, as he wishes?" asked Jack, after the matter had been thoroughly gone into.

"Aw—decidedly not," said he, emitting his words and a slender volume of smoke slowly together.

"In Britain, at least, as the law stands now, I can scarcely blame you, Mr. Berkeley," said Studhome, stiffly; "but as the orders from London stand, we are soon to leave, and something must be done in the matter; for, as it is at present, you cannot both remain in the same regiment."

"Aw—doocid good that," replied Berkeley, twirling up his moustache; "but—aw—who is the muff that is to quit it, now that we have orders of readiness?"

"You, sir," said Jack, rather perplexed.

"Thank you; but—aw—beg to decline. And this mysterious something which must be done—aw—eh?"

"I would recommend a candid confession on your part; such an explanation, in writing, as my friend, Captain Norcliff, may show to Lady Loftus and then commit to the flames, or return it to you."

"The deuce!" drawled Berkeley, holding his cigar at arm's length, and wheeling the sofa half round, to have a better view of our adjutant. "Is there any other little thing you would like?"

"I think not, sir."

"My good friend, Studhome, you are, I have not a doubt, a very excellent adjutant, well up in lance, sword, and pistol exercise—knowing how to 'set a squadron in the field,' like the amiable Othello; but you—aw—aw—must really permit me to be the best judge of my own affairs."

Studhome bowed haughtily, and then stood, cap and whip in hand, erect; so Berkeley resumed—

"You are aware of the whispers concerning Norcliff and that girl, Agnes Auriol—isn't that her name?"

"Yes, sir; I am aware there have been malicious whispers, and I have my eyes now on the circulator of them."

"Very good," said Berkeley, colouring slightly; "they are very current among the 16th Lancers and 8th Hussars. I have known a little of the girl; but have—aw—tired of her now. We all tire, my dear fellow, of such affairs in time. Take a cigar—aw—you won't—what a bore! well, so my

advice to your irritated Scotch friend would be that, as she is at perfect liberty to leave my protection, she may enter quietly upon his; so there is an end to the doocid affair."

"So you may affect to think," said Studhome, eyeing the lounger with angry scorn.

"What could be more equivocal, as Lady Loftus admitted, than the circumstances under which we found them? He was supporting—actually caressing her; and then there was his proffered fifty-pound note. My dear fellow, people are not such devilish fools as—aw—to give fifty pounds to such girls for—aw—nothing!"

"Whatever you may pretend to think, or affect to say, of that affair, of my friend's ultimate intentions, as a man of spirit, you cannot be unaware."

"Aw—I don't choose to speculate upon them."

"This trifling, sir, is insufferable! He may lash you in the face with his whip before the whole regiment, when Beverley wheels it into line to-morrow, and so make you a scandal to us, to Maidstone, and the entire British Army, from the Life Guards to the Cape Rifles."

"Lash me?"

"Yes; and soundly too!"

"I don't think he will."

"Why?"

"For then the whole story would come out, there would be an arrest—aw—and court of inquiry, and my Lady Louisa Loftus would have her august name paragraphed in every paper, from the *Morning Post* downwards."

"And under this belief in his forbearance, which pays my friend a high compliment, you actually shelter yourself?" said worthy Jack Studhome, with intense scorn.

"I shall take my chance."

"Then, sir, cunning as you are, and though believing that my friend must submit to lie under a vile imputation, and, if it so happen, be ruined with Lady Louisa Loftus and his friends, you cannot expect to get off scot free. The devil! we live in strange times. Are we sunk so low that

officers and gentlemen, that honourable and gallant members, that noble lords, that counsellors learned in the law, and even jolly students, are to settle their disputes in pothouse fashion, by womanly vituperation or vulgar fisticuffs, without ever dreaming of a recourse to the pistol? Men of all ranks, from the premier peer down to the anonymous scribblers of the daily press—

> Those grovelling, trodden, whipt, stript, turncoat things,
> Made up of volumes, venom, stains, and stings,—

may now brand each other as liars, cowards, and ruffians, with perfect impunity. Do you understand me, sir?"

"Not quite."

"How so? I speak plain enough!"

"Such fellows are—aw—out of my way."

"Then you will understand this, sir," said Studhome, grasping him fiercely by the shoulder, and with an expression in his eye which made even the insouciance of Berkeley to evaporate, "a few weeks must see us in the Levant, on the shores of Turkey, and before the enemy. A duel shall come off there, and to evade alike the laws of Britain and the rules of the service, the seconds shall bind themselves by a solemn promise to declare that he who may be wounded, or he who may be killed, was struck by a chance shot from the enemy. You comprehend this arrangement, sir?"

"Perfectly."

"And your friend—who is he to be?"

"Captain Scriven, of ours."

"Good—I shall see him instantly."

"So that was your arrangement, Studhome?" asked Beverley.

"Yes; there was no other way. Scriven promises and agrees, and has passed his word for secrecy. Do you approve, colonel?"

"Why, I suppose that I must; and you, Norcliff?" he inquired.

"Wish to Heaven that I saw Malta, or even Gibraltar, sinking into the sea upon our lee quarter!" said I, with fierce fervour, as I shook Studhome's hand, and for that night, at least, was obliged to content me, and return to my troop at Canterbury.

"If one in our ranks shows the white feather before the Russians, I believe Berkeley will be the man," said Beverley, as he and Studhome smoked a last cigar with me on the platform before the down-train started.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Since there's no help, come let us kisse and part.
Nay, I have done; you get no more of me;
And I am glad—yea, glad with all my heart—
That thus so clearly I myself can free;
Shake hands for ever. DRAYTON, 1612.

Unslept and unrefreshed, after returning to Canterbury, I found myself next day at morning parade, and undergoing all the routine of regimental drill, by troop and squadron, with the hussar corps to which we were attached, while my thoughts and wishes were apparently a thousand miles away from the present time and circumstances.

The prospect of "satisfaction," as it is termed, even in the unusual mode in which it was to be obtained, and though deferred, soothed me; but how was I circumstanced with Louisa? She believed me untrue to her! I was still under the false colours in which the artful Berkeley had contrived to show me.

My ring was returned, and though I still wore hers, our engagement seemed to be silently, tacitly broken; her miniature I would look upon no more—its features filled me with rage and torture.

Over the day which followed my last unlucky visit to the cottage near the Reculvers I shall gladly hurry. Ordering my horse—the black cover-hack with the white star on its counter—I was about to start for a ride, before mess, towards Ashford, when Pitblado placed in my hand two notes, which had just come by post. On one I recognised the handwriting of Cora; on the other the coronet and monogram of the Countess of Chillingham! My heart leaped to my head, and I tore open the latter first.

It was simply a card of invitation in the usual form—the Earl and Countess of Chillingham requested the honour of Captain Norcliff's company at a friendly dinner, at eight o'clock on the evening of the 20th inst.—only three days hence, so the time was brief; but then we were under orders of readiness, and everywhere troops—horse, foot, and artillery—were pouring towards Southampton and other places for embarkation. The note concluded by mentioning that Sir Nigel Calderwood was expected from Scotland.

The invitation was perplexing; but I reflected that the earl and Countess were alike ignorant of the relations that had existed between their daughter and me, and the sharp wrench by which those tender relations had been so suddenly broken.

I could not refuse; and if I accepted, how was I to meet Louisa? And now, what said Cora?

Her dear little note was brief and rapid, but explained all, and more than I could have hoped for. Miss Agnes Auriol, on seeing the false position in which Berkeley had contrived to place me, had generously transmitted, last night, by her old nurse, all the letters she possessed of Mr. Berkeley, and these had served completely to explain her relations with him, and to exonerate me, affording a complete clue to what had already excited their suspicion and surprise—Berkeley's intimate knowledge of the cottage, and the strange fact of his possessing a latch-key for it.

"Louisa knows everything, and now believes that she has been too precipitate;" so ran the note. "Restore her ring when you meet, and I shall tell you a great deal when we see you here. It is Louisa's request that you meet her as if nothing had taken place. Will you believe it, that yesterday morning, before that horrid scene occurred, Berkeley had actually proposed to her in form, and been rejected—rejected, dear Newton, and for you? (This part of the note was singularly blurred, blotted, and ill-expressed for Cora.) I need not tell you to make yourself pleasant, for papa is expected, and Lord Slubber is to be here."

A postscript added that the packet of letters had been returned to the cottage that morning by a servant—but he found the place locked up, and the inmates gone, none could tell him whither; so, in this dilemma, they had been posted to Berkeley himself, at Maidstone barracks.[*]

[*] When serving in the East, a paragraph in a Welsh newspaper recorded the death of Agnes Auriol in the parish where her father had been incumbent. She was found dead at the stile which led to the village burying-ground; and the verdict of the jury was "Death by the visitation of God."

I answered the notes, gave them to Pitblado to post, and turned along the Ashford Road like one in a dream, letting the reins drop on my horse's neck, and having ample food for serious reflection and mature consideration; for all these meetings, communications, and passages so momentous to me had been crammed into the short space of barely two days.

There were yet three days to pass before I should again see Louisa, hear her voice, and be gladdened by her smile.

Three days were a short invitation to a fashionable household, even to an officer in country quarters, but they seemed three centuries to me.

I felt, too, that I never enjoyed Louisa's society less than amid her own family circle. True, my name was not recorded in Douglas, Debrett, or any other *libre d'or* of Scottish or English nobility, but I was not the

less a gentleman, and my whole soul fired up—almost with red republicanism—at the cool bearing usually assumed towards me by my Lady Chillingham.

A few hours since, the idea of being made a mark for a Muscovite bullet, or a Cossack lance, had not been a matter of much moment; now that the cloud had dispersed, that I knew Louisa loved me still—now that I felt once more all the witchery with which the love of such a girl can enhance existence—now that the sweet dream was no longer, as it had been at Calderwood, a mere dream, but a delicious reality—I came to the conclusion that war was an impertinent bore, glory a delusion and a snare, Mars and Bellona a couple of humbugs—the former a rowdy, and the latter no better than she should be.

I can really assure the reader that I would have borne the intelligence of a sudden peace with great Christian fortitude and perfect equanimity of mind; and had it pleased the Emperor Nicholas and the Western Powers to shake hands, and leave unmolested the Crimea and the "sick man" at Stamboul, certainly none would have blessed their quiet intentions more than I, Newton Norcliff.

But fate had ordained it otherwise; and, like the Roman senator, their "voice was still for war!"

The eventful evening of the "20th instant" saw me ushered into the drawing-room at Chillingham Park, and on this occasion I went in full uniform, knowing well that it enhances the interest with which one is viewed, in times when the atmosphere is so redolent of gunpowder, as it certainly was at this period of my story; and when one is made up—

> By youth, by love, and by an army tailor,

the impression is generally favourable.

Circumstances fluttered me, and it was not without an unwonted emotion of confusion I made my way among ottomans, buhl tables, and glass-shades, and seeming to see in the reflecting mirrors at least one hundred figures in lancer uniform traversing the vast perspectives.

Even the usual cold and haughty countess received me with cordiality (she was soon to be rid of me for ever, perhaps). Lord Chillingham, a dignified old peer, whom it is difficult to describe, as there was an absence of characteristics, and nothing remarkable about him, save the extreme length of his white waistcoat, met me with the polite and pleasing warmth he accorded to all whom he cared nothing about.

Cora hurried forward to meet me, looking, I thought, very pale, and not very becomingly dressed—in deep dark blue silk, with black lace flounces—and beyond her I saw Lady Louisa. When I approached the latter, my temples throbbed painfully, and I played nervously with the tassels of my gold sash, like a raw boy who had just reported his having joined.

She was calm, collected, and grave—fashionably, painfully so—but then your well-bred Britons do so hate a scene that they have learned the art of keeping every emotion under the most complete control, relaxing the curb only when it suits themselves.

Save Cora, who witnessed our smiling and pleasant meeting, our suave exchange of bows, and a slight pressure of the hand, none could have read the thoughts that filled our eyes and hearts, and still less could they have imagined the stormy adieux of the other evening. The diamond drops that glittered in Louisa's eyes as she met me did not run over; but were absorbed by her thick dark lashes, as she closed them for an instant, and then looked down. She was simply dressed in white silk, with diamond ornaments, and strings of pearls among the braids of her magnificent black hair.

"I invited your friend, Mr. De Warr Berkeley, for the evening," said the countess, "but the invitation, I fear, was too short, and unfortunately, he pleaded a pre-engagement."

At that moment a bright and intelligent smile flashed in Louisa's eye. In fact, the whole of the late affair was known only to the actors therein—unless I included Beverley and Studhome.

"Captain Calderwood Norcliff—my Lord Slubber," said the earl, as he led me forward to an old gentleman, who was stooping over the chair of the countess, with whom he was smiling and conversing in a polite monotone.

"Ah—indeed—have much pleasure," said this personage, bowing, with a broad conventional smile, and giving two of his withered fingers; "any relation of Sir Nigel Calderwood?"

"His nephew."

"De-lighted to see you, my dear sir. Sir Nigel is here—arrived this morning."

"We but wait his appearance for dinner; our party is small, as you see, Captain Norcliff," said the countess, who was certainly still beautiful, being a larger, older, and more stately version of Louisa, and a powdered toupee would well have suited her face and stature.

Amid vapid discussions or desultory remarks about the probabilities of the war, the weather, and the crops, with my Lord Aberdeen's suspicious policy—ante-dinner remarks—while my eyes from time to time sought those of Louisa, I studied the aspect of my wealthy rival, who, little suspecting the secret of my heart, had immediately engaged me in conversation.

Lord Slubber was not so tall as he had been; his features, though finely cut, were somewhat flabby now, and had become a mass of undoubted wrinkles, yet he had been deemed "the handsomest man of his day," a period on which we shall not venture to speculate. The veteran roué considered himself "a lively dog" yet, and hoped to achieve conquests. Thus his teeth were a brilliant triumph of art over nature, and though his head was bare and smooth as a billiard-ball, his pendulous cheeks wore a delicate little pink hue there could be no doubt about.

His face, with its long, aristocratic nose, somewhat prominent chin, and receding forehead, and his perpetual simpering smile, reminded one of the portraits of Beau Nash, and made one fancy how well he would have suited the powder and ruffles, the bagwig and small-sword of the early days of George III., rather than the odious black swallow-tail and waiter-like costume of the present age.

And this garrulous old beau—this "lean and slippered pantaloon"—was the descendant and representative of the great Norman line of Slobar de Gullion, who had hamstrung the Saxon Kerne in the New Forest, extracted the grinders of the sons of Judah; who had made their mark (as an Irish navvy might do) at Magna Charta, and ridden in all their ironmongery in Edward's ranks at Bannockburn, and in Henry's at Agincourt.

My satisfaction in finding myself still the lover of Louisa, and again the guest of her father, was somewhat dashed by the presence of this, in some respects, formidable rival, who, as the countess informed me in a whisper, was about to be created a marquis for his zealous support of Lord Aberdeen's administration, and was to be decorated with the Garter, of which the Emperor Nicholas had just been deprived.

I muttered something by way of reply, and Lady Louisa, who was seated near us on an ottoman, said, laughingly, behind her fan—

"A marquis and K.G. Oh, mamma, such an old quiz it is! But, only imagine, he has been proposing to take us all, and Cora, too, in his yacht to Constantinople—or even to the Black Sea, if we wish it."

"How kind of him."

"She carries brass guns, and he believes he may assist Admiral Lyons, if necessary."

"Remember that he is a devoted admirer of yours," I heard Lady Chillingham whisper, with a glance which repressed her daughter's desire to laugh outright.

"Hush, mamma," she replied, shutting her fan sharply; "confidences are unusual in you; and as for he you speak of, his appearance is quite enough to make one grow old."

Whether the countess would have checked this unseemly remark, which I could not help overhearing with joy, I know not, for at that moment the roar of the dinner-gong was heard in the vestibule, and my uncle, Sir Nigel, looking hale, hearty, and ruddy, with his silver hair all shining and waving, entered, and shook hands with all, but with none so

warmly as me. He wore a dark grey riding-coat, top-boots, and white corded breeches, a costume for which he apologized to the countess, and then turned again to me.

"Egad, Newton, glad to see you, my dear boy—in uniform, too—how well the fellow looks in his sash and epaulettes! Your pardon for being so late, Lady Chillingham; but I rode over to the barracks, thinking to accompany Newton here. How glad Willie, my old keeper's son, was to see me! Returning, I lost my way among a network of green lanes and hedgerows; but as your Kent here is as flat as a billiard-table, when compared with Fife and Kinross, the slopes of the Lomonds, and the Saline hills, I rode straight for Chillingham, rushing my horse at hedges, sunk fences, and everything that came in its way, in defiance of threats against trespassers, and so forth, and I am here!"

"Coming as became the master of the Fife hounds, eh, Sir Nigel?" said the countess; "but now I shall take your arm."

The earl led Cora, Slubber gave his arm to Lady Louisa; and I thought of honest Chaucer's "January and May," as I brought up the rear, solus, playing with the tassels of my sash, and gnawing my moustache, as we marched through a double line of liveried servants to the dining-room, where I contrived to seat myself on her other side.

There was an air of propriety about old Slubber, which, though it made Louisa laugh, was intensely provoking to me, who had to keep my conventional distance. However, I could cross a country with her when riding to hounds, and claim her lithe waist for a waltz when occasion offered; thank heaven! our senile Anglo-Norman was beyond these, and a few other things now; and she gave me many a bright and intelligent glance from under her long black eyelashes, which were almost curled at the tips—recognitions of which his self-satisfied lordship was in blissful ignorance.

I had the engagement ring to restore; but in the meantime our conversation was confined to dinner-table twaddle, and as the dinner was served up *à la Russe*, and all the carving done aside, even its courtesies were abolished: so we confabulated with much hollow earnestness on the prevalent rumour that all the cavalry, light and

heavy, were to march through France to Marseilles, the last batch of novels from Mudie's, the race meetings, the future Derby, and other topics equally far from our hearts; and then we had to laugh at old Lord Slubber, when he perpetrated the joke that every small wit did at that time.

"Turkey, my lord?" said a servant.

"Thanks—a slice—just what Nicholas wants."

"And what you, Newton, and other fellows, must prevent him from getting, eh?" said Sir Nigel.

To return our engagement ring was the chief object that agitated me during dinner; and, on perceiving that Louisa had drawn the glove off her lovely left hand, I almost thought the return was thereby invited; and as we dawdled over the dessert, which was served up on the earl's favourite Rose du Barri service of Sèvres china, and while Slubber waxed eloquent on his friend Lord Aberdeen's doubtful policy, which my uncle tore all to fritters, I contrived, unseen, to place my Rangoon diamond in her hand, which closed upon it and mine, with a rapid, but nervous pressure, which sent a thrill to my heart, and a flush to my cheek.

It was done!

Recovering—if, indeed, she ever lost it—her complete composure, she asked me, with a smile, as if casually, how I liked the family motto, which was graven round the champagne goblets.

"*Prends moi tel que je suis*," she added, reading it.

"I understand it with delight," said I.

"Take me such as I am," she translated, with a glance which filled me with joy.

Poor old Slubber knew nothing of the little enigma that was being acted almost under his aristocratic nose, and amid such trivial remarks as these—

"What bin is this port from, Mr. ——?" naming the butler.

"Good, remarkable port, my Lord—bin ten—vintage, 1820; it is the finest old wine in the county of Kent."

"Don't taste so," said Lord Chillingham; in fact, it had been voted out of the servants' hall as intolerable. "And the sherry—eh?"

"Pale, my lord," whispered the butler; "you paid three hundred a butt for it—from the small bin."

"Good—uncork some of the Moselle."

In the calm, inscrutable face, and tutored bearing of Louisa Loftus, no one could have read the deep secret we had just shared in—the reconciliation of two ardent and anxious hearts—the bond of love and trust renewed; but this strange power of veiling all agitation at times is incident alike to birth and training, and to the local influences of these in the present time, when in modern society the human face is too often a mere mask which conceals every emotion, exhibiting a calm exterior, however at variance with the mind or disposition of the person; thus, though her pride and self-esteem had been recently stung to madness, and her heart had been crushed within her, now, under the revulsion incident to a great joy, and reunion with me, Louisa was able to wreathe her sweet face with a quiet and well-bred smile, while she listened to the senile gabble of my Lord Slubber.

Great emotions, like those excited by the affair of Agnes Auriol, seldom can remain long, and must subside; Louisa was quite subdued, and sunk in softness and love to-night. She was all that I could desire—my own Louisa.

The gentlemen soon joined the ladies in the drawing-room, and I drew at once near Louisa, who was again seated on the same ottoman with Cora. Lady Chillingham was idling in an easy-chair, half asleep, near the fire, with her feet placed on the velvet fender-stool, and a silky lapdog on her knee; but she roused herself on the approach of Lord Slubber to whisper one of his old-fashioned compliments, coined in the age when gallantry was a study.

"And you think the cavalry will not go through France?" said Louisa, taking up, after a time, the thread of some of her former remarks, while Cora fixed her tender and beautiful eyes kindly on my face.

"It is extremely doubtful," said I.

"And why so, Newton?" asked Cora.

"Because, cousin, it is feared that the red coats will not be popular in France; and then there are the Scots Greys, who are literally covered with trophies of Waterloo;[*] they especially would prove a very unpalatable spectacle to the men of the Second Empire."

[*] This circumstance delayed for a time the appearance of the Greys in the ranks of the allied army. They departed from Nottingham in July, 1854, with their band playing "Scots wha hae," &c.

"Your route will be a long but very pleasant one, by classic seas and classic shores," said Louisa. "Shall we trace it on the map of the Mediterranean, in the library? Come, Cora."

There was a tremulous change in her voice, and a glance in her eye that I could not mistake.

Quitting the drawing-room unnoticed by our seniors, we stepped into the library, the oak shelves of which were loaded with books of all sizes in glittering bindings, more seemingly for show than use, and approaching the large stand of maps on horizontal rollers, we drew down that of the Mediterranean, while Cora, whose good little heart forboded that we needed not her geographical aid, eyed us wistfully for a second, and passed out by a door beyond.

The library had green-shaded lamps, which were half lighted; thus we were almost concealed in shadow, and the huge cloth-mounted map we affected to examine hung before us like a friendly screen. We had but a few stolen moments for conversation, and one impulse animated us.

I turned to Louisa; her face drew closer to mine, and our lips met in one long, long passionate kiss—such a kiss as if our souls were there.

"You understand all, now, Louisa?" said I.

"All," she said, in the same breathless voice.

"And forgive all—about that poor girl, I mean. How appearances were against me!"

"Oh yes, dear, dear Newton."

"And you love me?"

"Oh, Newton!"

"You love me still?"

"Can you ask me while petting me thus? You have felt our separation since those few happy days at Calderwood?"

"As a living death, Louisa. Worse than anticipations of the greater separation that is to come."

"With all its dangers!" she said, with her eyes now full of tears.

"Yes; for whatever happens I shall feel assured——"

"That your poor Louisa loves you still—loves you dearly, Newton; and ere you go to-night you must give me a lock of your hair."

Her head on my shoulder; her pale brow against my cheek, her lips were close to mine.

"Till we are both in our graves, dear Newton, you can never, never know how much I love you, and the agony that Berkeley's cunning cost me."

These were blessed words to hear—blessed words to treasure in the distant land to which I was going; and in a silence more eloquent than words, I could but press her to my heart.

This was indeed a moment of reunion, never to be forgotten, but to be treasured in the secret recesses of the soul, and recalled only at times; and times there were when I recalled it, when far, far away, in the lonely watches of those dark nights, when the chafing of the Black Sea was heard afar off on the rocks of Fort Constantine, and the thunder of Sebastopol was close and nigh; and then the vague, undefined memory of the place, the time, her voice, her eyes, and her kiss, would come gradually back, filling my heart with intense melancholy, and my eyes with tears.

In my doubt of the future, in my fear of ensnarements, and the exercise of parental authority (a power of which we stand in such awe in Scotland), and lest, by an unforeseen chance or circumstance, I should lose her, I actually besought her, in what terms it is impossible to remember now, to consent to a private marriage; and strange ideas of written promises and protestations, of blood mingled with wine, and many other melodramatic absurdities, occurred to me.

"Ah, no, no," said she, rousing herself to the occasion. "There will be time enough when you return."

"If I ever do return," said I, impetuously, thinking of the chances of war, and my certain hostile meeting with Berkeley.

"You must return, dear Newton—you shall, and I feel it in my heart."

"And there will be time——"

"For me," she interrupted, "to be cried, as Lydia Languish says, 'three times in a parish church', and have an enormously fat parish clerk ask the consent of every butcher in the parish to join in lawful wedlock Newton Calderwood Norcliff, bachelor, and Louisa Loftus, spinster; unless we have a special licence, St. George's, Hanover Square, and the Bishop of London in his lawn sleeves, and so forth."

This sudden change of manner at such a time startled and distressed me.

"It is her way—a mistaken lightness of manner," thought I.

But, alas! I was yet to learn some terrible lessons in the treachery of the human heart!

Another brief and mute embrace, and we had just time to veil our mutual agitation and turn our attention to the outspread map of the Mediterranean, affecting to trace the distance from Cagliari to Malta, when we heard the voice of Lord Chillingham saying to Sir Nigel—

"Here they are, reviving their geography apparently. Captain Norcliff," he added, "here is a note for you which has just been brought by an orderly dragoon."

"Thanks, my lord. Is he waiting?"

"No, sir," said the servant, who presented it to me on a chased silver salver; "he immediately wheeled round his horse and galloped off."

"Permit me," said I, tearing it open.

It had been hurriedly pencilled by Frank Jocelyn, and ran thus:—

"MY DEAR NORCLIFF,—The lieutenant-colonel in command of the consolidated depôts here informs me that the route for ours is at Maidstone, for which place the troop must march by daybreak to-morrow. Sorry to disturb your dinner-party; but now the word is 'Eastward ho!'"

I handed it first to Louisa, and for a moment my voice failed me; but rallying, I said—"I have to apologize for a hasty departure, and shall thank you, my lord, to order my horse."

Much that followed was confusion. I can remember my good uncle shaking me repeatedly by the hand, and patting me on the epaulettes (we were like officers then, and had epaulettes on our shoulders). Cora wept a great deal; Louisa was quite silent and very pale. Our parting scene passed away like a dissolving view; but the bitterness was somewhat taken from it by the whole party promising to "drive or ride over to Maidstone and see us march out;" and so, with a kind adieu from all, I sprang on my horse, quitted Chillingham Park, and soon reached the barracks, where I found Jocelyn in my quarters awaiting me, and Willie Pitblado, who had already relinquished his livery for his lancer uniform, whistling vigorously as he packed and buckled up my traps.

Away from Louisa, I had no relief now for my mind but intense activity.

In the dull grey light of the next morning I quitted Canterbury with my troop for Maidstone, into which we were played by our own band, which came a mile or two on the Rochester Road to meet us.

There I learned from Colonel Beverley that, on the following day, we should march to join the expedition destined for the defence of Turkey.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Now, brave boys, we're bound for marchin',
Both to Portingale and Spain;
Drums are batin', colours flyin',
And the divil a back we'll come again.
So, love, farewell, we're all for marchin'!

Eighty-eighth and Inniskillin',
Boys that's able, boys that's willin';
Faugh-a-ballagh and County Down,
Stand by the harp, and stand by the crown.
So, love, farewell, we're all for marchin'!

The colonel cries, "Boys, are yee's ready?"
"We're at your back, sir, firm and steady;
Our pouches filled with balls and poulther,
And a firelock sloped on every shoulther."
So, love, farewell, we're all for marchin'!

Such was the doggrel ditty—some camp song of the brave old Peninsular days—with which I heard my Irish groom, Larity O'Regan, solacing himself in the grey light of the early morning, as he rubbed down my charger, and buckled his gay trappings, in the dawn of the, to me, eventful 22nd of April. How I envied that man's lightness of heart! Perhaps he had a mother in a thatched cabin in some brown Irish bog far away; sisters, too; it might be a sweetheart—some grey-eyed and black-haired Biddy, or Nora. If so, they occasioned him but little regret then; and light-hearted Lanty's queer song and jovial bearing went far to rouse my own spirit as I mounted the gallant dark horse that was to bear me in the fields of the future.

The regiment, mustering about three hundred men of all ranks, came rapidly from the stables, under the eye of Studhome, and that ubiquitous and indefatigable non-commissioned officer, Sergeant-Major

Drillem. The sun had not yet risen, but the barrack windows were crowded by the men of other corps to witness our departure. Their own turn would soon arrive.

Wilford informed me that the route[*] had come suddenly, when the regiment was in church, and it was first announced by the chaplain from the pulpit. The sanctity of the place alone restrained the cheers of the lancers, but not the sobs of the women; and he added, that by a singular coincidence, the text the chaplain had chosen for his sermon was from Proverbs xxvii. 1—"Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

[*] Order for marching.

As the trumpets blew the assembly on this auspicious morning, their sound seemed different—more warlike in fact than usual—a portion of the great movement in which the fate of Europe, and certainly of many a poor human being, was involved.

As yet Lionel Beverley, our lieutenant-colonel, who wore his Cross of the Bath, was the only decorated man among us (save a few Indian medals); but a rich crop of such tributes was to be reaped in the land to which we were going.

Our plumes had been laid aside, glazed covers were on our square-crowned caps, and officers and privates alike had canvas havresacks and wooden canteens slung over the right shoulder; some of the former had telescopes and courier-bags; but all betokened coming service and preparation for it.

Our horses were nearly all of a deep dark bay colour, save those of the band and trumpeters, many of which were white, or spotted grey. The guidons were all uncased; each was of white silk (the colour of our facings), embroidered with gold, measuring three feet long by twenty-one inches on the lance, which was ten feet in length—the regulation for light cavalry. On the flank of its troop each standard was now flying in the morning wind.

On this occasion there were, as usual at such times, many of the fair sex interested in our departure. There was much weeping among many wives, and certainly among a great number of "very foolish virgins," as Studhome designated them. Many of the soldiers' wives were mingling in the ranks, and, fearless of the horses' hoofs, were holding up their infants for the last kiss of many a poor father who was to find his grave in the land to which we were departing; and there were many painful separations among those who were destined never to meet again.

I remember a sergeant of Wilford's troop, whose wife had recently presented him with a baby. The latter died suddenly on the night before we were to march, and, by a singular coincidence, the little thing's cradle and coffin were brought into barracks together next morning, but poor Sergeant Dashwood had to mount and leave his weeping wife and unburied little one behind him.

He was one of the first who fell at the passage of the Alma.

There was, on the other hand, much heedless jesting and idle levity.

"This time," said Wilford, to the group of officers who were gathered round Beverley, "we shall do a portion of the Mediterranean, the entire Levant, and Dardanelles, at her Majesty's expense, and without the aid of Bradshaw or John Murray."

"So we are actually going at last," lisped Jocelyn, while playing with his horse's mane.

"Ah! but we leave our representatives behind."

"How, Travers?"

"In a squad of light infantry in arms, no doubt," replied Travers, a handsome fellow, with a clear blue eye and long fair moustache. He had the reputation of being the most rakish fellow in the regiment, and could not resist perpetrating the old dragoon joke.

"How clumsily we English show grief," I heard Berkeley say, as he witnessed a very affecting parting between a mother and her son. "Hear how that old—aw—woman is permitting herself to howl."

"Anything is better than having every natural emotion subdued and snubbed from childhood, as among us in Scotland," thought I.

Soldiers muster and march at all times merrily. Care cumbers them but little and briefly, for "with them the present is everything, the past a point, the future a blank. The greeting of surviving friends is seldom embittered by the recollection of those who are no more, and in a life of danger and casualty this is natural."

Already the advanced guard had been detailed and thrown out, under young Sir Henry Scarlett. The crowd in and about the barracks was great. Many carriages full of fashionables from Canterbury, Tunbridge, and elsewhere, were arriving, for the double purpose of getting up an appetite for breakfast and seeing us depart; but I saw nothing of my friends, for whom I was looking anxiously—so much so that Studhome said, laughingly, as he rode past—

"Come, look alive, Norcliff, and get your troop into shape. There is no such spoon in the service, or out of it, as an 'engaged man.'"

At another time I might have resented Jack's banter, but Beverley wheeled the regiment from open column into line, and opened the ranks, as the commandant of Maidstone cantered in, with his staff, their plumes waving and epaulettes glittering. Then, from line, we were formed in close column in rear of the leading troop, for the delivery of an address, of which I did not hear one word, for just as the commandant took off his cocked hat and began his oration Lord Chillingham's carriage, preceded by two outriders, drove in, I perceived that it was occupied by Cora, Lord Chillingham, and Lord Slubber. My uncle and Lady Louisa, who were on horseback, came at once close up to me.

My pale love looked tenderly at me, and her dark eyes bore unmistakable traces of recent tears, or was it the long ride in the morning wind which had inflamed them? All emotion, however, was subdued now, which was well, as her rare beauty, her bearing and seat in the saddle, attracted the eyes of half the regiment, seriously damaging the interest of the old commandant's address; and my uncle, after warmly shaking my hand, proceeded to examine, with a critical eye, the mount of our men.

The party in the carriage alighted, so Louisa dismounted and gave her bridle to her groom.

Our eyes seldom wandered from each other, but we had little to say beyond a few commonplaces, yet at that bitter hour of parting our hearts were very full, and she stroked and petted my horse, saying almost to it the caressing things she dared not address to me.

At last the final moment of departure came, and her eyes filled with irrepressible tears. Lord Slubber hurried forward to assist her to remount; but his tremulous hands failed him, or Louisa proved too large and ample; so I leaped from my horse, and took the office upon myself.

Louisa bit her lip, and smiled at Slubber, with mingled sorrow and disdain in her expressive eye, as I put one arm caressingly around her, and swung her up, arranging to her complete satisfaction the ample skirt and padded stirrup for the prettiest foot and ankle that England ever produced, and they are better there than in boasted Andalusia.

At that instant a hot tear from under her veil fell on my upturned face; and then it was that I contrived, unseen, to give her the lock of hair. It was in a tiny locket, the counterpart of that which I wore at my own neck. She just touched it with her lips, and slipped it into her bosom. Save Cora and myself, I think no one noticed the little action.

Another moment, and I found the whole regiment in motion, and, preceded by the band of a dragoon guard corps, departing from the barrack square. Many of our men now unslung their lances, and brandished them, while chorusing, "Cheer, boys, cheer"—a song, the patriotism of which is somewhat equivocal, though the air is fine and stirring.

Louisa accompanied me, riding by my side, to the gate. What we were saying, I know not now; but my heart was beating painfully. The scene around me seemed all confusion and phantasmagoria; the tramp of the horses, the crash of the band, with cymbals and kettledrums, the cheers of the soldiers and of the people, seemed faint and far away. I heard Louisa's voice alone.

But now a loud and reiterated hurrah—the full, deep, hearty cheer of warmth and welcome, of joy or triumph, which comes best from English throats, and from English throats alone—rose from the multitudes without, as the head of the column defiled slowly through the street; and

I must own that three hundred mounted lancers—all handsome young men, well horsed, and in gay uniform, blue faced with white, and with all their swallow-tailed red and white banneroles fluttering in the wind—presented a magnificent spectacle.

Thousands of handkerchiefs were waved from the windows, and many laurel branches and flowers were flung among us. Other troops, both horse and foot, were on the march that morning, and the crash of other bands, heard at a distance, came over the sprouting cornfields and hop-gardens of beautiful Kent. I had pressed Louisa's hand for the last time, and she had returned to her friends. We had separated at last, and with all the love that welled up in our hearts, we had parted, as some one says, "without the last seal upon the ceremony of good-bye, which it is unlawful to administer in public to any but juvenile recipients."

I was alone now, and yet not quite alone, for my uncle, though his military career had been confined to the ranks of the Kirkaldy troop of Yeomanry, accompanied me for some miles, mounted on a stout cover-hack, though sorely tempted to spur after some Highland regiment, whose bagpipes we heard ringing on some parallel road, as we marched along the highway to Tunbridge, *en route* for Portsmouth, where our transports lay.

Sir Nigel bade me farewell at Tunbridge, and turned to ride back to Chillingham Park, whither my heart went with him. The fine old man's voice faltered and his eyes grew very moist, as he pressed my hand for the last time, and reined aside his horse, looking among the troop for Willie Pitplado, whom he had known from infancy, and with whom he also shook hands.

"Good-bye, Willie," said he. "Remember you are your father's son. Dinna forget Calderwood Glen, and to stick to my nephew."

Willie's heart was full, and as he gnawed his chin-strap to hide his emotion, I heard him send a farewell message to his father, the old keeper.

And then, as the sturdy baronet rode slowly to the rear, adopting at once the old hunting seat, several of our lancers cheered him, for he was the last specimen of his class they would probably see for many a day to

come.

I now remembered, with keen reproach, that in the fulness of my emotion at parting from Louisa—in fact, the selfishness of my love—I had forgotten to bid adieu to Cora and to Lord Chillingham. About the latter omission I cared little; but to leave Cora—kind, affectionate Cora—whose sad and earnest face I seemed still to see, as she gazed so wistfully from the carriage window, and to leave her, it might be for ever, without a word of farewell, was a fault almost without remedy now.

However, I lost no time in writing my excuses from our first halting-place, which was at Mayfield, though some of our troops remained at Tunbridge Wells, and others had to ride to the market town of Cranbrook for quarters and stabling. Proceeding through the great hop-growing district of England, we frequently marched between gardens, where the little plants were beginning to creep up those tall and slender poles of ash or chestnut, which (before the hops gain their full growth, in September) present so singular an appearance to a stranger's eye. When those green hops were gathered, and when the hop-queen was decorated in honour of the harvest home, we were moving towards the passage of the Alma. Kent was wearing its loveliest aspect now, in the full glory of hedgerows, copse, and meadows, in the last days of spring, under a clear blue sunlit sky. The birds, in myriads, filled the hedges with melody; the purple and white lilacs were already in full bloom, and the grass was spotted with snow-white daisies and golden buttercups, while primroses and violets grew wild by the side of the chalky and flinty roads.

The quaint, tumble-down cottages, covered to their chimney tops with ivy, woodbine, and wild hop-leaves; the fair, smiling faces that peeped at us from their lozenged lattices; the sturdy fellows who lounged and smoked at the turnpike; the red wheeled waggons on the road; the laden wains, and the canvas-frocked yokels far a-field; the lowing cattle that browsed on the upland slope; the square white tower of the little village church on one side; the red-brick manor-house on the other, with all its gables and oriels peeping above the woodlands; the whistle of the distant railway train, and its white smoke curling up in the sunshine, were all indicative of happy, peaceful, and prosperous England, and of a

soil long untrodden by a hostile foot. From every port in the United Kingdom; between Portsmouth and Aberdeen, troops were quickly departing now. Being cavalry, on our route through Kent, Sussex, and a little part of Hampshire, we overtook and passed several corps of infantry and artillery, which were marching by the same roads for the same place of embarkation, and stirring were the cheers with which we greeted each other.

We remarked that the bands of the Scottish and Irish regiments were almost invariably playing the national quick marches peculiar to their own countries, while those of English corps played German, and even Yankee music.

The Black Watch, the Cameron Highlanders, the Scotch Fusiliers, &c., stirred each other's hearts by such airs as "Scots wha hae," "Lochaber no more," and so forth; the Connaught Rangers and the 97th made the welkin ring to "Garryowen," and similar airs, which are more inspiring to the British soldier than those of Prussia or Austria can ever be; and, as our colonel remarked it, it would have been better taste had the English bands played the quicksteps of the sister countries than foreign airs, with which an Englishman can have no sympathy whatever. [*]

[*] The same defect was observed on that great day when Her Majesty distributed the Victoria Cross. The bands of the Guards played Scottish airs for the Highlanders, and "Rule Britannia" for the Marines; but otherwise "favoured the troops and the people with a great deal of German music, to which no attention was paid. National airs would have gratified both, and stirred up the patriotism of the people. The Enniskilling Dragoons and Rifles were chiefly composed of Irishmen; but the bands did not venture upon a single air peculiar to Ireland."—*Nolan's History of the War*, p. 770.

I remembered a pleasant little incident during our march through Sussex. As we passed a village parsonage—a quaint old gable-ended house, secluded among moss-grown trees—the sound of our kettledrums

and trumpets, the tramp of the horses, and the clatter of the chain bridles and steel scabbards, drew forth the inmates—an aged clergyman and his two daughters—to a green wicket in the close-clipped holly-hedge, where the group stood, as in a green frame of leaves, looking with deep interest at the passing lancers, who were riding in what was then the order—sections of three. White-haired and reverend, with his thin locks shining in the sun, the curate took off his hat, and lifted up his hands and eyes in a manner there could be no mistaking. The old man was evidently praying for us. His face was expressive of the finest emotion; he felt that he was looking on many a man he would never see again. Perhaps he had a son a soldier, or was himself a soldier's son; or he felt that he, though old and stricken with years, was destined to survive many of the young, the hale and hearty in our ranks, who were still "on life's morning march." Some of our officers lifted their caps and bowed to the little group, and I am sure that Frank Jocelyn kissed his hands to the girls, who were waving their handkerchiefs, while more than one of ours cried, "God bless you, old boy!" and frequently, long after, in the snows of Sebastopol and the terrors of the valley of death, the face and form of that good old man, and the kindness of his mute prayer, came to the memory of some of us. It formed one of our last and most pleasing incidents connected with England.

In four days we reached Portsmouth, which presented a scene of indescribable bustle and activity; and the fifth day saw my troop, consisting of fifty men, with sixty horses, and with the colonel, Studhome, M'Goldrick, one surgeon, the sergeant-major, and rest of the staff, embarked from the dockyard jetty at eleven A.M., on board a splendid clipper ship, the *Pride of the Ocean*, Captain Robert Binnacle, bound for Turkey. The other five troops of the corps were embarked on board the transports *Ganges*, *Bannockburn*, and other vessels.

We had not been without hope of going in the *Himalaya*, which would have taken the entire regiment in her capacious womb, and which, moreover, is our only cavalry ship; but the authorities had declared otherwise.

The morning of our embarkation was beautiful; the scene animated, picturesque, and bustling, such as Portsmouth alone could exhibit at such a time; but we were sorely troubled by our horses. Some were conveyed on board in stall-boxes, others were lowered down the hatches by bellybands and slings, in which, being spirited and young, they were very restive, lashing out, to the imminent danger of the brains and bones of those in their vicinity, until they found themselves in the tow-padded stalls below the maindeck.

Adding to the bustle and interest of the scene, several ships of war were taking in stores and preparing for sea; boats, manned by seamen and marines in white jackets, were shooting to and fro between Portsmouth on one side and Gosport on the other. A strong detachment of the 19th (1st Yorkshire) Regiment was embarking on board the *Melita*, a Cunard steamer; the *Euxine*, a Peninsular and Oriental liner, was receiving many of the staff, a number of horses, and nearly twenty tons of ball cartridges. A squadron of the 8th, or Royal Irish Hussars, under Major de Salis, were stowing themselves on board of the *Mary Anne* transport; and a great body of Woolwich Pensioners, a numerous staff of veterinary surgeons, members of the ambulance, ordnance, and transport corps, were all embarking at the same time. Thus the hurly-burly was prodigious, and the whole of the quays were encumbered by baggage, stores, field-pieces, mortars, shot and shell, chests of arms, tents and camp equipage, guarded by marines with fixed bayonets, or seamen with drawn cutlasses. With all this apparent activity there was, of course, the counteracting influence of that red-tapism which is the curse of the British service. When war was declared the Royal Arsenal did not contain a sufficient quantity of shells to furnish the first battering train that went to Turkey, and the fuses then issued had been in store ever since the battle of Waterloo! Even the mattocks and shovels issued to the troops had been sent home from the Peninsula by the Duke of Wellington as worthless!

Here at Portsmouth we saw many a bitter—also to too many it proved a final—adieu. With all my soul I loved Louisa; and yet, when, standing on the dockyard jetty there, I saw the partings of husbands

from their wives, and fathers from their children, I thanked Heaven in my heart that in this, to them, most bitter hour, I had only my good black charger to care for.

Midday was past ere all the passengers for the *Pride of the Ocean*, with their baggage, &c., were on board. I had personally to see the cattle stabled below; the men told off to their messes and watches; the lances, swords, and other arms stowed away in racks; the valises and hammocks slung to their cleats, and so forth. In the stables one stall on each side was left vacant, with spare slings, in case of accidents at sea.

Fortunately, I was spared the annoyance of Berkeley's society on the voyage out, as there was not space for more than one troop on board the clipper; so he was with Wilford's on board the *Ganges*. He was not exactly "in Coventry," but somehow our mess disliked him, and could not exactly comprehend, as they phrased it, "what was up" between him and me.

Now that I was again in favour with Louisa Loftus; now that the untoward affair at the Reculvers had been completely explained, and that the victory was mine, and his the shame, defeat, and rejection—nearly all emotion of hostility against him had died away, or been replaced by settled contempt. Yet the hostile meeting was still looming in the future, and would have to ensue on the first suitable opportunity.

I was not sorry when the bustle of embarkation was over, and the clipper was towed out to the famous reach or roadstead at Spithead, where she came to anchor for a time, under the shelter of the high lands of the Isle of Wight.

The noblest army that ever left the shores of the British Isles was, undoubtedly, that which departed under Lord Raglan's orders for the East.

It was the carefully-developed army of forty years of peace, during which the world had made a mighty stride in art, in science, and in civilization—greater than it had done, perhaps, between the days of the Twelfth Crusade and the last day of Waterloo.

"War," says Napier, in his "Peninsular History," "war tries the military framework; but it is in peace that the framework itself must be formed—otherwise barbarians would be the leading soldiers of the world. A perfect army can only be made by civil institutions."

The same magnificent writer says elsewhere, with terrible truth, "In the beginning of each war England has to seek in blood the knowledge necessary to insure success; and like the fiend's progress towards Eden, her conquering course is through chaos, followed by Death!" and that such was her course in the Crimea, let the errors of general routine, the trenches of Sebastopol, and the criminal red-tapism at home bear witness.

Of the morale of that army there can be no higher evidence than the voices that came from the poor fellows in our ranks—the letters with which they filled the newspapers of the day, detailing with spirit, simplicity, and pathos their humble experiences in the great events of the war.

All our men loved Beverley, who was a model commanding officer, and my troop deemed themselves (as I did) peculiarly lucky in being with him and the head-quarters staff. He took great care of his regiment, and a strict supervision of the horses.

He had left nothing undone while at home, by the establishment and encouragement of a school, a library, and so forth, to raise the moral tone of the lancers, their wives and families; hence some of the contributions of our privates to the newspapers were fully equal to any that emanated from Sir Colin's famous Highland Brigade. Beverley regularly visited the sick in hospital, and cheered them by his kindly manner; and all the little ones who played in the barrack square smiled and welcomed the approach of the colonel, who was seldom without a few small coins to scatter among them, and cause a scramble; yet, as I have said, he was somewhat of a dandy, and not without a tinge of affectation in his tone and manner.

Next evening saw us at sea.

The Nab Light had sunk far astern, and the pale cliffs of the Isle of Wight had melted into the world of waters.

Old Jack Bloater, the pilot from Selsey, had drunk his last horn of grog at the binnacle, and left us with every wish for "an 'appy journey—a bong woyage, as the monseers called it, and that we would soon give them Roosians a skewerin'."

And now I knew that many a day, and week, and month, it might be years, filled up by the perils and stormy passages of a life of campaigning, must inevitably pass ere I should again hear Louisa's voice, before I had her hand in mine, and looked into her tender eyes again—if I was kindly permitted by Heaven to return at all. But little knew our departing army of the suffering and horrors that were before it—horrors and sufferings to which the bayonets and bullets of the Russians were but child's play.

I was now away from her finally, and without the least arrangement having been made for that which alone can soothe the agony and anxiety of such a separation—correspondence! I clung to the hope that she might write to me; if not, I could only hear of her from Cora, or perhaps when Miss Wilford wrote to her brother Fred; and, it might be, from some stray paragraph in the *Court Journal* or *Morning Post*, if either ever found its way beyond the Dardanelles, which seemed doubtful.

I had her treasured lock of hair and the miniature, on which I was never tired of gazing, especially when I could do so unseen in my swinging cot, for a crowded transport is the last place in the world for indulging in lover's dreams or reveries. It was a poor, feeble daguerreotype, yet there were times when, by force of imagination, the pictured face seemed to light up with Louisa's smile, and when the fine feminine features became filled by a blaze of light and life, so like the original that they became perfectly lovely.

Then I would think of Cora, too, and when I reflected over all her bearing towards me, the light which broke upon me at first became clearer.

Her tears when she first told Sir Nigel of her suspicion that I loved Louisa; her sudden changes of colour, from pallor to ruddy suffusion of the cheek; her hesitation in addressing me at times, her abruptness at others, or her silence; her vehemence in defending me against the

accusations of Berkeley, and her joy at my victory; her occasional coldness to Louisa and her silent sorrow at my departure; all that had at any time puzzled me was explained now.

Cora loved me with a love beyond that of cousin, and I must often have stabbed her good little heart by my impertinent confidences regarding my passion for another.

Well, well, Cora's love and my regrets were alike vain now, for the swift clipper ship was running on a taut bowline by the skirts of Biscay's stormy bay, as she bore us on "to glory" and Gallipoli.

CHAPTER XXV.

A wet sheet and a flowing sea,
A wind that follows fast,
And fills the white and rustling sail,
And bends the gallant mast.
And bends the gallant mast, my boys.
While, like the eagle free,
Away the good ship flies, and leaves
Old England on the lee.

The cabin was spacious and comfortable. Binnacle, the skipper, was a short, thick-set little stump of a fellow, with a round, good-humoured face, which had become browned by exposure in every climate and on every sea under the sun. He was very anecdotical, perpetually joking and laughing, and had one peculiarity, that he never in conversation interlarded his remarks with nautical phraseology, like the conventional or orthodox sailor of romance and the stage.

He had never sailed before with a horse on board, and now that he had actually one hundred of those useful quadrupeds under his hatches, he spent a great deal of his spare time among them, tickling their ears and noses—more, perhaps, than some of them quite relished, if one might judge of the manner in which they occasionally showed the whites of their eyes, and lashed out at the rear end of their stall-boxes.

On board we smoked, of course, played chess, loo (*rouge-et-noir*, a little), and daily watched with interest the steamers which passed us, full of troops, British or French, all on their way to the East. Some of us kept diaries and made memoranda for friends at home: but some grew tired of doing so, or reflected that they might not live to record that, on such a day, the white cliffs of old England were again in sight.

We had quite a bale of the "Railway Library" on board; but to reading we preferred telling stories, to kill time, or watching, telescope in hand, for bits of continental scenery, as we ran along the coast of Portugal, spanned the Gulf of Cadiz, and hauled up for the Straits of Gibraltar, after passing the rocky promontory of Cape St. Vincent, which we saw rising from the sea north-north-east of us, about ten miles distant, on the fifth day after we sailed from Spithead.

During the day we had not many leisure hours, as there is no situation in which troops more urgently require the personal superintendence of their officers than when on board ship.

All the lancers were supplied with white canvas frocks, to save their uniforms, and were divided into three watches, each of which in turn was on deck, with at least one officer. We had an officer of the day and guard, who posted sentinels, armed with the sword, at the breaks of the poop and forecastle, to maintain order, and, when the weather permitted, we had an hour of carbine and sword exercise, to the great edification of Captain Binnacle and his crew. Every morning the bedding was brought on deck and triced in nettings alongside; no smoking was permitted in the stables or between decks.

The cattle were of course our chief care, and Beverley was always particular about his mounts. Experience and theory had long convinced him that the sire dominated in the breed of chargers; thus he ever

eschewed the produce of half-bred stallions and stud horses. We gave them mashes dashed with nitre, and mixed bran with their corn; daily we had their hoofs and fetlocks washed in clean salt water, their eyes and noses sponged, and when at times the windsails failed to act, and the hold became close, we washed the mangers with vinegar and water, and sponged the horses' nostrils with the same refreshing dilution.

Notwithstanding all our care, however, before we sighted Malta we lost three—one of which was my uncle's present, the black cover-hack with the white star on her counter. It became glandered.

Pitblado, who had seen the nag foaled, and had many a day taken it to graze in Falkland Park, and on the green slopes of the Mid Lomond, flatly refused to shoot it when I ordered him to do so, but gave his loaded carbine to Lanty O'Regan, who had fewer scruples on the subject.

When this episode occurred, Cape Espartel was bearing south-east of us, about twelve miles distant; and by our glasses we could distinctly see the features of that remarkable headland of Morocco, the north-western extremity of the mighty continent of Africa, with its range of basaltic columns, which nearly rival in magnificence those of Fingal's Cave at Staffa; and the noon of the following day, as we bore into the Mediterranean, saw the great peak of Gibraltar rising from the horizon like a couchant lion, with its tail turned to Spain.

When my poor nag, previous to its slaughter, was being slung up from the hold, Beverley was much impressed by the real grief of honest Pitblado for its loss; and told me an interesting Indian anecdote of a pet horse that belonged to the 8th Royal Irish Hussars.

Beverley seldom spoke of India, for it was a land that was not without sorrowful recollections to him; and we all knew that he wore at his neck a large gold locket, containing a braid of the hair of his intended bride—a lovely girl, who was shot in his arms, and when seated on his saddle, as he was spurring with his troop through the horrors and the carnage of the Khyber Pass—on that day when nearly our whole 44th Regiment perished—and poor Beverley, with her dead body, fell into the hands of the Afghans.

"When we last went out to India," said he, "that was when I was but a cornet of sixteen, and several years before you joined us, we relieved the 8th Royal Irish, who had been there long—I know not how many years, but time enough to gain on their colours *Pristinæ virtutis memores*, with 'Leswaree,' and 'Hindostan'—honours which they shared with the old 25th Light Dragoons,[*] for five-and-twenty years was then the common term of Indian expatriation.

[*] A corps disbanded in 1818; and formerly the 29th Light Dragoons, were raised in 1795.

"The 8th had been at the storming of Kalunga, where their old and beloved colonel—then General Sir Robert Rollo Gillespie—was killed at their head, and fell with that splendid sword, inscribed 'The gift of the Royal Irish,' clenched in his hand. His horse was a remarkably noble animal, which had been foaled of an Irish mare at the Cape of Good Hope; but he had the beautiful Arabian head, the finely-arched neck, long oblique shoulders, ample quarters, well-bent legs, and long elastic pastern of his sire—a splendid Godolphin barb. Black Bob was indeed a beauty!

"After the affair at Kalunga he was put up for sale, with his saddle and housings still spotted with the blood of the gallant Gillespie, who was so greatly beloved by the brave Irish fellows of the 8th that they resolved to keep his horse as a memorial of him; but, unfortunately, the upset price was three hundred guineas.

"Two officers of the 25th Light Dragoons raised it speedily to a hundred more. But not to be baffled, the poor fellows subscribed among themselves, and actually raised five hundred guineas, for which the beautiful black horse, with his housings, was sold to them.

"Black Bob thus became their property, and always preceded the regiment on the march. He knew the trumpets of the 8th better than those of any other regiment. The men were wont to affirm that he had a

taste for the Irish brogue, too, and that he pricked his ears always highest at 'Garryowen,' in regard that his mother was a mare from the Wicklow Hills.

"Bob was fed, caressed, petted, and stroked as no horse ever had been before; and always when in barracks, as the corps proceeded from station to station where he had been with his old rider, he took the accustomed position at the saluting base when the troops marched past, just as if old Rollo Gillespie was still in the saddle, watching the squadrons or companies defile in succession, and was not lying in his grave, far away beneath the ramparts of Kalunga, among the Himalaya mountains in Nepaul.

"Well, as I have said, at last we came to relieve the 8th, who were dismounted, and had their horses turned over to us. They were to go home, as we had come out, by sea. The funds of the hussars were low now; pay was spent and prize-money gone. They were in despair at the prospect of losing their pet horse; but no such passengers ever went round the Cape, so they had to part with Bob at last.

"A civilian at Cawnpore bought him, and the hussars gave him back more than half the price, on receiving a solemn promise that Bob was to have a good stable and snug paddock wherein he was to pass the remainder of his days in comfort; and this pledge the new proprietor kept faithfully. But Bob had only been three days in his new quarters, when he heard the trumpets of the 8th waking the echoes of the compound, as they marched, dismounted, before daybreak, to embark on the *Ganges*, for Calcutta.

"It was the old air of the regiment, 'Garryowen.' Then Bob became frantic. He bit and tore his manger to pieces; he lashed out with his hoofs and kicked the heel-posts and treviss boards to pieces. He destroyed his whole stall, and sunk among the straw, bleeding, cut, and half strangled in his stall collar.

"After a time, when day by day passed, and he saw no more the once familiar uniforms, and heard no more the voices or the trumpets of his old friends, he pined away, refused his corn, and even the most tempting

mashes, totally declining all food. So he was turned into the paddock; but then he leaped the bamboo fence, and with all his remaining speed rushed direct to the barracks at Cawnpore.

"There he made straight for the cantonment of the European cavalry, and came whinneying up to the saluting post, where he had so often borne old Gillespie and seen the squadrons of the 8th defiling past, and there, on that very spot, the horse fell down and died!"[*]

[*] There was another pet of the 8th Hussars, which met with a different fate. The jet-black horse, on whose back their colonel, T. P. Vandeleur, was killed at the battle of Leswaree "long kept his place with the regiment, and afterwards became the property of Cornet Burrowes, who took great care of him until the corps left India, when he was shot, that he might not fall into unworthy hands."—*Narrative of Leswaree*. By Dr. Ore.

"I have often heard similar stories of dogs—but never such a yarn of a horse," said Captain Binnacle, who was greatly impressed by this anecdote, and smoked a long time thoughtfully and in silence after it.

"Fact though!" said Beverley, curtly, and rather haughtily, as he tipped the ashes off his cigar.

"That horse had the heart of a man. But I could spin you a yarn, colonel, of a man that had the heart of a beast—ay, of a wild wolf; and it all occurred under my own eye—for I had to shed human blood in the matter; though I doubt not God above will acquit me therefor, seeing as how my own conscience acquits me."

The impressive manner so suddenly adopted by our worthy little skipper attracted the attention of Beverley, Studhome, and M'Goldrick, and all the listening group.

Even Jocelyn—a gay fellow, who had more *affaires de fantaisie* than *affaires de coeur*, and who never permitted the impulses of that useful utensil, his heart, to go further than proved convenient or comfortable—felt himself interested by the gloomy and stern expression that came into the face of Captain Binnacle.

"Would you like to hear my yarn, gentlemen?" said the latter.

"With pleasure—certainly—by all means—if you please," said we, alternately, and all together, for Binnacle was evidently anxious to spin it.

He gave a glance aloft, and another at the sky. The evening was fine and clear. The mate had charge of the deck, the ship was running under her head-sails, courses, top-sails, and topgallant sails before a fine strong breeze, which, as she rolled from side to side, made our horses reel and oscillate in their padded stalls below. The watch of lancers were all smoking or chatting on the port side; the sail-makers, squatted under the break of the forecastle, were busy on a set of new studding-sails; the carpenters were at work repairing the headrails forward.

The result of Binnacle's glances was satisfactory; and, descending to the cabin, whither we all followed, he ordered glasses and decanters, with a case of four square bottles that held something stronger than decanters usually do. We all betook us to brandy-and-water, except Frank Jocelyn, who imbibed noyeau and lemonade, a decoction which Binnacle viewed with sublime contempt; but Frank wore his hair, divided in the middle, and invariably used *w* for *r*, so we excused him, as one might do a young lady.

After a few preliminary coughs and hems, Binnacle told us the following story, which is so horrible that it fully requires—let us hope deserves—an entire chapter to itself.

CHAPTER XXVI.

At length one whispered his companion, who
Whispered another, and thus it went round,
And then into a hoarser murmur grew,
An ominous, and wild, and desperate sound;

And when his comrade's thought each sufferer knew,
'Twas but his own, suppressed till now, he found,
And out they spoke of lots for flesh and blood,
And who should die to be his fellows' food.—BYRON.

"You must know, gentlemen, that five years ago, come December next, I was first mate of the *Favourite*, a brig of London, registered at Lloyd's as being two hundred tons burden, John Benson, master, with a crew consisting only of nine men and a boy. We had run, late in the year, to Newfoundland for a cargo of salted cod, and sailing later still, lost a topmast, and had to run up Conception Bay to refit at the town of Harbour Grace.

"Winter was close at hand now, so we lost no time in getting our gear ready; but the field ice came down swiftly from the north, and for the distance of two hundred miles from the mouth of the bay—that is, from Baccalieu and Cape St. Francis—away towards the Great Bank of Newfoundland, it covered all the sea, hard and fast, with hundreds of icebergs wedged amid it; so there was nothing for us now but patience and flannel, to strip the ship of her canvas and running rigging, to stow away everything till the spring, to muffle ourselves to the nose, and try to keep our blood from freezing by sitting close to wood-fires, and drinking red Jamaica rum mixed with snow-water, or that of the mineral springs on the hill of Lookout.

"A winter in Harbour Grace is not quite so lovely as one would be in London, as it is a poor little wooden town, with a few thousand miserable inhabitants, and a port that is difficult of entrance, though safe enough when one is fairly in. Well, everything passes away in time; so the winter passed, and the spring came; but, as usual in that imaginary season there, the snow fell heavier, till it was fathoms deep in the gulleys and flat places; the weather became more wintry than ever, and though the fierce black frost relaxes a little, it will still freeze half and half grog as hard as rock crystal.

"Some of our crew bemoaned this unlooked for detention bitterly, especially the captain, Tom Dacres, and one or two married men, whose wives, they feared, would deem them lost; but none were more impatient than the boy I have named. We called him Scotch Willy, for his name was William Ormiston, from the village of Gourock, on the Clyde. Well educated, with a smattering of Latin and other things, a passion for wild adventure, and chiefly for the sea—a passion fed by the perusal of Robinson Crusoe and other romances—made him run from home and ship for North America, where we picked him up; and often, in the watches of the night, poor Willy confided to me his remorse and repentance, and wept for his mother, whose heart he feared he had broken. Then he used to show me an advertisement cut from a Glasgow paper, that fell into his hands in New York:—

"Left his home, ten days ago, a boy fifteen years of age, named William Ormiston; dressed in a blue jacket and trowsers, with a Glengarry bonnet; has dark eyes and brown hair. Any information regarding him will be most thankfully received by his widowed and afflicted mother, at the Quayside, Gourock."

"'Such was the notice that caught my eye when I was more than two thousand miles away from her—with my heart as full of remorse as my pocket was empty,' Willy would say, in a voice broken by sobs; but he hoped yet to get home and cast himself into her arms.

"In his tribulation Willy always thought his mother would be praying for him, and that her prayers would be more efficacious than his own, and this conviction always consoled and strengthened him. He was a handsome boy, this Willy, with eyes so dark that he might have passed for a grandson of 'Black-eyed Susan,' only that she was an English girl, and our Willy was Scotch to the backbone—he was.

"In March we began to get ready for sea, as there is usually a partial breaking up of the ice about the middle of that month, so we resolved to get away if we could, and stand across for Cadiz, if once clear of that

dreary and snow-covered land and the field ice. In Spain we were to exchange the salted cod for wine and fruit, and then return to London.

"A Russian whaler, which had been frozen in the same bight, but nearer the sea, was working out ahead of us some three miles or so, through the blue water and between the white floating floes, and we gave the greasy beggar a cheer as he passed out of the bay, made a good offing, and bore away, east by north, round Baccalieu Island.

"Conception Bay, I should tell you, gentlemen, is a large inlet of the Newfoundland coast, about fifty-three miles long, by some twenty or so broad; thus there is plenty of elbow-room for working out, even against a head-wind. Its coast is very bold and precipitous, especially about Point de Grates and Cape St. Francis. Harbour Grace and Carboniere on its shore were settlements of the old French times.

"As we followed in the Russian's wake, Bob Jenner, a fine, handsome young seaman, from Bristol, had the wheel, steering, with a steady hand, between the floes of broken ice that were drifting dangerously about the bay. We had the brig under easy sail; her fore and main courses, topsails, jib, and forestay-sail.

"Amid the quiet that prevailed on board, and the satisfaction we felt in having the blue water rippling alongside again, we were surprised by hearing a voice hailing us, as it were, from the sea.

"'A man in the water, sir; just abeam of us, to port,' shouted Scotch Willy, as he sprang into the main chains.

"And there, sure enough, in the sea, some twenty yards or so from us, we saw a man's head bobbing up and down like a fisherman's float, just as we neared the mouth of the inlet, where, beyond the headlands, that were covered with snow, and shining in the sea, we could see the waters of the Atlantic stretching far away.

"'Rope—a rope!—man overboard, Captain Benson; lay the maincourse to the wind!' were now the shouts.

"'Bear a hand—quick—diable!' cried the man in the water. 'Are you fellows fit for nothing, in heaven or hell, that you will let me drown before your eyes, d—n them?'

"Ere this remarkable speech reached us, the sheet was let fly to starboard, hauled into port, the brig lay to the wind, and the line was hove to this ill-bred personage in the water. He caught the bight of it with difficulty, for he was sorely benumbed, and actually sunk out of sight as he tied it under his armpits. However, up he came again, and we gently hauled him on board, where he fainted for a few minutes; but recovered when we poured some warm brandy-and-water down his throat, stripped off his wet clothes, and put him in a cosy spare hammock in the forecastle.

"By the time all this was done, we had cleared Conception Bay, and, with flocks of the Baccalieu birds screaming about us, were heading east by north, to keep clear of the floes, which the current was throwing in towards the land again, so rapidly, that many of them, like the links of an icy chain, were already drifting between us and the Russian, who was hoisting out his studding-sails on both sides, to make as good an offing as possible, before the sun set upon that frozen shore and tideless sea.

"By midday she was well-nigh hull down; but standing to the southward, having cleared the outer angle of the ice, while we were standing east and by north, to turn the end of a long mass, which we hoped to do ere night fell. In fact, the Russian had glided through some opening, which had closed again, for we could see only a line of ice, now stretching to the northern horizon, shutting us in towards the land.

"By midday our new hand was so far recovered as to be able to tell us that he was by name Urbain Gautier, a French Canadian, and that he had been a seaman on board the Russian whaler; that he had resented some ill-usage, been flogged, and thrown overboard. In proof of this summary procedure he showed us his back, which was covered with livid marks, evidently produced by the hearty application of a cat or knotted rope's end, but Scotch Willy lessened the general sympathy by informing me and Tom Dacres, in a whisper, that when the Canadian's knife fell from its sheath as we dragged him on board there was blood on its blade.

"Blood!

"This circumstance was whispered among the crew from ear to ear, and gave rise to many suspicions in no way favourable to our new acquisition, whom, however, they cared not to question, as he was a man singularly repulsive and brutal in aspect, and having a something in his expression of eye which made all on board shrink from him.

"Urbain Gautier was Herculean in stature and proportion, and most saturnine and satanic in visage. His eyes were too near each other, and too deeply set on each side of his long hooked nose, over which his two eye-brows met in a straight and black unbroken line. His mouth, with its thin lips and serrated fangs, suggested cruelty, and altogether there was a general and terrible aspect of evil about him. He spoke English, but when excited resorted to Canadian-French oaths and interjections.

"If 'twas he brought us ill-luck we got our first instalment of it that very night.

"The morning broke cold, grey, and cheerless, amid a storm of snow and wind, through which, to reduce the ship's speed, for we could see but little ahead, we drove under our fore-course and topsails all close-reefed now, and bitterly did we all regret the impatience which made us leave our snug moorings in Harbour Grace.

"Now and then the black scud would lift a little, but only to show the ice-fields drawing nearer and nearer, so, lest we should be crushed or enclosed amid them hopelessly, and then, it might be, starved to death when the last of our beef, biscuits, and water were gone, we steered in for the land, with the wild Arctic tempest—for such it was—increasing every moment.

"We tried sounding to leeward, but the lead always slipped from my benumbed hands, and in the end we lost the frozen line, as it parted in the iron block which was seized to the rigging by a tail-rope. Ere long we struck soundings with the hand lead, for the water was beginning to shoal!

"The brig's tops and the bellies of the close-reefed topsails became filled with snow, and now we began to look gloomily at each other, fearing rather than doubting the end.

"For most of that weary day we held on thus, running alternately west and north—sea-room was all we wanted till a safe harbourage opened; but ere long we knew it would be hopeless to look for either if the gale continued, and the briskest exercise could scarcely keep us from being frozen.

"We had been driven nor'-west I know not how many miles—for, perhaps, more than six-and-thirty—when a heavier sea than usual struck the brig on her starboard side, throwing her over on her beam ends to port, carrying away the bulwarks, tearing the long-boat from its chocks and lashings amidships, and making a clean sweep of everything on deck, buckets, loose spars, and handspikes; and with these went one of our men, who was never seen again.

"The brig righted, for she was a brave little craft, but with the loss of her topmasts and jib-boom, all of which, with yards and gearing, were broken off at the caps, and with hatchets and knives we worked amid the blinding and benumbing haze of drift and spray, snow, and the darkness of the coming night, to clear the wreck away—and away it all went astern with a crash, leaving the *Favourite* now under only her forecourse and staysail.

"I shall never forget that night, if I live for a thousand years.

"The pumps were frozen; the boxes a mass of ice; the brakes refused to work; but I knew there was more water in the hold than was healthy for us. We could get no tea, coffee, nor any warm food, for the cook's galley had been swept overboard, and the tots of grog, which I served out from time to time, conduced, I think, rather to stupefy than to comfort the poor fellows, who were beginning to lose all heart, and to huddle together for warmth in the forecastle.

"Lightning, green and ghastly, glared forth at times, revealing the weird aspect of the crippled and snow-covered brig; yet it had the effect of clearing the atmosphere and enabling us to see the stars; but still the wind blew fierce and biting over the vast ice-fields, and still the fated craft flew on—we scarcely knew whither—but as the event proved, between the headland of Buenovista and the enclosing ice.

"We had the utmost difficulty in keeping a lamp in the binnacle, and by its light, amid the storm, Urbain Gautier, the French-Canadian, who had the wheel, was steering; no other man on board but he could have handled it singly and kept the brig to her course, for he had the strength of three of us, and seemed alike impervious to cold and to suffering.

"I think I can see him now as he stood then, with his feet firmly planted on the quarterdeck grating, his hands on the spokes of the wheel, and the livid lightning seeming to play about him, as the brig flew on through the storm and the darkness, and with every varying flash his features changed in hue. Now they were green, and anon red or blue; now purple, and then ghastly white; ever and again, as the lightning flashed forth, this infernal face came out of the gloom with a diabolical grotesqueness, and a strange smile on it that appalled us all; and now another day began to break.

"'Mate, that fellow is more like a devil than a human being,' whispered Bob Jenner to me, echoing my own thoughts, as we clung together to the belaying pins abaft the mainmast.

"He spoke in a low whisper; but in an instant the eyes of Urbain were on him.

"'Ah!' said he, showing his serrated teeth, 'a *maladroit* speech, messmate.'

"'No messmate of yours,' growled Bob, unwisely.

"'Shipmate, then,' suggested the other, with a strange glance, between a grin and a scowl, for his black, glittering eyes wore one expression, and his cruel mouth another.

"'Well, mayhap, for so it must be,' said Bob, bluntly.

"'Ah,' said Urbain, with his horrible smile, as he held the wheel with one hand, and—even at that terrible time—felt for his sheath-knife with the other; 'ah! you think me a *mauvais sujet*, do you?"

"'I doesn't know what "mavy suggey" may be, and I doesn't care if I never does,' replied Bob, sturdily; 'but once I catches you ashore, mounseer, I'll teach you not to grip your knife when speaking to me.'

"'No quarrelling, lads,' said I, while my teeth chattered in the cold of that awful morning atmosphere. 'I only wish we were ashore.'

"'Then have your wish. Land ho!' sung out Urbain; and at that moment the grey wrack around us parted like a curtain; there was a dreadful crash, which tumbled us all right and left; the breakers which he had seen ahead were now boiling around us; and the brig lay bulged and broken-backed upon a reef, close to a lofty line of rocky coast, a helpless wreck, with the ice closing round her; and with a sound between an oath and a laugh, Urbain quitted the now useless wheel, which oscillated, as if in mockery, to and fro.

"Captain Benson, who, worn out by toil, had been snatching a few minutes' repose under the hood of the companionway, now sprang on deck, to find the brig totally lost, and that for us there was no resource, if we would save our lives, but to abandon her and get on shore.

"Broken and bulged, she was too firmly wedged on the reef for us ever to have the slightest hope of getting her off, save to sink her in deep water. As yet she might hold together for some hours, if the fury of the storm abated, and there were evident signs of such being the case.

"As each successive blast grew less in fury, and as the force and sound of the sea went down, we heard the wild streaming of the Baccalieu birds; and now, ere the water, which was rising fast in hold and cabin, destroyed everything, we procured charts and telescopes, to discover on what part of that barren, bleak, and most desolate of all the American shores, our fate had cast us.

"On comparing the outline of the snow-clad coast with the diagrams on the chart, we found we were stranded somewhere between the Bloody Bay and the Bay of Fair and False, about one hundred and twenty miles to the north-westward of the point from whence we had sailed.

"Few or no settlers, even of the most hardy and desperate description, are to be found thereabout, as the inhabitants between that place and the Bay of Notre Dame, about one hundred and fifty in number, are poor wretches who fish for cod and salmon in what they call summer, and for seals and the walrus in winter, and usually retire for the latter purpose to St. John's, or bury themselves in the woods till the snow disappears, about the month of June.

"We had but a sorry prospect before us; every instant the brig was going more and more to pieces beneath our feet, and our glasses swept the far extent of the snow-clad coast in vain, for not a vestige of a human habitation, or any sign of a human being, could be seen. No living thing was there save the Baccalieu birds, which screamed and wheeled in flocks above the seething breakers.

"Captain Benson's resolutions were taken at once. He resolved to abandon the wreck, and make his way by land at once for Trinity, a little town on the western side of the great bay that divides Avalon from the mainland of the island, or for Buenoventura, another settlement twelve miles to the southward.

"By circumnavigating the numerous bights, bays, and other inlets that lay between us and Buenoventura—especially the long, narrow, and provoking reach of Clode Sound—provided we failed to cross it on the ice, we should have at least a hundred miles to travel over a desolate and snow-covered waste, without a pathway, and without other guide than a pocket-compass.

"We set about our preparations at once. Every man put on his warmest clothing, and Tom Dacres lent a cosy Petersham jacket to the Canadian, Gautier. We greased our boots well, that they might exclude the wet, and made us long leggings to wear over our trousers by tying pieces of tarpaulin from the ankle to the knee, and lashing them well round with spun-yarn.

"For many hours we had been without food, and now examination proved that, save a few biscuits in the cabin locker, all the bread on board had been destroyed by the salt water; yet Urbain Gautier was able to make a meal of it. We were forced to content ourselves with a half biscuit each, to be eaten at our first halting place on shore. Beef or other provision we had none, and not a drop of rum or any other liquid could be had, for the brig was going fast to pieces, as the breakers surged up under her weather-counter, and all the hull abaft the mainmast was settling rapidly down in the water.

"Luckily we got up six muskets and some dry ammunition through the skylight. I say luckily, as we would have to hunt our way to Buenoventura; and these, with two tin pannikins, wherewith to cook and melt the snow for water, and a box of lucifer matches for lighting fires when we squatted in the bush for the night, we made our way ashore in the quarter-boat, and landed a chilled, wan, haggard, and miserable little band, consisting of eleven persons in all, including the captain, Bob Jenner, Tom Dacres, Willy Ormiston, the boy, myself, and five others.

"We were not without some fears of the Red Indians, though few or none, I believe, are now to be found on the island. Thus our first proceeding was to load and cap our muskets carefully.[*]

[*] It was a tradition, when the author was there, that in 1810 an exploring party, under Lieutenant Buchan, R.N., was sent to cultivate friendship with the Red Indians, and left with them, as hostages, two marines. Returning to the Bay of Exploits (about seventy miles westward from Bloody Bay) next summer, he found the savages gone, and the headless remains of his two marines lying in the bush.

"Captain Benson proceeded in front, with a fowling-piece on his shoulder, steering the way, with the aid of his pocket compass and a fragment of a chart; and he, too, was custodian of our box of lucifer matches. Just as we reached the top of the cliffs, by a slippery and dangerous ascent, we heard a sound, which made us all pause and look back towards the wreck. The field ice had already closed in upon the reef; but the last vestiges of the brig had disappeared where the Baccalieu birds were whirling thickest and screaming loudest.

"From the cliff that overlooked the sea, which was covered to the horizon with a myriad hummocks of field ice, diversified here and there by a great iceberg, the view landward differed but little in aspect. The whole dreary expanse was covered with snow—snow that made the frozen lakes and bays so blend with the land, that save for the dark groves of stunted firs and dwarf brushwood that grew in the arid soil, it was difficult to know where one ended and the other began. The hills

were low, monotonous, and unpleasantly resembled icebergs, without possessing the altitude, the sharp peaks, and abrupt outlines of the latter.

"In all that wintry waste the most awful silence prevailed, and not a sound was stirring in the clear blue air, for now the snow-storm had ceased, the wind had died away, and the sky was all of the purest, deepest, most intense, and unclouded blue. Amid it shone the dazzling sun, causing a reflection from the snow that served partly to blind or bewilder us; but now, after sharing our tobacco—all save Urbain—for a friendly whiff, we set resolutely forth upon our journey, in a direction at first due south-west from Bloody Bay, towards the upper angle of the long and winding shores of Newman's Sound.

"Three days we travelled laboriously, each helping his shipmates on, for our strength was failing fast, and sleeping in the scrubby bush at night was perilous work, for the cold was beyond all description intense; but we selected places where the snow was arched and massed over the low fir-trees, and there we crept in for shelter, running only the risk of being completely snowed up. Three days we travelled thus, without a path, over the white waste, where, in some places, the snow was frozen hard as flinty rock, and where, in others, we sank to our knees at every step; and during those three days, save the half biscuit per man which we had on quitting the wreck, no food passed our lips, and no other fluid than melted snow; and when the damp destroyed our tiny store of matches, we had no other means of allaying the agony of our thirst than by sucking a piece of ice or a handful of snow, and these were sure to produce bleeding lips and swollen tongues, as they burnt like fire.

"On the third morning, as we turned out, a seaman, whose name I forget, did not stir; we shook and called him, but there was no response; the poor fellow had passed away in his sleep, and so we left him there.

"Our fingers and noses were frequently frost-bitten; but when they were well rubbed in snow, animation returned. Those who had whiskers, found them more a nuisance than a source of warmth, as they generally became clogged by heavy masses of ice. Dread of snow-blindness, after

the glare of the past winter, came on us, too; for each day the sun was bright and cloudless—a shining globe overhead; but a globe that gave no heat.

"We met no traces of Red, or of Micmac Indians, or of the wild cariboo deer; the black bear, the red fox, the broad-tailed musquash, the white hare, and other game of the country, were nowhere to be seen either, or else we were not trappers enough to know their lairs or trail.

"Snow-birds, and all other fowl seemed equally scarce: in fact, the severity of the weather had destroyed, or driven them elsewhere, and with our hollow and blood-shot eyes we scanned the white wastes in vain for a shot at anything.

"To add to our troubles, little Scotch Willy fairly broke down, unable to proceed; and as the boy could not be left to perish, we carried him by turns—all, save the great and muscular Urbain Gautier, who told us plainly that he would see the boy and the crew in a very warm climate indeed before he would add to his own sufferings by becoming a beast of burden.

"'A beast you will ever be, whether of burden or not,' said Captain Benson, as he took the first spell of carrying poor Willy, who like a child as he was, wept sorely for his mother now.

"'*Tonnerre de Dieu!*' growled the savage, grinding his teeth and cocking his musket; but as three of us did the same, he gave one of his queer grins, and resumed his journey; but kept more aloof from us, for which we were not sorry.

"By contrast to the icy horrors around us, memory tormented us with ideas and pictures of blazing fires and festive hearths; of happy homes, of warm dinners and jugs of hot punch; of steaming coffee and rich cream; of mulled wines; of chestnuts sputtering amid the embers; of carpeted rooms and close-drawn curtains, glowing redly in the warm blaze of a sea-coal fire; of warm feather-beds and cosy English blankets; of every distant comfort that we had not, and never more might see.

"On the fourth day there was no alleviation to our sufferings; no change in the weather, save a sharp fall of snow, against which we were sullenly and blindly staggering on, when a cry of despair escaped from

the blistered lips of Captain Benson.

"The fly and needle of the pocket-compass had given way, and we had no longer a guide!

"Indeed, we knew not where, or in what direction, we might have been proceeding with this faulty index since we left the ship. Long ere the noon of the fourth day we should have turned the inner angle of Clode Sound; but now we saw only masses of slaty rocks on every hand, rising from the snow, with snow on their summits, save towards the west, where the vast and flat expanse of a frozen and snow-covered sheet of water spread in distance far away.

"We thought that it was the sea, but it proved eventually to be the great Unexplored Lake, which is more than fifty miles long, by about twenty miles broad.

"In this awful condition we found ourselves, while our little strength was now failing so fast that we could scarcely carry our hitherto useless muskets; and now another night was closing in.

"Urbain, who was near me, uttered a savage laugh.

"'What are you thinking of?' I asked with surprise.

"'Of what, eh?'

"'Yes.'

"'*Très bien!* very good; I was thinking over which is likely to be the best part of a man.'

"'For what purpose?'

"'*Cordieu!* for eating,' said he, with a fiendish grimace.

"After this the imprecations of Urbain, chiefly against the captain, became loud, deep, and horrible; but luckily for us most of them were uttered in French. Ere long the savage fellow's mood seemed to change; he wept, and to our surprise offered to carry Willy, on one condition, that one of us carried his musket; and then once more, guided now by the direction in which the sun had set, we continued our pilgrimage towards the south.

"Urbain's vast strength seemed to have departed now; he was incapable of keeping up with us, and began to lag more and more behind, so that we had frequently to wait for him, as we were too feeble

to call, and Willy, who feared him greatly, implored us not to leave them.

"On these occasions Urbain's old devilish temper became roused, and he broke forth into oaths, and even threats; so, ultimately, we left him to proceed at his own slow pace as we struggled towards a wood, dragging with us a seaman named Tom Dacres, who had been no longer able to abstain from swallowing snow, by which his mouth was almost immediately swollen, while he became speechless and all but paralysed.

"Yet on and on we toiled, dragging him by turns, our weary limbs sinking deep at every step. When I look back to those sufferings, I frequently think that I must have been partially insane; but it would seem that, like one in a dream, I went through all the formula of life like a sane person.

"On reaching the thicket, it proved to be one of old and half-decayed firs; then we proceeded to suck portions of the bark greedily. After this we became aware, for the first time, of the absence of Urbain Gautier and little Willy.

"They had disappeared in the twilight!"

Here Captain Binnacle interrupted his narrative by expressing a fear that he wearied us; but we begged of him to proceed, as we were anxious to know how those adventures ended by the shore of the Unexplored Lake.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A still small voice spoke unto me,
"Thou art so full of misery,
Were it not better not to be!"

Then to the still small voice I said,
"Let me not cast in endless shade

What is so wonderfully made." TENNYSON.

"Nestling close to a rock, from the side of which the snow formed an arch, we found some moss, which we ate with avidity, and then some sprigs of savine, which generally grows in the clefts of the rocks all over the island and the Labrador coast, yielding the berry from which the spruce beer is made. With tears of thankfulness we devoured them, and were surmising what had become of Urbain, when about nine o'clock by the captain's watch he appeared, but without Scotch Willy, who had, he said, died about an hour ago, and been buried by him among the snow.

"'Where?' asked the captain, in a low voice, for Dacres, and two others of our famine-stricken band, were in a dying condition.

"'Did you observe an old peeled trunk of a tree about a mile distant?'

"'Yes.'

"'*Très bien*—I buried him there,' replied Urbain, whose voice sounded strong and full compared with what it was some hours ago. Captain Benson remarked this, and said—

"'You have hunted and found something to eat?'

"'*Tonnerre de ciel*! Beelzebub—no. I left my gun with you.'

"True; did poor little Willy die easily?" I asked.

"'I wish we may all die so easily,' replied Urbain, with an impatient oath, as he crept close to me for warmth, causing me, I know not why, to shudder.

"I scarcely slept that night, though our snow cell was not destitute of heat; but vague suspicions and solid terrors kept me wakeful. Willy's sudden death appalled me; and something in the bearing and aspect of Urbain filled me with dreadful conjectures, which, in the morning, I communicated only to Bob Jenner.

"At dawn we found Tom Dacres dead, and two others dying; to leave the latter would have been inhuman; the poor fellows were quite collected, shook hands with us all round, shared their tobacco among us equally, and while we all smoked for warmth, the captain repeated the

Lord's Prayer. After which, Jenner and I took our guns and went forth to explore. With tacit but silent consent, we went straight to the old bare skeleton tree. The snow around it was frozen hard, and was pure, spotless, and untrodden, as when it fell some days before; so Urbain had told a falsehood, and little Willy was not buried there. For a little sustenance we now sucked the rags with which we oiled our guns, and looked about us, tracing back our trail of the preceding evening a little way.

"Suddenly we came upon the footmarks of Urbain, which diverged at an acute angle from our several tracks, and those we followed for about three hundred yards, to where a great rock rose abruptly from the snow, which was all disturbed and discoloured about its base—discoloured, and by—blood.

"Bob Jenner and I looked blankly at each other, and cold as our own blood was, it seemed to grow colder still. There, in that awful solitude of vast and snowy prairies, dwarf forests, unexplored lakes, and untrodden land, a terrible tragedy had too surely been acted. He had killed the boy—but why? Removing the snow with the butts of our guns, a white man's hand appeared, an arm, and then we drew forth the dead body of little Willy Ormiston. It had a strange and unnaturally emaciated aspect. A livid bruise was on the right temple, and there was a wound, a singular perforation under the right ear. These were all we could discover at first; but there was much blood upon the snow around, and on the poor boy's tattered clothing. Then a groan escaped us both, when we found that his left sleeve had been ripped up, and that a great piece of the arm was wanting, from the elbow to the shoulder, having been sliced off literally and close to the bone.

"'A strange mutilation!' said I, while my teeth chattered with dismay, and I evaded putting my thoughts in words. 'If wolves——'

"'Wolves never did this,' replied Jenner in a husky voice; 'but a knife has been used.'

"'You mean—you mean——'

"'Look ye, shipmate, at that round wound in the neck.'

"'Well?'

"'After stunning him by a blow, Urbain Gautier has punctured the boy's throat, and sucked his blood, like a weazel or a vampire, or some such thing, and ended actually by cutting a slice from his arm!'

"The whole details of this act of horror seemed but too complete, and gradually we were compelled to accept the fact, the more so when I recalled his strange remark of the preceding evening. We became sick and giddy; the white landscape swam round and round us, and while covering up the remains with snow we fell repeatedly with excess of weakness, and then returned to the little thicket—returned slowly, to find that our band was lessened by three, for in addition to Tom Dacres, two other poor fellows had just breathed their last. Urbain's fierce black eyes questioned us in stern silence as we approached.

"'Did you find the boy?' asked Captain Benson, who had been singeing the hair off a fur cap of Dacres, and cutting it into strips for us to chew, which we did thankfully.

"'Yes, he is dead. Let us think no more of it at present,' said I.

"Black fury gathered in Urbain's sombre visage as we came close to him, and he growled out—'I buried him at the foot of the old tree, shipmate; so, *diable!* say what you like, or that which is safer, think what you like.'

"I was too weak to resent this, or to confront him, and so turned away. The captain divided some of the dead men's clothes among us, but these Urbain declined to share, or in the strips of scorched fur, for his strength seemed to have been completely renovated during the night; and after covering our poor companions with snow, we again set forth wearily towards the south-east, and, weak though, we were, we cast many a backward glance to the thicket where our three dead shipmates lay side by side. About noon a covey of white winter grouse were near us; we all fired at once. Whether it was that we were bad shots, that our hands were weak, that our eyes miscalculated the distance, or our aim wavered, I know not, but every bird escaped, and with moans of despair we reloaded. Then, to add to our troubles, it was found that only three of

us, to wit, the captain, Urbain, and myself, had dry powder left. On and on yet to the south-east, through the blinding and trackless waste of snow!

"In a place where a grey scalp of rock was almost bare of drifted snow we found the skeleton of a cariboo deer. It was pure white, and coated with crystal frost. Wolfishly we eyed it, as if we would have sucked the dry bones that several winters, perhaps, had bleached, for not a vestige even of skin remained on them. Those whose ammunition failed them, now cast away their guns and powder-horns as useless incumbrances. We were all reduced to shadows, and two had to support their bending forms on walking-sticks. Even our jolly captain was becoming quite feeble, and the despondency of settled despair was creeping over us all.

"Urbain alone seemed hale, and stepped steadily, when others fell ever and anon in utter weakness. There were times when I surveyed his vast bulk, which loomed greater to my diseased eyesight, and I thought we had the foul fiend himself journeying with us in the form of a man.

"What if all should perish—all but he and me? On we toiled towards another thicket, where we proposed to search for roots or moss, on which to make a meal, and to light a fire, for evening was approaching; and now it was that Urbain seated himself on a piece of rock, swearing that he would proceed no farther then, but would rejoin us in the thicket. Captain Benson was too weak, or cared too little about him, to remonstrate, so we passed on in silence to our halting place, where, most providentially, we found some juniper bushes, which the snow had preserved, and some soft fir bark, which we devoured greedily. Refreshed by this, we lighted a fire by means of some gunpowder and a percussion cap, and heaped the branches on it. A bird or two twittered past; I fired mechanically—almost without aim—and was lucky enough to knock over a large-sized pigeon-eagle, which was speedily divided and devoured, half broiled, ere we thought that the feathers only had been left for Urbain, of whose guilt Bob and I had informed our shipmates,

that all might be on their guard, and our narrative added to their sufferings, for now we all feared to sleep, and had to cast lots for a watcher.

"About dawn he returned, and when we all set forth again, though we had been renovated by the heat of our fire and by the savage meal we had made, he seemed, as usual, the freshest among us, and on this day we observed, in whispers to each other, that he wore round his neck a red-spotted handkerchief which we had left tied over the face of Tom Dacres!

"He must have gone back to the thicket where the three dead men lay, but for what purpose?

"About noon on this day we found ourselves on the summit of a mountainous ridge of bare rock; it was without snow, which, however, lay drifted deep around. It commanded an extensive view so far as from the borders of the great Unexplored Lake on our right, to the head of Smith's Sound on our left.

"There was no sign of a human habitation to be seen, and our eyes swept in vain the horizon, where the white snow and blue sky met, for a smoke-wreath indicating where a squatter's cabin stood.

"'Malediction!' said Urbain, hoarsely, 'if this continues I shall have something to eat, *bon gré malgré!*—if it should be the flesh of a man. You seem shocked mate,' said he to me, as I shrank back.

"'I am shocked,' said, I, quietly.

"'Well—*diable!* don't be so,' he replied, mockingly, 'because it is wonderful truly what you may bring your mind to, if you put your courage to the test, and place yourself *en visage* with your fate like a man.'

"'Or a devil—eh, Urbain Gautier?' said Captain Benson; 'but no more of this, or——'

"'Don't threaten me, *mon petit capitaine*—my nice little man,' interrupted the giant, with a horrible grimace, 'or——' and pausing, he laid his hand significantly on his knife.

"Urbain now became surly, insolent, and ferocious; but knowing his singular strength, which failed less than ours, and knowing the secret, the loathsome and terrible means by which he maintained it—aware also that he had plenty of ammunition—we dissembled alike our fears, our suspicions, and our abhorrence of him.

"After we had toiled on for two hours in silence, he suddenly stopped us all by an oath.

"'*Nombril de Belzebub!*' he exclaimed to Captain Benson, 'what is the use of looking for food or game in these infernal wastes, into which your stupidity has led us? Let us cast lots, and find out who shall be shot for the food of the rest!'

"'Silence, wretch,' said Captain Benson.

"'To that it will come at last,' said Urbain, grinning.

"'Perhaps it has come to it already,' said Bob Jenner, unwisely.

"'Ah, *sacré*! You think I murdered that boy, do you? And you think so, too?' he added to me.

"'I have not said so,' I replied, evasively.

"'You had better not, or by ——, if you thought me capable of committing such an act, or if you said it——' and so on he rambled incoherently, threatening and bullying; but all the while most surely confirming our just suspicions.

"'Let us cut him adrift; leave him behind; if we can do so, to-night,' whispered Jenner to me.

"Low though the whisper was, it caught the huge ears of Urbain, even while muffled by the lappets of a sealskin cap.

"'Leave me behind, will you? Well, you may do so; but, diable! I shall not be left without food.'

"About an hour after this we met with a terrible but significant catastrophe. While we were all proceeding in Indian file behind the captain, Urbain stumbled on a piece of slippery ice; he fell, and in doing so, his musket exploded, lodging its contents right in the back of the head of my poor messmate, Bob Jenner, who fell back, and expired without a groan.

"We were appalled by the suddenness of this calamity; all, save Urbain, who rubbed his knees, muttered an oath, and reloaded with all the rapidity of alarm; while each of us read in his neighbour's face the conviction that there was more of design than accident in what had taken place, though it had all the appearance of a casualty.

"Dissembling still, and having but little time for grief, we covered poor Bob's remains with snow, and resumed our melancholy march.

"We were but six now, and five of those were famished scarecrows.

"A mile farther on, we found the ruins of a deserted log hut, which we hailed with extravagant joy, as our first approach to civilization, and the abode of human beings. There we resolved to pass the night, which was approaching, and there we kindled a fire, and with blocks of snow filled up the doorway, while the smoke escaped by an aperture in the roof.

"Oh, how genial was the warmth we felt; and though we had only a few fragments of moist bark to chew, we would have felt almost happy, but for the recent catastrophe, and for our dread of Urbain Gautier, who as soon as twilight fell said he would go in search of a shot, and taking his gun went away.

"We breathed more freely when he left us; but we shuddered with intense loathing when we knew that he was returning to the place where our dead companion—too surely murdered by his hand—lay uncoffined in the snow.

"We felt that we were no longer safe with him, and all were conscious that he should die, as a judicial retribution.

"Lots were cast for the dangerous office of executioner, and the fate fell on me.

"Instead of alarm or compunction, I felt as one who had a terrible duty to perform. I became conscious that justice to the dead and to the living, if not my own personal safety, demanded the fulfilment of the terrible task which had become mine, and with the most perfect coolness and deliberation I overhauled my gun, examined the charge, carefully capped it anew, and sleeplessly awaited him I was to destroy—this wretch—this ghoul or vampire, on his return from his horrid repast amid

the snow—a repast which his own treachery and cruelty had provided; and as I waited thus the face of poor Willy Ormiston, and the cheery voice of poor Bob Jenner, as I had often heard it, when he sang at the wheel, or when sharing the night-watch, came powerfully and distinctly to memory.

"I threw more dry branches on the fire, and bidding my shipmates sleep, addressed myself to the task of watching, and half dozing, with my weapon beside me.

"I felt sure that Urbain hated me; that he knew I suspected him, and would too probably be his next victim, especially if my shot missed him, as he might then legally slay me, and would do so by a single blow.

"Already I felt my flesh creep at the idea of its furnishing a collop for him, perhaps to-morrow night, when he stole back from the next halting place.

"I shall never forget the weary moments of that exciting night. I have somewhere read that 'it is one of the strange instincts of half slumber to be often more alive to the influence of subdued and stealthy sounds than of louder noises. The slightest whisperings, the low murmurings of a human voice, the creaking of a chair, the cautious drawing back of a curtain, will jar upon and rouse the faculties that have been insensible to the rushing flow of a cataract, or the dull booming of the sea.'

"I must have been asleep, however, when a sound startled me, and I could hear footsteps treading softly over the crisp and frozen snow. Rousing myself, I started to the aperture which passed for a doorway, and which, as I have stated, we had partially blocked up by snow; and through it, about fifty paces distant, I saw the tall dark form of Urbain towering between me and the ghastly white waste beyond. He loomed like a giant in the bright but waning moon, that was sinking behind the hills that are as yet unnamed, while a blood-red streak to the westward showed where the morning was about to break.

"My heart beat fast, every pulse was quickened, and every fibre tingled, as I raised the musket to my shoulder, took a deliberate aim, and, when he was within twenty paces of me, fired, and shot him dead!

"The bullet entered his mouth, and passed out of the base of the skull behind, injuring the brain in its passage, and destroying him instantly.

"So Captain Benson told me, for I never looked on his face again, though I have often seen it since in my dreams.

"About two hours after this summary act of justice we were found and relieved by a travelling party of Indians, Micmacs, who come from the continent of America at times, and domicile themselves chiefly along the western shore of the island, to hunt the beaver by the banks of the Serpentine Lake.

"They conveyed us through the fur country of the Buenoventura people to the miserable little settlement of that name, where we remained till the ice broke up, when we were taken to St. John's in a seal-fisher.

"There our perils and suffering ended. We had shipped on board different crafts for different countries, and the next year saw me appointed captain of this clipper-ship, the *Pride of the Ocean*."[*]

[*] A character not unlike Urbain Gautier figures in the account of the first or second expedition of Sir John Franklin.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Pass we the long, unvarying course, the track
Oft trod, that never leaves a trace behind;
Pass we the calm, the gale, the change, the tack,
And each well-known caprice of wave and wind,
Cooped in their winged sea-girt citadel;
The foul, the fair, the contrary, the kind,
As breezes rise and fall, and billows swell,

Till on some jocund morn—lo, land! and all is well.
BYRON.

Pleasantly we traversed the almost tideless waters of the Mediterranean, the great inland sea of Europe.

We generally had a fair wind; but in our tacks southward and northward more than once we sighted the shores of Europe on one side, and those of Africa on the other.

The routine of transport life varied but little, so every passing sail became an object of speculation and interest. Day by day, and frequently night after night, we walked with the same person on the same side of the quarter-deck, turning short round at the taffrail aft, and at the break forward, to resume the same pace, without making a remark, for all our mutual ideas had been interchanged over and over again, and no tie remained, save that of being comrades, weary and worn alike, though each had his own thoughts, the mental orbit in which his soul revolved, and these were, perhaps, three thousand leagues astern.

Every probable and possible phase of the war we had dissected and discussed, and the future excitement that was to come we contrasted impatiently with the quiet, inglorious monotony of the present, while the swift clipper cleft the classic waters of the Mediterranean.

The monotony on board was once varied by a trivial practical joke played by M'Goldrick, the paymaster, on the colonel and some of the English officers, who had been deriding Scottish cookery. He produced at dinner a valuable preserve, which he had previously had carefully soldered up in a tin case, by the armourer's aid, and which he had compounded with the joint assistance of the ship's cook and my man, Pitblado.

It was duly boiled, and produced at table in its tin case as a scarce and rare Parisian decoction—*Farina d'avoine au fromage*, or some such name; and after being partaken of by Beverley, Studhome, and the rest,

was pronounced excellent, though it proved, after all, to be only a very ill-made Scotch haggis.

In the Mediterranean we were frequently impressed by the extreme blueness of the water. It seemed to have a purer and deeper tint than we had ever seen it wear even in higher latitudes, especially when the weather was fine, and light scattered clouds were floating through the sky.

About a fortnight after passing "old Gib," the outline of Malta and its sister isle, the abode of Calypso, rose from the morning sea on our lee bow; and during the whole of a lovely day our eyes were strained in that direction, watching that rocky shore of so many great and glorious memories—the last stronghold of Christian chivalry—the link between Britain and her Indian empire—our "halfway house" to the Bosphorus—with all its cannon bristling as the mistress of the Mediterranean and Levant.

As we drew nearer, our field-glasses enabled us to trace the rocky outline of the greater isle—the hilly range of which is only about a hundred feet higher than the dome of St. Paul's—and the steep, rugged coast to the north-east, beyond which lie the *casals*, or villages of the lank, yellow-visaged, black-bearded, and malicious-looking Maltese, concerning whom I do not mean to afflict my reader with either a description or a dissertation.

The evening gun flashed redly from the Castle of St. Elmo, and the harbour lights of Valetta were sparkling brightly amid the golden evening haze, as we ran into the harbour, round which a thousand or more pieces of cannon were bristling on battery and platform, and on coming to anchor found that we were only a pistol-shot astern of the *Ganges*, which had on board Wilford's troop of ours, and which had come in two days before us.

We were only to wait the refilling of our tank with fresh water, of which, being a horse transport, we required an unusual quantity; and now our poor nags were neighing in concert in the hold, for, as Captain Binnacle termed it, "they smelt the land."

No officer or soldier was permitted to go on shore, unless on duty, for already Malta was crowded with troops, so much so that the 93rd Highlanders were actually bivouacking in a burying-ground. But these orders did not prevent us from visiting our comrades in the *Ganges*; so Binnacle sent off his gig, with the colonel, Studhome, Sir Harry Scarlett, and me.

We found that all were well on board, and had suffered no casualties, save the loss of four horses by disease. Unlike us, however, they had been favoured by that remarkable illumination known in those waters as St. Elmo's light, which had shone on their main-topgallant mast for a space of three feet below the truck in the night, when they were off the volcanic isle of Pantalaria.

My old friend Fred Wilford received us with warmth and welcome. Thus far our voyages had been equally unmarked by danger or adventure.

In the cabin we found Berkeley, reading one of the London morning papers, which was only a week or so old. It had come by the steam packet from Marseilles. He addressed a few remarks, in his usual languid way, to the colonel and to Scarlett, made a pencil-mark on his paper, as if half casually, and tossing it on the cabin table, retired, with his strange smile and lounging gait, on deck.

Under other circumstances I should most probably have been awaiting him at the hotel of M. Dessin, at Calais, for the purpose of giving him a morning airing on the beach, with the chance of myself being carried back on a shutter, perhaps, to that famous room, in which, as all the travelling world know, Lawrence Sterne and Walter Scott have slept. But fate or duty had arranged it otherwise; so here we were, quietly smoking cheroots in the harbour of Valetta. But his voice and presence recalled all the baseness of his conduct at the Reculvers, and the bitterness of the time when he involved me in disgrace with Louisa Loftus—a double piece of treachery for which I had yet to demand satisfaction.

Curious to see the paragraph which had such interest for him, I took up his paper, and my eye fell at once upon the following paragraph:—

"THE NEW PEERAGE.—Our readers will be glad to perceive that, by last night's *London Gazette*, a right honourable lord, long known in the world of fashion, and latterly in political circles, has been raised to a marquisate, by the title of Marquis of Slubber de Gullion and Viscount Gabey of Slubberleigh. Rumour adds that, lest the newly-won honours perish, the noble marquis is about to lead to the altar the only daughter and heiress of one of the greatest of our English families—the fair maid of Kent."

I knew well that the closing words could only refer to Louisa Loftus. I had seen her but a few days before this piece of impertinent twaddle had been penned, and the memory of our parting hour, and the expression of her eyes, came vividly before me; but we were far separated now, and it is difficult to describe how deeply the tenor of that paragraph stung me.

The drums were beating in barrack and citadel, and the trumpets were sounding tattoo in the transports, as we were rowed back to our vessel. Studhome and the colonel were chatting gaily, and Scarlett was humming a waltz, as he pulled the stroke-oar and thought of past days at Oxford.

I alone was silent and sad.

From violet and purple, the tints of the later evening—the gloaming, as we call it in Scotland—passed into blue and amber, and the lights of Valetta rose over each other, glittering in tiers along the slope on which the city is built, with all its "streets of stairs," which Byron anathematized.

The band of an infantry regiment was playing in Citta Nuova, and softly the strains of the music came across the rippling water, over which the blue and amber tints were swiftly spreading, while in its depths the stars were shining, and all the shipping were reflected downwards.

Lights glittered gaily all round the harbour; the ramparts of St. Elmo and of Ricazoli, with the mass of the cathedral, where the knights of the Seven Nations sleep in their marble tombs, and where hung of old

the silver keys of Acre, Rhodes, and Jerusalem, stood in bold outline against the ruddy, but deepening, twilight sky.

The scene was lovely and stirring withal; but my heart and thoughts were far away from Malta, as we were rowed back between crowded transports, and huge, silent frigates and line-of battle ships, to the *Pride of the Ocean*.

My good friend, Jack Studhome, who knew the cause of my too apparent depression, made light of the matter, and endeavoured, in his own fashion, to soothe and console me while we took a whiff together on deck, before turning in for the night.

"Consider, Norcliff," said he; "Lady Louisa Loftus, sole heiress of Chillingham Park!"

"Ay, there's the rub, Jack—sole heiress. I would rather that she had not a shilling in the world."

"Indeed! Why?"

"Our chances were more equal then."

"Hear me out. Sole heiress of Lord Chillingham—all save his titles! What should, what could, tempt her—already too, in the face of her engagement with you—to throw herself away on old Slubber, who might be her grandfather? Where would be her gain?"

"The title of marchioness, with vast estates," said I bitterly. "In my case, my dear fellow, she would only be Lady Louisa Loftus, wife of a very poor captain of lancers."

"But those newspaper rumours are frequently such impertinent falsehoods. Remember that, if their authors get their columns filled, they care little with what it may be, for a newspaper must contain daily the same amount of words, whether it give news or not. So with messieurs the editors, it is anything for the nonce. Their best productions are in the press to-day, and too often, perhaps, we don't know where to-morrow; so put not your trust in this, Norcliff. And now to bed. We have stable duty at seven, A.M., to-morrow," concluded Studhome.

Next morning, Captain Binnacle, who had been on shore at Valetta, brought off with him the mail, which came from London *viâ* Marseilles, and by it I received a welcome letter from Sir Nigel.

It was long and hurried; but was filled chiefly with hunting intelligence. Had Cora written—and why did she not?—I might have had more interesting tidings.

He had bought a couple of hunters from Lord Chillingham but feared they wouldn't do in such a stone-wall county as Fife; and he had secured a new huntsman—such a tip-top fellow! He had hunted all the counties on the Welsh border—could tell the pedigree of a hound at a glance—was perfect in his work, and rode under ten stone. Sir Hubert himself was but a sham when compared to him, and he was sure to figure some day in the columns of *Bell's Life*.

I had full permission to draw for whatever I required; but I scanned the letter in vain for the name of Louisa. Slubber's was spoken of only twice. Indeed, my hearty old uncle viewed that noble peer of the realm with no small contempt.

"I am still at Chillingham Park, with our kind friends; but I must be home in Scotland for the Lanarkshire steeple-chase on Beltane day. There will be some queer jockeyship in the mounts, I fear. Four miles distance will be the run, including thirteen stone walls, four rough burns, two water leaps, and six-and-twenty most infernal fences. I know the course well—by Gryffwraes and Waterlee. (All this stuff, thought I, and not one word of Louisa!) Old Slubber is to be made a marquis, it seems, so the countess talks nothing but 'peerage'—Douglas and Debrett, Lodge, and Sir Bernard Burke. It is all noble 'shop,' and we poor commoners have not the shadow of a chance!

"Slubber is an old humbug; I am as old as he is, perhaps; but I don't wear my hat in the nape of my neck, or use goloshes and an umbrella—never had one in all my life. I don't mount my horse with the aid of a groom, and ride him as if I was afraid he'd take it into his head to run up a tree. I don't take dinner pills and Seltzer water on the sly from the butler; and my stomach, thank God, is not like his—a more delicate piece of machinery than Cora's French watch; for I can take a jolly curler's dinner of salt beef and greens, and can rush my horse at a six-foot wall neck and neck with the lightest lad in your troop.

"So why he's made a marquis, the devil, and that Scoto-Russian, Lord Aberdeen, on whose policy he always gobbles like a turkey-cock, only know."

Sir Nigel's ridicule of Slubber consoled me a little for his omitting the dear name of Louisa. I knew that it was my regard for her that inspired his chief dislike for the lord. But why was the good-hearted baronet so vituperative? Was the senile peer really likely to become a successful lover? Save by the side of his mistress, a lover is never content.

CHAPTER XXIX.

We pass the scattered isles of Cyclades,
That, scarce distinguished seemed to stud the seas.
The shouts of sailors double near the shores,
They stretch their canvas, and they ply their oars.
Full on the promised land at length we bore,
With joy descending on the Cretan shore.
DRYDEN.—*Translation of Æn.* iii.

We were favoured by Æolus. One might have supposed that Captain Robert Binnacle had succeeded to the bag of wind which that airy monarch gave to the wise and gentle king of Ithaca. Thus a few days more saw our transport amid the Isles of Greece as she bore through the Archipelago.

One day it was Milo, with Elijah's lofty peak, its smoky spring, and hollow, sea-soaked rocks, that rose upon our lee; the next it was Siphanto's marble shore, where ireful Apollo flooded the golden mines; rugged Chios—in pagan times the land of purity, in later days the land of

slaughter; then Mytilene, the most fertile of all the Ægean Isles, where "burning Sappho loved and sung," and where Terpander strung the lyre anew. Now it was Lemnos, where Vulcan fell from heaven, and where his forges blazed; and the next tack brought us to Tenedos, whose name has never changed since Priam reigned in Troy—all names that recalled alike our schoolboy labours, and the departed glories of the Grecian name.

Off Tenedos the *Himalaya* steamed past us, with two thousand two hundred souls in her capacious womb. Soon after we entered the Hellespont, between the famous castles of the Dardanelles, where Sestos and Abydos stood of old, and the cannon of Kelidbahar (the lock of the sea) on the European side saluted us, while the Turkish sentinels yelled and brandished their muskets; and amid the haze of a summer evening we saw the harbour lights of Gallipoli rise twinkling from the waters of the strait; and when the anchor was let go, the courses were hauled up, and the transport swung at her moorings, we knew that we were hard by the shores of Thrace.

"And where the blazes is this same Seblastherpoll?" asked Lanty O'Regan, my Irish groom, who was taking a survey of the waters where Leander took his nightly bath.

"That place we sha'n't see, Lanty, for many a long and weary day," said his Scotch companion, Pitblado, with more foresight than some of us then possessed.

Few of us slept that night, and all were busy with preparations for landing; for, with all its varieties, we were weary of the voyage, the confinement of the transport, impatient for shore and for action. So vague were the ideas our soldiers had of distance and locality, that most of them expected to find themselves face to face with the Russians at once.

Beverley and Studhome prepared their "disembarkation returns" for the information of the adjutant-general; and these were so elaborate that one might have supposed the worthy man's peace of mind depended entirely on their literary productions. The whole troop had their traps packed, and were ready to start with the first boat, when the order came to land; and almost with dawn next morning an aide-de-camp, sent by

Lieutenant-General the Earl of Lucan, commanding the cavalry division, arrived with orders for our immediate disembarkation, as we were to be posted in the Light Brigade, which already consisted of the 8th and 11th Hussars, and the 4th and 13th Light Dragoons.

The news spread through the ship like wildfire, and the cheer which rose above and below almost drowned the welcome notes of the warning trumpet, as it blew "boot and saddle"—a sound we had not heard since the day we marched from Maidstone.

"Gentlemen, welcome to Gallipoli!" said the staff officer, as he clattered into the cabin, with his steel scabbard and spurs, and proceeded forthwith to regale himself with a long glass of Seltzer, dashed with brandy, for the morning breeze was chilly as it swept across the Hellespont.

"It's a queer-looking place, this Gallipoli," said Beverley.

"And a queer-looking place you'll find it, colonel," added the aide-de-camp, as we gathered round him. "You will be more given to airing your clothes than your classics, and won't be much enchanted with your quarters in Roumania. In lack of space and cleanliness, and in the liberal allowance of gnats and fleas, they are all up to Turkish regulation."

"Any society here?" asked Jocelyn, with his little affected lisp, as he caressed his incipient moustache.

The aide burst into a hearty fit of laughter, and then replied—

"Plenty, and of the most varied and original character."

"And how about the ladies?"

"Is it true that the Turks still regulate their establishments of womenkind according to the Koran?" asked the paymaster, with a grin on his long, thin Scotch face.

"Upon the system of the 4th Veteran Battalion rather," replied the aide-de-camp.

"Ah, and that——"

"Gave a wife to every private, and three to the adjutant."

"Good Lord deliver us!" exclaimed Studhome, as he doubled his dose of cognac and Seltzer.

"Is it a good country for hunting hereabouts?" asked Sir Harry Scarlett.

"Can't say much for that," replied our visitor, shrugging his shoulders. "Besides, the Earl of Lucan will probably cut out other work for you than riding across country; but for sportsmen there are plenty of hares, partridges, and wild duck to keep one's hand in till we see the Russians, which I hope will not be long, for we are already all bored and sick to death of Gallipoli."

"How long have you been here?" asked Beverley.

"A month, colonel. Another troop has just been signalled off the mouth of the Dardanelles."

"The *Ganges*, with more of ours, perhaps.

"Likely enough; but they come in here every hour."

"Any word yet of moving to the front—of taking the field?" asked Beverley.

"No, nothing seems decided on yet. There are a thousand idle rumours; but we are all in the dark as to the future—French and British alike."

"A deuced bore!" exclaimed two or three together.

"Ah, you'll find it when you have been a month or so under canvas at Gallipoli. And now, Colonel Beverley, I need not suggest to so experienced a cavalry officer how the horses are to be got on shore, but for the time shall take my leave. Some of the cavalry divisional staff have established a kind of clubhouse in a deserted khan, opposite the old palace of the Bashaw, or Capudan Pacha, where we shall be glad to see you, till we can make other arrangements; and so adieu. Should you look us up, ask for Captain Bolton, of the 1st Dragoon Guards."

In another minute the officer—a purpose-like fellow, in a well-worn blue surtout, his steel scabbard and spurs already rusted—was down the ship's side, and being rowed ashore by eight marines in a man-of-war boat.

We experienced some difficulties in getting our horses slung up and landed, as, to plunge them into the sea, after being so long in the close and confined atmosphere of the hold, was not advisable; and after they

were all disembarked (with the assistance of some merry and singing Zouaves of the 2nd Regiment, while a horde of lazy Turks of the Hadjee Mehmet's corps looked idly on), we had to give them a cooling regimen and gentle exercise, as the best means of restoring them to their wonted vigour, and preparing them for the strife and service that were to come. The vessel that was reported as being in sight, proved really to be the *Ganges*. We were at last on foreign soil, and Studhome, by a word and a glance, reminded me that he had not forgotten what was to take place between me and Berkeley; but immediately after landing, that personage was reported on the doctor's list, so we had to let the matter lie over for a time. Troop after troop of ours arrived; and gradually Colonel Beverley had again the whole regiment under his kindly and skilful command.

Studhome and I, who had frequently chummed together, when in India, had the good luck to be quartered in the quiet and snug house of Demetrius Steriopoli, the well-known and industrious miller, at a short distance from the town. Eighteen thousand British troops were now in Gallipoli, which, from being a quiet little den of Oriental dirt and Oriental indolence, Moslem filth and fatuity, became instinct with European life and bustle, by the presence of the soldiers of the allied armies. Those who landed with no other ideas of the Orient than such as were inspired by the "Arabian Nights," and Byron's poetry, were somewhat disappointed on beholding the dingy rows of queer and quaint wooden, rickety and dilapidated booths which composed the streets of this ancient Greek episcopal city of Gallipoli.

Narrow, dirty, and tortuous, they were scattered without order on the slope of a round stony hill; the thoroughfares were made of large round pebbles, from which the foot slipped ever and anon into the mud, or those stagnant pools whence the hordes of lean and houseless dogs—houseless, because declared unclean by the Prophet—slaked their thirst in the sunshine. Over these brown, discoloured hovels rose the tall white minarets of a few crumbling mosques, with cone-shaped roofs and open galleries, where the muezzin's shrill voice summons the faithful to prayer. A leaden-covered dome of the great bazaar, and the old square fortress of Badjazet I., with a number of windmills on every available

eminence, were the most prominent features of the view, which could never have been enchanting, even in its most palmy days—even when the vaults of Justinian were teeming with wine and oil; for the Emperor John Palæologus consoled himself for the capture of Gallipoli by the Turks with saying, "I have only lost a jar of wine and a nasty sty for hogs."

But now its muddy streets of hovels were swarming with redcoats: the Scottish bagpipe, the long Zouave trumpet, and the British bugle-horn, rang there for parade and drill at every hour—even those when the followers of the Prophet bent their swarthy foreheads on the mosaic pavement of their mosques; and daily we, the light troops of the cavalry division, were exercised by squadrons, regiments, and brigades, near those green and grassy tumuli which lie on the southern side of the city, and cover the remains of the ancient kings of Thrace. Now the waters of the Hellespont were literally alive with war vessels and transports, belonging to all the allied powers. They were of every size, under sail or steam; and amid them, with white pinions outspread, the swift Greek polaccas sped up or down the strait, which always presented a lively and stirring scene, with the hills of Asia Minor, toned down by distance, seeming faint and blue, and far away. Parade over, it often amused me to watch the varied groups which gathered about the doors of the bazaar, the wine and coffee-houses. There were the grave Armenian of Turcomania, with his black fur cap, and long, flowing robe; the black-eyed Greek, in scarlet tarboosh and ample blue breeches; the dirty, hawk-visaged Jew, attired like a stage Shylock, waiting for his pound of flesh; the kilted Highlander, in the "garb of old Gaul;" the smart Irish rifleman; the well-fed English guardsman, *blasé*, sleek, and fresh from London; the half savage-like Zouave, in his short bluejacket and scarlet knickerbockers; the bronzed Chasseur d'Afrique; the rollicking British man-o'-war's man, in his guernsey shirt and wide blue collar; the half-naked Nubian slave; the pretty French vivandière, in her short skirt and clocked stockings, looking like Jenny Lind in "The Daughter of the Regiment," only twice as piquante and saucy; even a Sister of Charity, sombre, pale, and placid, would appear at times, crossing herself as she

passed a howling dervish, when seeking milk or wine for the sick; and amid all these varied costumes and nationalities were to be seen such heedless fellows as young Rakeleigh, Jocelyn, Scarlett, Wilford, and Berkeley, of ours, in wideawake hats, all-round collars, with Tweed shooting suits and flyaway whiskers, hands in pockets, and cheroot in mouth, as they quizzed and "chaffed" the great solemn Turk of the old school, with his vast green turban and silver beard, which steel had never profaned, or drank pale ale with his son of the new school, in the military fez and frogged surtout, with varnished boots and shaven chin, who, in his double capacity of a true believer and a mulazim (or subaltern of Hadjee Mehmet's regiment), deemed himself at full liberty to use his whip without mercy among the camel-drivers and lazy galiondjis (or boatmen), eliciting shrieks, yells, and curses, which Berkeley, in his languid drawl, considered to be "aw—doocid good fun."

Many of those smart youths of ours, and other fast Oxford men, had their constitutional and national conceit somewhat taken out of them before the war was ended.

"There is nothing more disgusting," says a distinguished writer, with pardonable severity, "or more intolerable, than a young Englishman sallying forth into the world, full of his own ignorance and John-Bullism, judging of mankind by his own petty, provincial, and narrow notions of fitness and propriety—a mighty observer of effects and disregarder of causes, and traversing continent and ocean, at once blinded and shackled by the bigotry and prejudices of a limited and imbecile intellect."

Much of this was the secret spring of our Indian mutiny, and is the cause that we are hated and shunned on the Continent. There are, of course, exceptions, for in the East I have seen local prejudices so far respected that we formed an escort when the British colours of the Sepoy infantry were marched into the *Ganges*, to consecrate them in the eyes of the Bengalese—the same pampered ruffians who slaughtered our women and children at Cawnpore and Delhi.

We looked in vain for pretty women, and the reader may be assured that some of our researches were of the most elaborate description. Not a trace of the boasted Grecian beauty was to be found in those oddly-dressed females, whose costume seemed a mere oval bale of clothing (the feridjee), surmounted by a white linen veil, and ending in boots of yellow leather, as they flitted like fat ghosts about the public wells, or the gates of the great bazaar. All were, indeed, plain even to ugliness, save in one instance—pretty little Magdhalini, the daughter of the miller, Steriopoli. I remember a charming vivandière, who belonged to the 2nd Zouaves, for I saw her frequently under circumstances that could never be forgotten—in fact, under fire, at the head of the regiment. She was a smart little Parisienne, possessed of great beauty, with eyes that sparkled like the diamonds in her ears. She wore a pretty blue Zouave jacket, braided with red, over a pretty chemisette, and had her black hair smoothly braided under a scarlet kepi, which bore the regimental number. The first time I saw Sophie she was simply maintaining a flirtation with one of the corps, to whom she gave a mouthful of brandy from her barrel, as he stood on sentry under my window, and their banter rather interfered with the composition of a letter which I was writing to my cousin Cora.

"Ah, Mademoiselle Sophie," said the Zouave, in his most dulcet tone, "you—*mon Dieu*—you look so lovely that——"

"That what—what—Jules?"

"Well, so lovely this morning that I am quite afraid——"

"To kiss me—is it not so, Monsieur Jolicoeur?"

"Yes."

"*Très bien*. Take courage, *mon camarade*."

"Mademoiselle Sophie, you quiz me!"

"A Zouave, and afraid," exclaimed the vivandière; and then followed a little sound there was no mistaking.

"You are indeed beautiful, Sophie. There is not a vivandière in the whole French army like you."

"Yet I may die an old maid," said she demurely.

"May?"

"Yes, Jules."

"Then it will be your own fault, *ma belle coquette*, and not the fault of others."

"*Parbleu*! I sha'n't marry a Zouave, at all events."

"Don't speak so cruelly, Sophie. When I look on your charming face, I always think of glorious Paris. Paris! Ah, *mon Dieu!* shall we ever see it again?"

"Why did you leave it, Jules, and your studies at the Ecole de Médecin, to fight and starve here?"

"Why?" exclaimed the student.

"Yes, *mon ami*."

"The old girl at the wheel, Madame Fortune, proved false to me. I lost my last money, fifty Napoleons, at the rouge-et-noir table in the Palais Royal. I was ruined, Sophie; and as I had no wish to jump into the Seine, and then to figure next morning on the leaden tables of the Morgue, like a salmon at the fishmonger's, I joined the 2nd Zouaves in the snapping of a flint, and so—am here."

"You will return with your epaulettes and the cross, Jules."

"I don't think so. Kiss me, at all events, *ma belle*."

"Well, camarade, if it will console you——"

Here I tried to close the window, on which Jules "carried arms," and looked very unconscious; while the pretty vivandière gave me a military salute, and tripped laughingly away, singing—

> Vivandière du régiment,
> C'est Catin qu'on me nomme, &c.

Daily more troops arrived from Britain and France; daily the camps extended in size, and, notwithstanding the season, we suffered much from cold, while, so bad were the commissariat arrangements, that, in some instances, officers and soldiers were alike without beds or bedding, few having more than a single blanket; so, for warmth, they reversed the usual order, by dressing in all their spare clothes to go to bed.

Gallipoli became so crowded at last that some of the troops were despatched towards Constantinople and Scutari. There the Highland regiments, beyond all others, excited astonishment and admiration, not unmixed with fear, their costume seemed so remarkable to Oriental eyes; and many may yet remember the anecdote current in camp concerning them.

An old Turkish pasha, who had brought the ladies of his harem in a *caïque*, closely veiled in their *yashmacs*, to see our troops land, was intensely horrified by the bare brawny legs of the 93rd foot; but after surveying them, he said, with a sigh, to an English officer—"Ah! if the Sultan had such fine soldiers as these, we should not need your aid against the Russians."

"Well, *effendi*," observed the Englishman, who was quizzing, "would it not be advisable to propagate the species in this country?"

"*Inshallah!* (please God!) it will be done, whether we advise it or not," said the old Turk, sighing again, as he ordered his boatload of *Odalisques* to shove off for Istamboul with all despatch.

Amid the novelty of our new life at Gallipoli, a week or two passed rapidly away, ere rumours were heard of our probable advance to Varna; but, as I do not mean to repeat the well-known details of so recent a war, rather confining myself to my own adventures, and those of my regiment, I shall close this chapter by relating an episode which will serve to illustrate the brutal and lawless character of the Turk, and the slavery to which ages of conquest and degradation have reduced the wretched Greek. I have said that Jack Studhome and I were quartered in the house of a Greek miller, named Demetrius Steriopoli. His chief worldly possessions were a melon-garden, and two ricketty old windmills, which whirled their brown and tattered sails on the breezes that came from the Hellespont. In the basement of these edifices, and in the walls of his dwelling-house, were—and I have no doubt still are—built many exquisitely-carved fragments of some old Grecian temple; for there triglyphs, sculptured metopæ, the honeysuckle, and so forth, with portions of statues, all of white marble, were used pell mell among the rough rubble masonry.

These edifices—to wit, the house and mills—stood on an eminence a little way beyond the ruins of the old wall of Gallipoli, on the side of the road that leads across the isthmus towards the Gulf of Saros.

His dwelling was picturesque, and that which is better, it was clean and airy; thus, while Beverley and others of ours were nightly devoured by gnats and other entomological torments, we slept each in a separate kiosk, or bedroom, as comfortably as if quartered in the best hotel of Dover or Southampton—so much for the housewifery of the little Magdhalini. Steriopoli was by birth a Cypriote Greek—a handsome and fine-looking man, about eight-and-thirty, and when armed with sabre, pistol, and yataghan, had rather more the aspect of a marauder than a peaceful miller, especially as his attire usually consisted of a scarlet fez, a large loose jacket of green cloth, a silk sash round his waist, a capacious pair of blue breeches, his legs being further encased in sheepskin hose, and his feet in sandals of hide. When the merciless Turkish troops massacred twenty-five thousand persons in Cyprus, destroying seventy-four once happy and industrious villages, with all their monasteries and churches, seizing the young women as slaves, and casting the male children into the sea, it was his fate, when disposed of in the latter fashion, to be picked up by the boat's crew of a British man-of-war. Torn from the arms of his shrieking mother, he had been tossed into the harbour of Larneca, which was filled with the corpses of poor little infants. On board the British ship he had been kept for a time as a species of pet among the sailors. Hence his regard for us was great; and his open trust in us was only equalled by his secret abhorrence of the Turks. He was a widower, and his family consisted only of his daughter and a few servants, male and female—the latter being his assistants at the mills.

After the plain-looking women of Gallipoli, the beauty of the little Greek maid, Magdhalini, proved an agreeable surprise for us; and within doors she always laid aside the hideous *yashmac* which concealed her features when abroad. She was not much over fifteen, but already fully developed; she was lively in manner, and graceful in deportment; and her picturesque costume—a crimson jacket, with short, wide sleeves,

open at the throat, and embroidered at the bosom, her skirt of various colours, and her hair ornamented with gold coins, all added to the piquancy of her beauty. Her features were remarkably regular; her forehead low and broad; her rich, thick hair was of a bright auburn hue; but her eyes were of the deepest black. In the latter, when contrasted with the pale purity of her complexion, the form of their delicate lids and curled lashes, I saw—or fancied so—a resemblance to Louisa, which gave the girl a deeper interest to me; and her appearance frequently recalled to me Byron's description of Haidee:—

"Her hair, I said, was auburn; but her eyes
Were black as death; their lashes the same hue,
Of downcast length, in whose silk shadow lies
Deepest attraction; for when to the view
Forth from its raven fringe the full glance flies,
Ne'er with such force the swiftest arrow flew.
* * * * *
Her brow was white and low; her cheek's pure dye
Like twilight rosy still with the set sun;
Short upper lips—sweet lips! that make us sigh
Ever to have seen such."

In stature she was a foot less than Louisa Loftus; but her form, her delicate hands, small feet, and rounded arms, might have served as models for the best sculptors of the old Greek days. On one occasion I showed her Louisa's miniature, and she clapped her hands, and begged permission to kiss it, like a child, as she was in some respects. She was very curious to know why Studhome and I did not wear crucifixes or holy medals, like all the Christians she knew—even the Russians; and when I told her that such was not the custom in my country, she shook her head sadly, and expressed sorrow for its somewhat benighted condition.

I found a smattering of Italian which I possessed most useful to me now, for, next to the language of the country, it proves the most available in Greece or Turkey. The *divan hanée*, or principal apartment of the house (from which the doors of all the kiosks and other chambers open), was handsome, lofty, and airy. Its lower end was lined by a screen of trellised woodwork, containing arched recesses, or cupboards for vases of sherbet, cool water, or fresh flowers. In the central recess a miniature fountain spouted from a white marble basin, and a landscape was painted on the wall beyond. Curtains covered each of the doorways, and round the room—on three sides, at least—was a long sofa, or cushioned divan, the height of the window-sills, in the Turkish fashion; but, as Steriopoli was a Greek, his dwelling had more European appurtenances, such as a dining-table and chairs; and on its walls were various coloured prints of Greek saints and bishops, while above the door of each sleeping kiosk hung a crucifix of carved wood. In the divan we took our meals, and there, greatly to our host's annoyance, we were joined at times by the Colonel Hadjee Mehmet, who commanded a battalion of the Turkish line at Gallipoli—an individual with whom Studhome had become acquainted through some transaction about the purchase of horses for some of our dismounted men, an affair in which, though worthy Jack would never admit it, this hook-nosed and keen-eyed follower of the Prophet jockeyed him and Farrier-sergeant Snaffles as completely as any groom might have done at Epsom or the Curragh. Now Demetrius Steriopoli, though he seemed not to care whether Studhome or I, or any of our brother officers who visited us, saw his daughter, manifested great uneasiness and irritation when she caught the wicked and licentious eyes of the Hadjee Mehmet, whose character he knew, whose power he dreaded, and whose nation and religion he detested; and thus she had standing orders to seclude herself whenever he came, which was pretty often now, to smoke his chibouque and drink brandy and water in secret, though the Prophet only forbade wine. He was a fat, bloated, and wicked-looking man, past fifty years of age. He wore a blue frogged surtout, scarlet trousers, and a scarlet fez, with the broad, flat, military button. He wore also a crooked Damascus sabre and beard, in virtue of

his rank, as straight swords and shaven chins indicate the subaltern grades of the Turkish army, whose officers are the most contemptible in Europe. In boyhood they are generally the pipe-bearers or carpet-spreaders of the pashas. In this instance the Hadjee Mehmet (so named because he had performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, and kissed the Holy Kaaba) had begun life as a tiruaktzy, or nail-bearer, in the household of Chosrew Mehmet Pasha, who was the seraskier, or generalissimo of the forces, and who was supposed to be the gallant Hadjee's father, though that honour was usually assigned to a Janizary who escaped the massacre of that celebrated force by concealing himself; and by Chosrew he was speedily advanced to the rank of mire-alai, or colonel of infantry.

He was very careful always to style us "effendi," such being the prefix for all who are deemed educated; and, as he sat cross-legged on the divan, with his paunch protruding before him, his ample and well-dyed beard half hiding the frogged lace of his surtout, the amber mouthpiece of his long chibouque between his thick lips, with his little scarlet fez, and sleepy, half-leering black eyes, he seemed the very beau-ideal of a used-up and sensual Osmanlee.

"*Ev-Allah!*" (praise God!) he said, on one occasion, "I have now seen all the world."

"Indeed, colonel, I knew not that you had travelled," said I.

"Yes, and I would not give a grush (piastre) to see it again."

"*All*, do you say?" queried I.

"Yes; Mecca, Medina, Bassora, Damascus, Cairo, and Iskandrich—there is no more to see; and of all the women I have ever beheld," he added, with one of his wicked little leers, "who can equal the Cockonas of Bucharest? Not even the golden-haired Tcherkesses."

"And what think you of the Greeks, colonel?" asked Studhome, rather in a blundering manner, for Steriopoli's brows knit unpleasantly.

"*Backallum*" (we shall see), was his reply, as he gave a stealthy glance at Magdhalini, who was superintending the tandour, the substitute for a fireplace, consisting of a wooden frame, in which there is placed a copper vessel, full of charcoal, the whole being covered by a wadded coverlet, and closely reminding one of the brasseros of the

Spaniards. Swift though the glance, it was not unseen by Steriopoli, whom the ominous remark which accompanied it sufficiently alarmed, and, with unwonted abruptness of manner, he requested his daughter to retire and assume her veil.

On the following day it chanced that he had to visit Alexi (which is about twenty miles distant from Gallipoli), as he had some flour to dispose of, and would be absent all night. Whether our Turkish visitor was aware of this circumstance I cannot say, but in the forenoon I came suddenly upon him and Magdhalini, whom he had surprised or waylaid in the pathway near the windmills. He grasped one of her hands, and she was struggling to release herself. I had my sword under my arm, but as a fracas with a Turkish officer was by no means desirable, I lingered for a moment before interfering.

"Girl," I heard him say, with a dark scowl, while he grasped her slender wrist, "for the third time I tell thee not to bite the finger that puts honey into thy mouth."

"Nonsense, Hadjee; let me go, I say," replied Magdhalini, laughing, though she was partly frightened.

"I should like to make my home in thy heart, Magdhalini, even as the bulbul buildeth her nest in the rose-tree," panted the fat Hadjee.

"Oh, thou owl, thou crow of bad omen!" exclaimed the lively Greek girl, as she wrenched her hand free, and, darting a bright and merry glance at her enraged and perspiring admirer, drew her yashmac close, and sprang away, blushing because I had witnessed the scene.

That night Studhome and I had been supping with Beverley at his quarters near the palace of the Capudan Pasha, and were returning late to the house of Steriopoli. The sky was clear and starry; thus we could see distinctly several Turkish soldiers loitering about near the house and windmills, and though the hour was an unusual one for them to be absent, that we deemed no concern of ours, and on entering we retired to our kiosks, or rooms, and were both soon sound asleep—so sound that we failed to hear a loud knocking shortly after at the front door. Magdhalini and two female servants promptly responded to the unusual summons, but declined to open without further inquiry, on which the

door was beaten in by a large hammer, and a chiaoush, or sergeant, and several soldiers, all in Turkish uniform, seized Magdhalini, bound, gagged, and carried her off, despite her cries and resistance. Roused by the sudden noise, and suspecting we knew not what, Studhome and I dragged on our trousers, and came forth both at the same moment, each with drawn sword and cocked revolver; but before lights were procured, and ere the terrified servants could make us understand the real state of affairs, and the catastrophe which had taken place, our pretty Greek hostess was gone beyond recovery.

I shall willingly hurry over all that followed in this strange episode of social life in the East.

Poor Steriopoli came back next day to a desolate house—a degraded and broken home! He was full of rage and despair, for his daughter was the pride, the idol of his heart; and suspecting justly the Hadjee Mehmet, he discovered that this celebrated warrior had gone to Alexi, the very town from which he, Steriopoli, had returned.

There he traced his daughter, only to find that she had been most cruelly and shamefully treated. She was lodged in the house of the cole-agassi, or major of Mehmet's regiment—a wretch who had originally been a channator aga, or chief of the black eunuchs; and on the pretext that she had renounced Christianity and embraced Islamism, he refused to give her up. In compliance with the wish of her sorrowing father, and the indignant old Bishop of Gallipoli, she was brought before the vaivode of the district. She appeared the wreck of her former self, and, though not present, I afterwards heard that a most affecting scene took place.

On beholding Steriopoli, whose once coal-black hair was now thickly seamed with grey, she broke away from the Turkish slaves who held her, and cast herself into his arms, in a passion of grief, exclaiming —

"My father! oh, my father! after what has taken place, I am no longer worthy to be in your house, or to pray at my mother's grave. We can no longer be anything to each other."

"Oh, Kyrie Eleison (Lord have mercy)!" groaned the unfortunate Greek.

Despite her solemn protests that she was still a Christian, the vaivode would not yield her to her father; but opening the Koran, closed the case by reading a passage from the sixteenth chapter thereof—a passage revealed to the Prophet at Medina:—"O Prophet! when unbelieving women come unto thee, and plight their faith unto thee, that they will not associate anything with God, nor steal, nor commit sin, nor kill their children, nor come with a calumny which they have forged between their hands and feet, nor be disobedient to thee in that which shall be reasonable: then do plight thy faith unto them, and ask pardon for them, of One who is inclined to forgive and be merciful. O true believers! enter not into friendship with a people against whom God is incensed; they despair of pardon and the life to come, even as infidels despair of the resurrection of those who dwell in the grave."

"La-Allah-illah-Allah-Mohammed resoul Allah!"[*] shouted the people.

[*] "There is but one God, and Mahomet is his Prophet."

The poor miller and his daughter were torn asunder, and the former was driven by blows from the house of the vaivode; while Magdhalini, whom he was never more permitted to see, was taken again to the house of the cole-agassi. By Turkish law, such as it is, any commissioned officer who kills a man is liable to five years' slavery in chains, and service as a private hereafter; but the abduction of a Greek girl, though a rajah, or Christian subject of the Porte, was a very trivial affair—much less than stealing a terrier in the streets of London. The foreign Consuls took up the matter, and redress was sought of the Stamboul effendi, or chief of the police at Constantinople, but sought in vain. The Bishop of Gallipoli applied to the Skeik Islam, also without avail.

The Sheik is a very awful personage, who combines in his own person the greatest offices of religion, together with the supreme power of the civil law. Every new measure, even to naming the streets and numbering the houses of filthy Stamboul, requires his sanction. The

Sultan alone has the power of life and death over the Sheik Islam, who can neither be nobly bowstrung, nor ignobly beheaded, and he enjoys the peculiar prerogative of being pounded to death in a mortar. A word from the Sheik would have restored Magdhalini to her father; but Hadjee Mehmet, the ex-tiruaktzy, had once operated on his holy nails, so a deaf ear was turned to the prayer of the infidel Bishop, who was seeking the dove in the net of the fowler long after we had taken our departure for Varna; and, until the memorable day of Balaclava, I saw no more of the infamous Hadjee Mehmet.

CHAPTER XXX.

Let me see her once again!
Let her bring her proud dark eyes,
And her petulant quick replies;
Let her wave her slender hand,
With its gesture of command,
And throw back her raven hair
With the old imperial air;
    Let her be as she was then—
The loveliest lady in all the land—
    Iseult of Ireland.

Ere the course of events added to the distance which already lay between me and Great Britain, I resolved to write to Lady Louisa. I could no longer endure the torture of suspense, combined with absence and gathering doubt. In common parlance, ages seemed to have elapsed instead of weeks since the day we marched for embarkation, and when I beheld her for the last time; and thus, notwithstanding our strange

compact that there should be no correspondence between us, I wrote to her, even at the hazard of the letter falling into the hands of her I dreaded most—proud, stately, cold, and unsympathetic "Mamma Chillingham."

It was about the middle of May, the day before we were to embark again, for now the Allies were to advance to Varna; and while I wrote, and in thought addressed Louisa, her presence seemed to come before me in fancy, and the inner depths of heart and soul were stirred with a jealous love and sorrowful tenderness that were almost unendurable; but a summons from Colonel Beverley, regarding the baggage and squad-bags of my troop, cut short my epistle in a very matter-of-fact way, and I despatched Pitblado with it to the military post-office. In that letter I sent brief remembrances to Fred Wilford's sister, and to many of our friends; but of the newly-made marquis I could not trust myself to write, though I had no doubt as yet of Louisa's faith and truth. That night a letter came to me from Cora, the first I had received since we landed at Gallipoli. She and Sir Nigel had returned to Calderwood, and had just come back from the Lanarkshire steeplechases.

"Oh, Newton," she continued, "how anxious and frightened we have been, for we heard that cholera had broken out in the British camp, and we trembled for you—dear papa and I. (There was no doubt the "we" did not include Louisa, at all events.) Do you think of us and quiet Calderwood Glen—of the old house, of papa, and of me? Are the Oriental ladies so beautiful as we have been told? One reads so much about their veiled forms, their brilliant eyes, and so forth. Tell us what you have seen of all this—the mosques, the harems, and the Golden Horn. You have seen everything, of course."

There was nothing in Cora's letter that either flattered my passion or soothed my apprehension. Chillingham Park was never once mentioned, and I could only gather from its abrupt passages and assumed playfulness that she still loved me, tenderly, truly, and hopelessly. There were times when, in her dreams—I learned all this long after, when the present had become the past, and could be recalled no more—there were times when, in imagination, she saw Newton

Norcliff, safe from wounds and war, at Calderwood—hers, and hers only—a prize of which none could rob her, not even the brilliant Louisa Loftus; and in her sleep, tears of happiness stole down her poor, pale cheeks.

Newton was her cousin, her kinsman, her early playmate and boy lover, her idol, and her hero! What right, then, had this stranger, this Englishwoman, this mere Acquaintance, to seek to rob her of him? But she could not do so now. Newton was Cora's, and in her dreams he was her lover and her husband, of whom she prayed only to be worthy and more deserving still; and so the poor girl would dream on till morning came—the chill, gusty morning of autumn, when the brown leaves were swept by the cold eastern blast against the windows of the old manor-house, and down the wooded glen; and with that chill morning would come the bitter consciousness that it was all a dream—a dream only, and that he whom she prayed for, and loved so hopelessly, was far, far away in the land of the savage Tartars, exposed to all the perils of the Crimean winter and of the Russian war, and that amid them he was thinking, not of her but of another! But to resume my own story. Berkeley, who had been on the sick list since our arrival at Gallipoli, was reported fit for duty on the morning we embarked for Varna. Most of the British troops were ordered there, or to Scutari, while the mass of our allies were to remain about the coast of the Dardanelles. On this morning, however, I saw the 2nd Zouaves march, as Studhome said, "with all their ladies of light virtue and boxes of heavy baggage," for embarkation; and they presented a stirring spectacle, those swarthy, lithe, and black-bearded fellows, their breasts covered with medals won in battles against Bou Maza, and other sheiks of the Arab tribes, and their faces bronzed almost to negro darkness by the hot sun of Africa.

Their turbans and baggy breeches of scarlet gave them a very Oriental aspect; but their swinging gait and rollicking air, together with the remarkably free-and-easy manner in which they "marched at ease," and the songs they sang, announced them all sons of *la belle France*; and, singularly enough, every second or third file had a pet cat perched on the top of his knapsack. The tricolor was decorated with laurel; their

long brass trumpets played a strange and monotonous, but not unwarlike measure, to which they all stepped in rapid time; and in the intervals of the music many of them joined in a song, which was led by Mademoiselle Sophie, who was riding *à la cavalier* at their head, in rear of the staff, with her little brandy-keg slung over her left shoulder.

I caught just a verse as she passed; but I frequently heard her sing the same song at a future time—

Vivandière du régiment,
C'est Catin qu'on me nomme,
Je vends, je donne, et bois gaiment,
Mon vin et mon rogomme.
J'ai le pied leste et l'oeil mutin.
Tin-tin, tin, tin, tin, tin, r'lin tin-tin.
J'ai le pied leste et l'oeil mutin.
Soldats, voilà Catin!

Above all other voices, I could hear that of her friend, or lover, Jules Jolicoeur, most lustily—

Soldats, voilà Catin!

as he marched along with his hands in his pockets, and his musket slung butt uppermost. Our transport was taken in tow by a war steamer. Thus our progress through the Sea of Marmora was rapid. We passed Constantinople in the night, to our great regret; and as no part of it, save the palace of the Sultan, was then lighted with gas, it was involved in darkness and silence. At least, we heard only the voices of the patrols, and the barking and howling of the thousands of homeless dogs which prowl through the streets. Being unclean, they are never domesticated; yet their litters are never destroyed, and they feed on the offal of the houses, or on the headless trunks that are at times washed up from the Golden Horn. Next day, as we proceeded up the Bosphorus, a swift

(Clyde-built) Turkish steamer was running ahead of us; and we remarked that, whenever she passed a fort or battery, the standard with the star and crescent was immediately hoisted, and a trumpet was heard to sound.

At the Castle of Roumelia, and such places, we saw the slovenly Turkish guards getting under arms, and also that on each occasion the standards were dipped or lowered to half-mast three times. This indicated that the ship had on board a pasha of three tails, or one of equal rank, whose standard was flying at the foremast-head; and soon after we learned that he was the munadjim bashee, or chief astrologer, one of the first officers of the seraglio, and always consulted by the Sultan Abd-ul-Medjid. No public work was ever undertaken until he declared the stars to be propitious; and now he was steaming ahead to see how they looked at Varna! By the letter I had despatched from Gallipoli, I had, to a certain extent, relieved my mind, as I concluded that at Varna I should receive the answer, and that then all my suspense and anxieties would end, in the course of a few weeks at latest.

Against the strong current which sets in from the Black Sea, and which runs at the rate of four miles an hour down the Bosphorus, we steamed steadily on; and as the wind was fair, our transport carried a tolerable spread of canvas. Our sail was a delightful one! The weather was calm, and the scenery and objects on the European and Asian shores were ever changing and attractive. The abrupt angles and bends of the coast seemed to convert the channel into a series of seven charming inland lakes of the deepest blue—there being seven promontories on one side, and seven bays on the other, each bay running into a fertile valley, clothed with the richest foliage of the Oriental clime; and amid that waving foliage rose the quaint and fantastic country dwellings of the wealthy Frankish, Greek, or Armenian merchants of Stamboul, with their painted kiosks, gilded domes, and towering minarets, tall, white, and slender.

On the left or European shore, the whole panorama was a succession of beautiful villages, terraced gardens, and groves of chestnut, plane, and lime trees, with here and there long, sombre, and

solemn rows of gigantic cypresses and poplars. On the right or Asian shore, the objects of Nature were of greater magnitude. The groves became forests, and the hills swelled into mountains; and, towering over Brussa, rose Olympus, "high and hoar," covered with laurels and other evergreens to its summit.

Under a salute of cannon from the Castle of Europe, and still preceded by our Turkish friend, the astrologer with three tails, we hauled up for Varna, giving a wide berth to the dangerous Cyanean rocks, between which Jason steered the Argonauts in equally troublesome, but more classic, times.

From thence a run of about one hundred and fifty miles brought us to the low flat shore of Varna, where, on the 28th of May, we were all landed without accident or adventure, and placed under canvas among the rest of the troops. The aspect of Varna from the bay was somewhat depressing. Rising from a bank of yellow sand, a time-worn rampart of stone, ten feet high, loop-holed and painted white, encloses the town on its four sides, each of which measures somewhat more than a mile. This old wall had witnessed the defeat and death of Uladislaus of Hungary, by the troops of the Padishah Amurath II., and it yet bore traces of the cannon-shot of the Scoto-Russian Admiral Greig, who bombarded Varna in 1828.

Before the walls lies a ditch, twelve feet deep, and over both frown a number of heavy guns, which I found to be chiefly sixty-eight pounders; and over all rose the countless red-tiled roofs of the houses, with the slender white minarets and round leaden domes of the mosques, looking like wax-candles by the side of inverted sugar basins. Beyond, in the distance, stretched far away to the base of wooded hills the flat Bulgarian shore.

Painted with various colours, the tumble-down and rickety houses were all of wood, and exhibited a rapid state of dilapidation and decay. Prior to our arrival, the silence must have been oppressive. Save when a swallow twittered under the broad eaves, when a saka (or water-carrier), with his buckets suspended from a leather belt, shambled along, slipshod or barefoot, with water for sale, a hamal (or porter), laden with

his burden, or when the wild dog that lay panting on a heap of festering offal uttered a hoarse growl, no sight or sound of life was there, when the fierce sun of unclouded noon blazed down into the narrow and tortuous streets. The place exhibited only Turkish filth, inactivity, and stupidity, till the arrival of the Allies, when its wooden jetties opposite the principal gate became piled up with munitions of war—bales, tents, tumbrils, and cannon; its roadstead crowded with war-ships, transports, and gunboats, under sail or steam; its bazaar filled by regimental quartermasters, cooks, and caterers, or soldiers' wives in search of food, &c.; its five gates held by military guards—the merry Zouave, the grave and stern Scottish Highlander, the showy Coldstream, or the sombre rifleman.

Then its streets became literally alive, and crowded with the British, who came by sea, and the French, who came pouring over the Balkan. Their silence was broken by the sharp beat of the brass drum, and the sound of the ringing bugle every hour or more, and by the measured tramp of feet, as detachments on every imaginable duty marched to and fro between the camps, the town, and harbour, scaring the wild dogs from the streets, and the kites from the roofs and mosque domes, who were alike unused to such unwonted bustle and activity.

Crowds of Turks and Bulgarians, wearing caps of brown sheepskin, short jackets of undyed wool, and wide white trousers, with vacant wonder surveyed us, as brigade after brigade came on shore, our horse, foot, and artillery; while the little dark Arabs of the Egyptian contingent viewed with something akin to awe our brigade of Foot Guards, whose personal bulk and stature, with their white epaulettes and black bearskin caps, made them seem the veritable sons of Anak to those shrivelled children of the desert.

Amid the crash of military music, the glitter of arms, and the waving of silken colours, as regiment after regiment marched to its camping-ground, were to be seen the woebegone, helpless, miserable, and, in some instances, still seasick wives of our soldiers, hurrying wearily after their husbands' battalions, carrying bundles or children, sometimes both, while other scared little ones were trotting by their side, and

holding by their ragged and tattered skirts; but there was one soldier's wife who appeared to European and Oriental eyes under very different auspices.

"All these marvels reached a climax," says a writer,[*] "when a boat from the *Henri IV.*, rowed by six dashing French sailors, in snow-white shirts and coquettish little glazed hats, stuck with a knowing air on the side of their heads, shot up alongside the landing-place, and in the stern appeared the Earl and Countess of Errol—the former an officer in the rifles, and the latter intent upon sharing the campaign with her husband. I think the old civil pasha (*mussellem* of the city?), who was seated on a chair at a little distance, scarcely knew whether he was on his head or his heels when the lady was handed up out of the boat, and made her appearance at the town gate, with a brace of pistols in a holster at her waist, and followed by a Bulgarian porter, with a shoal of reticules, carpet-bags, and books, and taking everything as coolly as if she were an old soldier. The whole party followed the rifles to the field, and the countess is at the present moment living under canvas."

[*] In the *Daily News*.

This lady, who excited so much attention was Eliza, Countess of Errol, and her husband—as my uncle would have reminded me—was hereditary high constable of Scotland; as such, first subject in the kingdom, and of old leader of the feudal cavalry. Now he was a simply major in the Rifle Brigade, and was after severely wounded at the Alma. Undeterred by the miseries which he saw the soldiers' wives enduring, Sergeant Stapylton, of my troop, had the courage to take unto himself a wife in this land of the Prophet; but the fate which threw her in his way was somewhat remarkable, and made some noise at the time. It came about thus:—The wife of a soldier of the 28th Regiment, when proceeding through the corn-fields from our camp to market in Varna, and perhaps considering how far her little stock of money might go in the purchase of dainty soochook sausages and cabaubs of herbs, for the

delectation of herself and Private John Smith, was surprised to find herself addressed in tolerable English by a Greek female slave, who was at work among the corn, weeding it of the brilliant poppies.

Though fairer skinned than the women of that country, she had the appearance of a woman of Bulgaria. On her head a cylindrical bonnet, of harlequin pattern, was tied by a white handkerchief under her chin. She wore a short black gown, with a deep scarlet flounce, on which were sewn ornamental pieces of variously-coloured stuffs: a broad scarlet sash, elaborately needleworked, girt her waist; a few coins, of small value, were woven into her hair, which was of a rich brown hue, and hung in profusion over her shoulders, and on her wrists were bracelets of crystal. She wore the costume of a peasant girl, and her features were soft and pleasing—even pretty, though very much sunburnt.

In English she begged the soldier's wife to give her a mouthful of water from a vessel she carried, saying that she "was sorely athirst, and weary with her work in the field."

Now, Mrs. John Smith, of the 28th Foot, was greatly surprised on hearing this humble and gentle request made in the language of her native England, by one who seemed to all intents and purposes a Bulgarian. She entered into conversation with the stranger, and discovered that she was actually English by birth and blood, and a native of Essex!

She related that her father had been a merchant captain of London, who, after her mother's death, had taken her with him in a vessel on a voyage to the Levant, where they were captured by a Greek pirate. She was then a mere child. Her father and his crew were put to death, their vessel plundered, and then set on fire, in the Gulf of Sidra, and destroyed. Her captor, a thoroughpaced old rascal, had now settled, with all his ill-gotten gains, as a small landowner, on the shore of the Bay of Varna, where she was still his bondswoman—his slave.

The soldier's wife begged the girl to follow her, and take refuge in the British camp, and she was about to comply, when the appearance of her master or owner, a fierce-looking old fellow, clad in a jacket and cap, both of brown sheepskin, his sash bristling with knives, yataghans, and

pistols, altered her feeble resolution; and though the wife of Private Smith shook her gingham umbrella with vigour, and threatened him with the "p'leece," and the main-guard to boot, he, nothing daunted, replied only by a contemptuous scowl, and dragging the slave girl into his house, secured the door.

It chanced luckily, however, that Sergeant Stapylton, of ours, with a mounted party of ten lancers, was returning along the Silistria road—where he had been sent in search of forage—and to him the soldier's wife appealed, and detailed what had taken place. He at once surrounded the house, and demanded the girl, in what fashion or language I know not; but he made the proprietor aware that fire or sword hung over him if she was not surrendered instantly.

Armed to the teeth, the Greek appeared at the door, and threatened him with the *vaivode* of the district, and the *kaimakan*, or deputy of the Pasha of Roumelia, and of various other dignitaries; but Stapylton put the point of his lance to the throat of the old pirate, who found in it an argument so irresistible, that he at once gave up the girl, whom our fellows brought with them in triumph to the camp, where a subscription was made for her, and she was a nine days' wonder; and that this little bit of romance might not be without its *finale*, she ultimately became the wife of Sergeant Stapylton.

Our regiment was encamped eighteen miles distant from Varna, in the lovely vale of Aladyn, surrounded by forests of the finest timber, where the springs of water were numerous and pure, and where the grass and verdure were of the richest description; yet there it was that disease—the fell cholera and dysentery—broke out among us, and decimated our ranks more surely and more severely than the Russian bullets could have done. But amid their horrors folly ever found its way; and several of our people, French and British, got into scrapes with the Bulgarian and Turkish damsels, especially the latter, who are rather prone to intrigue, notwithstanding the dangers attendant on it, in such a land of jealousy and the prompt use of arms. Perhaps the *yashmac*, and

the mystery it gave to their faces, of which the ever brilliant eyes alone were visible, and the mouth—usually its worst feature—was hidden, had much to do with this.

By the Koran, aged women alone are permitted to "lay aside their outer garments, and go unveiled." A very old history of Constantinople—Delamay's, I think—relates that a pasha, remarkable for the size and ugliness of his nose, married, before the kadi, a lady who, on being unveiled, proved to his great disgust to be exceedingly plain.

"To whom, of all your friends," she asked, with her most winning smile, "am I to show my face?"

"To all the world," said he; "but hide it from me!"

"My lord, patience," she whispered, humbly.

"Patience have I none!" he exclaimed, wrathfully.

"*Allah kerim!* you must have a great deal of it to have borne that great nose so long about you," she retorted, as she hurled her slipper at his head.

A pair of dark and brilliant eyes, sparkling through the folds of a fine white muslin *yashmac*, were very nearly the means of ridding me of Berkeley, and the impending duel, while we lay at Varna.

He and Frank Jocelyn, of my troop, a smart and handsome young fellow, whilom the prime bowler and stroke oar at Oxford, as good-hearted and open-handed a lad as any in the service, began an intrigue with two Turkish damsels, whom they found at prayer before an *aekie*, or Mahommedan wayside chapel, and whom they followed home to a kiosk in the vale of Aladyn.

Their love affair did not make much progress, being simply maintained by tossing oranges in the dusk over a high wall, which was furnished with a row of vicious-looking iron spikes. The oranges of Jocelyn and Berkeley contained notes written in French and Italian, of which the girls could make nothing, of course, the language of the educated Turks being a mixture of Turkish, Persian, and Arabic, the former being spoken by the peasantry alone; so the ladies responded by

oranges, in which flowers were stuck, till on the fourth or fifth night, in reply to a very amatory epistle, souse came over the garden wall an iron six-inch shell, with its fuse burning!

Our Lotharios had only time to throw themselves flat on the ground, when it exploded in the dark with a dreadful crash; but without hurting either of them, and they retired, somewhat crestfallen, while hearing much loud laughter and clapping of hands within the garden wall. After this rough hint, they went no more near the ladies, who proved to be the wife of a *yuse bashi*, or captain of Turkish artillery, and her female slave.

While the months we wasted so fruitlessly at Varna crept slowly away, there occurred to me a singular adventure—in fact, one so remarkable in its import, and in reference to the future, that it still makes a deep impression upon me; and this episode I shall detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XXXI.

So gaze met gaze,
And heart saw heart, translucid through the rays,
One same harmonious universal law,
Atom to atom, star to star can draw,
And heart to heart. Swift darts, as from the sun,
The strong attraction, and the charm is done.
THE NEW TIMON.

To the letter I wrote Louisa from Gallipoli no answer was ever returned.

Had it reached her, or been intercepted, and by whom?

I began to associate Berkeley—groundlessly, certainly—with her singular silence. All my former animosity to him returned; but, for the personal safety of the survivor, our strangely deferred meeting could not take place till we found ourselves in the vicinity of the enemy. I feared, too, that he might discover how completely she had ignored—or, to all appearance, forgotten—my existence. To me there was pure gall in the idea that he should have cause for triumph in suspecting it.

I constantly wore her engagement ring—the pearl with the blue enamel. Did she gaze on my Rangoon diamond as frequently as I did on the tiny gold hoop which once encircled her finger, and had hence become a holy thing to me? I was now beginning to fear that she did not.

The past had but one feature, one which every thought and memory seemed metaphorically to hinge; and the future but one object—the same—around which every hope was centred—Louisa. Viâ the Bosphorus, the mail steamers came puffing regularly into Varna Bay. They seemed to bring letters to all but me, and gradually my heart became filled by anxiety and fear.

Louisa might be ill—*dead*! I thrust aside that thought as impossible; I must have heard of so terrible a calamity from Cora, or from Wilford, who was in constant correspondence with his sister.

Her answer to my Gallipoli letter might have miscarried. Why her letter alone? Those of my uncle and of cousin Cora came at the requisite time, and in course of post. Could it actually be that Louisa was forgetting me? Her last look—her eyes so full of grief—her last kiss, so full of tremulous tenderness, forbade this fear, and yet it was passing strange that neither Cora nor Sir Nigel ever mentioned her in their correspondence with me.

I frequently prayed that her love might be as lasting in her as it proved agonizing to me.

Studhome knew my secret. To conceal from him that I was miserable was impossible, but honest Jack's advice "to take heart of grace—to remember that there were as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it, that—

"'There were maidens in Scotland more lovely by far,
Who would gladly be bride to the young Lochinvar,'"

and a great deal more to the same effect and purpose, proved but sorry comfort and counsel.

On a Saturday evening I had tiffed with him in his tent. We had no second parade or anything to do. He vowed that he was tired of his studies, which generally consisted of the *Racing Calendar*, Hart's "Annual Army List," "White's Farriery," and the "Field Exercise and Evolutions for the Cavalry," varied by *Punch* and *Bell's Life*, so we ordered our horses, and rode to Varna, the variety and unwonted bustle of which afforded the means of amusement and relief, after the quiet and monotony of our camp in the green wooded vale of Aladyn.

We put up our horses at an old rickety Turkish khan, which an enterprising French sutler had turned into a species of hotel, for over the door a gay signboard, painted in tricolour, informed us that it was "*Le restaurant de l'Armée d'Orient, pour messieurs les officiers et sous-officiers*."

There we had a bottle of excellent Greek wine, in a large whitewashed room, full of French officers, of every branch of the service and of all ranks, who received us with great politeness. They were all smoking cigarettes, chatting, laughing, playing chess or dominoes, and reading the *Moniteur* or *Charivari*, which last caricatured the Russians as unmercifully as our good friend *Punch* ever did.

Their gaiety and *étourdi* fashion of quizzing the women who passed drew many a scowl of wonder and reprehension from the turbaned, shawled, and solemn Turks, for few of the believers took kindly to "the sons of perdition who had come to aid them and the Vicar of God—the refuge of the world—from the Muscovite dog," as one was heard to say; "and at the behest of a queen—a woman—*Allah razolsum!*" he added, with special reference to us.

"What a change all this is from our recent barrack life at Maidstone," said Studhome. "We see such strange scenes—a new world here."

"For our used-up guardsmen and hussars, who have been hitherto bored by the mere aimlessness and emptiness of their lives, our friend, the Emperor Nicholas, has certainly provided that which Sir Charles, in *Used Up*, would call a 'new sensation,' and a little healthy excitement."

A young sous-lieutenant of Zouaves was particularly vehement and droll in describing a certain Egyptian magician, who had shown some wonderful things to him and his friends. His words seemed to excite much laughter, and, on drawing nearer, I discovered him to be Jules Jolicoeur, the Zouave, who had now been promoted to the rank of second-lieutenant in his regiment, in the ranks of which the cholera had already made sad ravages.

"Monsieur Jolicoeur," said I; "a magician, do you say?"

"*Peste!* you know my name," said he, smiling, while he pirouetted about and twirled his moustache.

"I have to congratulate you on your promotion. Better this than poring over Lemartinière, Ambrose Paré, and so forth, at the Ecole de Médecin, eh?"

"*Parbleu, monsieur!* how do you come to know all this?" he asked, with pardonable surprise.

"Perhaps I am a magician too," said I, laughing. "But this Egyptian of whom you tell us—he is a juggler, I presume?"

"*Jouer—joueuse de gobelets*, you mean? Oh, no. In a little water or ink, poured into the hollow of your hand, he will show you the face of any friend you most desire to see. It is miraculous."

"*Diable!*" exclaimed Victor Baudeuf, a well-decorated captain of a French line regiment; "then he shall show me Mogador."

The name of this well-known French dancer elicited a burst of laughter; but Jolicoeur said—

"Monsieur, you should call her Madame la Comtesse de Chabrillan!"

"And where the devil is *monsieur le Comte*?" asked Baudeuf, with a grimace.

"At the gold-fields, having spent his fortune twice on the girl."

"Well, to a wife in Paris a husband at the gold-fields is just as valuable as no husband at all. *Très bon*! I shall see pretty Mogador, if your magician has any skill."

"And where does your magician hang out?" asked Studhome.

"Hang—hang—*il mérite la corde*, you mean, monsieur?" asked the puzzled Frenchman.

"No, no; where is he to be found?"

"*Monsieur le magicien* holds a spiritual séance to-night," observed a French hussar, whose gorgeous dolman was almost sword-proof with silver lace.

"*Très bon!*" exclaimed another; "there are twenty girls in Paris I want to see."

"What is his time, Jules?"

"Eight o'clock."

"'Tis but twenty minutes from that now."

"We shall go too," said Studhome, "and have our fortunes told; it will be as good a lark, monsieur, as any other."

"Lark—*aloutte*—oh, yes, *très bon!*" replied Jolicoeur, with a good-natured smile, though quite at a loss to understand why the bird was referred to.

"My fortune has often been told me, Newton, by gipsies, at Maidstone and Canterbury. By no two alike; but it was magnificent, according to the fee I gave, and always droll. We shall see what this astrologer—a real magician—has to show us."

"If he shows us Louisa Loftus, Jack, I'll forfeit a year's pay!"

"Come, messieurs, to the séance," shouted Jolicoeur, as he buckled on his sabre. "I wish to see Mademoiselle Sophie of ours, who has gone to Constantinople."

"And I Mogador," said Captain Baudeuf, "the delicious little dancer at the Mabille."

"And I Rose Pompon!" exclaimed the hussar, tying the cords of his silver dolman. "Rose, the heroine of a thousand flirtations."

"Mogador, the empress of ten thousand hearts," added the captain.

"Hearts such as thine, *mon camarade*," said the hussar, laughing.

"And Fleur d'Amour," added another heedless fellow, "the Queen of the Tourlurous!"[*]

[*] Camp phrase for the French linesmen.

"*Ah, mon capitaine*," said Jules. "*Peste!* what a *roué* it is. He has made as many conquests as our good friend Don Juan, in the delightful opera which bears his name."

"Beware!" said the other, with a mock frown; "I'm an ace of diamonds man with the pistol, Jules."

"Bah! Your pistol will never be levelled at me. Have a cigarette?"

"Thanks. As for Mogador, her silk tights were a study at the Mabille, and the grace with which she showed her feet and ankles——"

"*Cordieu, mon ami!* we haven't a man in the 2nd Zouaves who has not appreciated that generous exhibition to the utmost. I hope she'll appear in Baudeuf's hand as Diana, or the chaste Lucretia!" said Jolicoeur.

These remarks elicited roars of laughter from the gay Frenchmen.

"By Jove, Newton," whispered Studhome, "our fair friends will be conjured up in odd company. These fellows are naming the most notorious *lorettes* in Paris!"

With a prodigious clatter of swords and spurs, we all quitted the restaurant together for the residence of the magician; and Lieutenant Jolicoeur, who seemed disposed to fraternize with us, informed me that this personage, who was making so much noise in Varna, was a native of Al Kosair, on the Egyptian coast of the Red Sea, and that he was now chief hakim, or senior surgeon, of the 10th Battalion of Egyptian Infantry, which formed a portion of the Viceroy's contingent with the Turkish army. So we looked forward with some interest to the interview, as he had a high reputation among the Osmanlees for the marvels he produced, and was faithfully believed.

After an interview, this magician strongly reminded me of the Sooltan described by Lane, in his "Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians."

If in England, at this hour, so many persons believe implicitly in table-turning, spirit-rapping, mesmeric slumber, and mesmeric mediums, and many other outrageous whim-whams, it can surely be no wonder that the poor, ignorant soldiers of the Turkish and Egyptian armies should believe in the magic powers of the hakim Abd-el-Rasig, who, by the medium of another human soul, could show them whether their friends, their fathers, and mothers, at Gaza, at Cairo, or on the banks of the Nile, were still in the land of the living, as clearly as if they peeped through the magical telescope of the favoured prince in the fairy tale.

It was just about the period of which I write that the public of the modern Athens—that happy city of bibacious saints and briefless Solons—was electrified by a series of letters which appeared in one of her journals, signed by a tolerably well-known historian, occupying, however a lucrative legal position, to the effect that "he possessed a peculiar medium," of whose person and spirit he had such entire mesmeric control that he had sent the latter to the Arctic regions, in search of Sir John Franklin, whom she saw, accoutred with cocked hat and quadrant, seated sorrowfully on a heap of snow; next, that he had sent her on a visit to one of Her Majesty's ships in the West Indies, where she pryed into the savoury secrets of the midshipmen's berth; and, not content with these wonderful voyages, he actually announced that he sent her spirit to heaven to visit his friends, and a much warmer climate to visit his enemies; and this blasphemous rubbish and mid-summer madness found believers in the Scottish capital, though it excited the laughter of the masses; but one night the fair medium, "being hot with the Tuscan grape, and high in blood," or having imbibed over much alcohol, fairly unmasked the would-be Northern Balsamo as a dupe and fool, by forgetting to play her assumed character.

"*Allons, mes camarades!*" said Jules, placing his arm through mine and Studhome's; "we shall all face this Cagliostro together—one for all, and all for one, like Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, in 'Les Trois Mousquetaires.'"

It was impossible not to be pleased with the gaity and winning manner of this young Frenchman. His bearing and uniform, half Parisian and half Oriental, gave him somewhat of the aspect of a dandy brigand; but that bearing is peculiar to all the officers and men of the regiments of Zouaves.

Evening was approaching, and the shadows were falling eastward. Those of the tall minarets, and the rows of cypress-trees that guard "the City of the Dead," were cast to a great distance, over the flat ground on which Varna stands. Many "true believers" were awaiting the shrill, boyish voice of the muezzin to call them to prayer; and the tambours of the French troops were gathering at their places of arms, and bracing up their drums, preparatory to beating the evening retreat, as we passed along the strangely-crowded streets, towards the Armenian church.

At a coffee-house, the whole front of which was open, we passed several of the Colonel Hadjee Mehmet's soldiers, all drowsy with tobacco or bang, and seated like so many tailors, each on a scrap of tattered carpet. Some were idling over the chequers of a chess-board, and others were listening to the wild fairy tale of an itinerant dervish, to whom, from time to time, they tossed a quarter piastre (about a halfpenny) as it waxed more and more exciting.

Passing through a street which had just been named the Rue des Portes Franchises—a corporal of sappers being in the act of nailing up that title on the rickety mansion of a wondering and indignant emir—we reached the temporary residence of the hakim Abd-el-Rasig, near which several Turkish women in long caftans, a few hawk-nosed Greeks, and squalid Jews were loitering, as if pondering whether they dared tempt his skill by unwisely seeking to probe the future.

To the street the house presented nothing but a small door, having a curved arch, like a horseshoe, and a low, whitewashed wall.

Passing through, we found ourselves in a cool, shady courtyard, surrounded, as usual, by those inexplicable Turkish sheds, a well in the centre, a few rose-trees in tubs, and a few flowers and tiny shrubs forcing their way up between the slabs of pavement.

The mansion was almost entirely built of wood, and painted saffron and blue. We were ushered in by a little tawny Egyptian servant-boy, clad in baggy blue breeches and a scarlet tarboosh, and whom, to our disgust, we discovered to be tongueless—a mute!—and found ourselves in the *divan hanée*, or principal apartment; and now the hitherto ceaseless gabble and merriment of our French friends became hushed into comparative silence, as the hakim, who had been smoking his chibouque, with its long cherry-stick, rose from a luxurious pile of silken cushions to welcome us.

He was a little man, with Arab features, and a complexion of mahogany. His bushy beard was of a great amplitude. Time had long since dyed that appendage white, but the proprietor had turned it to a rich brown. He wore a green turban, a long, flowing coat, fashioned like a dressing-gown, of bright blue cloth, elaborately braided on the breast and seams with scarlet cord; his vest and trousers were of white linen, girt by a sash of green silk. Round his neck hung a comboloio, or Mahommedan rosary, of ninety-nine sandalwood beads.

Save that his intensely black eyes had under their impending brows a keen and hawk-like expression, his appearance was neither unpleasing nor undignified. His cheekbones were somewhat prominent; he had the organs of locality largely defined, and his forehead was high, but receding.

A Turkish soldier, an onbashi, or corporal of the Hadjee Mehmet's corps, had just preferred some request as we entered; and on learning that we had come to see a trial of his power at the séance, or whatever else he was pleased to call it, he invited us all into an inner apartment which opened off the *divan hanée*.

It was lighted by four lamps, suspended from the ceiling, each with a large tassel below it. From these lamps flickered four flames, which emitted a strange mephitic odour. The chamber had been recently

whitewashed; the doors and windows were all bordered by arabesques in black and red, and with elaborate sentences from the Koran, which I afterwards learned to be the following:—

"If they accuse thee of imposture, the apostles before thee have also been accounted impostors, who brought evident demonstrations, and the book which enlighteneth the understanding."

"They will ask thee concerning the spirit; answer, the spirit was created at the command of my Lord; but ye have no knowledge given unto you, except a little."

"This is light added unto light. God will direct His light unto whom He pleaseth."[*]

[*] Al Koran, chapters iii., xvii., and xxiv.

In the centre was a table covered by a crimson cloth, on which stood a species of altar, formed of brass, about two feet high, supported by four monstrous figures, the description of which is beyond the power of language, and before it lay the Koran, open, and from its leaves depended fifty-four flesh-coloured ribbons, with leaden seals attached to them, being one for every two of the chapters of that remarkable book.

Near this lay a rod of strangely-sculptured bronze, which was known to have been found in one of the six great cavern tombs that stand in the pass of Bibou-el-Melek at Thebes, by the side of a mummy, which was alleged to be that of a royal magician, for in those tombs lie the Egyptian kings of the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties.

Several bright green chameleons from Alexandria, which were perpetually crawling about this altar, and turning from their natural colour to red, blue, and white, according to the hue of anything they approached, added to the *diablerie* of this scene, which soon became rather exciting.

My own share in this adventure was so remarkable, that I came away with but a slight recollection of the part borne in it by my companions.

Indeed, I was the second person on whom he attempted to impose, if his singular mode of summoning, or spirit rapping, could be termed an imposition.

The first to whom he addressed himself was the Turkish soldier with whom we had found him in conversation.

The onbashi wished to know if his mother, Ayesha, widow of Abdallah Ebn Said, who dwelt at Adramyt, was well, and gave the hakim his fee—ten piastres—a large sum, no doubt, for the poor Osmanli warrior, who gazed about with considerable uneasiness, though the unabashed bearing of the Frenchmen might have reassured him; and I heard Jolicoeur whispering to Baudeuf that he had a dozen times seen just such a magical tableau at the Mabille and Porte St. Martin—*diable—oui!*—and had hissed it off, that he might have Mogador or Fleur d'Amour on with their dances.

"Ayesha, widow of Abdallah Ebn Said," muttered the hakim. "A lucky name—it was borne by one of the four perfect women who are now in Paradise."

Opening a gilt door in his little cabinet or altar, the hakim brought forth a large clam-shell and two phials of a dark liquid.

He wrote that verse of the Koran which I have quoted from chapter xvii., concerning the spirit, on a strip of parchment; then, pouring pure water over it, he washed it into the hollow of the shell; thus its sentiment and spirit were supposed to become a component part of the charm about to be wrought.

He then desired the onbashi to turn to the east, and pray (for religion evidently bore a great part in all his mummery), and next he summoned me to look into the shell, which he held in his left hand, while waving over it his bronze rod seven times—the mystical number.

I steadily gazed into the liquid, which a few drops from the phial had turned to a pale purple tint, but saw—nothing.

She did not appear. Thrice she was summoned, but in vain.

The hakim tugged his beard, frowned, and reddened with vexation, and emptied his shell, pouring the liquid carefully through a hole in the floor.

"My poor mother, then, is dead?" said the corporal, sadly, crossing his hands on his breast.

"Stafferillah! nay, do not think so," said the hakim, kindly.

"Why, effendi?"

"Because, in that case, the liquid would become as black as the holy Kaaba."

"But she did not appear?"

"This is an unlucky day, my son."

"Why so for me, if not for others? I never omit to wash and pray; and yesterday, O hakim, you showed strange things to the Franks, filling all their khans and coffee-houses with wonder."

"True; but go. Thou art one of the faithful. To the infidels all days are alike," replied the hakim, with a very unmistakable scowl at Jolicoeur and Baudeuf. "Doth not the Prophet say, 'Their works are like unto vapour in a plain, which the traveller thinketh to be water, until when he cometh thereto he findeth it to be nothing?'"

"Allah kerim!" said the onbashi, putting his right hand to his forehead, his mouth, and his heart, and stalking solemnly away.

Jolicoeur was pressing forward to summon his friend Sophie, no doubt, or perhaps some other gay damsel, when the hakim, who evidently disliked his scoffing smile and general bearing, ignored his presence, and said to me—

"Effendi, in what can I serve you?"

I felt the blood rush to my head, and in a whisper I mentioned to him Louisa Loftus. I was loth that my fast companions should hear her name, and make, perhaps, a jest of it. The hakim's fee was, I have said, ten piastres; but as I gave him above a hundred—or equal to a guinea sterling—there were no words to express his thanks in Egyptian or Turkish; he could only mutter, again and again—

"Shookier Allah! May God reward you!"

Again he produced his clam-shell, the surface of which I carefully surveyed, while with great alacrity he wrote a verse from the Koran. The shell was clear and pure; no picture, line, or drawing could be detected

on its pearly surface. Again he went through his mummery with the phials, and washed off the ink into the shell; again, as before, the liquid grew purple, and again he waved his rod of bronze.

"You wish to see her you love?" he whispered, with something of a licentious leer in his keen black eyes; "she who is to be your hanoum (wife or lady)?"

"Yes, effendi," said I, blushing like a great schoolboy, in spite of myself, all the more that I saw Jack Studhome's handkerchief at his mouth.

Fixing his keen eyes with something of sternness upon Jules Jolicoeur, whom he had suddenly detected in the act of mimicking him, the bearded hakim summoned him forward, and desired him to look into the shell, and tell us what he saw.

Abd-el-Rasig then turned to the east, and proceeded to pray and invoke in an inaudible voice.

I was four paces from the Zouave lieutenant, whose eyes, as he gazed into the shell, became dilated and fixed with astonishment, while his whole features, which were handsome, expressed something akin to fear.

"*Merveilleuse! mon Dieu! merveilleuse!*" he exclaimed.

"Do you see anything, monsieur?" I asked, with growing excitement.

"Yes—yes—*oui, peste*!"

"In heaven's name what do you see?"

"A lady!"

"A lady?"

"Yes; the face of a lady, young, and very gentle. It is pale; her eyes are dark, her hair thick and jetty—it seems almost blue in this purple shell. Her eyebrows and lashes are thick," he continued, speaking very fast. "She has an expression of intense sadness—ban Dieu!—she is like a sorrowing angel."

"Her nose is aquiline?" I suggested.

"On the contrary, it is neat and small, but not quite *retroussé*. She moves—*merveilleuse!*—tears—she is weeping! On her breast there is a silver crescent; and now—now—the whole thing fades away!"

I was springing forward, when the hakim waved me imperiously back with his bronze rod, and instantly poured the contents of the shell on the tiled floor, from which a strange mephitic odour rose.

This was not the case on the previous unsuccessful occasion. Jules, who had become quite grave, now turned eagerly, and full of interest, to me.

"Is this the lady whose face you saw?" I asked, showing him the miniature of Louisa.

"No, monsieur; there is not the least resemblance."

"Indeed!"

"I am somewhat of an artist, and know."

"You are sure?"

"Sure as I now address you, monsieur."

I began to smile.

"I have said that her eyes seemed dark, nearly as these. Her hair was black, thick, and wavy, but her nose and features were all smaller—more (pardon me, monsieur) feminine, perhaps—less decided in character, certainly; and on her breast she had a crescent of silver."

"A crescent!"

"Yes, monsieur, with a lion above it. The ornament seemed to fasten or adorn the dress, and I saw it distinctly till she placed her hand upon it, and then the water in the shell rippled. It is positively miraculous," he added, turning to Captain Baudeuf, who was twirling his moustache and smiling with obstinate incredulity.

The latter details petrified me.

Jolicoeur's description was completely that of my cousin, Cora Calderwood. The crescent and lion was a gift I had sent her from India—a double ornament I had picked up in the great pagoda at Rangoon, and which she always wore, preferring it to her father's crest and every other brooch.

"Are you satisfied, effendi?" asked the hakim, quietly, for he seemed used to astonishment on such occasions.

"I am bewildered, at all events, hakim," said I.

"Why so?"

"It was not she I asked for or whom I named."

"How do you know? You did not see. Another looked with your eyes."

"True—but what does the vision portend?"

"You asked to see her——"

"I loved, hakim," said I, emphatically.

"Nay, she who—if Allah and the Muscovite dogs spare you—is to be your wife, your *hanoum*. Do you not remember? Go! *Allah Kerim*! it is *kismet*—your destiny. The destinies of all, and the hour in which we are to die—yea, the very moment—are written by the finger of Azrael on our foreheads at our birth—on yours also, although you believe neither in Azrael[*] nor the Prophet. Go! the mark is there, although we see it not."

[*] The Mahommedan Angel of Death.

With those rather solemn words ringing in my ears, bewildered and thoroughly startled, I found myself traversing the streets of Varna with Studhome, while the French drummers were beating *la retraite* as the sun went down beyond those mountains that were then echoing with the cannon of Silistria, and while the shrill voices of the muezzins proclaimed the hour of evening prayer from the minarets of the mosques, into which the Moslems were pouring, with bowed heads and bare feet, to count their beads.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Sleep by evil spirits troubled,
Fleeing at the matin bell;
Fears that start to eyes scarce waking,
Sighs that will not quit her cell.

As from a dream I was roused at last by Jack Studhome proffering his cigar-case, and saying, with a smile—

"How about the year's pay, Norcliff, eh? I owe you that, I suppose?"

"Don't jest, for Heaven's sake, Jack," said I; "for I feel faint, queer, and ill."

All that night we talked over the affair, through the medium of sundry flasks of iced champagne, without being able to come to any conclusion about it.

As a piece of trickery, it beat all that we had ever seen performed at Cawnpore, Delhi, or Benares, by Indian jugglers, though at mess we had seen those worthies swallow a sword to the hilt, or run it through a basket, in which was concealed a child, whose blood and screams came forth together, till the room door opened, and the little one ran in joyously, unhurt, and without a wound; or the orange seed, which one placed in my tumbler, where it took root, and in three minutes became a little tree in full bearing, from which the mess plucked the oranges as it was handed round. All such performances were beaten by that of the hakim Abd-el-Rasig!

That Jules Jolicoeur had seen a female face—a pretty one, too—in the clam-shell was certain, by whatever art or legerdemain that circumstance was achieved. His astonishment was too genuine and too palpable to be acted. The detail of the crescent brooch was a coincidence, perhaps; but then his description of the wearer accorded so well with that of Cora!

I resolved to seek him next day; but he was despatched on duty along the road towards the Balkan; and, as the event proved, I became too ill to follow him.

As we rode home from the Restaurant de l'Armée d'Orient, I was sensible of extreme giddiness; but attributed it to the champagne. I could scarcely guide my horse along the road that led to our camp in the

vale of Aladyn, and felt Studhome repeatedly place his hand upon my bridle to guide me. I felt delirious, too, and next day found myself in the pangs of that foul pest, the cholera.

It seized me at the distance of some ten miles or so from the camp, from which I had ridden in search of Lieutenant Jolicoeur. I became so ill that I had to dismount, and was conveyed to the kiosk of a wealthy Armenian merchant, and there I remained in great peril for several days, before my circumstances or my whereabouts became known to my friends or the regiment.

I endured a severe pain or burning heat in the pit of my stomach, accompanied by the other symptoms of cholera—cramps in the limbs, and spasms of the intestines and muscles of the abdomen.

The pulses became faint, and at times scarcely perceptible; my skin grew cold, and suffused by a clammy perspiration. It was an undoubted case of spasmodic cholera.

I felt resigned and almost careless of life. There were times, however, when I reflected sorrowfully, almost bitterly, that it was not thus I had wished to die, unnoticed and unknown, among strangers in a foreign land; but, luckily for myself, I could not have fallen into more worthy hands.

The proprietor of the kiosk I have mentioned was a wealthy Armenian merchant, a native of Kars. Whether he was animated by that inordinate love of gain which is peculiar to his race, I know not; but he treated me with extreme kindness and hospitality, yet I never saw either him or any of his family. The dangerous nature of my disease was a sufficient excuse for my being carefully secluded from his entire household, which was numerous, as it consisted of several sons with their wives and children, all living together as one great family, but under his own rule, somewhat in the patriarchal mode of a Scottish clan under its chief.

In a little airy apartment, which opened upon a high-walled and spacious garden, I lay for many days, hovering between life and death. My medical attendant was an Italian surgeon, attached to the Bashi Bazooks, and wore a bright green frock-coat, long riding-boots, and a

crimson fez, with a long blue tassel and broad military button. He looked like a reckless foreign cut-throat, with a fierce moustache, vast black beard, and close shorn head; but his exterior belied his character and skill.

In the old Sangrado fashion he bled me, taking twenty-five ounces of blood from my left arm, and gave me, I remember, from eighty to a hundred drops of laudanum, together with a teaspoonful of cayenne pepper, in a glass of stiff brandy-and-water, steaming hot, ordering me to drain it almost at a draught.

"Oh, Signor Dottore," said I, "whence come those dreadful spasms?"

"They are rarely accounted for satisfactorily," he replied, with professional nonchalance; "but, if I were to venture an opinion, I should say that the *convulsioni* arise from distended vessels, in the neighbourhood of the spine, on the origin of the nerves—you understand, Signor Capitano?"

I was soon past understanding anything; but, after the hot dose, I was wrapped in hot blankets, friction, with strong stimulating liniments, being applied along the spine by the hard hands of two black slaves, and heated bricks were placed to my feet and hands; and under all this process I fainted away.

For days I was as one who is in a dream, passive in the hands of those sable assistants, who, doubtless, thought a bowstring would have proved a "perfect cure," and a saving of considerable trouble. The green frogged coat, the crimson fez, and the dark face of the Italian doctor, as he came from time to time, seemed all a portion of the phantasmagoria which surrounded me; but there came anon a sweeter, a softer, and more feminine face, with a lighter and a smaller hand, that seemed to touch me and smooth my pillow; and with this vision came thoughts of Louisa, of Cora, of the hakim Abd-el-Rasig and his magic spells, and then I would close my eyes, wondering whether I was asleep or awake, or if in a dream, from which I would waken, to find myself in my cool bell-tent in the green breezy vale of Aladyn, in my familiar quarters at Canterbury, or it might be in the dear old room of my boyhood, where

my mother had so often hung over me and watched, in Calderwood Glen, and then I seemed to hear the cawing of the hoodiecrows among the ancient trees that rustled their green leaves in the summer wind.

The murmuring breeze that came so pleasantly to my dreaming ear passed over wooded mountains; but, alas! they were those of Bulgaria, and not my native land.

Amid all the wild ideas induced by my condition was the overpowering sense of weakness, with intense prostration and lassitude; but now, thanks to Heaven, to human skill, to my own youth and strength, the terrible disease was passing away.

While, by a stupidity or treachery closely akin to treason, our army, during the hot, breathless months of a Bulgarian summer, lay rotting and inactive at Varna, as if merely waiting the approach of winter to open a campaign with Russia—hardy Russia, the land of ice and snows, whose rash emperor boasted that her two most terrible generals were January and February—the fell disease which prostrated me was making sad havoc among my brave and patient comrades.

The 7th, 23rd, and 88th regiments, and all the infantry generally—the Highlanders almost excepted, their Celtic costume being an admirable safeguard by its warmth about the loins—were decimated by cholera. The Inniskillings and 5th Dragoon Guards were reduced to mere skeletons, and few cavalry colonels could bring more than two hundred and fifty sabres into the field.

So much was my own corps reduced, that on one parade Beverley only mustered two hundred lances; but many convalescents joined after. It was remarked that many of the ambulance corps, after what was termed "the great thunder-storm," died within five hours of being assailed by the plague.

Thus, "hundreds of brave men, who had left the British shores, full of high hope and manly strength, died in the valley of Aladyn, or on the hills overlooking Varna! The army grew discontented. Though no act unbecoming British soldiers was committed—though no breach of discipline could be charged—it was impossible to refrain from discontent. Murmurs, not loud but deep, made themselves heard. No

man there but burned to meet the enemy. The entire army was prepared cheerfully to face death in the service of the country to which it had sworn allegiance; but to remain in inactivity, exposed to pestilence, which struck down its victims as surely, and nearly as speedily, as the rifle-bullet, beneath a burning sun, with no power of resistance, and no possibility of evasion, was a fate which might quell the stoutest courage, and raise discontent in the most loyal bosom."

Seven thousand Russians, who had perished of cholera some time before, were buried in the vicinity of our camp; and thus the green, smiling spot which the Bulgarians named the vale of Aladyn, the bearded Muscovites anathematized as the Valley of the Plague!

While such was the state of our inactive army at Varna, our fleet in the Black Sea was vainly seeking to lure the Russian vessels from their secure anchorage under the formidable batteries of Sebastopol; and the Turkish army was exhibiting a courage which astonished all Europe.

At Giurgevo, a city on the left bank of the Danube, on the 7th of July, a mere handful of Turks, chiefly led by a gallant Scot, styled Behram Pasha,[*] defeated a large force of Russians, after a desperate conflict. At Kalafat the latter sought in vain to force the passage of the river, and drive the Osmanlees from their stronghold; and at Citate and Oltenitza they were routed with disgrace. For neither their own native prowess, the prayers of the Bishop of Moscow, nor the miraculous image of St. Sergius, availed them—the blue cross of St. Andrew and the Eagle of Muscovy fled alike before the crescent and star of Mahommed. And now Silistria, on the Danube—"the thundering river"—became the base of operations; and there Moussa Pasha, Butler, an Irish officer, and my countryman, Naysmith, covered themselves with glory, while the Hungarian exile, Omar Pasha, opposed the foe with all his available troops.

[*] Lieutenant-Colonel Cannon.

During this time the French continued pouring into Varna, by marching across the Balkan, the great mountain barrier of Turkey, the rocky passes and deep defiles of which are almost impassable in winter.

On the 28th of July the Russians were driven from Wallachia; but the Turks were utterly defeated by them at Bayazid, on the slopes of Western Armenia, and again at Kuyukdere. Our fleets bombarded Kola, on the White Sea, and the 4th of September saw the eagle of victory hovering over the armies of the Czar at Petropaulovski; but thus the summer passed with us ingloriously away, and still our army lay inactive amid a hotbed of fever and suffering at hated Varna.

The most of these stirring events I learned after my recovery from that illness which so nearly carried me off. I knew nothing of them while in the house of the Armenian, and equally little did I know that Mr. De Warr Berkeley, in the hope that I might never rejoin, was doing all he could to blot my military reputation in the brigade to which we belonged.

It was on a morning in June—the 23rd, I think—the same day on which the Russians raised the siege of Silistria, leaving twelve thousand dead before its walls—that I seemed to wake from a long and refreshing slumber.

The vague, drowsy sense of having been surrounded by phantasms and unrealities, and that it was not Newton Norcliff, but some one else, who was lying there, sick and weary, had passed away with sleep. I was conscious and coherent now, but weak with past suffering.

Through the lattices of a pretty kiosk (for that word signifies alike a room or a house), I could see the great rose trees, covered with their fragrant glories, standing in rows, or trained over gilded iron bowers or arches. The leaves of the apricot, the purple plum and greengage trees, rustled pleasantly in the passing breeze, and pleasantly, too, there came to my ear the plashing of a marble fountain that stood in the shaded verandah without.

Around that white marble fountain grew the great scarlet pumpkin and the golden-coloured water-melon, their gaudy brilliance contrasting with the green leaves amid which they nestled. The garden was an

epitome of Turkey, for there the blood-red ilex of Italy, the rose tree of Persia, the palm of Egypt, the Indian fig, and the African aloe, with the tall, solemn cypress, all grew side by side in the lovely parterres, through which the sunshine fell aslant in golden flakes.

The kiosk in which I lay was floored with marble slabs. Its walls were painted gaily with a panoramic view of Constantinople. I could recognise the heights of Pera, and all the Propontis, from the Seraglia point to the Seven Towers, with all the glories of the Golden Horn, Sophia's shining cupola, the Serai Bournou, and the cypress groves, where the dead of ages lie.

I was reposing in a pretty bed, with spotless white hangings, and lace all so charmingly arranged, that it reminded me of a baby's cradle. A divan of yellow silk cushions surrounded the apartment on three sides. On the fourth it was entirely open to the verandah and garden. On this divan I saw my undress uniform, neatly folded, with my forage-cap, sword, and cartridge-box placed above it.

My watch and purse, Louisa's miniature and ring—I felt for the latter involuntarily—were all lying on a little white marble tripod table by my side, together with a beautiful china drinking vessel, which seemed familiar to me.

A sigh of thankfulness that I was conscious, free of pain, and at comparative ease, escaped me, and I turned to survey again the other side of my chamber, when a remarkable female figure met my eye.

She was seated on the low divan, quite motionless. She was reading intently, and by her costume I knew at once that she was a French sister of charity—one of those pure in heart, great in soul, and unflinching in purpose, who, on their saint-like mission of mercy and humanity, had followed the allies from France.

Her dress was a plain black serge gown, with a spotless white coif, which fell in soft folds upon her shoulders, pure as the feathers of a dove. In her gentle face, which seemed familiar—for doubtless it had often been before me in the intervals of suffering and delirium—there was a kind, a peaceful, and divine expression, that underlay the lines of premature care, suffering, and privation.

She was young; but among the dark brown hair that was braided smoothly and modestly over her pale, serene brow, I could detect already a silver thread or two.

So perfectly regular were her features, so straight the lines of eyebrow and nose, that the dark, speaking eyes, and that drooping form of eyelid peculiar to the south of Europe, alone relieved them from tameness, for I had seen more sparkling beauty in a somewhat irregular face; but in those dark eyes there ever shone the steady light of a soul devoted to one great purpose; and yet at times, as I afterwards found, her manner could become merry, almost playful.

Slight though the motion of simply turning my head, she heard it, arose anxiously, and, coming forward, handed to me a cooling drink.

"Mademoiselle, I thank you!" said I, gratefully.

"You must not thank me, monsieur. I am simply your nurse."

"And I have disturbed you——"

"At my office—merely, monsieur, at my office, which I can read at any time within the twenty-four hours."

"And how often do you do this?"

"Every day—all these pages—see!"

Her voice was so very silvery, her eyes so calm and lustrous, her hands so white and small, that it was impossible not to see that she had been highly bred, delicately nurtured, and came of some good French family.

"How long have I been here, mademoiselle?" I asked, after a pause.

"I do not know. Monsieur was here when I came."

"And who brought you to nurse me?"

"Lieutenant Jolicoeur, of the 2nd Zouaves, heard somehow that you were here, suffering under a perilous illness. An Italian surgeon chanced to mention it at the Restaurant de l'Armée d'Orient, and they brought me here. We are in the house of a rich Armenian trader—a good Christian, after his own fashion; but, O Sacre Coeur! what an odd fashion it is!"

"Ah! mademoiselle——"

"I am Archange, of the Order of Charity."

"Well, Sister Archange, you are really an angel!"

"Oh, fie! don't say so! You must think very poorly, very meanly, of me to give me a title I dare not hope to merit, even by a thousand actions such as attending you."

"Pardon me; I did but—but say what I thought."

"You are a child, and thought wrong," she replied, with playful asperity. "But you have already spoken too much for one who is only beginning to recover; so try to sleep, *mon frère*."

And, waving her hand with a pretty gesture of authority, she resumed her missal, and read on in silence.

I slept for a time—I know not how long—it might have been an hour, or perhaps two: but, when I looked up, she was still seated, motionless and reading.

"*Ma soeur!*" said I, as our eyes met, and my heart swelled with gratitude for her generous watchfulness; and she came hastily towards me.

"*Mon frère*, what do you want?"

"You mistook my meaning when I called you an angel, and were angry with me."

"Angry?—I? Ah, no! no! Don't say so—I am never angry; it would not do for me to be so now."

"But I think you quite a saint to watch me thus."

"You must not say that either."

"You are so good, and I so unworthy."

"Good I may be thought, monsieur; but I shall never be a saint, like Father Vincent de Paul—I am too wicked for that," she added, laughing merrily; "but I try to be as good as I can."

"Have any letters come here for me?"

"Letters!" she said, with alarm in her fine eyes, and withdrawing a pace.

"Yes; I am so anxious for them."

"Ah! now you are beginning to rave again. In your pain and delirium you always raved about letters."

"There are, then, none?" said I, with a groan.

"I shall see, *mon frère*," and, in the kindness of her heart, after pretending to search for what she too well knew were not to be found, she came again to my bedside, and said there would, perhaps, be some to-morrow.

"Still no letter!" I exclaimed, sadly, with tears in my eyes.

She laid a soft hand caressingly on my brow.

I besought her, in the most moving terms, to inquire if there were any letters for me at our cantonments in the vale of Aladyn, heedless of the distance and of the trouble I gave her; for I thought only of Louisa Loftus, and that her answer to my Gallipoli missive might have reached the regiment during my illness and absence.

"Monsieur, then, belongs to the English service?"

"No."

"The Osmanli army, then?"

"No, mademoiselle; I belong to the British," said I.

"Ah! true. But your uniform is not red?"

"All our light cavalry wear blue. Ah, *ma soeur*, seek the quarters of the lancers serving in the Light Brigade, and see if there is a letter for me. It will do me more good than all the doses of our Italian doctor."

"Ah! you will be dosed by him no more."

"I am truly glad to hear it. Some of his messes were vile enough."

"Do not speak so ungratefully; but you know not what I mean or what has happened."

"How?"

"Poor *monsieur le docteur* is dead."

"Dead!"

"He died of cholera in the cavalry camp yesterday. He had volunteered to attend the sick soldiers in the vale of Aladyn, and perished at his post among them."

I was greatly shocked by this intelligence, which perhaps, it was not wise in my little nurse to afford me at such a time.

When again I woke from sleep the shadows of evening were darkening the room; the trellis-work and Venetian lattices that had opened to the sunlit garden were closed now, and the sun had set. Sister

Archange was seated in her usual place upon the low divan, but looking pale and exceedingly fatigued.

She had been at the British cavalry camp, and she had seen my friends, but no letters had arrived for me, of that she was assured, as she had taken one of my cards from its case to show the commanding officer.

"No letters?" I repeated, in a hollow tone.

"No; but, *monsieur mon frère*, must take courage. Many, many ships have perished in a recent storm in the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmora, and your letters may have gone to the bottom with the mail steamer. Monsieur Estoodome—*monsieur l'adjudant* he is, I think, of your regiment—and *monsieur le colonel*, too, will ride over here to-morrow to see you. And now there must be no more talking, but to sleep, *mon ami*—to sleep. I must take care of you now, for *la soeur* Archange will not be with you always."

"What are you doing?"

"Making the sign of the cross on your forehead, *mon frère*. To-morrow I shall tell you what it means, if you will remind me; but, for to-night, adieu."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

O fondest memories! come and go,
Shine on sad times which are no more,
As sunbeams gladden waters of snow,
As wavelets kiss a barren shore:
And light with love and tenderness
The happy days which still are ours;
Whose influence, rich in April showers,
Casts round us love and tenderness.

The clatter of spurs and scabbards, and the firmer tread of feet than one usually hears among the slipshod or slippered Moslems, next forenoon, announced the arrival of my friends, and most welcome to me was the appearance of Colonel Beverley, Studhome, Wilford, and Jocelyn of ours, all fearless of cholera, as they came through the verandah of the kiosk where I lay; and there, too, lingering without, I saw my faithful follower, Pitblado.

They were all in full uniform and accoutred, for it was the day of a great review; and all bowed with politeness to the sister of charity, who immediately withdrew to the shadow of the verandah.

"I rejoice to see you, my dear boy," said the colonel; "we had all given you up as lost to us and to the regiment."

"Lost, colonel?" I repeated.

"Faith, did we, Newton," said Studhome. "We concluded that you had been waylaid—cut off in the flower of your youth and day-dawn of ambition, as the novels have it—by some Bulgarian footpads or rascally Bashi Bazooks, for I presume you know that no one can go beyond the advanced posts with safety without a revolver."

"A rumour reached us of a British cavalry officer being conveyed seriously ill to the house of an Armenian gentleman," resumed Beverley. "We strongly suspected that you were the person, and the presumption became a certainty when yesterday this young lady brought your card to my tent at the cavalry camp."

"She is a good little saint," said I, with enthusiasm.

"And so, Norcliff, you have actually had cholera—that foul pest which is destroying our noble army piece-meal?"

"I am recovering, as you see; but pray don't linger here, colonel. There is danger by my side."

"Norcliff, the air we breathe is full of cholera," said Beverley, impatiently twisting his grizzled moustache; "our poor fellows are dying of it like sheep with the rot!"

"If the Emperor of Russia had planned the whole affair himself, he could not have taken better measures to weaken and decimate us than this useless camp at Varna."

"You are right, Studhome—to decimate us before the war begins," added Jocelyn.

"When do we take the field, colonel?"

"No one knows."

"Then how long are we to remain here?"

"No one can tell. Satisfactory, isn't it? In fact, no one knows anything."

"Except," said Studhome, "that we are giving the Russians plenty of time to prepare a hot reception for us, if we venture to seek 'the bubble reputation' in the Crimea—or military fame, which, as some one says, consists of 'a few orders on a tight uniform.'"

"How far am I from the camp, colonel?"

"About five miles."

"Five miles!" I exclaimed, "Then you, my poor friend, Sister Archange, actually walked for me ten miles under a broiling sun yesterday?"

"Yes, *monsieur le capitaine*," she replied; "and happy would I have been could I have returned with what you wished for."

"How sorry I am! How can I ever repay, ever apologize, for the amount of trouble I have given you?"

"Apologies are not to be thought of," said she, quietly; "and as for repayment, we do not look for that—here, at least."

She smiled, and looked very beautiful. Twirling his carefully-bandolined moustache, Jocelyn, who had been observing her admiringly, was about to address her in, perhaps, rather a heedless way, when Beverley said to him pointedly—

"Those French sisters of charity are the admiration of all the troops. Even the stupid Turks adore them, and are bewildered by a devotion and purity of purpose which their sensual souls cannot understand. Mademoiselle, we have no language to describe what we owe to your order."

The sister of charity gave the colonel a pleasant smile, and a bow full of grace and good humour.

"Our visit," said he, "is necessarily a hurried one. We are all in full puff, as you may see, Norcliff, for this afternoon the cavalry division is to be reviewed before Omar Pasha and Marshal St. Arnaud."

"Hence my Lord Lucan is most anxious that each and all should appear in his best bib and tucker," added Studhome.

After they were gone, I turned again to thank the gentle sister of charity for the journey she had made, on a hot and breathless day, through a camp of more than eighty thousand foreign troops, to serve me.

She only gave me one of her pleasant smiles, and; taking the miniature of Louisa from the tripod table, said in a low voice, "Is this the lady from whom you expect letters?"

"Yes."

She shook her head sadly, as if her survey of the tiny portrait had not proved satisfactory.

"Why do you look thus, *ma soeur*? What do you see?"

"Much of dangerous beauty; but more of pride, of caution, tact, and cold decision. The eyebrows nearly meet—I don't like that. The eyes are lovely; but—but——"

"What?" I asked, almost imperiously.

"I dare not say it. I may be guilty of the sin of detraction."

"Nay, speak, I beg of you. The eyes are lovely, you say, but——"

"Have an untruthful expression."

"Ah, good heavens, don't say so!"

My heart sank as she spoke, and I sighed deeply.

"I have seen such eyes and brows once before, and I remember the sorrow they wrought."

The paragraph which I had read in the London morning paper, on board the *Ganges*, in the harbour of Valetta—that fulsome paragraph, at which Berkeley had smiled so complacently and covertly—came to my memory word for word now. Was it possible that the journal was true,

and Louisa false? After an uncomfortable pause, I related to the sister the strange episode which occurred at the house of the hakim Abd-el-Rasig.

"*Magique!*" she exclaimed, while her large eyes became larger still, and she crossed herself three several times with great earnestness. "*O Sainte Dame!* you tried the art of the great fiend, did you?"

"Who—I? Not at all! How could I? Don't imagine anything so absurd. The man is only a trickster, like Houdin or Herr Frickel."

But she seemed so horrified at me, and "the art that none may name," that I was fain to explain that the whole affair originated in the suggestion of Studhome, and some of the officers of the 2nd Zouaves, in a moment of idleness.

"I can tell you many a tale of the wickedness of having recourse to magic, and the retribution which falls on those who do so," said she. "Have you ever read the writings of the fathers?"

"No, I regret exceedingly," I was beginning, when I could not help laughing at her conceiving such a course of reading palatable to a young cavalry officer. Even the pundits who "go in" for cramming, that they may have the magical letters "P.S.C."[*] after their names in the "Army List," do not go that length.

[*] Passed (final examination) at the Staff College,

"Have you ever heard of St. Jerome?" she asked, gravely.

"I think so, *ma soeur*."

"Well, I shall tell you a tale he records concerning magic, and one who resorted thereto. Once upon a time in France, your odious Abd-el-Rasig would have been burned alive, for there can be no doubt that, like those of the Egyptian magicians of old, his operations are conducted with infernal agency. Can the accounts we hear of those magicians from Moses admit of any other construction?"

"Of course not, though I can't for the life of me see what you are driving at."

"If ever you see him again, *mon frère*, make the sign of the cross, and then you will see how he will shrink and whine, like Mephistopheles in the opera, for it is a sign that always sends the thoughts heavenward. We are told that, if St. Ephrem saw a little bird fly, he always remembered that, with pinions outspread, it made the sign of the cross as it soared towards heaven; but that when it folded those wings the holy sign was marred, and the poor bird fell at once, grovelling and fluttering, on the earth."

"Well, *ma soeur*; but the story and St. Jerome?"

"Pardon me, I had forgotten. He tells, in his life of St. Hilarion the Hermit—ah, you never heard of him either—that a gay young man of the town of Gaza, in Syria, fell deeply in love with a young lady, whom he used to see occasionally in those beautiful gardens of tamarisks, figs, and olives for which the place is still so famous; but she was pious, devoted to Heaven and to religion, and, consequently, shunned him—a course which only added the stings of jealousy and attraction to the passion which she had inspired.

"His glances, his tender whispers, his presents, and professions she treated with coldness; his attempted caresses she repulsed with anger and disdain, till, finding all his attempts baffled and ineffectual, in a fit of rage and despair he went to Memphis, which was then the residence of many eminent magicians, all reputed to possess wonderful power.

"There he remained a whole year, studying the dark mysteries under the tutelage of the most learned, until he deemed himself sufficiently instructed; and, exulting in his unholy knowledge, acquired chiefly among the graves which still lie to the south and westward of Memphis, and where one may walk for miles and miles amid bones and fragments of crumbling mummies, he returned to Gaza, confident that now he could bend the inflexible beauty to his will.

"Beneath the marble peristyle of her father's house he contrived to lodge at midnight a plate of brass, whereon he had engraved a potent spell. Hence, the first time she passed over it a wondrous illness seized her! She became furious, says St. Jerome; she tore her glorious hair, she

gnashed her teeth, and raved over the name and image of the very youth whom she had so repeatedly driven from her presence in despair by her coldness and hauteur.

"In sorrow and terror her parents conducted her to the hermitage of St. Hilarion; and then, when the holy hands of the old man crossed her, the devil that was within her began to howl, and to confess the truth.

"'I have suffered violence!' he exclaimed, speaking with *her* tongue, to the fear of all.

"St. Hilarion took a branch of blessed palm, and, having dipped it in holy water as an esperges, threw the sparkling drops profusely over her, on which the devil exclaimed again—

"'I have been forced here against my inclination! Alas! these drops are as freezing ice! Oh, how happy I was at Memphis among the tombs of the dead! Oh! the pains, the tortures I suffer!'

"Then the hermit commanded him to come forth; but the devil told him that he was detained by a brazen spell beneath the peristyle of the maiden's house.

"So cautious was the saint, however, that he would not permit the magic figures to be searched for till he had released the virgin, for fear he should seem to have intercourse with incantations for the performance of a cure, or to have believed that a devil could ever speak truth. He observed that demons are always liars, and cunning only to deceive."

"So the damsel was released?" said I, who had listened with some amusement to the story, which was told me with implicit faith in its veracity.

"Yes; but the devil, ere he went back to Memphis, paid a terrible visit to his first summoner; for the young man was found in the garden of olives, strangled, with the marks of talons in his throat. So, *mon ami*, never again have recourse to such persons as Abd-el-Rasig. Promise this to your little sister, Archange!"

"I may well promise you that, or anything else you ask," said I, charmed by her winning manner. "How sweetly your name sounds when pronounced by yourself."

"Do you really think so?" she asked, while her dark eyebrows arched up. "My godfather named me Archange, that I might be under the protection of the archangels. You comprehend me, monsieur? When I joined the order of the *soeurs de la charité* for my noviciate in the Rue du Vieux Colombier, to share with the Sisters of St. Martha the care of the sick in the hospitals of Paris, they saw no reason to change it; and hence I am still, as I was before—before I thought of being a sister of charity—Archange."

To a sick man's ear, there was a soothing charm in the girl's voice and its intonation. Then her broken English, her earnestness, truthfulness, and intense faith in all the little religious legends and anecdotes with which she amused us, were all fascinating, and there came a time when I missed her, and then sorely. Add to all these that, in the girl's beautiful but colourless face, there was an expression singularly pure, noble, and frank, lofty, and at times sublime. I was very curious to know her surname, and the reason why she had adopted a life of such privation and peril as that of a Sister of Charity—an order so severe, and whose duties were a ceaseless round of privation and peril. Without being uncourteously curious, I knew not how to approach the subject; but next day, after Jack Studhome and Fred Wilford (who rode over from the camp) had retired, she imparted the little story of her past life of her own accord, and the circumstance came about very simply, through a mere remark of mine. The mail steamer had come in from Constantinople, but Studhome had no letter for me.

"Ah, *ma soeur* Archange, I begin to be torn by jealousy," said I.

"Why?" she asked, gently.

"I cannot say why, as the only man in England I have reason to fear is a creature so contemptible."

"Then wherefore give way to a weakness so odious and so tempting?"

"Tempting?" I repeated.

"Yes; I mean tempting to crime."

"How strangely you speak!"

"But truly," she replied, sadly.

"I do not understand——"

"I can tell you a horrible episode," she began, impetuously; "but no, 'tis better forgotten—forgotten, if possible, than to recollect it now, in all its sad details," she added, after a pause.

"Why?"

"You have unbosomed yourself to me, and have told to me your only sorrow; why should I conceal mine? or why be less communicative to you? Well, I shall tell you why I—for the sake of others, rather than even for my own soul's welfare—dedicated myself to God and the order of charity. By jealousy, and the revenge it inspired, I lost a brother whom I idolized, and two friends whom I loved dearly; and, monsieur, it all happened thus."

After a short pause, with her long dark lashes cast down, and her little white hands folded on her knees, she told me the following story:—"My father, M. Marie Anatole Chaverondier, resided in a little antique château among the mountains of Beaujolais, where we had a property which, though small, is fertile, and in some places is covered with fine old wood. Our château is very ancient, for it had anciently been a hunting-seat of the illustrious family of Beaujeu, who gave their name to all that district; and thus we have rooms that many a time were honoured by the presence of the Great Constable and the Dukes of Bourbon.

"I can, in fancy, see that dear old château now, with its round turrets, its gilded vanes, and white façade, rising above the green woodlands, with the blue Saône flowing in front under an ancient bridge, the central arch of which had been blown up in the wars of the old revolution, but was now partly repaired by logs of oak, that were half-hidden by luxuriant ivy, and beautiful red and white roses. Ah!" she exclaimed, while her splendid eyes became suffused with tears, "shall I ever again see the old Château de Chaverondier?

"My mother was dead. My father—a gentleman of the *ancien régime*, a strict legitimist, or adherent of the old monarchy, and a worshipper in secret of Henri V.—resided there in seclusion with his family, which consisted of myself, my brother Claude, and three or four

servants; and, save our tutor, who was the old curé of the neighbouring village, or monsieur le maire of Beaujeu, we had few or no visitors; and our time glided away amid quiet pleasures, but with no sorrow, till Claude, a tall and handsome youth, left us for the military school of St. Cyr.

"There he soon received the commission of sous-lieutenant in the 3rd Light Infantry of the line, then commanded by Colonel François-Certain de Canrobert, now marshal of our army in the East.

"I sorrowed for my brother, my lost companion, long and earnestly. We had no more rambles now by the Sacine, in search of flowers and ferns, or in the deep dark woodland dells around the old château. There was a sad emptiness and loneliness in and around it, too. I no longer heard my brother's clear voice singing merrily as he prepared his flies and fishing-rod, or the report of his gun waking the echoes of the forest; and I went to mass, to confession, and to communion alone, for my father had become too feeble now to leave his apartment, and my chief solace was in attending him; so, monsieur, you see that I served an early apprenticeship in the sick chamber.

"But there were others who sorrowed for the absent Claude—the two daughters of Montallé, the maire of Beaujeu, a wealthy proprietor of several forges and furnaces, whose alliance my father would have opposed with disdain and wrath; but that did not prevent us from being great friends with Lucrece and Cecile, whom we had been in the habit of meeting so regularly at mass, and with whom we worked in common to decorate the altar of monsieur le curé on holidays.

"Both were remarkably handsome and sprightly girls. Cecile was fair and gentle, and Claude, I knew, loved her, and sighed for her, even as a boy; but Lucrece, the elder, I also knew, loved him in her secret heart, for she had frequently told me so after his departure for St. Cyr, and more than once I had seen a dangerous expression in her pale face and dark eyes when Cecile spoke of him with regret or affection. Dark as night were the eyes of Lucrece. Her nose was aquiline, and over it her eyebrows nearly met; and she had a general expression not unlike that which I saw in your miniature. Letters came at times to our old château

among the mountains of Beaujolais from the absent Claude; but it was soon too evident that Cecile Montallé was in correspondence with him as well as I; for she knew quite as soon as we did of Claude's movements, and those of the 3rd Light Infantry, with which he was serving in Africa; and she knew before we did of how he had distinguished himself in Canrobert's famous expedition against Ahmed-Sghir, when that chief rallied the tribes of the Bouaoun in revolt against France.

"In 1850, Claude wrote us that he had been wounded in Canrobert's expedition against Narah, that Colonel Canrobert had granted him leave of absence, and that he was coming home. No hearts were so happy as ours at the old château, on learning that Claude was returning, and covered with honour, too—save, perhaps, the fair-haired Cecile Montallé. There was a radiance in her pink cheek, a sparkle in her beautiful blue eyes, when we met at church in Beaujeu, which showed that she, too, was mistress of the same joyous tidings; and, in the fulness of her heart, she confessed to me that she and Claude had corresponded long, had exchanged rings, and were mutually attached and engaged. I loved my brother. Could I wonder that Cecile Montallé did so too? Lucrece, who stood by us, heard all this with a lowering brow, and there was the old and strange expression in her face which had terrified me before as I kissed her, and got into our old-fashioned carriage to return to the château, which stands some five leagues or so from Beaujeu.

"For days I busied myself, preparing for the reception of Claude. His old room was put in order by my own hands. Alas! I could little foresee that he was never to tread its floor again! In fact, the unhappy Lucrece was the victim of an absorbing and corroding jealousy; and in her heart she was beginning to hate and to loathe her guileless and unsuspecting sister. To add to this evil feature in our mutual relations, when I ventured timidly to speak of Claude's engagement to my father, he became inflamed with sudden fury. All the buried pride of the old days of the monarchy—the days of periwigs and pasteboard skirts, of shoe-buckles and rapiers—with the memory of past greatness, and the time when the Constable and Dukes of Bourbon had joined our forefathers in the chase, and shared their hospitality in Chaverondier—all this I saw

blazed up within him! His eyes flashed with fire, and his thin bent form became erect. He had been proud of his son's brilliant career under Canrobert; he had pictured for him a brilliant future; he already saw him ranked among the marshals of France, reviving the past glories of ancestors who had left their bones at Pavia, Rocroi and Ramilies.

"But now he thought all those ancient triumphs and those revived hopes would be blighted and blotted by a disgraceful marriage with a mere *bourgeoise*—a vulgar smelter of iron—a man who had begun life with a hammer and bellows; a grimy manufacturer of spades, ploughs, and pickaxes for the markets of Beaujeu, Belleville, and Chalieu!

"My father thought of his sixteen heraldic quarters, among which were the arms of Cressi, Sante-Croix, and Segonzoe, the three noblest families in Beaujolais, and swore by the souls of his fathers that such a marriage could never be. He did more. He wrote a severe and sarcastic letter to the maire of Beaujeu, warning him of his most severe displeasure, if the correspondence between his daughter and 'Monsieur my son, the Captain Chaverondier,' was not at once and for ever ended. To have read that letter might have made one think that the Grand Monarque was still flirting at the Trianon, and that the fleur-de-lis still waved above the Bastille of St. Antoine. On the other hand the maire Montallé was a sturdy and purse-proud republican; one who in his youth had fought at the barricades, had sacked the Tuileries, and had actually beaten on his drum, by order of Santerre, to drown the dying words of the son of St. Louis! So he retorted in a manner which I do not choose to repeat; but therewith ended all the hopes of the sweet and gentle Cecile, and of my brave brother, who was travelling, as fast as the railway trains could fly, through the provinces from Marseilles, to see us all, and his own happy home again.

"At those malignant letters, the dark Lucrece laughed bitterly. At Beaujeu poor Claude learned the state of affairs between the families, and, weak as he had become by hard service in Africa, and the wound he had received at Narah, he could barely withstand the shock. It filled him with despair; but he loved Cecile too well to relinquish her. They had many interviews, contrived I know not how, and a secret marriage was

arranged and concluded before even the watchful and jealous Lucrece could discover them, or interrupt it; so nothing remained now but for Claude to carry off his bride, to reach the old château among the mountains of Beaujolais, and trust to his father's old parental love and pride in his recent bravery for forgiveness.

"A powerful Arab horse, with which Canrobert had presented him (and which had borne a warrior of the Kabyles in many a bloody conflict) was accoutred with a market saddle and pillion to bear the lovers, who were to be disguised as a farmer and his wife, lest *monsieur le maire* and his workmen might assume arms and fire on them; for the Revolution of two years before had left much bad feeling between the aristocrats and the *canaille* (as the former most unwisely termed the latter), and thus in the provinces many a lawless act was done that never reached Paris, or figured in the pages of the *Moniteur*.

"So Claude wore a blue blouse over his uniform, a straw hat, in lieu of the smart scarlet kepi; and Cecile was disguised as a *paysanne* of Beaujolais. All this was achieved with the assistance of Lucrece. Dull despair had settled on her heart now, and, finding that Cecile was irrevocably the wife of Claude Chaverondier, she could only endeavour to be resigned, and to complete the happiness she had failed to mar or interrupt, and could never hope to enjoy.

"The night on which they were to set forth was dark and tempestuous. Near Beaujeu there rolls a mountain torrent, a tributary of the Saône. It was crossed by a narrow wooden bridge, at a place where, between two high and impending banks, on this night, it was foaming white and furiously, as snows were melting in the mountains, and every tiny rivulet was full to overflowing.

"Lucrece had secured the key of the private gate which closed the end of this bridge, and she was to lock it after the lovers had passed through, and thus bar pursuit in that direction. With a sad heart she issued forth to undo the barrier. So wild was the tempestuous wind that she could barely keep afoot, and she felt her aching heart tremble when she saw the blackness of the fast-flying clouds, between which the pale stars shone coldly forth at intervals; and now she came to where the

black and hideous chasm yawned in the rocks, and she could see, far down below, the snow-white flood boiling hoarsely over its stony bed, deep, fierce, and swollen, as it rushed to join the Saône, hurling rocks and trees together to the sea.

"The wild winter flood and the stormy night were both in accordance with the tempestuous spirit that writhed in her bosom. She heard the hoofs of Claude's Arab horse, as their clatter was swept past on the wind, that blew her black, dishevelled hair in disorder about her pallid face; and as she unlocked the gate, a sob of astonishment and terror escaped her.

"The wooden bridge had fallen, or been torn by the tempest from its posts, and the gulf was impassable.

"To warn the lovers was her first good impulse; to be silent was the second.

"As they rode up to thank and bid her adieu, she saw their mutual endearments; she saw the strong arm of Claude caressingly round the waist of Cecile, and her head reposing trustfully on his shoulder, as she sat on the saddle before him. Then a madness seemed to sting the heart of Lucrece! She felt herself to the fullest extent the neglected, the discarded, the unloved one, and revenge and hatred filled her soul with a dreadful fury.

"'Adieu, dear, dear Lucrece!' cried Cecile; 'adieu! and pray for us.'

"'Ride on; the way is clear,' she replied, in a breathless voice.

"And Claude gave the spur to his Arab. Like an arrow it shot past her. In another instant a scream rang upward on the stormy wind, as the horse and its double burden went headlong into the wild abyss of rushing water far below, and disappeared for ever!

"So perished my dear brother Claude, and with him my friend Cecile.

"Lucrece stood there for a time like one bewildered and aghast, for the whole episode resembled a sudden and ghastly dream, from which she might yet awaken. She saw only the river foaming past like a white flood amid the blackening gloom, and its roar seemed deafening and stunning, and she placed her hands on her ears to shut out the sound, as

she went slowly home, and for days and nights the roar of the river seemed never to leave her. From that hour she was quite insane, and, if still alive, is an inmate of the lunatic asylum at Beaujeu.

"This double catastrophe had such an effect upon my spirits that, after the death of my father, by the advice of *monsieur le curé*, I quitted the Château de Chaverondier, joined the order to which I now belong, and was soon after sent hither with the army of the East."

Such, as nearly as I can remember, was the sad story of her early life told me by Mademoiselle Chaverondier.

It was not until I began to recover that I became fully aware of the vast debt of gratitude I owed to this good sister of charity, and that I completely knew how much I owed to her sisterly and motherly care of me during that perilous and loathsome disease.

But there were no means of repaying her. Gratitude of the heart was all she would accept, and that I gave her to the full, but now daily, as I became convalescent, and as my brother officers cantered over from the vale of Aladyn to visit me, she left me more and more alone, and there were three whole days during which she never came at all.

I rather think she was scared by Studhome, who had ridden over with a couple of champagne bottles in his holsters, and whom she found smoking in my *kiosk*, with his shell-jacket open, and his stock off, and singing a song, the first verse of which was something in this style—

My father cared little for shot or shell,
He laughed at death and dangers;
He'd have stormed the very gates of hell,
At the head of the Connaught Rangers.

How much I missed her!

When she did return it was to bid me adieu, and to say that she had been ordered to attach herself to the 45th regiment of the French line, where severe duties awaited her, and that in all human probability I should never see her more.

Those farewell words sounded sadly. We shook hands kindly, affectionately, and parted with tears in our eyes. In my heart I felt the love of a brother for that self-devoted French girl, and at that time she could but little foresee the sad offices I was to render her in the hour of suffering that was to come.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Then sacred be their last repose who fall
Bravely and greatly at their duty's call,
Mix with their country's cries the parting breath,
And from the vanguard face her foes in death!
I, too, have known the hour when friendship's tear
Has dewed from British eyes a comrade's bier,
When the rough soldier o'er the lowly cell
Of fallen courage breathed a last farewell,
Paid the last mournful honours to the brave,
And left, with heavy heart, the new-closed grave.
LORD GRENVILLE.

On the 5th of September the allied armies embarked at Varna, and the 14th of the same month saw us landing in the Crimea, on ground near the Lake of Kamishlu—not that chosen by the gallant Lord Raglan originally—some miles north of the Bulganak river, at a place where the cliffs, a hundred feet in height, overhung the beach. But, save a boat-load of Zouaves, who were run down by a steam-transport, all were disembarked safely under cover of the cannon of the allied fleets, and without molestation from the enemy. The change of landing-place was owing to the treachery of the French, who altered the buoys in the night.

Lord Raglan could scarcely forget, what many an old peninsular veteran remembered, that the auspicious day on which we made this landing in the country of the foe was the anniversary of the death of his former leader, the great Duke of Wellington.

We were exactly thirty miles westward of Sebastopol. The morning was fine, and the surface of the Black Sea was smooth as glass. The whole of the troops of the light division were in their boats, in heavy marching order, with sixty rounds per man; packed close, each soldier sat with his firelock between his knees, and the seamen, with their oars out in the rowlocks, all motionless, and awaiting the signal.

It was given, and instantly a hum, rising to a cheer, passed over all that vast array of men and boats; a gleam passed over the bright accoutrements, and the oars fell plashing into the water.

"Give way, lads—lay out upon your oars!" was the order.

And the whole line of boats—a mile in length—shot off from the fleet; and at half-past eight A.M. the first, which belonged to the *Britannia*, landed her living freight.

Mid-leg deep in the surf, the sailors lent us valuable assistance in getting ashore. Fusiliers, Highlanders, guardsmen and rifles, lancers and hussars, all rapidly formed line upon the beach, where the infantry piled arms, and the cavalry stood by their horses. Those who may have witnessed the trouble and care requisite for the landing of one horse from a vessel, with all the appliances of a spacious quay, can imagine the difficulties attendant on the disembarkation of one thousand chargers, armed and accoutred on an open beach.

The French were landing elsewhere, under St. Arnaud and Canrobert; and ere long, sixty thousand men stood to their arms on that remarkable peninsula, Crim Tartary—of old, the Isle of Kaffa, and known to recent fame as the Crimea!

We were entirely without baggage. Our tents, and everything that might encumber us in advancing to meet the enemy, had been left on board the fleet; thus, few of us had cause to forget the night of the 14th of

September, when the army halted to sleep in an open bivouac, on bare ground, for we had learned nothing in the art of conducting a war since Moore fought and fell at Corunna.

Without cessation the drenching rain fell down. Thus our thin uniforms and blankets were speedily soaked; but all ranks suffered in common. I saw the Duke of Cambridge sleeping amid his staff, with his head protected by a little tilt cart. For myself, I chiefly passed that miserable night muffled in my cloak, dismounted, in the ranks beside my horse, with my right arm twisted in the stirrup-leather for support, and my head reposing on the holster flap. Thus I snatched a standing doze, with the cold rain pouring down the nape of my neck; and in this fashion most of the cavalry division passed this night, the effects of which were speedily shown in the ranks of our young and as yet untried army.

Many of our battalions were already in possession of a hill on the right of our landing place, and commanding it; and all the evening of the 14th its sides were brightened by the glitter of their arms shining brightly in the sun (that was then setting in the golden Euxine), as they formed along its green slope in contiguous close columns of regiments.

"But," says an eye-witness, "what were those long strings of soldiery now beginning to come down the hillside, and to wind their way back towards the beach? and what were the long white burdens horizontally carried by the men? Already—already on this same day? Yes, sickness still clung to the army. Of those who only this morning ascended the hill with seeming alacrity, many now came down thus sadly borne by their comrades. They were carried on ambulance stretchers, and a blanket was over them. Those whose faces remained uncovered were still alive. Those whose faces had been covered by their blankets were dead. Near the foot of the hill the men began to dig graves."

Each poor fellow was buried in his uniform and blanket. Thus began our war in the Crimea!

The reason for our tents being left on board was occasioned by the curse of the red-tapeism and ignorance in London. On the outbreak of the conflict, we were destitute alike of the *materiel* and the *personnel* for a transport corps of any description whatever, beyond a few Maltese

mule carts; and had the Russians availed themselves of the ample time so kindly given them by our ministry, and swept every species of horse and waggon from the Crimea, our advance upon Sebastopol had been a movement of greater difficulty than it proved to be. All our most useful baggage was thus left at Varna, and there I lost with mine much of the lumber with which I had provided myself at Maidstone, and at good Sir Nigel's expense. At last we were on Russian ground. I reminded Studhome of the conduct of Mr. Berkeley, and urged that now a meeting should be arranged beyond the outposts. I remember how palpably Jack changed colour at my angry suggestion. He concealed from me a fact, which afterwards came to my knowledge, that Berkeley had circulated injurious reports concerning me through not only the lancers, but the hussar corps of our brigade. But now Studhome put it to me, as a matter of feeling and discretion, whether I should insist on this secret duel, for a matter that was long past, when we would soon be face to face with the enemy, and when one of us, perhaps both, might not be spared to see another muster day. These arguments prevailed; I smothered my wrath, and met Mr. De Warr Berkeley (as he chose to designate himself) on duty with cold civility, but nothing more. To be cordial was beyond my powers of acting or endurance. And thus, for the time, our quarrel stood. When those who were ignorant of the cause of coolness between us remarked it, his general answer was—

"Aw—haw—don't know the reason, 'pon my soul; but those Scotsmen are such doocid awd fellahs."

Our contingent consisted of twenty-six thousand foot, one thousand mounted cavalry, and sixty pieces of cannon, divided into five divisions of infantry and one of horse; an absurdly small force to attempt an invasion of Russia, even with the greater strength of the French and Turkish allies—the former being thirty thousand, and the latter seven thousand bayonets. Our first division, led by his Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge, consisted of the Grenadier, Coldstream, and Scots Fusilier Guards, with three Highland regiments—the Black Watch, the Cameron, and 93rd Highlanders, all considering themselves the *corps d'élite* of the army. The other divisions, under Sir George Brown, Sir De

Lacy Evans, Sir Richard England, and Sir George Cathcart, were composed of our splendid infantry of the line—as I have elsewhere said—the noble and carefully developed army of forty years of peace; and the Earl of Lucan, who in his youth had served as a volunteer with the Russians against the Turks in the campaigns under Diebitch, led our mounted chivalry—the cavalry division—the flower of the British Isles—yet to be covered with glory in the disastrous Valley of Death! While the armies were advancing, with my troop I was repeatedly despatched by the Quarter-master-General, Major-General Richard Airey, to procure provisions and carriages, for that officer, beyond any other, had seen from the first the necessity of procuring supplies and means of transport. On one of these occasions, by his orders, I had the good fortune to capture twenty-five *kibitkas*, or waggons, in a village near our line of march. On the same day I think it was that his aide-de-camp, the gallant Nolan, when exploring for water, came upon a Russian government convoy of eighty waggons laden with flour, and seized them all, routing the escort. In all we obtained three hundred and fifty waggons, with their teams and Tartar drivers.

The chief proprietor of the *kibitkas* I had taken was the patriarch or leading man of the village—a Tartar of venerable aspect, wearing a pelisse or long robe of blue stuff, with a small black lambskin cap, not unlike an Egyptian tarboosh, from under which his white hair flowed upon his shoulders.

Accustomed only to the lawless and brutal military tyranny of the Muscovites and Cossacks, nothing could equal the good man's astonishment when I informed him, by means of an interpreter, that we merely required the loan of the carts, and that he would be duly paid. Allah, ho Ackbar!—think of that—actually paid, for any inconvenience or loss the villagers might suffer by their detention.

On the morning of the 19th we quitted our miserable bivouac, and commenced our march in search of the enemy, for we were on perilous ground, and had the Russians come suddenly upon us, we might have been compelled to risk a battle with our rear to the cliffs which overhung the Euxine (where the sea-calves basked on the beach a hundred feet

below), and on a field where defeat would have been certain ruin and death to all. But, as the French had assumed to themselves the honour of the right wing, they had thus a greater risk than we British, who had quietly taken the left flank, as the allies advanced along the coast.

The 11th Hussars and 13th Light Dragoons, under Lord Cardigan, formed an advanced guard; and in their rear marched a detachment of rifles, in extended or skirmishing order. We knew that the enemy was somewhere in front; but in what force, or where or how posted, we were in perfect ignorance. Occasionally an excited voice in the ranks would exclaim that a Russian vedette was in sight on the distant hills.

The atmosphere was calm, the sky almost cloudless, and high into its azure ascended the smoke of the allied fleet, which kept moving under steam far away on the right flank of the French army, which rested on the shore. The sun shone hot and brightly; but at times there came pleasantly a light, fresh breeze from the shining Euxine.

The colours were all uncased and flying; the bands of the cavalry and infantry, with the merry bugles of the rifles, filled the air with music; and I could hear the pipes of the Highlanders, under the Duke of Cambridge, alternately swelling up or dying away upon the ambient air, as the first division traversed the undulating country in front.

As we proceeded, I could not resist letting my horse's reins drop upon his neck, and soaring into dreamland, my thoughts went far away to our distant home beyond the sea. Sometimes I imagined how my name would look in the list of killed or wounded, and of what Louisa Loftus would think then. And with this morbid fancy came always another idea—was it a conviction?—that such an announcement would cause a deeper and more lasting grief in Calderwood Glen than at Chillingham Park; and I thought of my good uncle reading the heavy news to his two faithful old henchmen, Binns, the butler, and Pitblado, the keeper.

Louisa's lock of raven hair which I had received at Calderwood, the miniature which she had sent to me afterwards at the barracks, were with me now; and with me, too, was the memory of those delicious words she had whispered in my ear in the library at Chillingham—

"Till we are both in our graves, dear Newton, you will never, never know how much I love you, and the agony which Berkeley's cunning cost me."

This was strong language: yet it would seem now that, amid the whirl of fashionable life at Chillingham Park, balls, routs, dinners, suppers, and reviews, the race, and the hunting-field dotted with red coats, she had been compelled, or had allowed herself, to forget me—I, who thought of her only. And amid that more brilliant vortex, the world of London life, the Queen's Court, the royal drawing-rooms, the crowded parks, the gaieties of Rotten Row and the Lady's Mile, the splendours of the opera, and the wonders of the Derby, it seemed likely enough that a poor devil of a lancer serving in the East was to be forgotten, and for ever too!

From such a reverie I would be roused by Jocelyn, Sir Harry Scarlett, or some other of ours, exclaiming—

"Look out! By Jove! there's a Russian vedette!"

Then through my field-glass I might discern, between me and the sky, a Cossack in a fur cap, riding along the green ridge in the distance, with his knees up to his girdle, his back bent, his lance-head glinting in the sunshine, and the snub nose of his Calmuck visage planted almost between the drooping ears of his shaggy little horse, as he uttered a shrill whoop and galloped away.

"We seem to be coming closer and closer to those fellows," said the colonel. "Every moment I expect to see Cardigan with the advanced guard draw the cover, and receive a dose of grape from flying artillery."

"And those vedettes seem to be thrown forward from a large force, colonel," said Studhome. "I have already detected five or six different uniforms."

"Yes, Jack. So I would advise you to write a dutiful letter to your friends."

"Why, colonel?" said our adjutant, laughing.

"Because we shall certainly be under fire to-morrow."

To-morrow proved to be the day of the Alma—an eventful day for many.

The approach of danger made all who were in health grow high in spirit and hilarity.

"Rather different work this from the gravelled yards at Canterbury and Maidstone," said Wilford, joining us at a canter, to share a little conversation.

"Ay, Fred," said the colonel; "and very different from our daily service of a year or so ago."

"At Allahabad and Agra—eh?"

"Yes. Lying half the day on an easy *fauteuil*, in a silk shirt and cotton drawers, fanned by an Indian girl; or cooled by a punkah, and guarded by mosquito-curtains, making up our books on the Meerut race meeting; calculating the rising or falling of the thermometer, and studying the 'Army List?'"

(Another year or two was to see very different work cut out at Cawnpore and Delhi for our Indian comrades.)

Five nights spent amid the mud of our bivouac had somewhat tarnished the finery of our lancer uniforms. Already the bullion of our large epaulettes was crushed and torn, our gorgeous lace defaced and frayed; but our horses were all in high condition, and our arms and appointments bright enough to have satisfied even Count Tilly himself.

On this short day's march we lost one lancer of Wilford's troop. Passing where a Coldstream guardsman lay by the wayside, black in visage, and dying of weakness, thirst, and heat, he gave him the entire contents of his wooden canteen, and falling from his saddle soon after, died himself for lack of that which he had so generously given another, as there was not a drop of water with the regiment; for, in the Crimea, by the end of August, all springs, rivulets, and fountains are alike dried up; verdure disappears, and the thermometer, even in the shade, rises to 98 or 100 degrees.

Twice on this march I saw a sister of charity kneeling beside the sick or dying, and rode on to learn whether she might prove to be Mademoiselle Chaverondier, or, as I preferred to call her, my dear sister Archange, but on both occasions I was disappointed. All were high in courage, and full of ardour; but their spirit changed and sunk as the hot

and breathless day wore on, and our poor men's strength became worn out. The music ceased, as band after band gave in, and the drummers slung their drums wearily on their backs. Even the Scotch bagpipes died away, and the massed columns, each some five thousand strong, trod silently over the undulating steppes, with all their sloped arms, and the glazed tops of their shakos, glittering in the sun. But long ere the noon of that first day of toil, many had begun to fall out, in all the agonies of cholera. At one place my horse had actually to pick his way among them. All looked black in the face, and choking; the heavy bearskin caps and thick leather stocks were cast aside, and their jackets were torn open. Some were writhing in agony, and others, weakened by toil and thirst, lay still and voiceless. On we marched, on and on, and the sufferers were left to the Cossack lances, or a more lingering death, while the wolves from the groves of the Alma, and the Alpine vulture and kite from the rocks of Kamishlu, hung on our skirts, and waited for their prey. Our thirst was intense and indescribable, when a shout of joy announced that the advanced guard, under Lord Cardigan, had reached that long-wished-for river the Bulganak, where we were to bivouac for the night. The moment a division came in sight of the cool stream that rippled between its green banks, and groves of wild olive and pomegranate trees, the men burst with a shout from the ranks, and rushed forward to slake their burning and agonizing thirst.[*]

[*] In one brigade a stronger governance was maintained. Sir Colin Campbell would not allow that even the rage of thirst should loosen the discipline of his splendid Highland regiments. He halted them a little before they reached the stream, and so ordered it that, by being saved from the confusion that would have been wrought by their own wild haste, they gained in comfort, and knew that they were gainers. When men toil in organized masses, they owe what well-being they have to wise and firm commanders."—Kinglake's "Invasion of the Crimea," vol. ii.

The infantry were speedily bivouacked along the bank of the stream; but we—the cavalry—were fated to have a little passage at arms with the Russians before the sun set.

CHAPTER XXXV

Sword at my left side gleaming!
Why is thy keen glance beaming,
So fondly bent on mine?
Thanks for that smile of thine. Hurrah!

Borne by a trooper daring,
My looks his fire-glance wearing,
I arm a freeman's hand,
That well delights thy brand! Hurrah!
THEODORE KÖRNER.

Physical endurance is not a more necessary quality to the soldier than mental elasticity. There seemed to be no want of the latter among our fellows, when we unbitted our horses and sat down to a meal which was improvised by our servants near a grove of turpentine and caper trees. It was a lovely evening now, and many a wreath of purple and golden cloud lay cradled in the amber sunset. The infantry had piled their arms by regiments, brigades, and divisions, and the thousands of our host lay panting on the sward, or preparing to cook their rations in such a fashion as suited the emergency or their fancy. In the distance were flocks of bustards crossing the now arid plain, which in summer had been covered by a profusion of aromatic herbs. Our accoutrements were

cast on the grass, our uniforms were unbuttoned, cigar-cases went from, hand to hand, freely interchanged, and even the last copies of *Punch* were conned over and laughed at.

Thanks to me, and the use of a *kabitka* I procured, we had plenty of provisions. A ham, some cold fowls, Bass's pale ale, sherry, even champagne, were produced by some of ours; and these, with a few cucumbers and gourds, medlars, and filberts, which Willie Pitblado had found in the deserted garden of a Tartar, formed, all things considered, a sumptuous repast, and what it lacked in style and equipage was amply made up for in fun and jollity, for "men accommodate themselves unconsciously to the modes of living that are forced upon them. It is a law of our being, and it is well that it should be so. A bomb bursting in the midst of a fashionable London dinner party would do no more mischief than one of the numbers which used to burst daily within the walls of Lucknow; but assuredly it would produce a far greater impression."

"This is really the tug of war!" exclaimed Wilford, who, after various ineffectual efforts to uncork a champagne bottle, adroitly struck off its head by the stroke of a knife.

"Yes, by Jove! and think of the mess!" added Jocelyn.

"To feel," said the colonel, "that one has a soul—and what is more, an appetite, a taste, and decided predilection for turtle soup and *recherché entrées*—and yet compelled to appreciate this style of thing!"

"I can appreciate everything and anything," exclaimed the paymaster.

"Even an 'aggis, eh?—haw!" said Berkeley.

"Yes, even a haggis. My stomach is as empty as a kettledrum," replied the paymaster, as he sliced away at the ham.

"I think there is something going on in front," observed Wilford, pausing in the act of dissecting a fowl.

"Yes," said Beverley; "Lord Raglan, with some squadrons of the 11th and 13th, has crossed the river to reconnoitre; but let us make the most of the present, our turn will come all in good time. Pass the wine, M'Goldrick; a slice of meat, Studhome—thanks."

"Ugh!" remarked the paymaster; "'the bed of honour,' as Jean Paul Richter says, 'since whole regiments lie on it, and frequently have received their last unction, should really be filled anew, beaten and sunned.'"

"What—aw, haw—does that quotation mean?" asked Berkeley, adjusting his eyeglass, contracting the muscles of his eye, and giving our old Scots paymaster an inquiring and quizzical stare. "It sounds doocid queer, and—haw—unpleasant."

"I was thinking of the hard bed I shall sleep on to-night, sir," replied M'Goldrick, rather sternly.

"By Jove, some of us may sleep sound enough to-night yet," said the colonel, half starting up. "There is a decided movement in front, and here comes a French mounted officer."

At that moment a subaltern of Zouaves, mounted on a French dragoon horse, in a somewhat excited manner, dashed up to where we lay lounging on the grass, reined his trooper sharply in on the bit, shouting something of which I could only make out the prefix, "*Messieurs les officiers*!"

"*Diable!* you don't speak French?" he added, in English, to Travers of ours.

"No, sir; I am sorry——"

"*Peste!*" interrupted the Frenchman; "every staff officer should speak at least two European languages."

"*Dioul na bocklish*! There, I can speak my mother tongue, being an Irishman; and if that won't do, the devil is in it. But I am not a staff officer," he added, to the stranger, in whom I now recognized M. Jolicoeur, of the 2nd Zouaves.

"The enemy is in great force in front, and your commander-in-chief, with the two regiments of your advanced guard, will be surrounded and cut off."

"Lord Raglan, with the 11th and 13th!" we exclaimed, starting to our feet; and just at that moment an aide-de-camp, Captain Bolton, of the 1st Dragoon Guards, came galloping up, and exclaimed—

"Boot and saddle, Colonel Beverley; the 11th and 13th, under Lord Cardigan, are engaged in front. Cavalry supports and horse artillery are instantly required."

The trumpets sounded, the regiment formed by troops, and joined the brigade, which formed in squadrons, and advanced rapidly in search of the enemy.

"Aw—doocid bore, after our pleasant little tiffin," I heard Berkeley say, with a bantering air; but I could see that he looked very white for all that, and Beverley only smiled superciliously, as he twisted his thick moustaches.

"I wonder Berkeley has not his white gloves on," he whispered to me, and I saw some of our men smiling, for it was a regimental joke, or notoriety, that he was in the habit of pencilling on his gloves the words of command he had to issue in succession.

As the junior regiment, we were in the centre of the brigade, the senior corps being on the right, and the next in seniority on the left; and we advanced at a rapid trot, in a column of squadrons at wheeling distance, while the artillery, making a dreadful clatter, with all their tumbrils limbered up, their spare wheels, forge waggons, rammers, sponges, buckets, and other apparatus, went thundering at full gallop to the front.

"In a few minutes, my lads, we may be hand to hand with the enemy," shouted Beverley, as he stood up in his stirrups and brandished his sword; "let us be true to the old motto of the regiment!"

All knew what he meant, and responded by a long and ringing cheer, for our lancers had been raised as light dragoons in 1759, by Colonel John Hale, the officer who came to London with the news of Wolfe's fall and victory at Quebec; and in that year it was ordered by his Majesty George II. that "on the front of the men's caps, and on the left breast of their uniforms, there was to be a death's head, with two crossbones over it, and underneath the motto, '*Or Glory*.'" And this grim but significant badge we still wear on all our appointments.[*] It would appear that, early in the afternoon, and before the whole army had halted, our old and one-armed leader, the good Lord Raglan, who had

ridden far in advance of the first division of infantry, observed a group of Cossacks hovering on the brow of a green hill, towards the south, on which he ordered part of Lord Cardigan's command, the 11th Hussars and 13th Light Dragoons, forward to reconnoitre. On this occasion Lord Lucan was also present.

[*] Our predecessors in the service were the old Scots 17th Light Dragoons, raised at Edinburgh in the winter of 1759, during the alarm of the projected invasion under the Marechal Duc d'Aiguillon, by Sholto, Lord Aberdour, afterwards sixteenth Earl Morton, who died in Sicily in 1774. This corps, which never consisted of more than two troops, served in the Seven Years' War, and was disbanded in 1763. One of its officers, Lieutenant the Honourable Sir T. Maitland, son of the Earl of Lauderdale, died so lately as 1824, a lieutenant-general, G.C.B., governor of Malta and the Ionian Isles.

Where the road from Eupatoria to Sebastopol crosses the Bulganak, the bank of the river rises for several hundred yards, and then the ground slopes down into a valley, beyond which rises a succession of grassy undulations. The hussars and light dragoons rode boldly forward. Formed in four squadrons, they splashed through the stream, galloped up the bank, and descended into the hollow, before they became aware that no less than two thousand Russian cavalry were advancing to meet them, with a line of skirmishers in front in extended order.

"Forward, skirmishers!" was now the command.

The trumpet sounded, and from the flanks of each squadron, as it halted to form line, the few selected men for this duty spread at intervals of twenty yards from each other, at the distance of two hundred yards from the column; sheathing their swords and unslinging their carbines, as they took up their dressing from the right. Beyond the crest of the second eminence, a steady glittering in the sunshine revealed to the keen eyes of General Airey that it came from the points—the mere tips—of fixed bayonets, and that there were concealed in the hollow way many battalions of an infantry force, quietly waiting to open a close and

murderous fire upon our little body of cavalry, when they were lured sufficiently far forward to secure their total destruction. In fact, our advanced guard, composed of only two slender regiments, was thus suddenly opposed to six thousand men of the 17th Russian division, posted in ambush, with two batteries of artillery, a brigade of regular cavalry, and nine sotnias of Cossacks, the whole under General Carlovitch Baur. It was a perilous—a terrible dilemma! Lord Raglan knew that he must avoid an action on one hand, and secure the retreat of the 11th and 13th with complete honour on the other. To the roughly-mounted and loosely-handled Russian horsemen, the beautiful and ceremonious formation of our gay hussars, with their glittering dolmans, and our smart light dragoons in blue and buff, with all their swords and bright appointments flashing in the sunshine, was a cause of hesitation. They could not suppose but that this slender force had a greater body of troops at hand, and feared the very snare they were preparing for others; thus they were quietly and tranquilly confronting each other, out of musket-range, when we, with the light and second division, the 8th Hussars, and nine-pounder batteries, came up at a gallop, to succour our comrades, and got into position. After this, the wily and savage Muscovites found their opportunity gone, and the gallant Baur was rather nonplussed.

When the regiments of the infantry divisions came up, they deployed into line, and all their bright steel ramrods glittered in the sunshine, as they loaded with ball cartridge and "capped." We, the cavalry support, took up a position in the left rear of the advanced force under Lord Cardigan, and rapidly loaded our pistols and carbines, awaiting further orders. In each of my holsters I carried a six-chambered revolver. So close were we to our advanced guard, that we could hear the officers of the 11th and the 13th recalling their skirmishers.

"Retire the skirmishers," rang again and again on the clear air; "shorten stirrups—girth up—reload and reform."

Every heart was beating high, for we were now face to face with an enemy—many among us for the first time.

"Keep your dressing, squadron leaders," said Colonel Beverley, whose eyes were lit up by a strange brightness—indeed, it seemed to spread over all his handsome and sunburned face; "close up, gentlemen. We have all been used to ride to hounds, and that is more than any of those Russian fellows have done. By Jove! I should like to see them crossing a stiff stone-wall country. In a few minutes, lancers, I repeat we may be hand to hand with the enemy; so, when we come to close quarters, remember the old fencing-school advice, 'Watch your antagonist's eyes, not his blade.'"

I was leader of our left squadron, and had my post, of course, half a horse's length in front of the standard, which was carried by Sergeant Stapylton. It was a white swallow-tailed pennon, with a skull, and the words, "Or Glory" embroidered beneath—terribly significant at such a time, as it rustled out in the breeze. My secret enemy, Mr. Berkeley, was a troop leader on my left, at some little distance, and at this exciting moment there was a singular expression in his eyes. I thought he was about to ride up and extend his hand to me, for I had known of forgiveness being often asked and accorded when men were face to face with death; but if it were so, I was pitiless. I remembered Lady Louisa Loftus, and the cottage by the Reculvers, and resolved that the hard expression of my glance should chill him. Little did I know the ideas that were in his mind, and the mischief he was yet to work me, ere we passed the heights of Alma. On this evening, so cool were some of our fellows, that I detected several of the rear-rank men tickling the front-rank horses, to make them kick. Lord Raglan now became apprehensive that the numerous cavalry of General Baur, in their longing for a little sword exercise, might be tempted to charge the Earl of Cardigan's slender force; thus it became necessary to draw it off without further delay, and to express his desire to that officer, despatched General Airey, whose movements we watched with irrepressible excitement.

"Your brigade will immediately retire, my lord, and by alternate squadrons," said the general, reining in his horse, and saluting.

Lord Cardigan bowed, and gave the necessary orders for throwing back the squadrons of direction.

"Right squadron and left—threes about—march—trot!"

The remainder of the 11th and 13th remained motionless in their saddles, with swords drawn, waiting till the flank squadrons halted and fronted, about a hundred yards in their rear, when their own turn came to retire, and so the movement of retreating alternately in this fashion went on. But the moment it began, General Baur's Russian brigade of horse artillery came galloping out of the hollow, and were wheeled round and unlimbered in battery on the ridge. The red flash of the first field-piece made every heart bound and every pulse quicken; and ere we had time for reflection, another and another boomed, with a cloud of white smoke, from the green eminence. Then a gap appeared here and there in the ranks of the 11th and 13th, as a horse, a hussar, or light dragoon went down, and we saw them rolling in agony on the sward; but their comrades closed in, holster to holster, and still the retreat by alternate squadrons went coolly and quietly on. The six-pounder guns attached to Cardigan's force had no power upon the enemy; but the nine-pounders which accompanied our brigade slew many of the Russians at their guns. At every boom that echoed through the still evening air, the scared birds flew about, screaming and flapping their wings wildly, till, at last, they actually grovelled among our horses' hoofs.

The 11th and 13th retired beyond us, and then came our turn to go threes about, and fall back by squadrons, under cover of our artillery, whose balls told so well that Beverley mentioned he could reckon through his glass at least thirty-five Russian dragoons, with their horses, lying stiff enough on the slope, where our nine-pounders had roughly loosed their "silver cords" for ever. Prior to this, we had moved ten paces to the left—a lucky thing for me, as a shrub which my horse had been nibbling was torn into pieces by a five-inch shell a second or so after. Glory apart, I was not sorry when we got the order to retire, for we could achieve little honour here. My horse seemed sensible of our danger, when the balls of the Russian artillery began to plough and tear up the earth at his feet, or to hum past with a sound that made him shrink. He kicked, lashed out behind, pawed with his forefeet, bore with his teeth on the bit, and uttered strange snorts.

"By heaven! there is one of ours down!" exclaimed Jocelyn, my sub, in an excited manner, as he turned in his saddle; and we saw a lancer in blue lying on his back in our rear, his horse galloping away, and three Russian skirmishers busy about him, while four dragoons were cantering on to join them.

"'Tis poor Rakeleigh," said Studhome, galloping up; "a shot has just smashed his right thigh."

"Colonel, may I try to save him—to recover his body?" I asked, hurriedly.

"Certainly; but, Norcliff, be wary."

"Who will come with me?" cried I, wheeling round my horse.

"I, sir," replied Sergeant Dashwood.

"And I!" added Pitblado.

"And I! and I!" said others, unslinging their lances.

"Thanks, my brave lads!" cried Beverley. "Go at those devils like bricks, and show them what true British pluck is!"

Attended by the first six who spoke, I galloped back to where the poor fellow lay, heedless of the Russian cannon shot, and the three skirmishers, in long grey coats and flat blue caps, who, after firing their rifles without effect at us, scampered off to meet their troopers. We found poor Rakeleigh quite dead, almost stripped already, and hideously mutilated about the body. He had always been particular in his person, and studiously fashionable in his dress. How often had we quizzed those bandolined moustaches, now covered with froth and blood gouts! His handsome face was terribly distorted, and his uniform was almost gone —torn from him by those brutal Russian plunderers! Watch, purse, and rings were also gone. We could but cut off a lock of his rich brown hair to send to his poor mother in Athlone. He probably had not been dead when overtaken by the Russians, as a bayonet wound was perceptible in his breast. I had barely time to remark this, when a shot from a Minie rifle whistled past me; and just as I sprang into my saddle there was a shout and a crash—we were engaged in a *mêlée* with the seven Russians. Sergeant Dashwood pinned an infantry man to the turf with his lance, and shot a trooper with the pistol which he grasped in his bridle-hand. A

gigantic Russian dragoon, with a red snub nose, a thick black beard, and coarse green uniform, all over red braid, cut through the shaft of Pitblado's lance, inflicting on his shoulder a wound which many a volunteer officer would give a good round sum for the honour of possessing; but, quick as lightning, Willie's sword was out, and, after a few passes, he clove him through the glazed helmet down to the nose. It was one of those tremendous strokes we read of sometimes, but seldom see; such a stroke as that which Bruce gave Bohun, when he "broke his good battle-axe" in front of the Scottish line. It rather appalled our new acquaintances, who spurred away, dragging their two infantry men with them. We then rode back to the regiment at a hand-gallop; for we were compelled to leave the body of poor Rakeleigh. What became of it I know not; but every vestige of it had disappeared when we marched past that way on the morrow.

And so, as the twilight came down on land and ocean—on the plains of the Chersonesus Taurica, and the waters of the Black Sea—ended this "first approach to a passage at arms between Russia and the Western Powers;" and Lord Raglan rejoiced in the steadiness and coolness displayed by his slender force of cavalry in the now forgotten skirmish of Bulganak, which the greater glories of the following day so completely eclipsed.

"Poor Rakeleigh," said Beverley, as we gradually gathered at the place where we had squatted before the alarm was given, and threw off our accoutrements, while the grooms were unbitting our horses; "poor lad—lying yonder to-night, mutilated and unburied—his first engagement, too! Thank Heaven, his mother and sister don't see him as we have done! But greater work is to come."

"Aw—the dooce, colonel!" said Berkeley, who, after the past danger, was smoking his cigar vigorously, in a great flow, or rather revulsion, of spirit; "what do you mean—haw—to infer?"

"That to-morrow we shall see the Russians, where their strength is all concentrated in position on the heights of Alma!"

His words were rather prophetic; but all knew that matters must come to the musket ere long. We passed the wine bottle from hand to hand, and wrapped our cloaks and blankets about us preparatory to passing the night as best we could. We were certainly less chatty and hilarious than before, and had quite relinquished our jovial friend, *Mr. Punch*. Doubtless each one was reflecting that poor Jack Rakeleigh's fate might have been his own. If mine, would Louisa have shed a tear for me? The doubt was a pang! We saw no more of General Baur, who fell back towards the river Alma in the night; but long after we thought the affair over, a shell, the last missile fired, came souse from a long gun into our bivouac, and caused a new alarm.

Pitblado, after his wound was dressed, was about to feed his horse, and placed the corn in a tin platter on the ground. While grooming the charger, he saw a large raven come to feed at the corn. Twice he threw a stone at it in vain—the greedy bird continued its repast obstinately. On the third occasion, armed with another stone, he ran towards it, on which the raven flew into a tree, where he croaked as angrily as if he had Elijah to feed as well as himself. At that moment a shell—a five-inch one —-came whistling from the other side of the stream, and exploded on the very place Pitblado had left, disembowelling and killing his horse; so, in this instance, a raven was not the precursor of evil fortune, or, as Willie said, sadly, while contemplating his dying charger, "one hoodiecrow didna bode an ill wind."

At a future period I was fated to see more of the gallant Schleswiger who commanded the Russian reconnaissance at Bulganak; but there is an anecdote connected with his origin, and how he became a soldier, so creditable to human nature, and that which is dying fast among us, genuine love of home, that I may be pardoned relating it here, just as Beverley told it in our bivouac—especially as it is only to be found in the old *Utrecht Gazette*, or the scarcer memoirs of a Scottish soldier of fortune, Count Bruce, neither of which may be within the reader's reach. Prior to the conclusion of the dispute between Denmark and the ducal house of Gottorp, when the Muscovite troops were in Schleswig and Holstein, their cavalry were commanded by a general named Baur—a

soldier of fortune, who had attained his rank by merit and bravery alone, his family and country being secrets to all save himself. His troops occupied Husum, a small seaport at the mouth of the Hever, while he, with his staff, lived in the old palace of the Duke Karl Peter of Gottorp, who became Emperor of Russia, and lorded it over the people with somewhat of a high hand. The little bailiwick was then a charming place. The green meadows were fertile and rich, and spotted by golden buttercups; the uplands were well tilled, and covered with wavy corn, or deep rich clover; the farmhouses, of red brick and bright, yellow thatch, were wondrously clean and pretty, their quaint porches covered with flowing trailers, and borders gay with gorgeous hollyhocks.

The windmills whirled gaily in the breeze, and the laden boats, their brown sails shining in the sun, floated lazily down the clear waters of the river towards the calm and dark blue sea that stretched in the distance far away—that sea where, as the Schleswigers aver, Waldemar and Paine Jager, the Wild Huntsman, and Gron Jette, were never tired of hunting and killing the mermaids, who sat on the slimy rocks, combing their hair, and singing in the moonshine. All was peaceful, and all so calm and rural, that the good men of Schleswig, their plump wives and pretty daughters, trembled at the woes that might be wrought among them by their bearded visitors from the Neva and the Wolga; and more than ever were they alarmed on hearing that the general of the Muscovites had sent for poor old Michel Baur, the miller by the wooden bridge, and also for his wife, who went with many misgivings to the palace of the duke, over which the standard with the cruel double eagle of the Czars was flying.

"Make yourselves easy, my good people," said the Russian general, kindly, as they entered the great hall, with eyes abashed and shrinking hearts; "I mean only to do you a service, so this day you shall dine with me."

Dine—dine with him—the general of the Muscovites? Did they hear aright, or did their ears deceive them? Then he set the goodman Michel and his goodwife Gretchen at table among the splendidly attired and brilliantly accoutred officers of his staff—those counts and colonels of

Uhlans, hussars and cuirassiers, who gnawed their moustaches, and raised their fierce eyebrows superciliously, with wonder and inquiry, at proceedings so novel; while some of the younger laughed covertly at the terror and bewilderment of the worthy couple, who, however, ate heartily of dainties to which they were all unused, after their first alarm subsided. The Muscovite general, who sat between them, at the head of the table, with a kind smile on his handsome face—for handsome it was, though his hair was now thin and grey—asked Michel many questions about his family and household affairs—how the mill prospered and flour sold in the market.

Then Michel, who scarcely ventured to raise his eyes from the order, with the cross batons and crown of St. Andrew of Russia, which sparkled on the general's breast, told him that he was the eldest son of his father, who had been a miller at the same mill years and years ago, even when Frederick V. of Denmark, married to the Princess Louisa of Great Britain, was a boy.

"The eldest son, say you, Michel?"

"Yes, herr general," replied the miller, smoothing down his white hair nervously.

"Then you had, at least, a brother?"

"Yes, herr general; poor Karl. He disappeared."

"How?"

"Some said he became a soldier, others that he was spirited away by the fairies," said Gretchen.

"Many a prayer my good wife and I have said for Karl, though it is so long since he was lost; and in his memory we have named our only son Karl, too."

On hearing this, the Russian general became greatly moved, and, seeing that the astonishment of his officers at the interest he took in these humble rustics could no longer be repressed, he rose, and taking Michel and his wife by the hand—"Gentlemen," said he, "you know me but as a soldier of fortune, and have often been curious to learn who I am, whose breast the Emperor has covered with stars and orders, and whence I came. This village is my native place. In yonder crumbling mill

by the wooden bridge I was born. This is my brother Michel, and Gretchen, his wife! I am Karl Baur, son of old Karl, the miller of Husum. Here was I *bairn* ere I relinquished my miller's dusty coat to become a soldier. Oh, brother Michel, who then could have *spaed*[*] the present?" he added, in their old native dialect, as he embraced the wondering pair.

[*] Foretold.

"I was supposed to have been stolen on St. John's night by the golden-haired Stillevolk of the marshes, or the cranky old red-capped Trolds, who dwelt among the green holms; but it was not so. I became a hussar under Duke Karl Peter of Gottorp, and have risen to be what thou seest—general of cavalry under our father the Emperor! So drink a deep becker of our Danish beer, brother Michel; drink to the old times of our boyhood, and fear not. I know our patrimony is but one of the poor *Bauerhafen*, which are divided according to the number of ploughs; but to-morrow thy *hufe* shall be a *Freihufen*, Michel, free of all burdens, even to the duke's bailiff or the King of Denmark."

Next day the general dined at the old mill, where he sat upon the same hard stool he had used in boyhood, supping his Schleswig *groute* with a horn spoon from a wooden platter. In memory of the olden time, he placed a marble cross above his parent's grave. Three days after the trumpets were heard, and the army marched from Schleswig to return no more; but the general—the same General Bauer who served under Suwarrow in the famous campaigns of Italy—made a plentiful provision for his poor relatives, and sent the miller's only son, his namesake, Karl, to Court for his education, Karl rose to a high place in the household of the Czar, and it was his son, Karlovitch Bauer, who prepared so specious a trap for our advanced guard on the Bulganak—a trap happily rendered useless by the skill and foresight of our leader, the good and brave Lord Raglan.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Let me go! The day is breaking,
Morning bursts upon mine eye,
Death this mortal frame is shaking;
But the soul can never die!

Let me go! The day-star beaming,
Gilds the radiant realms above;
Full its glory on me streaming
Lights me to the land of love!
LAYS OF THE PIOUS MINSTRELS.

Wrapped in my cloak and blanket, I had fallen into an uneasy slumber, close by a fragment of ruined wall, the boundary, perhaps, of a deserted Tartar garden, when I was roused by Sergeant Stapylton of my troop.

"I beg pardon, sir, for disturbing you," said he, in an apologetic way; "but as I was returning from the river side with water for some of the wounded horses, I passed a Frenchwoman, as I take her to be, dying to all appearance, and thought, as she can't be left where she is, that if you would come and speak to her——"

"Of course," said I, springing up; "where is she?"

"Near a grove of olive trees—just a pistol-shot or so beyond our advanced sentries. You can pass me to the front, sir, as your guide."

Leaving the sleeping group of my brother officers, I accompanied Stapylton, with stiffened joints and chattering teeth. The morning was yet dark, but a red streak of light above the hilly ground that rose between our left flank and the Perekop road, showed where the dawn was about to break. All was still around me. Save the occasional neigh of a horse, scarcely a sound broke the silence of that place, where so many thousands of our soldiers were sleeping, or dozing as men may do, after

reflecting that the night which was passing away might be their last in the land of the living, and that the coming day must find them face to face with danger, and—death! On the chill breeze of the September morning, I could hear the rush of the Bulganak over its stony bed, between which and our bivouac could be traced the line of our cavalry vedettes, seated, cloaked, in their saddles, with carbine on thigh, and the advanced sentinels, muffled in their great coats, standing motionless, with "ordered arms," and their faces turned to the southward, where all knew the enemy lay. Passing through the Light Brigade, where each man slept beside his horse, I stumbled over a sleeper, in whom I recognized a medical officer, and asked him to accompany us, which he did readily; and, guided by Stapylton, we proceeded towards the grove of olive trees.

As we quitted the bivouac, the medical officer said—"You perceive that vapour which is rising so steadily from the ground?"

"Yes," said I, with an irrepressible shudder; "I saw enough of it at Varna."

"You are right," he continued, in a low and impressive voice; "that pale, blue, fetid vapour is the cholera mist—always a bad sign. We shall have many cases on our lists ere sunset to-morrow, and Heaven knows they are full enough already. Nearly all the women and children of my regiment were buried on the roadside yesterday. A sick Frenchwoman, I think you said, sergeant?" he observed, recurring to the business in hand.

"Yes, sir," replied Stapylton, saluting.

"Strange! What should bring her here? The French are at present far away on our right, and in the rear. I presume you have heard of what took place this evening, Captain Norcliff?"

"Where?"

"At head-quarters."

"The little post-house on the Bulganak, where Lord Raglan passes the night?"

"Exactly. Marshal St. Arnaud, attended by Colonel Trochier, of the imperial army, rode up there to concert the plan of an attack to-morrow. So, whatever it is, our part in the play of to-morrow is already assigned

us; and now, sergeant, your Frenchwoman."

"Is here, sir, to speak for herself, if she can, poor thing."

Close by the grove of olive trees, with a coarse blanket spread over her, lay the woman of whom Stapylton had spoken.

"Cholera!" said the surgeon, as he turned down the blanket, and knelt beside her; "cholera, and in the last stages, too. No pulse can be felt, the extremities cold and rigid, the face ghastly, the strength exhausted. I can be of no use here," he added to me, in a low voice. "A little time and all will be over."

From my hunting flask he poured a little brandy between the lips of the sufferer, who proved to be a *soeur de charité*, by her white coif and black serge dress; and, on drawing nearer, imagine what were my sensations on recognising, through the twilight of the coming day, the pale and convulsed features of Sister Archange—of Mademoiselle de Chaverondier! An exclamation of sorrow and astonishment burst from me. All the memory of her kindness when I lay sick in the house of the Armenian merchant at Varna; all her singleness of heart; all her purity and self-devotion; all the memory of her story, and of her own happy home amid the mountains of Beaujolais, and how and why she had devoted herself to Heaven and acts of charity; all her simple belief in magic and miracles, with her child-like love and piety; her regard for her brother Claude, the gallant officer of Canrobert's regiment, his wife, Cecile Montallé, and the cruel Lucrece, whose revenge wrought all their sorrow—all the memory of these things, I say, rushed upon me like a flood, as I stood, bewildered, by the side of the dying girl—dying like an outcast in that wild and savage place—and they deeply moved me. To leave her to die thus, untended and uncared for, was impossible. Yet what was to be done? How was I to succour her? Already the trumpets of the cavalry, and the ringing bugles of the infantry, were sounding the "rouse" and the "assembly," and the army was getting rapidly under arms—all the more rapidly that there were no tents to strike and no baggage to pack. Each man fell into the ranks on the ground where he had slept; the cavalry were mounting, the artillery were tracing their

horses and limbering up, and long ere the Bay of Kalamita glittered in the rising sun, the whole British army was on the move towards the Alma.

My friend the surgeon, finding that he could do no more—that he had, perhaps, patients enough elsewhere—suggested, ere he departed, that she might be put into one of the *kabitkas* of the ambulance corps; but, as he assured me that she could not live above an hour, I despatched Stapylton to explain the matter to Colonel Beverley; and in a few minutes he returned with Pitblado, Lanty O'Regan, my groom, and four other lancers and our horses, and with permission for me "to look after my sick friend; but, at all risks, not to be ten minutes' march behind the rear guard, as General Bosquet's division was already advancing rapidly on our right flank, and the French sister might be more properly handed over to her own people."

We lifted her into the olive thicket, out of the way of the passing troops; for already our advanced guard, under Lord Cardigan—"Prince Albert's Own," with their blue jackets and scarlet pelisses covered with glittering lace, and the 13th Light Dragoons—were once more splashing through the Bulganak, laughing and joking merrily, as if it were a fox that was to break cover in the Lincolnshire fens, and not the hordes of the southern and western Russias that were before them. By means of three barrel-hoops and a horse-sheet, we improvised something like that which the French term a day-tent, to hide her and her sufferings. Then the idea occurred to me as to what I could do if she survived beyond the time allotted to us by the colonel. Could I leave her in that wild place to die alone, and to lie unburied, save by the wolves and birds of prey? Alas! a very brief time now resolved all my doubts and fears. A little way apart from us, a silent and sympathetic group, my seven lancers stood, each by his horse's head, leaning on his lance, and awaiting me. If they conversed, it was in half whispers, for they sincerely pitied the girl, those French sisters of charity being the admiration of the whole army. I was bathing her lips with some diluted brandy, when she fully, and for the

first time, recognised me. Then a little smile of joy passed over her ghastly face, and she began to speak, painfully, huskily, and at long intervals.

"It is my turn now; but I am dying, you see, *mon frère*," said she, "dying. Many of my sisters have died in the camp—but—but few thus."

"Few, indeed," said I, in a low, sad voice.

"In ardent prayers for the repose of my soul you find no solace. I say not this upbraidingly, yet the mortuary chants of the 'Dies Iræ' and the 'De Profundis' will never be said for me, because I die—die thus!" she said, in a low and piercing voice, as she closed her eyes.

Perplexity was now added to my sorrow, for I knew not what the poor girl wished or meant; but I implored her to tell me how she came to be left thus alone and in illness. In the night when, asleep and weary, she had fallen unseen from a French ambulance cart, some scouting Cossacks had found and carried her off in mocking triumph; but, on finding that the deadly pestilence had seized her, they barbarously flung her into the Bulganak. She had crept ashore, and was making her way to our bivouac, when the progress of her illness became so rapid and destroying that she was reduced to the condition in which Stapylton found her. Such was the short story she told me, in long and painful intervals, her voice being at times so low that I had to place my ear close to her lips.

"And now," she added, with a divine smile, which brought back much of the wonderful beauty of her face, "I am so glad—so happy that I shall die!"

"Why, *ma soeur*?"

"Lest I should live longer; because, in doing so, I could scarcely fail in some way to offend heaven," replied the poor girl. "I confessed me two days ago—I die in peace, and forgive those Cossaques—*mon ami—mon frère*, I should say—you will close my eyes—you will see me buried—promise me that you will!"

I could only answer her by my tears; and strange it seemed that all around the thicket where this solemn scene was acting, and when the spirit of this good being was hovering between eternity and time, the

thousands of our army, horse, foot, and artillery, with ammunition and stores, were pouring past in the bright morning sunshine, towards the passage of the Bulganak.

All around was instinct with the glitter and bustle of martial life; but within that olive grove was death, sublime humility, and suffering.

"Are you in pain now?" I asked, as this thought occurred to me.

"Oh, no—pain is long since passed away. If I could but live till three in the afternoon, I could then die more than ever happily."

"Why at three?"

"For at that time our Blessed Lord yielded up his soul on Calvary!" said she, with a voice of enthusiasm, while a strange brightness seemed to pass over all her face.

As she turned restlessly her eyes fell upon Sergeant Stapylton and the lancers, and beckoning them forward, she bestowed her blessing on each; and they listened with bowed heads, and took off their caps. I was deeply moved, and drew a pace or two aside.

"Heaven has always been so good to me," she muttered, in broken English, as the sergeant placed his cloak as a pillow under her head; "because, as you must know, *messieurs les soldats*, my mother dedicated me to heaven, and I am a child of the Holy Virgin."

Poor Stapylton, a worthy but stolid John Bull, looked rather bewildered by this information; but my Irish groom understood her.

"Thrue for you, miss," said Lanty, wiping his eyes with the worsted tassels of his yellow sash. "Oh, it's fast she's goin' to glory, the poor cratur. Oh, never a ha'porth she thinks of herself; but it is us she's prayin' for, boys."

"Other souls than mine shall pass away to-day, for ere nightfall a great battle is to be fought—I know that."

At that moment, through an opening in the olive trees, we saw a regiment of infantry marching past in close column of subdivisions, with the band in front, colours flying, and bayonets gleaming in the sun. It was our 88th, of gallant memory, with Colonel Shirley riding at the head of the column, and the drums and fifes made the blue welkin ring to the air of "The Young May Moon." She looked wistfully at the defiling ranks;

there was so much of life there, so much of death here! Then, clasping her white hands, which were so thin and tremulous, and, closing her eyes, she began to repeat a little prayer in Latin, for those who were to fall on both sides—the Russians as well as the English.

Of that prayer I can only remember a single sentence—

"*O clementissime Jesu, amator animarum, lava in sanguine Tuo peccatores totius mundi, nunc positos in agoniâ et hodie morituros.*"[*]

[*] "O most merciful Jesus, lover of souls, wash in Thy blood the sinners of the whole world who are now in their agony and are to die this day!"

Then, whispering something of her "mother who was in heaven, kneeling for her before the Mother of God," the pure spirit of this French girl passed out into the black night of eternity. We stood for a time silent, and nothing roused us but our rear-guard defiling to the front from the right of troops, and then the orders of the colonel recurred to me. Were I to live a thousand years I shall never forget the calm and soothing, yet sorrowful, impression made upon me by this poor girl's death. I closed her eyes, and their long, dark lashes fell over the pale cheek, from which they never more would rise, and she lay under the poor horse-rug, looking so calm, with a peaceful and beautiful expression on her sweet dead face. Her hands were now folded on her breast; her black ebony crucifix had fallen from them; but Lanty O'Regan replaced it gently, and kindly closed the stiffening fingers round it, and there was a big sob in Lanty's throat as he did so. Death brought back all the strange loveliness of other days to Sister Archange; and I could not behold her lying there, looking so peaceful, so white and still, without feeling my heart very full indeed. For when I saw so much self-devotion, poverty, and charity united with peace and goodwill to all mankind—to Christian and Osmanli, to friend and foe alike—it seemed to me truly that of such as she was the kingdom of God. I kissed the dead girl's forehead as we drew the horse-rug over her, and prepared for her interment, as we had not a moment to lose.

The soil was soft, and we had only our sword-blades and hands to dig with; but we contrived to scoop a hole about three feet deep. Reverently, as if she had been their sister, my comrades laid her in it, and then we heaped the mould above her. She lies in that little thicket of olives, about a mile from Bulganak, and sleeps in what is called unconsecrated earth; though the ashes of that sister of charity might bring a blessing on the city of the Sultan. We now mounted, put our horses to full speed, and soon passing our rear-guard, came up with our brigade, and rejoined the regiment. By this time the whole army was on the march to force the position of the Alma, and already our right flank was almost united to the left of the French column under General Bosquet, as the allies advanced together.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

News of battle!—news of battle!
Hark, 'tis ringing down the street!
And the archways and the pavement
Bear the clang of hurrying feet.
News of battle!—who hath brought it?
News of triumph! Who should bring
Tidings from our noble army?
Greetings from our gallant king?
LAYS OF THE SCOTTISH CAVALIERS.

While these events were occurring by the shore of the Euxine, brown autumn was spreading her sober tints upon the Scottish woods; and one seldom sees the country more attractive than when its beauty is decaying, and a soothing sadness mingles with our delight.

The long grass is dank in the shady places, for there the dew falls early at eve, and lingers long after sunrise; and now in Calderwood Glen the dark leaves of the chestnuts were varied by the golden yellow of the lime tree, whose frail leaves are among the earliest to whirl before the gusty autumn wind.

Already the first leaves—the early spoil of the season—were lying in the long, shady avenue, or were gathered in heaps, even as the breeze had swept them, about the well of James V., the yew hedgerows, and the grass walks of the antique Scottish garden, where tradition avers that Anne of Denmark flirted with the bonnie Earl of Gowrie. There the asters and dahlias still contended for a place with the old-fashioned hollyhock. Summer had gone; but the corn-marigold and the gorgeous crimson poppy yet lingered among the yellow stubble, or on the green burn braes; scarlet hips and haws made gay the hedgerows, and the ladybirds were pecking at the sweet apples in the orchard. The shadows of the flying clouds passed over the green mountain slopes, over Largo's lofty cone, the round swelling Lomonds—the Mamelles of Fife, as a French officer not inaptly termed them—the breeze of the German Sea came up the long, fertile Howe, and brought softly to the ear the lowing of cattle from Falkland Woods and many a cosy homestead. The autumn was lovely in Calderwood Glen; but the old manor house seemed empty and silent, and the heart of Cora was sad, for—

> Great events were on the gale,
> And each hour brought a varying tale,

and she knew that the same autumnal sun which was browning the woods of Scotland was lighting her kilted regiments on their path of death and peril by the Alma. There were times when Cora thought that, bitter though it was, this hopeless sorrow for the absence of one she loved, how sweet it might have been—how sadly sweet—had Newton loved her in return. Ah! it had not been hopeless then; but Newton loved another, who loved him too. Yet, did that other love him so well as she, poor quiet Cora, did? And would she love him always? Then, when she

heard the thistlefinch, with its golden wings, singing among the linden trees, the words of the old, old song seemed to come home truly to her heart as she hummed them over.

There sat upon the linden tree
A bird, and sang its strain;
So sweet it sang, that, as I heard,
My heart went back again;
It went to one remembered spot,
It saw the rose-trees grow,
And thought again the thoughts of love
There cherished long ago.

A thousand years to me it seems
Since by my love I sate,
Yet thus to have been a stranger long,
Was not my choice, but fate;
Since then I have not seen the flowers,
Nor heard the bird's sweet song,
My joys have all too briefly passed,
My griefs have been too long!

Ladies were setting forth to join the army of the East as nurses! An idea occurred to her, and then she shrank from it, for Cora was not one of our strong-minded British females but a good and kind-hearted, earnest and high-souled Scottish girl; and it is a peculiarity of the women of Scotland ever to shrink from publicity; and, somehow, public life seems neither their *forte* nor their *rôle*.

"Ah, oh!" thought Cora; "what if this is not merely a separation, but a loss for ever!"

No battle had yet been fought; but already many men had perished at Varna, at Scutari, and elsewhere, of fever and cholera. And so, often as she wandered alone in the garden walks, by the old Battle Stone in the

woods, by the Adder's Craig, or King James's Well, she wept, as she thought of the lively young lancer whom she had last seen marching for the East, and still more for her early playmate and cousin, who in boyhood so petted her at home.

And when Cora would say, or old Willie Pitblado would read, that the lancers had embarked, that they had touched at Gibraltar, at Malta—that they were at Varna or elsewhere—he would pause, and look up wistfully, saying—"Nae word yet o' my Willie?"

"But the papers don't mention Captain Norcliff either."

"Ay, ay, true, Miss Cora," the old man would mutter, and shake his head at omissions so strange.

Anxiety, love, and fear injured the poor girl's health. She was alternately resigned and gentle, or short-tempered and irritable. Though frequently self-absorbed and pre-occupied, she strove, by affected gaiety, to prove to those about her that she was neither. By turns she was grateful for sympathy or irritated by it, while her craving for news about the army of the East became a source of speculation—shall we call it friendly?—among such sharp-witted visitors as the Mesdames Spittal and Rammerscales, the wife of the parish minister, or the slavishly suave Mrs. Wheedleton, the rib of the village lawyer.

To add to her annoyances, she had a new admirer in young Mr. Brassy Wheedleton—a newly-fledged legal prig—who had in his hands a dispute concerning a bond over a portion of the Calderwood property, and whom, as Sir Nigel patronized him, being the son of a neighbour, a dependent, and beginner at the bar, she saw rather oftener than she cared for as a visitor at the Glen. Cora was always most irritable when a letter came from her English friends in Kent. However, her correspondence with Chillingham Park had lessened every day since the regiment left England, why neither could exactly say. Louisa's missives were generally full of gaiety and the world of fashion, with all its tinsel glitter and heartless frivolity. As for the war, and our poor soldiers in the East, she heeded them no more than the clock of St. Paul's, or the last year's snow. Her last letter had been all concerning the elevation of my Lord Slubber to a marquisate (skipping the intervening titles of viscount

and earl,) and enclosing a slip from a fashionable morning paper, which announced that the garter king had given to the noble peer "a coat of augmentation, in addition to the three guffins' heads mange, of the grand Anglo-Norman line of De Gullion, with the cage in chief granted to the fourth baron of that illustrious name, by the greatest of the Plantagenets, when that chivalrous monarch hung the Scottish Countess of Buchan outside the walls of Berwick for four years in an iron cage, and when 'ye potente and valyant Lord Slobbyr de Gulyone was captain yairof with CCC archeris.'"

This afforded her father the first hearty laugh in which he had indulged for some time past, for he, too, had become somewhat dull and peevish.

"Three guffins' heads; Cora, this is excellent!" said the old baronet, laughing still; "it is very droll how the English snob of high family boasts of his descent from the rabble of William the Norman, just as our Scotch snob likes to deduce his pedigree from those Saxon *hildings* who fled from Hastings, or the savage Danes we licked at Luncarty and elsewhere. There were Calderwoods in the Glen before either of those times! What says the old rhyme?

> Calderwood was fair to see,
> When it gaid to Cameltrie;
> But Calderwood was fairer still,
> When it grew owre Crosswood Hill."

Sir Nigel's old chum, General Rammerscales, was laid up with the gout and jungle fever, and their political friend, Lickspittal, was absent in Parliament—where, like a true Scottish M.P., he served to fill the house, to vote with the lord advocate or the majority, to work on all committees (which paid); but, of course, remaining as oblivious of Scottish interests as of those of the Sioux Indians.

Now that he was residing almost permanently at the old manor house—the Place of Calderwood, as it was named *par excellence*—Sir Nigel became somewhat infected by his daughter's melancholy. Thoughts of his two dead sons—Nigel, who fell at Goojerat, of his pet boy Archie, and also of his nephew, his favourite sister's only son, exposed to all the perils of disease and war in Turkey—recurred to him again and again, as he wandered through the rooms and under the old linden trees that had often echoed to their voices in infancy; and he thought of how the old estates, and the title first granted by King Charles to Sir Norman Calderwood, *Primus Baronettorum Scotiæ*, would go after his death, an event which he knew must happen some day; for, though hale and hearty yet, he felt that he rode a stone or two heavier now, was apt to "funk" at a sunk fence, and was finding that noble brute Splinterbar a trifle hard in the mouth for his bridle-hand now.

Even Cora's old song of "The Thistle and Rose" only served to make him sad—to make him think of those who had sung it long, long ago; and then he would order another bottle of that rare, creamy old claret, that Mr. Binns kept among the cobwebs, in a particular corner of the cellar, for *themselves*.

Faithful old Davie Binns! He had grown grey, white, and bald in the service of the Calderwoods, like his fathers before him, and like many other servants in that kind old Scottish household—one, indeed, "of the olden time." If he had been dismissed for a dereliction of duty, he would have thought the world was coming to an end, and doubtless would have flatly refused to go; for Davie was one of a class of servitors that are passing away, even in Scotland and Ireland; and from the sister-kingdom I fear they have long since vanished.

Accompanied by old Willie, Sir Nigel and a friend or two had occasionally a shot at the partridges in the stubble or the turnip-fields; but when the first meet of the hounds took place their master was absent.

In vain the horns were blown by Largo's slopes and Balcarris Wood; in vain the dogs gave mouth, and yelped, and wagged their upright tails. The cover was drawn, and every spur struck deep, as the huntsmen sped

over dyke and ditch, by loch, and moor, and mountain; but Sir Nigel was sorrowing at his house in the Glen, and his favourite hunters, Saline and Splinterbar, were forgotten in their stalls.

Why was this?

On a Sunday towards the end of September—a Sunday which many must recall with sorrow—mysteriously, as if borne in the air, there passed a whisper over all the land of a great event that had happened far, far away; and that whisper found an echo in many a heart and home in England—in many an Irish mud cabin and Scottish glen—in many a high and many a humble dwelling.

In the quaint old village kirk of Calderwood, during the morning service, it passed along the pews from ear to ear among the people, even to the old haunted aisle of St. Margaret, where Cora sat (her sweet, earnest eyes intent on the preacher, though her thoughts were far away) beside her father in his carved oak seat, with all its armorial bearings overhead; for he was lord of all the glen and manor—a little king, but a very kind one, among the peasantry there.

So, on this calm, sunny summer morning, when no sound disturbed the preacher's voice but the rustle of the oak woods without, or the twittering of the martins in their nests among the Gothic carvings, there came vaguely to the pastoral glen—vaguely, wildly, no one knew how—news that a great battle had been fought far, far away in the East, and that we had lost four, five, some said even six thousand men; but that we were, thank God, *victorious*.

Pausing in his sermon, while his eyes kindled and his cheek flushed as they had never done when detailing the bloody wars of the Jews and Egyptians, the aged minister announced the tidings from the pulpit, adding (the first false rumour) "that the Duke of Cambridge had fallen at the head of the Guards and our own Highland lads, as he led them, sword in hand, up the braes of the Alma."

Every eye turned to St. Margaret's aisle, where, through the painted windows, the yellow sunshine streamed on Sir Nigel's silver hair and Cora's smooth dark braids, for all knew that they had a dear kinsman in that distant field, and when the minister asked the people to join with

him in prayer for those who might fall, and for the widows and orphans of the slain, it was with earnest, humble, and contrite hearts that the startled and anxious rustics added their voices to his.

Cora covered her face with her handkerchief; and old Pitblado looked round him, grim and sternly as any Covenanter who ever wore a blue bonnet; but the poor man's heart was full of tears, as he prayed to heaven that his Willie might be safe. Besides, as a native of Fife, he had much of the old and inbred horror of soldiering peculiar to that peninsula, since those dark days when the Fifeshire infantry found their graves on the field of Kilsythe.

Ere the red autumn sun went down beyond the green hills of Clackmannan, the electric wire had announced the passage of the Alma over all the length and breadth of the land—flashing over all Europe, from the shores of the Bosphorus to those of the Shannon.

But in reply to a message sent by Sir Nigel to the War Office—a telegram despatched to soothe the agony of love—came the brief but terrible answer—

"*The name of your nephew is among the killed!*"

"Papa—papa—among the killed—among the killed!" Cora exclaimed, after the first stunning paroxysm of her grief was past.

"Yet I do not despair, Cora," said the old man, in his bewilderment, caressing her, and not knowing what to say, while remembering the keen bitterness that the gazette of Goojerat brought to his heart, when there he read the name of his eldest son and hope—his dark and handsome Nigel.

"Oh, do not speak of hope to me, papa. Poor Newton, I did so love him! I cannot dare to hope!"

"Dearest Cora, we have no details. He may be missing. I have heard of many returned so in the old Peninsular times. My old friend, Jack Oswald, of Dunnik, among others; but he was always found under a heap of dead men, or so forth."

"But the telegram says distinctly, among the killed—his body, his poor, mangled body, must have been seen——"

"Colonel Beverley will write to me. In a few days we shall know all the particulars."

"Even were he only wounded, I should be miserable; but to know that he is dead—dead—Newton dead—buried far, far away by strangers, and among strangers, and that I shall never, never see him more! Oh, papa—my dear papa!" she exclaimed, as she flung herself upon his breast, "I loved Newton dearly—far more dearly than life!"

And so the great secret escaped her in her grief.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The fight's begun;—in momentary blaze
Bright o'er the hills the volleying lightning plays,
Bursts the loud shell, the death shots hiss around,
And the hoarse cannon adds its heavier sound,
Till wide the gathering clouds that rise between
Clothe in a thicker gloom the maddening scene;
And as the billow's wild and angry crest,
That swells in foam on Ocean's lurid breast,
Through each long line the curling volumes spread,
And hang their white wreaths o'er the column's head.

After the troops crossed the Bulganak, strict silence was enjoined, and no drum was beaten or bugle blown. Scattered parties of Russian cavalry scoured all the ground before us; and as they galloped to and fro, the gleam of Cossack lances, the flash of a carbine, or the steady glitter of sword-blades and cuirasses, shone at times from among the groves of the turpentine trees, and between the rocky undulations of the landscape. Thus we, the British, could not make ourselves quite aware of

the nature of the ground we were approaching, while the French marched straight and confidently towards certain great cliffs, which had been carefully reconnoitred from the sea on the extreme right, and which they were to storm, with the village of Almatamack, at the point of the bayonet. At nine o'clock, the French on our right—Bosquet's column—halted, and quietly cooked their coffee, while our troops were still moving laboriously over rough ground, to bring our flank closer to theirs; and now, far beyond the extended columns of the allies—those long, bright lines of bayonets, sloped barrels, and waving colours that shone in the sun of a lovely morning—we saw the dark smoke of the war-steamers towering into the clear air, as they crept in-shore, seeking opportunities to open fire upon the Russian's lofty position; and at twenty minutes past ten we heard the first cannon booming, as they threw their shot among the imperial troops in rear of the telegraph station, which was distant nearly five thousand metres from the shore. Two more protracted halts took place, while final consultations were made between Lord Raglan and Marshal St. Arnaud; but still we were drawing nearer the scene of the coming conflict.

Before us rolled the Alma—a picturesque river—which takes its rise among the western slopes of the Chatyrdagh, in Crim Tartary, and falls into the Euxine, about twelve miles from Sebastopol. High rises its southern bank into picturesque rocks, that in some places are precipitous, and terminate in a lofty cliff which overhangs the sea; and this formidable position was to be defended against us by more than thirty-nine thousand Russians and one hundred and six pieces of cannon, led by Prince Alexander Menschikoff, one of the Emperor's most distinguished generals, who had entered the world as the son of a poor pastrycook, but who now held the supreme civil and military command in the Crimea. A round shot from a Turkish cannon had mutilated him severely at the siege of Varna, and hence the hatred he bore the race and faith of the Osmanlis was deep and fierce. His skill was not equal to his presumption, for he fully thought—as a letter found in his carriage by Captain Travers of ours, after the battle, asserted—that if

the three invading armies were not routed at the Alma, he would be fully able to defend its hills for three weeks, until the Emperor sent him reinforcements from the steppes of Bessarabia.

Two miles from the mouth of the Alma stood the picturesque little village of Burliuk. It was now in flames, and the smoke of the conflagration was rolling among the vineyards, which covered the slope that extended between the stream and the base of those cliffs along which glittered the hostile lines of the Russian army. Two miles in length those lines extended along the hills, which were intersected by deep ravines. On every ridge strong batteries of cannon swept the approaches to these; deep trenches were dug along the mountain slopes, and therein were posted the infantry. Constructed on the side of the Kourgané Hill, which rises to the height of six hundred feet above the Alma, was an enormous battery, forming two sides of a triangle, and mounting fourteen heavy guns, thirty-two pounders, and twenty-four pound howitzers. The ascent to this was commanded by three other batteries, mounting twenty-five guns. To assail the Kourgané Hill—the right wing of the Russian army—with all its cannon, howitzers, and trenches, was the task assigned to the Light Division under Sir George Brown, supported by the Duke of Cambridge, with the Guards and Highlanders; and so intent was Menschikoff on its defence, that he had there concentrated sixteen battalions of regular infantry, two battalions of sailors, and two brigades of field-pieces. Near them were many ladies in carriages from Sebastopol, and elsewhere, waiting to see the "English curs" beaten.

During one of the protracted halts referred to, I could not help thinking how lovely was the morning for the unholy work we had in hand! The sun was without a cloud, and the soft breeze of the September morn played along the grassy slopes, rustling the leaves of the olive and turpentine groves, and the broader foliage of the vineyards, till at last even its breath died away upon the summit of the hostile hills. "It was then that in the allied armies there occurred," says Kinglake, "a singular pause of sound—a pause so general as to have been observed and remembered by many in remote parts of the ground, and so marked that

its interruption by the mere neighing of an angry horse seized the attention of thousands; and although this strange silence was the mere result of weariness and chance, it seemed to carry a meaning; for it was now that, after nearly forty years of peace, the great nations of Europe were once more meeting for battle!"

The French steamers were now shelling the heights, the Russians making but a poor response; and just as a bomb, splendidly thrown by the former, among the smoke wreaths that curled round the brow of the cliffs, unmasked an ambush which had been prepared for the advancing Zouaves, after the smoke cleared away, showed by the prostrate forms of the riflemen it slew, how well it had done its fatal work—just as I was watching this episode, through my glass, I heard Studhome say, "Norcliff, we are to go to the front."

"Ours, alone?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Can't say; but you see the danger of having a reputation, Newton," said Jack, laughing, for he was in unusual high spirits. "We lancers served against the Pindarees in Central India, at Neerbudda, and elsewhere—the men and horses, poor nags, change; but the name and the number remain. Thus, you see what the honour of having a good name and gallant number costs us. The lancers must advance."

"Only your squadron, Captain Norcliff," said Colonel Beverley, cantering up to where we were halted in brigade; "you will advance and extend to double the usual skirmishing distance, simply to feel the enemy."

I saluted and gave the command, "Threes right—left-wheel—forward," and away we went at a swinging trot, with plumes and pennons glittering in the air.

"If they hit you, Bill?" cried one of our men to Sergeant Dashwood, of Wilford's troop, which formed the left of my squadron.

"Bah! I escaped often enough in India," said the sergeant, laughing; "and, please Heaven, were it only for my poor wife's sake, I shall do so again."

It did not please Heaven, however, for within one hour after this worthy Sergeant Dashwood was lying on his back, pale and stiff, with a bullet in his heart.

As we halted, formed line to the front, and extended from the right at full speed, I heard Jocelyn of ours, a wild and extravagant fellow, say to Sir Henry Scarlett, "I wonder how many infernal *post obits* will be cancelled to-day!"

We now advanced slowly over the open ground, halting at times, and every moment gave us a clearer and nearer view of the enemy's position.

I looked to the rear. How steadily they were coming on, those splendid lines of British infantry—the Royal and the Welsh Fusiliers, the 19th, and 33rd, and Connaught Rangers—stretching far away from flank to flank, in scarlet—that glorious and historic colour, which fills at once the eye and the mind—their bayonets flashing in the sun, and their colours threateningly advanced, but hanging listless, for the wind had died away. Thousands of those who were now marching there, in youth, and pride, and health—whose place at home was still vacant in many a parent's heart—were doomed to fatten the earth with their bones, and make the grass of future summers grow greener on the slopes of the Alma. Strong memories of my early youth, of my dead mother's face and voice, were with me now, and tears came too—I scarcely knew why; but I felt somewhat as if in a dream. I had a strong yearning also to see the proud Louisa, the tender Cora Calderwood, and my kind old uncle—those I might never see again.

I strove to imagine how Louisa Loftus would bear the shock of hearing that I had fallen—if fall I should. When and by whom would the news be broken to her? I thought, too, of the quiet old woods of Calderwood Glen, under the shadow of the greater Lomond. There, at least, all was peace, thank Heaven; and in my heart I prayed that long, long might it be so. And strange it was, too, that in this exciting time, when so many thousands of various races were about to close in the shock of battle—when a few minutes more might see me face to face with death—death by the cannon, the rifle, or the sabre—even while the

explosion of the French shells rung every instant in the air—there flickered in my memory snatches of frivolous musical strains, and one or two trivial mess-room incidents; so that the vast array along the Alma seemed almost a phantasmagoria. But here a hand was laid upon my bridle arm. It was the hand of my faithful follower, Willie Pitblado, who slung his lance, and, sinking the soldier in the friend and countryman, said, while his bright grey eyes sparkled under his lancer cap—

"Hear you that, sir? It is the pipes of the Highland brigade!"

We were so far to the right of our squadron as to be close to the division of the Duke of Cambridge, which was composed of the Grenadier, Coldstream, and Scots Fusilier Guards, with three of the Highland regiments (the 42nd, 79th, and 93rd), whose pipers were now playing each the pibroch of their corps during the second halt; and then over all the field the old wild "memory of a thousand years" was kindled in every Scotchman's heart. I felt his enthusiasm; I saw that Willie felt it too, and in the kindly smile we exchanged there was conveyed a world of hidden sentiment. Wild, barbarous, and uncouth as it may be deemed—an instrument, perhaps, beyond improvement—the voice of the war-pipe seldom falls without a strange and stirring effect upon the Scottish ear; and let neither Englishman nor Irishman ever trust that Scot who hears it unmoved by the love of country and of home. There is something rotten at his heart's core! In whatever part of the distant world a Scotchman hears its strange notes, and the hoarse hum of its deep bass drones, it sets him dreaming of home; of the old thatched cottage in the mountain-glen, where the trouting burn gurgles under the long yellow broom, or "the auld brigstane" where he fished in boyhood; and with its voice come back the faces of "the loved, the lost, the distant, and the dead," and the glories and the battles of the years that are gone. He sees, too, the old kirk, where he prayed by his mother's knee; the graveyard, with all its mossy stones, and the forms of those who are lying there rise again in memory's eye. So the storm-beaten Isleman may seem to hear once more the waves that lash on Jura's rocks, or the scream of the wild birds over Scarba's shore, when ploughing far away in the wastes of the Indian Sea. It is difficult to define what this influence is; but that Scot is

little to be envied who hears the warpipe unmoved, when far away from home, or as we heard it on that day beside the Alma; and though proud of his lancer regiment, I could see that my comrade Willie's heart was with the Highlanders, whose dark plumes were tossing on our right. It was at this time that Sir Colin Campbell, in his quiet, grave way, said to one of his officers, as the historian before quoted records, "This will be a good time for the men to get loose half their cartridges."

"And when the command travelled along the ranks of the Highlanders, it lit up the faces of the men one after another, assuring them that now, at length, and after long expectance, they indeed would go into action. They began obeying the order, and with beaming joy, for they came of a warlike race; yet not without emotion of a grave kind. They were young soldiers, and new to battle."

But now the trumpets recalled us to our brigade in rear of the infantry, who had the chief work of that bloody day to do. And just as we wheeled into our places, a roar of musketry on our right announced that the impetuous French had commenced the attack! The enemy's shot and shell were coming souse among us now, and many heard for the first time the fierce rushing sound, and then the mighty shock, as a bullet ripped up the earth, or swept a man away; while shells that burst in mid-air fell in hissing showers, that tore our clothing with their jagged edges, when they failed to wound. Dashing through the Alma, in front of the steep cliffs, under a terrific shower of round shot, grape, and musketry, which clothed the whole face of the slopes with spouting lines of white smoke, streaked with flashes of fire, waking a thousand echoes in the sky above and earth below, the French poured forward in yelling and impetuous masses. Fresh from their campaigns and conquests in burning Algeria, those fierce little Zouaves, in their blue jackets, red breeches, and turbans, active as mountain goats, were seen swarming up at the point of the bayonet, and forming in two lines, which charged with headlong rush on the astonished Muscovites, whose general, being thus completely outflanked on the cliffs being scaled, sought, but sought in vain, to change his front, and drive the French from those hills they had taken so rapidly and so gallantly, but at awful loss.

"Allah-Allah Hu!" was now the cry that rent the air, as the Turks advanced.

Under their green standards—the holy colour—with the crescent and star, massed in close column at quarter distance, the Turkish troops came on; and through the sea of red fezzes the cannon balls made many a deadly lane, until the battalions deployed into line, sending, as Studhome said, "many a believer to Paradise in a state of mutilation such as the houris wouldn't appreciate." But on they went against that sheet of lead and iron, shoulder to shoulder with the French; and many a shaven crown and many a scarlet fez, with its broad military button and blue tassel, were lying on the turf, while, with visions of the dark-eyed girls of Paradise waving their green scarves from their couches of pearl, and crying, "Come, kiss me, for I love thee," many a grim, Turkish soul passed forth into the night of death. On the other flank were the French linesmen, crying on "*Dieu, et la Mère de Dieu*," to help them in their last agony, while the sisters of charity and the *vivandières* rivalled each other in the rear in their attention to the wounded and dying.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Three hundred cannon threw up their emetic,
And thirty thousand muskets flung their pills
Like hail to make a bloody diuretic.
Mortality! thou hast thy monthly bills;
Thy plagues, thy passions, thy physicians, yet tick,
Like the death-watch, within our ears the ills
Past, present, and to come;—but all may yield
To the true portrait of one battle-field. BYRON.

At half-past one the British infantry advanced into action; like lightning the order flew along the line, for it was borne by Nolan, the impetuous and the gallant.

The village of Burliuk, the centre of our position, was still in flames that rose to a vast height, especially from the well-filled stackyards.

To the right of the conflagration, two regiments of Adams's brigade, the Welsh[*] and 49th, or Hertfordshire, crossed the river by a deep and dangerous ford, under a galling fire from the Russian Minie Riflemen, who were ensconced among the vineyards on the opposite bank. The remainder crossed on the left of Burliuk, and, both uniting beyond it, the whole division of De Lacy Evans found themselves engaged in sanguinary strife, while we, the cavalry, could but sit in our saddles and look on, but burning with impatience to advance.

[*] 41st—so called since 1831.

On the extreme left of the British advance, the Light Division, under Sir George Brown, G.C.B. (a Peninsular veteran of the old fighting 43rd), crossed the stream in their immediate front. Rugged and precipitous, the bank rose above them. So steep was it in some places that one of our officers, when in the act of climbing, was mortally wounded by having his entire spinal column traversed by a ball, which had been fired perpendicularly down from the Russian ranks above. Dense vineyards and abattis of felled trees partially obstructed the advance of our gallant Light Division; but in vain, for the 7th, the 33rd, and Welsh Fusiliers, the 77th, and Connaught Rangers pressed on under the volleying fire; and such was their coolness, that the soldiers threw to each other bunches of the delicious crimson grapes, to quench their thirst, for they had been long in marching order under a burning morning sun. The Minie balls were showering past like hail; caps, epaulettes, ears, fingers, and teeth were torn away, and every moment the men fell fast on every hand; but from right to left the cries of "Forward! on! on! forward!" were incessant, and the human surge of the Light Division swept on, bearing with it the

whole 95th regiment. Rapidly they formed in line beyond the broken ground—rapidly and magnificently—and threw their steady fire into the strong redoubts with terrible effect; but hundreds were falling on both sides, and now commenced that ever memorable charge up hill by which we won the Alma. Faintly in the air came a yell of defiance from the Russians; it was very different from "the strong-lunged, massive-throated, deep-chested outbursts of cheering" that ran along the ranks of the British infantry.

Conspicuous on a grey horse, amid the clouds of passing smoke, we could see old Sir George Brown, riding as he had ridden with the Light Division of other days, at Busaco and Talavera. A deadly sheet of fire now tears through the 7th Fusiliers—led by Lacy Yea—they waver, but re-form! By the same fire the 23rd are decimated, and Colonel Chester falls at their head, shouting, "On, lads, on!" Relief after relief is shot down under the colours of the 7th. One is lost for a time; but, hurrah! it is safe among the soldiers of the Royal Welsh!

Under their colour, young Anstruther (the son of my uncle's neighbour, Balcaskie) is shot dead, and the poor boy rolls down the hill, enveloped in its silken folds; but again it waves in the wind, as Private Evans snatches it up, and bears it on towards the Great Redoubt.

Thicker fall the dead on every hand, for it is all musketry, and the deep, hoarse boom of the cannon, surging like a stormy sea, roll upon roll. The wounded are crawling, limping, and streaming to the rear; the dead lie close as autumn leaves in Vallombrosa. On stretchers and crossed muskets, officers and men are borne to the riverside, and, reeking with blood, the stretchers return for other victims. Hythe is forgotten now, and all her science of musketry; for no man thinks of sighting his Minie rifle, but all load, and cap, and blaze away at random, though many an officer is shouting, "Steady, men, steady, and aim below the crossbelts."

On, yet on, rolls the human surge, for what or who could withstand them—our noble infantry, our 19th and 33rd, our 77th and 88th, as they rush on, with colours flying and loud hurrahs!

But now there is a louder cry!

Their leader falls! In a cloud of dust both horse and man go down, and for a moment the advance is paralyzed—but for a moment only.

Again the grand old soldier is at their head on foot, his sword glittering above his white head, and, reckless of the tremendous fire which sweeps through them, our troops dash at the redoubts—a mighty torrent in scarlet—the flashing bayonets are lowered—man seeks man, ready to grapple body to body with his foe, and the sparks of fire rise in the midst as steel clashes on steel, for the Russian hearts are stout and their hands are strong as ours; the dead and the dying are heaped over each other, to be trampled on and smothered in their blood.

Nine hundred of our officers and men fell, killed and wounded, amid the terrible *mêlée* in the Great Redoubt, and all up the scorched slope that leads to it. In the torn vineyards, and among the leafy abbatis, the poor redcoats are lying thicker than ever I have seen the scarlet poppies stud the harvest fields in Lothian or the Merse!

The red dragon of the Royal Welsh is flying on that fatal redoubt, but not yet is the victory ours!

Descending from the higher hills, a mighty column of Russian infantry—a double column, composed of the Ouglitz and Vladimir battalions, bearing with them the image of St. Sergius, a solemn trust given to them by the Bishop of Moscow—a supposed miraculous idol, borne in the wars of the Emperor Alexis, of Peter the Great, and Alexander I.—came rushing to the mortal shock, in full confidence of victory.

Deploying into line, the great grey mass, with their flat caps and spiked helmets—for the corps were various—came boldly on, and followed up a deadly volley by a powerful bayonet charge. Then the ranks in scarlet, exhausted by their toilsome ascent, began to waver and fall back, followed down hill by the yelling Russian hordes, who had a perfect belief in their own invincibility, and barbarously bayoneted all our wounded as they came on.

Terribly fatal was this temporary repulse to the gallant Welsh Fusiliers in particular; but now the 7th and 33rd, with the Guards and Highlanders, advanced, and again the struggle was resumed.

Of the 33rd, nineteen sergeants fell, chiefly in defence of the colours; and fourteen bullet holes in one standard and eleven in the other attested to the fury of the conflict.

Throwing open his ranks to allow the retreating regiments to re-form and recover breath, the Duke of Cambridge now brought up his division, though there was a momentary fear of its success, for an officer high in rank exclaimed—

"The brigade of Guards will be destroyed. Ought it not to fall back?"

"Better that every man of her Majesty's Guards should lie dead upon the field than turn their backs upon the enemy!" was the stern and proud response of grim old Colin Campbell, a veteran of the old and glorious wars of Wellington, as he galloped off to put himself at the head of his Highlanders, whom he had had skilfully brought on in *échelon* of regiments. They reserved their fire, and advanced in solemn silence.

Terribly was our splendid brigade of Guards handled, when the Highlanders came up, and then, as Kinglake tells us, a man in one of the regiments re-forming on the slope cried, in the deep, honest bitterness of his heart, "Let the Scotsmen go on—they'll do the work!" and, with three battalions in the kilt, Sir Colin (whose horse was killed under him) advanced to meet *twelve* of the flushed and furious enemy.

"Now, men," said he, "you are going into action, and remember this, that whoever is wounded—I don't care what his rank is—must lie where he falls. No soldier must carry off wounded men. If any one does such a thing, his name shall be stuck up in his parish kirk. Be steady—keep silence—fire low! Now, men—the army are watching us—make me proud of my Highland brigade!"

The brilliant author of "Eöthen," an eye-witness of this part of the field, describes their movements so beautifully that I cannot resist quoting him again.

"The ground they had to ascend was a good deal more steep and broken than the slope close beneath the redoubt. In the land where those Scots were bred, there are shadows of sailing clouds skimming up the mountain side; and their paths are rugged and steep; yet their course is

smooth, easy, and swift. Smoothly, easily, swiftly, the Black Watch seemed to glide up the hill. A few instants before, and their tartans ranged dark in the valley; now their plumes were on the crest."

Another line in *échelon*, and another—the Cameron and the Sutherland Highlanders; and now, to the eyes of the superstitious Muscovites, the strange uniform of those troops seemed something terrible; their waving sporrans were taken for horses' heads; they cried to each other that the Angel of Light had departed, and the Demon of Death had come!

Close and murderous was the fire that opened on them; then a wail of despair floated over the grey masses of the long-coated Russian infantry, as they broke and fled, casting away knapsacks, and everything that might encumber their flight, and, for the first time, rose the Highland cheer. "Then," says the great historian of the war, "along the Kourgané slopes, and thence west almost home to the Causeway, the hill-sides were made to resound with that joyous and assuring cry, which is the natural utterance of a northern people, so long as it is warlike and free."[*]

[*] Kinglake, vol. ii.

The Heights of the Alma were won!

CHAPTER XL.

Had ye no graves at home,
Across the briny water,
That hither ye must come,
Like bullocks to the slaughter?
If we the work must do,

Why the sooner 'tis begun,
If flint and trigger hold but true,
The quicker 'twill be done,
By the rifle! the good rifle!
In our hands it is no trifle!

The battle was fought and won; the thunder had died away along the heights of the Alma; it was all over now—that "hell of blood and ferocity" was past; and little more remained but to number the dead, and lay them in their last ghastly homes. The agonies even of the wounded—that terrible grey acre of Russian wounded—were half forgotten by the untouched; but many a bright-eyed girl in England far away, and in that northern land which was to me the dearest half of "sea-walled Albion," who was wearing her gay muslins and flowers, would be coming forth, ere long, in the crape and sable livery of grief; for many a father and mother's hope and pride were among the redcoats that lay so motionless and still along those fatal slopes.

The sun was verging westward, the smoke of the villanous saltpetre hung like a lurid canopy over the summit of the Kourgané Hill, and that final scene of slaughter in the Great Redoubt; and now men, who had been separated in the confusion and hurry of the conflict, were meeting again, and congratulating each other that they were spared.

We, the small force of cavalry, a thousand sabres and lancers, who had hitherto been impatient onlookers, now dashed through the river, without Lord Raglan's authority; and, though the upsetting of a field-gun, and the slippery nature of the ford, were the cause of much delay, we reached the summit of the Kourgané Hill soon after the Highlanders had swept the foe from it. We had six guns with us, and their fire told fearfully upon the retreating masses of the Russians, who left mangled piles of dead in their rear. The battery was divided; one half our force,

led by Lord Cardigan, escorting those on the right, while Lord Lucan, with the rest, conducted those that were on the left. Our orders were, also, to glean up cannon, prisoners, and other trophies.

The earl rode in advance with my squadron of lancers. We picked up a good many prisoners, who sullenly threw down their arms and submitted. These men were all light infantry, wearing flat forage-caps, and long grey coats that reached to their ankles.

On this duty we had to traverse a great portion of the field, and its aspect was harrowing; a day of slaughter was to be followed by a night of agony.

Here and there were pools of blood, in which the flies were battening, and from whence the honey-bee and the snow-white butterfly strove in vain to free their tiny pinions; and on the glacis of the Great Redoubt, where men of all regiments—but chiefly Welsh Fusiliers—lay blended together, were bodies to be seen without heads, or legs, or arms, bowels torn out, brains crushed, blood oozing from eyes, or ears, or mouths—blood, blood everywhere: for it was there that grape, canister, and round-shot had bowled through the advancing columns.

Among those ghastly piles lay an ensign of one of our line regiments —a poor boy, fresh from Eton or Harrow, struck down in his first red coat. He had a miniature in his hand—a young and beautiful girl, thought I. But Pitblado handed it to me, and then I saw that it represented a grey-haired woman, of comely and matronly aspect.

She was his mother, no doubt. Could she have seen him there!

A ball had pierced his chest. He was not quite dead; for when Pitblado poured some water between his lips, his eyes opened, and he began to mutter as if speaking to his mother—that his head lay on her breast, and he heard, in fancy, her replies.

True, in the end, to the first instinct, or first tender impulse of nature, as, when a little child, he had, under pain or wrong, hid his weeping face in his mother's lap, the old spirit came over him; and as his dying ear seemed to hear that mother's voice, a holy light shone over his livid face, and the poor lad died happily.

He must have been shot under his colours, for the standard belt was yet over his left shoulder.

The roar of battle was gone now, and the bushes where the dead ensign lay were literally alive with larks, thrushes, and linnets in full song.

Many of the Russian slain had half-bitten cartridges in their open mouths. Many who were shot in the head lay with their faces on the sod, and their muskets under them; and when struck in the heart, death was so instantaneous that all retained the position in which they had been shot. By their attitudes, we might know the time they had been in dying.

In one place seven of the Russian 26th—for that number was on their glazed leather helmets—lay all in a line, with their bayonets at the charge. All these men had been slain by a shower of grape, and were shot in the head or breast.

As we rode on we secured many prisoners and several battery guns; all the cannon were on stocks of wood, painted green, with white crosses on the breeches and muzzles.

And now we were traversing the Kourgané Hill, where the fine fellows of our household brigade, in their bright scarlet and black bearskins, were lying in great numbers, and close by were many of the Black Watch, but all dead. I reined in my horse, and looked at them earnestly.

The countenances of some seemed as if still in life, so far as expression went. Some were calm and resigned; some as if in prayer. Others were fierce and stern; but all were pale and white as the cold Carrara marble. The evening breeze passed over them; it lifted their hair and the black plumes in their bonnets. Then the dead seemed as if about to stir. There they lay, with the blood stiffening on their tartans. My heart was very full.

In some faces I could read a ghastly and defiant smile, and several were stretched at length, as if the friends that would ere long be sorrowing for them in their distant home were about to commit them to their winding-sheet.

Where our cannon had mauled their retreating cavalry, the horses lay in close ranks, with their long necks stretched out, and their riders beneath them, all torn, brained, or disembowelled alike by the iron storm of grape-shot that had swept through the squadron. In some places we saw only a red, muddy pulp, composed of flesh and bones, where the enemy's brigade of guns had traversed the ground.

"War!" says a French writer; "those by whose will war comes—those who make men resemble the savage beasts—will have a fearful account to render to the righteous Judge above!"

As we passed along with our prisoners, many of our wounded reviled and execrated them, for on all hands we heard stories of Russian treachery.

Our soldiers, in some instances, when supplying their wounded enemies with water from their canteens, were shot down by the very wretch whose thirst they had just quenched. Captain Eddington, of the 95th, was murdered in this fashion by a Russian rifleman, in sight of the whole regiment, and of his brother, a lieutenant, who rushed in advance to avenge him and fell riddled with bullets. Maddened by several such incidents, our soldiers, with their musket butts, dashed out the brains of several of the wounded, slaying them like reptiles, and undeserving of mercy.

Such details are only calculated to weary and revolt; but the stern scene was not without its brighter features.

Already the surgeons were busy among the wounded, and our gallant seamen were all tenderness, sympathy, and activity, as they conveyed them on board the ships, from the rigging of which the events of that exciting day had been witnessed by thousands.

"Cheer up, sodjer," I sometimes heard them shout, as they bore a maimed victim, pale and bloody, to the boats; "we shall all eat our Christmas duff in Sebastopol."

Many whom they bore away were "booked" for Chelsea, "the poor soldier's last home in the land of the living;" but many were fated to die of their wounds ere the sun of the morrow lit up the waters of the Euxine.

We were now far in the rear of the original Russian position, and were actually riding along the Sebastopol road, when Captain Bolton, of the 1st Dragoon Guards, whose sword hand was muffled in a bloody handkerchief, came galloping after us, to explain that Lord Raglan desired we should fall back at once.

"His lordship fears that you are going too far in advance," said he, "and that the Russian flying artillery may halt and open on you. Give up all pursuit of prisoners; set loose those you have, and simply escort the guns."

On this we halted and liberated more than a hundred prisoners of all ranks, several being officers. Some of the latter shrugged their shoulders contemptuously at the commiseration we expressed for some of the Russian wounded, who lay on the road expiring of weakness and thirst.

"Bah!" said one, in French, to me; "they are only private soldiers—peasants—and will soon die."

His sentiments were worthy of a Russian aristocrat; but he was a grim, stern, and white-moustached officer, evidently of high rank, for his breast was covered from epaulette to epaulette with stars, medals, and crosses.

I had afterwards reason to know that this officer was General Baur, who had commanded the reconnaisance at Bulganak.

As we were retiring, we came among some of the French, and I recognised Mademoiselle Sophie, the *vivandière* whom I had seen at Gallipoli and Varna, and who immediately offered me a *petit verre* of cognac from her little store, which I gladly accepted. She looked pale and excited, and her eyes were bloodshot.

"Our regiment has suffered heavily to-day, monsieur," said she. "I was thrice under fire with it; but so many of my comrades fell—that—that—*mon Dieu!* it proved too much for me."

"Your friend, M. Jolicoeur, of the 2nd Zouaves," said I; "he, I hope, has escaped to-day?"

"*Hélas! mon pauvre Jules!* he is lying yonder with ever so many more of ours," she replied, pointing with her trembling hand to the Telegraph Battery.

"Wounded?"

"Dead, monsieur, dead! He fell when planting the standard of the 2nd Zouaves on the summit, where you may still see it flying. Poor Captain Victor Baudeuf, who used to flirt so terribly with Rigolboche, and pay such frightful sums for a *fauteuil* every night she danced, till Mademoiselle Theresa took her place at the *cafés chantants*—well, he, too, and two hundred of our rank and file, are lying there."

The *vivandière* wept and wrung her hands.

All great excitements are followed by a painful reaction; and I shall not readily forget the dreary night that followed the day of the Alma.

My troop bivouacked near the old ruined walls that lie on the western flank of the Kourgané Hill.

Vast numbers of dead were lying near; they disturbed us not. But the wounded, the dying—ah, their moans and cries were frightful! I muffled my head in my cloak, and strove to shut out the piteous-sounds, and court sleep beside my jaded charger, close to whose side I crept for warmth.

CHAPTER XLI.

Mine own one! years have passed away
Since I have seen your thoughtful face;
Yet could I every feature trace—
Your image haunts me night and day.
A song brings back the time we walked
Above the brown cliff's sloping lawn;
From music I have even drawn

The very words we used to talk.
The crumbling church, the upland lea,
The river wimpling round the bridge,
The brave grey wold—the far-off ridge,
The mournful singing of the sea.

A few days after the startling telegram reached Calderwood, the newspapers teemed with despatches and details of the victory at the Alma, the flight of the shattered Russian Army towards Baktchiserai, and the advance of the Allies on Sebastopol.

Among those details were the official lists of the killed, wounded, and missing, furnished by the adjutant-general. How many a home in the British Isles did these fatal lists fill with grief? how many a heart they wrung?

Cora Calderwood, pale, and still suffering from the recent shock, read over the lists; but looked in vain for the name of her cousin Newton. It was not among the killed; neither was it among the wounded or the missing. There was no casualty among the officers of the lancers, save the death of Lieutenant Rakeleigh, who was killed by a cannon shot in the affair of Bulganak, on the evening preceding the great battle of the Alma, "and whose body Captain Newton Calderwood Norcliff, with a few lancers, made a gallant attempt to rescue and carry off."

Poor Rakeleigh! She remembered how well he waltzed, and what desperate love he made to her at the lancers' ball, when flushed by a furious galop and a bumper of the mess champagne. What mystery was this? Dared she hope? Might papa prove right, after all? And might Newton "turn up" as their old friend Dunnikeir had so often done, from under a pile of dead men and horses, in the old Peninsular days? Sir Nigel instantly wrote to the War Office requesting some information regarding Captain Newton C. Norcliff, and was promptly informed that the telegram should have been, "*The name of your nephew is* NOT *among the killed*."

So the omission of those three letters—one little word—made a mighty difference to poor Cora's anxious and affectionate heart; but the letter from the War Office added, after an apology, "*We regret to state that, a day or two after the passage of the Alma, Captain Norcliff was severely wounded, mutilated, and taken prisoner in a skirmish with the enemy's cavalry—an affair of which no detail has yet reached headquarters.*"

Mutilated and taken!—taken by those odious, savage, and terrible Muscovites, of whose barbarities the newspapers were daily giving fresh details! Here was a new horror—another source of anxiety and grief; and Cora and Sir Nigel were never tired of surmising or conjecturing what might be the fate of their kinsman, or of searching the public journals, and the letters from the army with which their columns teemed, for some scrap of information regarding the lost one; but they searched in vain. Time passed on; the Russians sank their fleet across the mouth of the harbour of Sebastopol; Balaclava was captured by the British; and the second week of October saw the first bombardment of the beleagured city. These were important facts; but one was more important still to Cora Calderwood—there came no tidings of her lost cousin Newton. Had he died in the hands of the Russians, or been sent to dig copper in the mines of Siberia?—a place of which she had rather vague ideas, and of which, with its capital, Tobolsk, she had read such thrilling accounts, when at school, in Madame Cottin's celebrated "Elizabeth, or the Exiles," &c. Her heart sank within her at this conjecture, and all that such a fate suggested. She penned several letters on the subject to Lady Louisa Loftus. Now, they could mingle their tears, she wrote; now they could commune and sorrow in common; now——. But she could not tell *her* that she loved Newton, too, and could only profess a sisterly affection for Louisa.

The responses of the latter were cold—singularly so. She was greatly shocked, no doubt; it made her quite nervous, and all that sort of thing, to think that Captain Norcliff should be mutilated. Had he lost his nose (it was a very handsome one)?—or his ears?—or what had the Russians cut off? If it was a leg, Lord Slubber jocularly suggested that it would

mar his fox-hunting and round-dancing for the future; and to think of a husband with a wooden leg, or an iron hook for an arm, like the poor old creatures one sees at Chelsea, would be so funny—so very absurd!

"Oh," exclaimed Cora, "to write thus, how heartless! To write thus, when now, of all men in the world, he most requires commiseration! How horrible! How worldly and selfish she is! She never loved him—never, never loved him—as—as—I do," she dared not add, even to herself.

Then the letter described the new lining of the carriage; the last thing in bonnets, and—but here Cora crushed it up in her quick, impatient little hand, and, with a gesture of impatience, flung it in the fire. November kept on, and the woods in the old sequestered Glen became leafless and bare.

The snow powdered white the bare scalps of the hills, and old Willie Pitblado, the keeper, predicted that the coming winter would be a bitter one, for numbers of strange aquatic birds had been floating on Lochleven and in the Forth above Inchcolm; and one morning the woods round the Adder's Craig, and all the slopes of the Western Lomond, were covered by flocks of wild Norwegian pigeons—large white birds, whose appearance in Scotland always indicates a severe winter in the Scandinavian peninsula—a winter in which all the north of Europe is sure to share; so Cora trembled, in her tenderness of heart, as she thought of our poor soldiers before Sebastopol, and her secret love, Newton, who, if surviving, was a suffering prisoner in the hands of the Russians.

Cora often visited the cottage of old Willie, in the copse near King Jamie's Well (though the rows of half-decayed hawks, wild cats, and weasels, with which its eaves were garlanded, made the atmosphere thereabout redolent of anything but perfume), for Willie's heart, like her own, was with the army of the East; and he "devoured" all the newspapers she gave him for intelligence of the war. But he used to shake his white head, and speak often of the old times of Wellington and his boyhood—of the many fine lads who had gone forth to Spain and

Holland—"forth frae the Howe o' Fife, to return nae mair," and he greatly feared such would be the fate of his Willie, now that the poor young master was gone.

The veteran keeper's spirits had sunk considerably. He was rheumatic and ailing now; but he still crept about the woods and preserves with his old double-barrelled Joe Manton and his favourite dogs, and said hopefully, at times, "Aye ailing, ye ken, never fills the kirk-yard, Miss Cora."

But Cora's visits to the gamekeeper's lodge, to the Adder's Craig, the ruined castle of Piteadie, and other old familiar haunts, became circumscribed, when she had the annoyance of Mr. Brassy Wheedleton's company. For there were times when that legal sprout came on the circuit, or visited Sir Nigel on business "anent the bond," or begged leave to have a few blundering shots at the pheasants; and he seldom failed to combine these objects with a more ambitious one, by a pretty close attention upon Cora, and a marked attention, that to her was only productive of extreme annoyance.

Yule-tide had come and gone at Calderwood; again Cora's pretty hands had spiced the great wassail bowl, and all the household had partaken of its contents; but there were heavy hearts at the Glen, as in many a home circle elsewhere. For every icicle that hung from the eaves; every flake of snow that drifted past; every biting gust that swept through the bare woods, made old Sir Nigel and his people think of the horrors our poor fellows were enduring among the frozen trenches of Sebastopol. The golden pheasants and the brown partridges were alike forgotten, and old Pitblado wandered about, alone and forlorn, among them, "though sic a season for breedin' he couldna ca' to mind!"

The meets of the county pack took place at Largo, at Falfield, and elsewhere. The foxes, tan, grey, and brown, were thick as blackberries in Calderwood Glen—ay, thick as the black rabbits on the Isles of the Forth—but the "M.F.H." heeded them little. He had only ridden to the hounds once that season, and preferred in the cold evenings his seat by the ruddy dining-room fire, with his steaming tumbler of toddy on a gueridon table close at hand; and there he dozed in his cosy easy-chair,

with his favourite dogs at his slippered feet; or he beat time dreamily to Cora, as she ran her fingers over the keys of the cottage piano, and sang some such old-fashioned song as the "Thistle and the Rose."

CHAPTER XLII.

Alas! what evils I discern in
Too great an aptitude for learning!
And fain would all the ills unravel
That aye ensue from foreign travel.
Far happier is the man who tarries
Quiet within his household *lares*.
Read and you'll find how virtue vanishes,
How foreign vice all goodness banishes,
And how abroad young heads grow dizzy,
Proved in the under-written Odyssey.
RELIQUES OF FATHER PROUT.

The letter from the Under Secretary of State for War, which announced my capture by the Russians, unfortunately proved more correct in its tenor than the telegram; but the mode in which I fell into their hands, through the foul treachery of Mr. De Warr Berkeley, shall be detailed by myself in the following chapter.

On the 23rd of September, early in the morning, we bade adieu to the Alma, and to all those sad mounds that now lay along its southern bank, marking where seven thousand seven hundred and eighty soldiers were taking their last long slumber.

The dying Marshal St. Arnaud—for he took the field literally in a dying state—wished us to advance on the day immediately after the battle, as his intention was to be at Sebastopol by the 23rd, at latest.

"If," said he, in one of his letters, "I land in the Crimea, and it pleases God to give me a smooth sea for a few hours, I shall be master of Sebastopol and of the whole Crimea; I will push on this war with an activity and energy that shall strike the Russians with terror!"

But the humane Lord Raglan declined to advance until the wounded of all countries were attended to; and to that high-spirited hero and Christian gentleman, Dr. Thompson, of the 44th—still remembered in his native Scottish village as "the surgeon of the Alma"—was committed the care of seven hundred and fifty Russian soldiers, who had lain in their blood on the field for sixty hours. Accompanied by one attendant, with only a flag of truce displayed upon a lance to protect him from the savage and vindictive Cossacks who were hovering about, that self-devoted man worked without ceasing in the care and cure of those miserable creatures, who were all lying side by side, collected in one place—the acre of wounded—a task which proved too great in the end for his energies, as he died of fatigue and cholera soon after the battle.

The day after we marched, Death, who had hovered beside the great French marshal, even while his baton directed the movements of his zouaves and riflemen, seized more firmly on his victim, and on the 29th St. Arnaud died of cholera—that fatal pest, which still hung upon our skirts.

Our wounded, after the Alma, were conveyed in great numbers in those *kabitkas*, some of which I had personally secured; and these, after delivering their suffering and dying loads to the boats' crews, had to bring back supplies to the camp. Many of those open carts broke down, and were abandoned on the road with their contents; and thus, after we marched, it was no uncommon event for us to find seven or eight soldiers, dead, or dying of wounds and cholera, above the bags of biscuit intended for the use of the troops.

The morning of the 23rd beheld us set forth hopefully on our march to Sebastopol, where we hoped to crown our efforts by its speedy capture and destruction.

No enemy was visible to oppose our advance, and save here and there a broken-down *kabitka*, a dead Russian, who had fallen in his flight, and lay by the wayside in his leather helmet and long coat, with the vultures hovering over him; save these, and a deserted cannon, and the deep wheel-tracks in the rough old Tartar road, no trace remained of the great host we had swept before us in disorder and dismay.

In the afternoon of that day, we reached the beautiful valley of the Katcha (seventeen miles from Sebastopol), a river which has its source among the mountains of Taurida, and flows into the Black Sea, a little below Mamachai.

The valley is fertile, and we had all the enjoyment of abundant provender and water. We occupied the pretty little village of Eskel, which Baur and Kiriakoff's retreating Cossacks had plundered and partially destroyed, and piles of broken furniture around the tastefully-decorated villas of the more opulent residents evinced their destructive spirit.

Studhome, Travers, Sir Harry Scarlett, and I possessed ourselves of a pretty little villa, with painted lattices of coloured glass, and rooms neatly—even handsomely—furnished. A piano, and some pieces of music from Rossini's "Guillaume Tell," Strauss's waltzes, &c., were scattered about, showing that the fair occupants had fled at our approach; but nearly all the furniture and every utensil had been destroyed.

With his carbine, Pitblado had shot a brace of fine fat ducks, just in time to anticipate those most active of foragers, the Zouaves, and they were stewed in a warming-pan, which he had luckily discovered, and utilized for culinary purposes, the fuel used being the front door of the villa, the wood that came most readily to hand.

We had a comfortable supper, and Travers and Scarlett, who were wont to be fastidious enough with the mess-waiters about the icing of their sparkling hock or Moselle, were now content to wash down their stewed duck with a draught of water from a stale wooden canteen. But

then we had gorgeous bunches of emerald green and dewy purple grapes, from the vineyards close by, and melons and peaches, too; and these we ate in defiance of prudence and the cholera.

We had just lit our cigars, and my cornet, Sir Harry, was trying his hand on the piano, through which some inquiring Cossack had poked his lance two or three times, when the trumpet-major arrived with letters for us all; the mails from England had just come in and been distributed. Many a letter was there for those whom we had left in their graves behind us!

A letter from Sir Nigel! I recognised his bold, old-fashioned handwriting. There was none from Cora (but she had scarcely ever written to me), and there was none yet from Louisa Loftus!

Alas! I had ceased to hope for one from her. Yet I paused with good Sir Nigel's letter unopened in my hand, while my friends were busy with theirs.

How was it that, as doubt, jealousy, and irritation gathered in my mind concerning Louisa, I thought more of Cora, and that her soft features, her sweet, earnest expression, her nose, that bordered on the retroussé, her thick dark hair, and brilliantly fair complexion, came before me?

I opened my uncle's letter. It contained little else than country gossip, and his usual ideas on things in general; but some of these seemed odd and startling to me then, as I read them in that Russian villa, far away in Crim Tartary, with the hum of our camp mingling in my ears with the rush of the mountain Katcha, as it poured through its stony vale towards the sea.

The letter had been posted before news had reached Calderwood of our departure from Varna.

"So the army is to remain inactive till half its number die of cholera; and then the rest are to open a campaign against Russia at the beginning of winter. History has no parallel for such—shall I call it madness? But I tell you," continued the furious old Tory, "that the Whigs—a party which never yet made war with honour—have sold you to the Russians, and *Punch* alone dares boldly to expose it." (Pleasant, thought I, to read this

within a short ride of Sebastopol!) "Every Scottish statesman had, and still has, his price. In the olden time they were always ready to sell Scotland to England, and why should one of the same brood hesitate in selling both to the Russians now?

"My friend, Spittal of Lickspittal, the M.P., of course ridicules this idea; but that is no proof of our suspicions being incorrect. He and the Lord Advocate—that especial ministerial utensil for Scotland—have put their small brains in steep to prepare some bill for the assimilation of our laws; but strive though they may, they can never assimilate them. And while Englishmen may bow with respect to the decision of Mr. Justice Muggins, to our ears an interlocutor sounds better when delivered by my Lord Calderwood, Pitcaple, or so forth.

"By the way, Cora has had a dangler, a new admirer, for some time past; and who the deuce do you think he is? Young Mr. Brassy Wheedleton, son of old Wheedleton, the village lawyer here—one of those fellows who should be in front of Sebastopol just now, with sixty rounds of ammunition at his back, instead of loafing about the Parliament House with his hands in his pockets.

"He is a greater snob than your brother officer, Mr. De Warr Berkeley (whose patronymic was Dewar Barclay, and who once asked, when I was fishing six miles up the Eden, if I "ad 'ooked many 'addocks'). Whenever little Brassy comes here anent that d——d bond, he lays close siege to Cora, with flowers, books, music, and pretty nothings; but she only laughs at this Edinburgh goose, who neither speaks English nor Irish, Scotch nor the unknown tongue; who pronounces lord 'lud,' and cat, what, or that as 'ket, whet, or thet,' and so forth. Believe me, Newton, there is no more grotesque piece of human carrion than a genuine Scotch snob, in a high state of Anglophobia.

"I am sorry to say it, but the honourable position of the Scottish bar is simply traditional—a thing of the past. To the English barrister, the House of Lords, the woolsack, and the highest offices of the state are open; but to his poor Scotch brother, since the Union, after blacking the boots of the Lord Advocate, and scribbling in defence of his party,

whatever it may be, a wretched sheriffship is all he may get, unless, like Mansfield, Brougham, or Erskine, he casts his gown inside the bar, and crosses the border for ever.

"Any way, I don't like Cora's dangler; but the fellow is plausible, and will be deuced hard to get rid of, unless Pitblado could mistake him for a partridge, or Splinterbar bolt across country with him, after we have given her a feed of oats, dashed with brandy.

"I wish you could see Cora, as the good girl sits opposite me just now, reading. Her dark hair smoothly braided over her tiny ears; a muslin dress of pink and white, fastened by your old Rangoon brooch; and she blushes scarlet with pleasure as she desires me to send her love to you."

So ended this eccentric letter.

I felt irritated. But why should I? Cora might have a lover if she chose. But then to throw herself away upon old Wheedleton's son—old Wheedleton, whose father was the village tailor!

Something like an oath escaped me; but at that moment Sergeant-Major Drillem made his appearance, to announce that my squadron, with that of Captain Travers, was detailed for the advanced guard of cavalry on the Belbeck road, and that the trumpets would sound "boot and saddle" an hour before dawn to-morrow.

In the dusk we got under arms, mounted, and, with the troops riding in sections of threes, I rode from Eskel at a slow pace, crossed the Katcha—a position stronger, in some respects, than the Alma, and which the Russians might have disputed by inches, had we not cowed them; and then we took the road towards Belbeck, while the whole army was getting under arms.

My orders were simply to be on the alert, to advance in line when the ground was sufficiently open for such a formation, and to "feel the way" towards Belbeck, which lay only four miles distant. Such were the instructions given to me by Colonel Beverley, whose eyes sparkled at the coming work, for he was one of that race of men "known by the kindling grey eye and the light, stubborn, crisping hair—disclosing the rapture of instant fight."

As we moved off we nearly trampled down a wounded cornet of the 11th Hussars, who lay under a tree.

"That wretched little cornet of yours," said Berkeley to a captain of the 11th; "he reminds me—haw—of one of the new Minie rifles."

"How?" asked the other, coldly.

"He is a small bore—haw—what do you think of the pun?"

"That it is poor, and the occasion is bad," replied the hussar, sternly. "The poor boy will be dead before sunset."

"A doocid good thing for himself, and—haw—for us, too. He always beats us at billiards," was the heartless response of Berkeley.

"Is it true," said I, "that Lieutenant Maxe, of the navy, has opened a communication with our fleet at Balaclava?"

"Yes," said Travers. "Bolton and Nolan informed me that the allied generals were most anxious to secure it by a flank movement, especially as it is slightly defended; and to announce this intention to the fleets, which follow our movements, became the task of Maxe, who rode by night through a woody district, literally swarming with Cossacks, skirting Sebastopol; and with no aid but his brave heart, his sword and pistols, arranged the combined sea and land movements so essential to our success."

"Gallant, indeed!" we exclaimed, as we rode off.

On our right lay the ocean, its waves, as they rose and fell, beginning to be tipped with light, as the dawn brightened over the high ground that rose on our left. The country became hilly in our front, and, as it was open for a time, I formed the squadron, and advanced in line, diverging a little to the east, in the direction of Duvankoi, a village which is exactly five miles from Belbeck.

In fact, we advanced straight between these two places towards the valley through which rolls the river that bears the latter name, and which comes from the lofty table land of the Yaila, fed on its course by all the mountain streams of the Ousenbakh.

The birds were singing merrily among the trees when the sun burst forth, to light the glancing bayonets of the advancing columns in our rear; and now before us opened the vale of the Belbeck, with all its

groves of vine and olive, as we crowned an eminence, from whence we could see the woody ravines of Khutor-Mackenzie, and, ten miles to the westward, the gilded dome of Sebastopol shining like a huge inverted bowl. From this point the road lay through woods so thick, that we found it impossible to preserve much military order, and the utmost vigilance was necessary on the part of our exploring squadron, as scattered troops of the enemy were supposed to be in our vicinity.

Lord Raglan, with his staff, usually rode in advance of our main body; but on this morning my little party was in advance of the whole. As we defiled between the trees, that covered all the slope, by sections, by subdivisions, and frequently by single files, struggling along at a slow pace, but with our horses well in hand, I had repeatedly to address Berkeley in a tone of reprimand, for the loose and unnecessary manner in which he was permitting the men to straggle, and his mode of response was rather sullen, defiant, and, on one occasion, jeering.

"Aw—the dooce! very easy for you to speak. I didn't make the road to Belbeck," he would mutter. And once he added, "A demmed fool I not to send in my papers long ago—aw—aw—doocid deal too good-looking to be shot in a ditch."

Suddenly I called out—

"Front form troops at wheeling distance, and halt!" for now I perceived that Sir Harry Scarlett, who was in advance with four lancers, halted them, and sent back a corporal, who came along at a hand-gallop.

"Hullo, Travers, old fellow, what's up, do you think—aw—aw—what's the row in front?" asked Berkeley, with haste and anxiety, as he stuck his glass in his eye, and fidgeted in his saddle.

"The Russians, no doubt," said Travers, drily, as his handsome face brightened with courage and excitement.

"Ah, I thought so," said I. "Are they in force, Corporal Jones?"

"We can't tell, sir; but lance-heads, and bayonets too, are visible among the coppice in front."

By this time the two troops had formed, and halted in open column, quietly and orderly, the leading three files of each having advanced for three horses' lengths, and then reined in as if upon parade.

"We can't well use the lance here. Unsling carbines! Remain where you are, Travers," said I. "Mr. Berkeley and two files from the right, forward with me—trot!"

I drew my sword, cast loose my holster flaps, and rode on with the little party, all of whom followed me willingly enough, save one.

On joining the advanced party, we made ten horsemen altogether. Proceeding farther, to where the ground dipped somewhat suddenly down towards the Belbeck river, we could see, about a mile distant, a body of Russian cavalry, whose spiked leather helmets and lance-heads glittered in the sun. They were drawn up in line, their flanks being covered by thickets, which concealed their actual strength, so that we knew not whether they were a mere squadron or an entire brigade.

Berkeley, who was nervously busy with his powerful racing-glass, muttered—

"I see an officer on a white horse. By Jove! a doocid swell—aw, aw—all over decorations."

After using my own telescope, I exclaimed—

"He is the same fellow we released in the evening after the Alma, when Bolton came up with orders for the cavalry to fall back and abandon prisoners. I know him by his grim visage and enormous white moustache."

"Aw—aw—a general officer, I take him to be."

"Now, lads," said I, "be steady. I think I saw the glitter of a bayonet among that brushwood in front. There may be an ambush prepared thereabout, and into that we must not fall."

I could not help thinking how useful a few hand-grenades would have been on this occasion, as they would soon have solved our doubts.

To have fallen back would have served only to draw their fire upon us instantly, if any men were concealed there.

"Follow me, lads!" I exclaimed. "Mr. Berkeley, keep the rear rank men in their places."

"Captain Norcliff, asthore!" cried Lanty O'Regan, shaking his lance, "lead the way, and, be me troth, we'll ride through the whole rookawn o' them Roosians!"

Followed by my nine horsemen, I rode resolutely forward a few lance-lengths, my heart beating wildly with excitement; but a climax was soon put to that, for a hoarse voice in a strange language suddenly rang among the underwood; fire flashed redly on both sides of us; I heard the whistle of passing bullets, and amid the explosion of thirty Minie rifles a double cry, as Berkeley and one of my men fell heavily on the turf. The horse of the former was shot; but the poor lancer was mortally wounded, and his charger galloped madly away.

"Good-bye, old nag. You will never carry Bill Jones again, I fear," cried the bleeding corporal, as he was hurrying to the rear with his lance on his shoulder, when a second shot pierced his back, and finished his career.

"Retire, Travers, retire!" I shouted at the fullest pitch of my voice; "right about, lads, and away!"

The firing from the thicket was resumed, and another lancer fell dead from his saddle.

"Aw—aw—for Heaven's sake, don't leave me here!" cried Berkeley, piteously, while we heard the steel ramrods ringing, as the Russians cast about and reloaded.

While the rest of my party retired at a gallop, I caught the fallen lancer's horse by the bridle, and—in less time than I take to write it—dragged up the pale and crestfallen Berkeley, who scrambled rather than mounted into the blood-covered saddle, and we galloped off together, another shot or two adding spurs to our speed, and strewing the leaves about us. So close were we to this ambush that I heard many of the percussion caps snapping, as the Russian muskets doubtless remained foul since the Alma.

Berkeley's fresh horse carried him half its length before mine; he was riding with wild despair in his heart; and bitter malice glittering in his eye, for he felt that I had been heaping coals of fire upon his head. I could read the double emotion in his pale face, as he glanced fearfully back.

He had drawn a pistol from its holster, and, inspired by the spirit of the devil, the unnatural wretch discharged it full into my horse's head!

Wildly it plunged into the air, and then fell forward on its head, and, as its forelegs bent, I toppled heavily over, and fell beneath it.

The whole affair passed in a moment, and the next saw me surrounded by fierce and exulting Russian riflemen, with muskets clubbed and bayonets charged.

CHAPTER XLIII.

ALBANY. O save him! save him!

GONERIL. This is mere practice, Gloster:
By the law of arms, thou wast not bound to answer
An unknown opposite; thou art not vanquished,
But cozened and beguiled. SHAKSPEARE.

The prayer of Hezekiah for the prolongation of life flashed on my memory, and rose to my lips, as with rage, and almost with despair at my heart, I struggled to my feet, half-stunned, and groping blindly for my sword-hilt, which hung from my wrist by its gold knot and tassel.

Just as I grasped it firmly, the nearest rifleman charged me with his fixed bayonet, which ran through the left side of my full-dress jacket, and came off. Clutching his weapon by the barrel, I closed in, and plunged my sword twice into his breast. As he fell back, groaning heavily, the bayonet of another struck me; but luckily, those fellows, who belonged to the Kazan column, had blunted their weapons by broiling beef on them over their wood fires.

A third rifleman fired full at my head; but, by a singular chance, the nipple of his rifle was blown out by the explosion, and buried itself in his forehead, just above the nose, severing the optic nerve, and nearly forcing his eyes out. (In two hours after he died, raving mad.)

This incident created, for a moment or two, a diversion in my favour; but a Cossack officer, armed with a great crooked sabre, assailed me. Like one of Cæsar's Legionaries of old, this fellow seemed bent on cutting only at my face; and having some regard for my personal appearance, I was not sorry when he fell backwards over my dead horse, and in doing so, snapped his blade off near the hilt.

Could I have reached my holsters, in which were a pair of six-chambered Colts, I might have escaped; but now I was hemmed in on all hands by a band of fierce, ugly, beetle-browed, and snub-nosed Russians, in flat caps and long great-coats.

In an instant my gold epaulettes, my rings—Louisa's miniature and her ring, the treasured pearl in blue enamel—my purse and watch, were rent from me as if I had been in the hands of common footpads; and one of those who assisted in such work was the Cossack officer, whose name I afterwards ascertained to be Lieutenant Adrian Trebitski of the Tchernimoski corps.

In fact, he made himself very busy about the knees of my trousers in search of my portmonnaie (as the Russians usually carry their purses strapped to the knee), while his Corporal found it in my pocket; and each acquisition was greeted by a torrent of uncouth sounds, expressive, I presume, of great satisfaction.

My sabretache was torn away. It contained only my uncle's letter, which I afterwards learned, was duly translated into choice French for any secrets it might contain, and for the information of Princes Menschikoff and Gortschikoff, who, I hope, were much edified by Sir Nigel's description of Mr. Brassy Wheedleton, and of Scotch prigs in general.

Having stripped me of every article of value, and ripped all the gold lace from my lancer jacket and blue pantaloons, I have no doubt those savage wretches would soon have despatched me; but a wounded officer

rode up—the same personage with the many decorations and long grim moustache. He ordered them to desist, striking those who were near him with a whip that was attached to his bridle. He then placed me in charge of his aide-de-camp, Captain Anitchoff, a fashionable-looking young Muscovite, who wore the light blue and yellow-laced uniform of a hussar corps (the Princess Maria Paulowna's), and who has since that time published a work on the Crimean campaign. He courteously informed me, in French, that he was on the general staff of the Russian army, and that the name of my preserver was Lieutenant-General Karlovitch Baur.

He also desired me to remain close by his side, while we proceeded quickly to the rear. By this time, every trace of Travers and my squadron had disappeared.

And so I was actually a prisoner!

I was, perhaps, the sole trophy of the Russian army, so they were disposed to make the most of me. I had a special escort of a corporal and two well-bearded and ill-washed Cossacks, who rode one on each side of me, and one in the rear, each trussed up among his forage plunder and fleas—their shaggy little horses being so laden that little more than their noses and tails were visible. If I lagged, the corporal used to grin and shake his lance ominously; and when not occupied in scratching themselves, they were very merry and not unpleasant, though totally incomprehensible companions.

I knew not in what direction they were conveying me, and our mutual ignorance of each other's language prevented me from discovering. I could but trust to chance and patience.

Meanwhile, my friends were, I am pleased to say, under no small concern on my account elsewhere.

The army halted at Belbeck, where five hundred sick—among whom were many of my lancer comrades—were left behind, all ill with cholera. Lord Raglan occupied the château of a fugitive Russian noble, and there Travers rode to report that he had seen the Russians in strength among the woods between Belbeck and Khutor-Mackenzie, where, as all the world knows, a sharp engagement took place with them soon after, and where they were driven back with the loss of baggage and ammunition

for more than twenty-five thousand men. Among the former were a great quantity of watches, jewellery, and gay hussar jackets, in which the artillery and Highlanders masqueraded for a time.

After making his report to Lord Raglan and General Airey, Travers rode to Colonel Beverley, who occupied a Tartar's cottage near the river side. There he found several of ours, including Fred Wilford, old M'Goldrick, the paymaster, and Studhome, making a hearty repast on some well-cooked wild boar, with caviare, biscuits, and plenty of champagne, which had been found in the broken-down carriage of General Kiriakoff, whose crest and initials were painted on the lid of his canteen, which contained a tiny dinner service for four, but all of Dresden china.

"Gentlemen," exclaimed Beverley, starting to his feet, as Travers, Berkeley, and young Scarlett entered, "I am sorry to see you return alone. Where is our friend Norcliff?"

"Gone to the—aw—devil by the down train, probably," muttered Berkeley, whose teeth chattered as he drained a glass of champagne.

"He has fallen into the enemy's hands," said Captain Travers; "a rescue was impossible, as we knew not the extent of the ambush into which we fell. I saw him riding after us, with Berkeley——"

"Aw—yes, colonel—we were covering the rear of the squadron, in fact," interrupted that personage.

"Suddenly there was heard a single shot, and on looking back, I saw Berkeley galloping on alone——"

"Alone!"

"And poor Norcliff in the hands of the Russians, who were cutting him to pieces apparently."

"His horse had been shot under him?" said the colonel.

"Yes—but—aw—not by the Russians," said Berkeley.

"By whom, then?" asked the colonel, sharply.

"By himself," was the unhesitating response.

"Himself?"

"Absurd!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed his hearers, in succession.

"It is neither absurd nor impossible. The horse was killed by a pistol-shot, and he fell into the power of the Russians."

"Do you mean to say," asked the colonel, slowly, after a very ominous and unpleasant pause, during which Berkeley's paleness increased, and he tugged his moustache with his effeminate, girlish-like fingers, feeling evidently the loss of a toothpick, with which, like other fops, he soothed his leisure moments; "do you mean to say that this event was not accident, but design?"

"Can't tell, 'pon my life—aw—haw—would rather not say anything about it—it was doocid odd, anyway," drawled Berkeley, applying himself to the champagne again.

"Mr. Berkeley, I must insist upon your explaining."

"Can't say, I repeat—his pistol exploded—the bullet went through his horse's head——"

"Killing it on the spot?"

"Of course—aw—of course."

"What could be his reason——"

"Perhaps he thought—aw—it safer work to fall quietly into the hands of the Russians thus than to ride back under their fusilade."

"Are you aware, Mr. Berkeley," said the colonel, with increasing gravity, while all present exchanged some very peculiar glances, "that this is tantamount to branding our friend with cowardice?"

"I shall—aw—aw—answer that question, Colonel Beverley, when the time comes, and he returns," replied Berkeley; "but I don't think those Russian riflemen were in the mood to show much mercy or quarter to-day."

"And Norcliff was not such a muff as to surrender quietly," said M'Goldrick.

"You will answer the colonel's question when Norcliff returns say you?" exclaimed Studhome, starting forward, pale with passion; "answer it you shall, and now, to me!"

"Studhome!" said the colonel, interposing angrily, "this is some mistake—some wretched misconception. We all know that Captain Norcliff was incapable of committing the act you, Mr. Berkeley, impute

to him."

"I have seen him lead his troop under fire ere now," growled Studhome; "and lead it when Mr. Berkeley might have thought it unpleasant work to follow him."

"Aw—haw—well, disprove it if you can," said Berkeley, with one of his old insufferable smiles, as he stuck his glass in his eye, and lounged out of the cottage, near which my poor fellow, Willie Pitblado, was lingering to pick up some certain information about me from the colonel's servants.

"Eh, me! this will be sair news for the folk at Calderwood Glen," he sighed, as he and Lanty O'Regan turned away together.

As Berkeley and I had been in the rear, none save myself could be cognisant of his foul act of treachery. He never doubted that I had been bayoneted by the Russians, and, confident that I should never return, he thus crowned his villany by attempting to destroy my honour.

Ere long we shall see what this availed him.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Yes, thou art gone, sweet friend, my own,
We miss thee every day,
And I, yet more than all, alone,
Can only weep and pray.

Pray to be rendered meet for heaven,
And agonize in prayer,
That if we meet no more below,
Our meeting may be there.

The first halting-place of my escort was in a wood of wild pear trees, among some of those ancient burial mounds or green tumuli which stud all the Crimea, but more particularly the peninsula of Kertch, where one still marks the tomb of Mithridates. In that solitude we heard only the voices of the birds, the lark, the tomtit, and the wren, as they twittered among the caper bushes.

The Cossacks hobbled their horses, and proceeded to seat themselves on the green sward that covered the bones of the classic warriors of other times. In their havresacks they had some black bread and salt, with a flask of quass. These they shared freely with me; and with such coarse fare I was forced to be content.

The corporal had a Russian poodle, red-eyed, fox-headed, and white as snow, which he pretentiously named Olga, after the Grand Duchess, and with this cur, to which he was much attached, he freely shared his repast, and that piece of felt which serves the Cossack alike for cloak, tent, and bed.

I could not be prevailed upon to join them in partaking of some wild horseradish, which Corporal Pugacheff discovered, and unearthed with his sabre, exhibiting a root as thick as his arm. After they had smoked for nearly an hour, during which I was left to my own unpleasant reflections, the march was once more resumed—leisurely, because I was afoot—towards the east, as the sun informed me, and that was all I could learn about it.

The uniforms of these Cossacks were richer than any I had yet seen. Each had a blue jacket, edged with yellow lace, hooked over a scarlet silk vest; loose blue trousers, fastened high above the waist; busbies of black shining wool, terminating in a crimson sack, with a scarlet sash, cartridge-box, and sabre, completed their costume. Like ourselves, they rode with the lance slung, and resting on the right toe.

That night we halted at a Tartar village. The inhabitants of the cottage to which we proceeded were somewhat over-awed by the three Cossacks—a race at all times rather unscrupulous—but were disposed to view me with a commiseration that made me begin to conceive hopes of escape.

Escorted by Corporal Pugacheff and his poodle, I was conducted to the humble apartment used by the males of the family. A wooden basin, filled with clear water, and a napkin, were presented to me by the master of the house—a venerable Tartar of the old nomadic race—that I might lave my face and hands; a pipe of the cherrywood tree, which grows in the mountains, was then given me to smoke, while a repast—not of horseflesh, happily—but of goat's milk, poached eggs, and cheese, was prepared; and these we ate with our fingers, seated on mats on the earthen floor, around the little stool on which the supper-tray was placed, for, in their household and habits, the poor Tartars are nearly as primitive as their forefathers were in the days of the valiant Batu Khan, the destroyer of Moscow.

A dish of sour milk and water—the veritable yaourt of the Osmanlis—was passed round; the master of the house returned thanks without uncovering his shaven head, the Cossacks resumed their pipes, the repast was over, and the day was closing in.

The hope of escape was growing stronger in my heart; but the corporal crushed it, as if he had divined my thoughts, by quietly securing my right hand to his left, with the small steel bridle of his horse, before we lay down to take our repose, and the escort, with their pistols loaded, slept side by side across the only doorway. In addition to all these precautions, if I ventured to move, almost to wink, the poodle, Olga, was on the alert, with cocked ears and bristling hair, barking furiously. How I hated that dog!

Though weary in mind and body, I could not sleep, even if the deep bass snoring that issued from the snub noses of my three keepers would have permitted me to doze.

Berkeley's infamous treachery made my heart glow like a furnace! How deeply I repented now that, instead of succouring and remounting him, I had not left him, as his prior conduct deserved, to the chances of war and fate, and to take the place now occupied by me!

How long might I be a prisoner!

Of this war with the greatest empire in the world none could foresee or calculate the end.

Years, perhaps, might pass, and find me still a captive. By the troops of General Canrobert, some men had been discovered who had been lost by the French on their fatal retreat from Moscow in 1813, and who had, from youth to age, been slaves in the Tartar fortresses or the Siberian mines.

My blood ran cold with this idea. Oh, if such were to be my fate!

If Berkeley returned to England after all, and married Louisa! And then, if this wretched Brassy Wheedleton succeeded in marrying Cora, while I was industriously quarrying for copper and assafoetida in the vicinity of that pleasant city, Tobolsk by name!

But what was Cora to me? She was my cousin, and, of course, my cousin must not throw herself away and make an unequal marriage.

"There are men in this world," says a female writer, "who are quite capable of being in love with two women at once."

This was not at all my case; but I fear that Louisa's cold and cutting neglect was causing me to think more than I used to do of Cora Calderwood, who I knew loved me well, and I remembered the strange episode of the spell, or mesmeric riddle, wrought by the *hakim* Abd-el-Rasig, the surgeon of the 10th Egyptian Infantry.

But to be a prisoner—the prisoner of these filthy wretches—and to be conveyed by them, like a helpless Polish exile, I knew not whither!

If in boyhood, and even in infancy, I had ever a horror of study and restraint; if in later years, even regimental discipline sometimes galled me by its monotonous trammels, the reader may imagine how I writhed, how my soul revolted, at the idea of being a Russian captive, and how I longed for vengeance on Berkeley. I swore to horsewhip him in front of the line, and pistol him after! There was no extravagant length in punishment to which my fancy did not resort and my fury indulge in. No MacGregor with the dirk at his lips, swearing vengeance for Alaster of Glenstrae; no Corsican De Franchi, vowing a dreadful *vendetta* on his foe, could harbour feelings more bitter than I did in those moments of futile anger in that poor Tartar cottage.

I talked to myself wrathfully and incoherently.

I dozed at last; but my slumber was haunted by dreams and nightmares, like those of a fevered patient. I saw Louisa Loftus, with her pale and lovely features distorted by fear, her black hair floating all dishevelled about her white shoulders. She was clinging to the verge of a lofty rock, towards which an angry tide was advancing, while I, chained, withheld by some mysterious power, was unable to succour or to save her. My voice was gone, and my agonies were unbelieved, as she only beheld them with proud smiles of scorn and derision.

The scene changed. Now she had married, or was about to marry the Marquis of Slubber, believing me dead—that I had perished in the East. I heard her say so, distinctly and tearlessly, with a calm sympathetic smile, which my Lady Chillingham, with an impatient motion of her fan rebuked. Still I was deprived of all power of volition, and a spell tied up my utterance, till Berkeley—I saw him to the life, in his lancer uniform, hovering about her, to the evident annoyance of the senile marquis—told her, in his drawling lisp, that he had seen me killed, and she quite believed him. Then a painful cry escaped me, and I awoke. I had other dreams, and these were, perhaps, the worst of all. I was free! I had exposed and punished Berkeley. I was again among my friends; handsome Beverley, Travers, bluff Jack Studhome, Fred Wilford, and the others were around me. The lancers were on parade, I heard the neighing of the chargers; and saw the long line of glittering lances, the plumes and banperoles waving in the sunshine; I heard the music of our band; we were laughing, talking, smoking; we were in the mess or billiard-room, and I could hear the bells of Canterbury ringing in the cathedral towers.

At other times I was in Calderwood Glen, under the old, old trees that had echoed to the hunting-horn of many a kingly Stuart; or I was on the heather muirs, gun in hand, with old Sir Nigel, knocking over the whirring partridges and the golden pheasants, the plash of the mountain burn and the hum of the mountain bee coming together on the balmy breeze, as I trod the green Lomond side, and saw the grassy glens of Fife, the blue Forth, and many a village spire among the woodlands far away.

Then to waken and find myself chained to the Cossack corporal, in that loathly Russian den, in the wilds of Crim Tartary, was a disappointment cruel and bitter!

The rising sun saw us once more on the road; but for what place I was still ignorant. Before we started Corporal Pugacheff released my hand, but pointed significantly to his pistols.

On this day, as we proceeded eastward, there rose in the distance on our right the mountain of the Tents, the highest in the Crimea (the Tchatir Dagh, a mass of red marble), so named from its resemblance to the dwellings of the Nogai Tartars. Five thousand feet it towered above the Euxine, with its summit crimsoned in the morning sun.

Through a defile, named Demir-Kapon (or the Iron Gate), we entered the valley of the Angar, a tributary of the Salghir (which flows into the Putrid Sea); and here, from the slopes of the mountain, the scenes we saw were full of rural loveliness—picturesque Tartar villages, laden orchards and blushing vineyards, and flocks and herds without end; everywhere softness blending with sublimity. I noted every foot of the way well, as I had but one thought—escape.

I remember that near the Tartar town of Sivritash, which lies twenty miles north-east of Sebastopol, we passed a body of Russian recruits for various regiments, all hastening to get into the latter place before the Allies could invest it.

These recruits were escorted by a squadron of the hussars of the Princess Maria Paulowna (sister of the Emperor). They were certainly gorgeously-equipped and accoutred troopers, mounted on fine Arab horses; but my admiration for them was not increased by a blow which one of them dealt me, in mere wantonness, with the flat of his sabre, as I trudged past wearily and afoot: but this insult honest Pugacheff resented by laying his lance heavily across the shoulders of the hussar.

Many questions were asked of him by the officers of these troops, who altogether mustered about five thousand men; and from the frequency with which the name Kourouk occurred in his replies, as well as the direction in which we were travelling, I surmised that we were proceeding to the fortress at that place.

In this conjecture I was right, for on the evening of the third day after my capture, I found myself a prisoner in the secluded Russian fort or outpost of Kourouk, which lies on the northern slope of the mountain of Karaba Yaila, and is distant exactly seventy miles, as a bird flies, from Sebastopol.

No parole was offered me; I was without money, and my name and rank were alike unknown; I was clad only in the tatters of my own regimental finery; and I felt a deep gloom steal over me, when the little wicket gate in the massive wooden and iron barriers of the fortress was closed behind me. And now, cast utterly among strangers, I parted with regret even from the snub-nosed Corporal Pugacheff, who had been my guide thus far, and from his red-eyed poodle, Olga, too.

I was the only prisoner of war in the fortress of Kourouk.

CHAPTER XLV.

It was at length the same to me,
Fettered or fetterless to be,
I learned to love despair.
And thus when they appeared at last,
And all my bonds aside were cast,
Those heavy walls to me had grown
A heritage—and all my own!
BYRON.

Situated on a rocky slope, under the shadow of the hills of Karaba Yaila, stand the town and castle of Kourouk.

Built by the Genoese upon the ruins of a fortress erected by a khan of the house of Zingis (under whom the Crimea became an independent monarchy in 1441), the castle had been in its glory in the days when Genoa the superb was mistress of the coasts of Asia, and the islands of Cyprus, Lesbos, and Scio; but when Mohammed II. conquered Constantinople, he destroyed all the colonies of the Genoese republic upon the shores of the Euxine.

The defenders of the Castle of Kourouk, under a Scottish soldier of fortune, made a gallant resistance; but were all put to the sword, and their skulls are now built into a portion of the rampart which faces Mecca. The rocks of red and white marble on which it stands have been excavated, like those of its contemporary, the old Genoese Castle of Balaclava, into magazines and stately chambers, the sides of which are covered with coloured designs in stucco.

The two old round towers of the Genoese days were crowned by Russian cupolas—one striped like a melon, the other cut into facets, like a pineapple, all red and yellow alternately, and each surmounted by a glittering cross. These, with the great white banner of St. Andrew, with its blue saltire over all, made Kourouk look gay at a distance.

Within all was grim and sombre enough.

The garrison consisted of a four-company battalion of Russian infantry, under a *chef-de-bataillon*, named Vladimir Dahl, a tall, grisly-moustached old soldier, who wore on his breast the embroidered representation of a Turkish standard, which he had taken from the Infidels, in the days of Navarino. Each of his companies consisted of two hundred men, and belonged to a regiment three thousand strong. Such corps are the usual Russian formation, and are commanded by a *pulkovnick*, or colonel.

These troops wore long, loose, dirty-grey capotes, reaching to their ankles. On their shoulders, and in front of their flat cloth caps, was sewn a piece of green stuff, with the regimental number, 45; and this was all their finery.

They were on parade in line as Corporal Pugacheff conducted me into the fortress; and I thought them a strange array of sorry-looking wretches, so stolid in aspect, that I was reminded of the traveller, who, on seeing a Russian and a British regiment under arms in the same square at Naples, exclaimed—

"There is but one face in that whole regiment, while in this" (pointing to the British) "every soldier has a face of his own."

I was treated with the greatest respect and kindness by old Vladimir Dahl and the officers of the 45th, or Tambrov Infantry, for the outrages of the French at Kertch, and the infamous massacre of our seamen at Hango, had not yet occurred to impart a bitterness to the war.

Neither he nor I knew the other's language; his *capitans*, *fiarooschicks*, and *praperchicks* (*i.e.*, lieutenants and ensigns) were in the same condition. Thus we had no means of communication, save by clinking our glasses, and exchanging cigarettes, nods, winks, and grins.

An old *Times* newspaper was given to me. It was dated months back, and detailed the battle of Oltenitza; but its columns had been carefully purged by the censor of everything political—an ingenious process achieved by gutta-percha and ground glass.

The reader has, perhaps, heard of how a farrier-sergeant of the Emperor Alexander's Dragoon Guards predicted the destruction of the grand army of Napoleon I., on being shown a horseshoe dropped by the retreating cavalry of France.

"What! not frosted yet," he exclaimed, professionally, "and the snow to fall to-morrow! Holy St. Sergius! these fellows don't know Russia!"

Vladimir Dahl was the son of the farrier-sergeant who thus predicted the downfall of the enemies of Russia; and he was more proud of his father than if he had been, like the best of the Muscovite nobles, descended from Ruric the Norman.

The days passed slowly away. I might as well have been dumb, having no one to converse with. I could not pass the castle gates, as every avenue, angle, and outlet was guarded by snub-nosed Muscovites, in grey capotes, with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets.

Hope of escape as yet I had none!

On the morning of the fourth day, a mounted Paulowna hussar delivered at Kourouk a letter, with a shred of the feather of the quill with which it had been written inserted among the wax of the seal—a Russian mode of signifying speed.

It announced the arrival of General Baur, with all his staff. Baur had been wounded in the encounter with our troops at Khutor-Mackenzie; and I was very well pleased when the evening of the same day saw him ride into Kourouk, of which I was heartily weary; and I was not without hopes that the general, on remembering how we had released him after the Alma, might do something for me in the way of exchanging or paroling me; and in his aide-de-camp, the gay young Captain Anitchoff, of the Maria Paulowna Hussars, I was glad to see a face that I knew, and to meet one with whom I could converse.

The general had been wounded by a musket shot in the bridle arm. It was severely inflamed. Ease had been recommended, so he had come to spend a week or so at Kourouk, which was in his own military district; and on the very evening of his arrival, Anitchoff brought me an invitation to dine with him.

Anitchoff was eminently a handsome Russian. His eyes were dark, and had a latent fire in them that showed some Tartar blood; the lids were full and white, the lashes long and dark. His nose was straight and thin, and his ponderous moustache was as black as his close-shaven hair, or the wolf's fur that trimmed his light blue uniform.

My costume was of the most sorry description; but a few discrepancies were made up by Vladimir Dahl, who, among other things, presented me with a full uniform, silver epaulettes and all, of the Tambrov infantry.

French is not so much spoken in Russia as people in Britain suppose; yet, luckily for me, General Baur and Anitchoff could speak it fluently.

Before proceeding to the General's I asked—

"Can you inform me, Captain Anitchoff, if parole is to be accepted?"

"I cannot say, but rather think not," he replied, with hesitation.

"The deuce!" I exclaimed, haughtily; "then I shall escape, if I can."

"Pray don't think of it," said he, earnestly.

"Why?" I demanded, with intense chagrin.

"We have rather a summary mode of dealing with prisoners who attempt to escape. So be wary, my friend."

"Indeed, summary. How?"

"We don't always keep them on our hands," said he, with a smile that was grimly significant, while he played with the gold tassels of his hussar busby.

"Well, 'twere better to be shot than kept lingering here."

"Oh, you won't be kept here, my friend."

"Where then?"

"In a few days you will probably be sent with a convoy of sick and wounded by the way of Perecop and the desert plains towards Yekaterinoslav."

"I shall escape by the way," said I, doggedly.

"I repeat, my friend, don't think of it, for Trebitski, who will command, does not stand on trifles; and yet," he added, with a smile, "there are two persons who seldom fail in what they attempt—a prisoner and a lover."

"Why?"

"Stendahl, a Russian author, says, 'The lover thinks oftener of obtaining his mistress than the husband does of guarding his wife; the prisoner thinks oftener of escaping from his prison than the gaoler does of keeping him safe within its walls. Therefore, the lover and the prisoner should succeed.' You see," he continued, laughing, "we have some authors in snowy Russia, whatever you Britons may think to the contrary. But here is the general."

Passing through the officers of the 45th, who all made way for us, I was ushered into the presence of General Baur, the grim soldier, who was related to the hero of Beverley's interesting anecdote—Karlovitch Baur, son of Karl, the brother of Michel, the old miller of Husum.

He received me with studious politeness, though he could not help smiling at my Tambrov uniform. His left arm was in a sling, and, as he shook hands with me, I felt that he had but two right fingers remaining.

A Turkish sabre had shorn him of the rest at Kalafat, on the Danube, in the year before.

Baur was every way a man of a severely impressive presence and aspect. He had an enormous white moustache, the long, snaky curls of which floated almost over each of his large silver epaulettes. His forehead was high, massive and stern; his hair, shorn short, was rough and grizly. His dark eyes were keen, bold, and inquiring at times; but at others they wore a deep, sombre and melancholy expression, as if he was always thinking of a world beyond the present—to be looking into it, in fact—and this was not to be wondered at when we consider that Karlovitch Baur was the hero of one of the most remarkable episodes ever committed to paper.

His manner was that of one who is prompt and ready alike in thought and action, and yet who never unsaid or undid anything.

Over his grass-green and silver-laced uniform, he wore a loose, wide *souba*, or fur coat with sleeves, for service, and this he cast aside when the trumpets announced that dinner was served; and then, among many other orders that glittered on his warlike breast, I saw that of St. Andrew, which was founded in 1699 by Peter the Great, and is only bestowed on crowned heads and officers of the highest rank.

It reminded me much of our own Order of the Thistle, being a blue enamelled saltire; but on the reverse was a Muscovite eagle, with the initials "S.A.P.R." (*Sanctus Andreas, Patronus Russiæ*).

At the table I was seated between the general and his chief aide-de-camp, Anitchoff, both of whom conversed with me in French.

"How did it come to pass that you were taken prisoner?" asked the former.

"My horse was shot under me."

"Near the Belbeck?"

"Yes," said I, blushing like a school-girl, as I could not, for the soul of me, say that a British officer had degraded his epaulettes by the perfidy of which Berkeley had been guilty.

"Ah! unlucky; but such things will happen. Your troops and the French, with the Turkish dogs, are now almost in front of Sebastopol."

"Indeed!" said I, with a joy which I could not conceal.

"You think, no doubt, to take it under our moustaches, or, as you Britons say, under our noses; but you won't," he added with a grave smile. "St. Sergius has ordained it otherwise, and Todleben, the wary old Courlander, is busy fortifying it. His sappers are at work day and night."

"Pho! don't talk of Sebastopol, general," said his aide-de-camp, laughing. "Our feeding there was so bad that I felt inclined to try whether the Allies fared better than we did; but after the Alma, I thought that the less I considered the matter the better."

"Ah, that day at Alma played the deuce with many a family circle in Sebastopol," said Baur, twisting his moustache angrily.

"Yes," added Anitchoff; "many a widow is there now, weeping for the dear defunct with one eye, and ogling his successor with the other."

At this jest a dark frown gathered on the long, stern visage of Baur.

Dinner proceeded briskly. It was served up in a kind of hall, which had arched and painted windows, flanked by the round Genoese towers, whose gilt cupolas formed the chief features of the fortress.

The walls were simply whitewashed, and the furniture was somewhat of the "barrack ordnance" description of our own equipments in quarters at home.

The repast was rather military in fashion, and by no means a dinner *à la Russe*, all flower vases, bouquets, and kickshaws; but was composed of substantial edibles for hungry and soldierly stomachs.

We began with small glasses of kimmel, and then came caviare, made from the roe of the sturgeon of the Don, spread on thin slices of bread; then followed the fish—turbot and mackerel from the Black Sea; yellow-fleshed sterlets from the Volga, salted in oil; wild boar hams from the forest of Khutor-Mackenzie; mutton fed on the Tauridian steppes; pies of holy pigeons from the gilt domes I had admired at a distance; piles of Crimean fruit; the wines of Ac-metchet and Kastropulo, with Cliquot; and there, too, were London stout and Bass's pale ale, taken from some of our wrecks in the Black Sea.

During dinner I was amused by hearing the ideas entertained by the Russians of our British soldiers, with whom they were now for the first time in actual conflict; for Prince Menschikoff had industriously spread among his troops a rumour that we were only beardless seamen, dressed up as soldiers; and that, however formidable on the ocean, we were worthless ashore.

To this contemptuous notion was added a sublime faith in their own valour, and the miracles to be wrought by St. Sergius, whose image they bore at Alma, and whose fourth reappearance was confidently predicted by Innocent, Archbishop of Odessa, in his sermon to the garrison of Sebastopol, for Sergius was a patriotic saint and warrior who defeated the Tartars—whose "uncorrupted body" lies in a silver shrine, like a four-post bed, and whose shoes (sorely worn at the heels) are still preserved in the Troitza, or monastery, of the Holy Trinity at Moscow.

General Baur, a man deeply imbued with the most gloomy superstition, believed in all these delusions devoutly. His aide-de-camp and Vladimir Dahl, however, laughed at him covertly; but admitted that the appearance of the Highland regiments filled the columns on the Kourgané Hill with a strange terror; for being, as the author of "Eöthen" records, "men of great stature, and in a strange garb, their plumes being tall, and the view of them being broken and distorted by the wreaths of smoke, and there being, too, an ominous silence in their ranks, there were men among the Russians who began to conceive a vague terror—the terror of things unearthly; and some, they say, imagined that they were being charged by horsemen, strange, silent, and monstrous, bestriding giant chargers."

Dinner was drawing to a close, or giving place to the dessert, when my former acquaintance under less pleasant circumstances, Lieutenant Adrian Trebitski, of the Tchernimoski Cossacks, appeared, travel-stained, and splashed with the mud of a journey on his boots and sabretache, having arrived on duty with sick soldiers, and a deserter, who was to be shot on the morrow.

"Why not to-night?" asked the stern Baur.

"The sentence says to-morrow, general," replied Anitchoff consulting a despatch.

"Then to-morrow be it—I am not a messman, and so don't begrudge the poor wretch his last supper. Is he one of your corps, Trebitski?"

"Yes, general, I regret to say, a Cossack of our sotnia, from the Lena, in Siberia," replied Trebitski, who was eyeing me with an aspect of discomposure, evidently fearing that I might report the pillage I had undergone at his hands. But this fear subsided when I drank wine with him, clinking my glass over and under his, for I felt that my position was too perilous to make an enemy of this man, especially as Anitchoff informed me that he was to have command of the convoy which would take me towards Perecop.

"I hope he will treat me with courtesy," said I, "and remember that I am a commissioned officer."

"Why do you doubt him?" asked Anitchoff, with a quiet smile.

"I—I don't like the expression of his eyes."

"They are as keen as those of a Tartar; but, then, he has Tartar blood in him, for his mother was a woman of the middle Kirghis hordes, lately added to our empire."

"Are they remarkable for a curious expression of eye?"

"Yes; any Tartar can discern a single Russian horseman at a quarter of the distance that a Russian will discover a whole troop of Tartars, even with lances uplifted; hence they make our best vedettes."

I now heard complete details of the defeat of twenty thousand Russians at Khutor-Mackenzie; and that, on the morning of the 26th September, Balaclava had been taken, that its safe and secluded harbour was now full of our war ships and transports, and that already our army was on the heights above Sebastopol.

And so, while the great game, on which the eyes of all the world were turned, was being played by my noble comrades, I—the victim of treachery, ignorant alike of my fate and of the future—was to be marched towards the desert plains of Yekaterinoslav, in the custody of an

unscrupulous ruffian like Trebitski, *parooschick* of the Tchernimoski Cossacks; one who knew as little about the position or feelings of a British officer as he did about those of the Great Llama.

On my bed that night I tossed restlessly to and fro, revolving a hundred plans for escape, but could decide on none. Bribery will achieve anything in Russia; but I had no money. I was also without weapons, a horse, or knowledge of the language. I determined, however, to look well about me; to study a map of the Crimea if I could find one; to act surely, warily, and resolutely; and to take the first opportunity of escaping, even if I should be shot down in the attempt. I was all the more free to make this essay, that, as yet, not a word had been spoken either of parole or exchange by the gloomy General Baur, or 'his more genial aide-de-camp.

By dawn next morning, the hoarse roll of the wooden drums summoned the garrison of Kourouk to witness the execution of the deserter; and by the time I came forth, as a spectator, the battalion of the 45th was under arms, formed in three sides of a hollow square, facing inwards; all silent, motionless as statues, closely ranked in their grey capotes and flat blue caps, with rifles shouldered and bayonets fixed.

The fourth side of the square was enclosed by the inner wall of a rampart, and there stood the culprit, pale and dejected in aspect, accompanied by a silver-bearded priest of the Greek church in white, with a gorgeous stole of cloth-of-gold, edged with fine lace. A dog bounded towards them—a fox-headed, snow-coloured, and red-eyed Russian poodle, whose bark was familiar to me; and then I was greatly concerned to recognise in the deserter, who was stripped of his uniform, and stood in his loose wide trousers and red flannel shirt, poor Corporal Pugacheff, who had escorted me from the Belbeck river.

"Had I known your disposition for levanting, my friend," thought I, "gladly would I have availed myself of it in time."

"Was he deserting towards the Allies?" I inquired of Anitchoff.

"No; he was supposed to be making off to his own country by the peninsula of Arabat, which encloses the Putrid Sea. Ah, *pardonnez moi*," added the hussar, and he yawned lazily in the chill air of the early morning, as he buttoned his well-furred pelisse over his uniform.

"But is not the punishment excessive?"

"Not for a soldier in time of war, surely! There are two classes in Russia exempt from all corporal punishment, severe as you may deem us —nobles, and soldiers who have been honoured with medals. Pugacheff served against the Turks at the frontier town of Isaktcha last year. He has a medal, so there is no resource but to shoot him; and here comes the firing company under a *praperchick*? (This grotesque word in Russ signifies an ensign.)

"What is he saying?" I asked, as the poor Cossack now threw himself on his knees, and raised his trembling hands and haggard eyes to heaven in supplication.

"He is praying to St. Sergius, and saying that, if his life that is to come in heaven were to be no better than it is on earth, as a corporal of Cossacks, pain and death would, indeed, be terrible!"

"Poor fellow!"

His sentence had been read over by Vladimir Dahl; and he and General Baur—both of whom wore cocked hats with immense green plumes, and well-furred *soubas*—withdrew a little way, and leaned composedly on their sabres, while the ramrods glittered in the rising sun, as the stolid-visaged firing party of twelve men loaded their rifles, cast them about, and capped. Now the chapel bell began to toll solemnly, and the standard waved, half-hoisted, in the wind.

The small, keen eyes of Pugacheff seemed fixed on vacancy. The old priest, in full canonicals, was praying with great earnestness and devotion; but the prisoner scarcely seemed to hear him.

Perhaps his eyes at that moment saw in fancy his father's cottage by the broad waters of the Lena; the grove of dark green pines that cast their shadows on the deep snow-wreaths, and the sharp, flinty summits of the distant hills, where the stalwart Siberian Cossack galloped in freedom, with his long, ready spear at his stirrup.

The fawning of the dog, Olga, now attracted the attention of the doomed man. He lifted it up, stroked, caressed, and kissed it tenderly, for the poor dog was, perhaps, his only friend. His rugged nature was

melted, and I think there was a tear in his eye, as he looked with a haggard expression around him.

Suddenly his glance fell on me. He beckoned me to him, and gave me the dog, saying something, I know not what, hurriedly, and in a husky voice—a request, no doubt, that I would keep and be kind to the little animal when he was gone; and I led it away by its leather collar, just as the firing party brought their muskets to the "ready" and cocked them.

The dog whined and struggled fiercely with me. It broke away at last, and rushed to the side of its kneeling and blindfolded master, leaping, frisking, and barking joyously about him, just as the twelve death-shots flashed from the muzzles of the firing party.

When the smoke cleared away I saw the Cossack and his dog lying dead on the gravel, side by side. They had been shot at the same moment. Pugacheff had several balls in his head and breast, and from the white coat of the still quivering poodle a crimson current was pouring.

The corporal was buried in the dry ditch of Kourouk, and ere the last sods were put over his grave by the pioneers, his faithful little four-footed friend was thrown in beside him, by order of Vladimir Dahl, and they were covered up together.

The tolling of the chapel bell died away; hoisted to the truck, the Russian cross streamed out upon the morning wind; and so ended this little tragedy.

CHAPTER XLVI.

BEN. This wind you talk of blows us from ourselves!
Supper is done, and we shall come too late.

ROMEO. I fear too early; for my mind misgives,
Some consequence, yet hanging in the stars,
Shall bitterly begin his fearful date
With this night's revels; and expire the term
Of a despised life, closed in my breast,
By some vile forfeit of untimely death:
But he that hath the steerage of my course
Directs the sail!
SHAKSPEARE.

The noon of the succeeding day saw me several miles from the Castle of Kourouk, and pursuing the rugged old Tartar highway that was to conduct me to Yekaterinoslav, under the escort of Trebitski's Cossacks, about a hundred of whom, armed with sabres, pistols, and lances, and carrying their forage, food, and in most instances, plunder, rode in double file on each side of a train of *kabitkas*, which were filled with sick and wounded Russian soldiers, and, in a few instances, I saw Frenchmen among them.

Every jolt of those wretched waggons over the rough and rocky roads caused wounds to burst out afresh; groans and curses rose in the air, and blood was soon oozing or dripping through the salt-encrusted planking on the dusty highway.

These *kabitkas* are Tartar waggons, which are driven in vast numbers to Perecop for the conveyance of the salt, which, in the dry season—from June till August—lies on the plains or steppes so thick that they are usually driven axle-deep among it for loading.

A number of these waggons had been improvised by General Baur for ambulance purposes; and now I found myself seated in one, among some bloody and dirty straw, with three severely wounded men of the 45th, or Tambrov regiment, and a French officer, whose face was half hidden by a large bandage, discoloured by the blood of a sword-wound, which had laid open his right cheek.

Intent upon escape, I looked earnestly and constantly before me; but we were now traversing an undulating plain, that was dotted by a few trees, of strange aspect, and the flocks of the Nomadic Tartars. And as the path dipped down over an eminence, I took a last farewell, but certainly not "fond look," of Kourouk, with its two burnished domes, which glittered brightly in the sunshine, while the Mountain of the Tent looked faint and blue in distance.

Trebitski, the Cossack officer, had conceived, I knew why, a personal animosity for me; and ever and anon, as if he would anticipate any attempt on my part to escape, he hovered about the *kabitka* in which I was reclining, and recoiling in disgust from the grey-coated Muscovites who lay beside me, and whose presence made the air redolent of Stamboul tobacco, bloody bandages, and the Russian leather of their clumsy boots and coarse accoutrements.

One of the first acts of the pitiful Trebitski was to deprive me of a small basket of rations—cold fowl, wine, &c.—provided for me by the kindness of Vladimir Dahl and Captain Anitchoff, and to substitute in their place a meagre allowance of the black bread, salt, and *vodka* used by the half-barbarian escort.

I determined to report this petty theft on reaching his head-quarters; but where were they?

At Yekaterinoslav, on the banks of the Dnieper, in the territory of the Cossacks of Azof, far over the desert plains that lie beyond the Isthmus of Perecop, whose vast fortress bars the way from the Crimea to the mainland of Europe.

My blood boiled up with vengeance against Berkeley, my betrayer, and my entire soul revolted at the prospect of such a heartless and hopeless journey, with a doubtful termination—a captivity, the end of which none could foresee; and the desire—a deep, clamorous, and heart-burning desire—of escape at any hazard grew strong within me; but I was without weapon, money, or a horse.

Oh, that I had but five minutes' start, with such an animal under me as that ridden by Trebitski, which was a beautiful and powerful Arab, whose actions were full of lightness and grace!

To increase my annoyance, this bearded commander got tipsy more than once on brandy and absinthe; and then he would shake his crooked sabre at me with many "strange oaths," of which I could make nothing; but I thought that, if some of those "wives and daughters of England," who think foreigners so interesting, had been with us in the Crimea, their ideas of continentals might have changed in favour of their more prosaic countrymen.

"*Ouf! pst! pst!*" I heard the wounded Frenchman muttering, as he raised himself from an uneasy doze, and looked about him with one eye, that glared wildly, for bandages concealed the other. "But for this devilish Crimean business, I should have been flirting in the Bois de Boulogne, lounging in the Gardens of the Tuileries, eating ices at Tortoni's, or drinking lemonade at a café chantant with la belle Rogolboche. *Pst! pst! c'est le diable!*" Then, addressing himself to me, he said, "*Ah, le Cossaque!*—yon devil of a Trebitski—is a shocking ruffian—a veritable brigand! Luckily, the Russian savage does not understand a word we say. He has stolen your rations, and left you—pah! what a dog wouldn't eat; but I have something better, and you shall dine with me."

"I thank you, monsieur," said I.

"Comrades in glory, we shall be friends in misfortune!" exclaimed the Frenchman, with great emphasis. While he ran on thus, something in his voice seemed familiar to me.

"You are, monsieur—you are——"

"Exactly, my friend; Victor Baudeuf, at your service—Captain of the French line."

"I thought you were killed at Alma!"

"Only half killed, as you may see. Pardieu! but who told you so?"

"Mademoiselle Sophie."

"The vivandière of the 2nd Zouaves?"

"Yes."

"Ah! she had always a spite at me—that dear little Sophie. You should see her riding at the head of the 2nd, with her canteen slung over her shoulder, and a cigarette between her little fingers, and a saucy twinkle in her bright eyes as she sings—

"Vivandière du régiment
C'est Catin qu'on me nomme,
Je vends, je donne, et bois gaiment
Mon vin et mon rogomme.

"I hope she may escape all this wild work, and see our beautiful France again. No, monsieur, I was not killed, but most severely wounded—left for dead—and thus fell into the hands of these beastly fellows. I remember you now, monsieur. We often met at Varna, at the Restaurant de l'Armée d'Orient. A droll den it was! And you remember Jules Jolicoeur, of the 2nd Zouaves. Poor Jules! A round shot finished him at Alma. He has gone to his last account. Heaven rest him! You are a Scotsman, I believe, though I always took you for a Jean Boule—à *biftek*; and so you shall dine with me. '*Fier comme un Ecossais*,' is still a proverb among us in France, in memory of the old times, which our Zouaves are about to renew, I think; for they boast themselves '*les Ecossais de l'Armée Française*,' and fraternize like brothers with your sans culotte regiments, in what you call 'lakeelt.'"

All this sounded so like some of Toole's "French before breakfast," that I could almost have laughed at my garrulous friend, who produced from a small havresack, which he opened with his left hand—the right being severely shattered by a grape shot—one of those *pâtés de foies gras* for which Strasbourg is so famous; made from the livers of geese, after the poor birds have undergone a process there is no use in detailing here. Heaven knows how M. Baudeuf came by it, but the pâté, with his biscuit, he divided very liberally with me, and with the three wounded Russians, who shared with us the soft comforts of the *kabitka*, and whose glances of hungry appeal there was no resisting.

Aware that they knew not a word we were saying, we conversed freely; and I told the Frenchman that, as no parole had been offered us, we should escape together. He replied that the hazard was great; yet that he would have shared it with me, but for his shattered hand, which made

him every way so helpless. He wished me every success, and gave me secretly a little map of the Crimea, which he had concealed in the lining of his tattered uniform; and this on every occasion I studied intently.

"Mutilated as I am, it is of no use to me," said he; "but may serve you, *mon camarade*, at a pinch."

It was small, and by Huot and Demidoff; but was extremely correct.

On our arrival at Karasu-bazar, sixteen or eighteen miles from Kourouk, I was separated from this pleasant Frenchman. I never saw him again, and have too much reason to fear that he perished amid the horrors of a catastrophe which ensued subsequently.

It was evening when, after traversing a pleasant valley, we entered Karasu-bazar, so slow had been the progress of our primitive train of cars, with their melancholy load of human suffering. Situated on the Karasu, an affluent of the Salghir, this town is the great wine and fruit mart of the Crimea; and there a strange rabble of Tartars in short jackets, with open sleeves, high caps, and high boots; Greeks in scarlet fez and baggy blue breeches; Russians, with fur caps and canvas doublets, trimmed with fur; and Armenians, in long, flowing garments, crowded around us.

These escorted us through the narrow and tortuous streets in the dusk. To attempt an escape there would be futile, notwithstanding that the Tambrov uniform which I wore seemed to favour the idea.

Darkness set in. We were closely guarded; and now I heard the shrill, vicious whistle of a railway engine, and found the train of *kabitkas* halted near some wooden booths, where the wires and posts of a telegraph, a platform, and covered passenger shed, with other familiar features of the usual kind, indicated a railway station!

In fact, we had reached the head of a single track line of railroad, which had been hastily constructed for the conveyance of troops and munition of war a portion of the way towards Perecop; and probably it might have been carried to Arabat, at the head of the Putrid Sea, or to Sebastopol itself, but for the rapid advance of the Allies.

Roughly constructed and hastily laid down, it led from the banks of the Karasu I knew not at the time whither, as it was not depicted in the map given to me by Captain Baudeuf, from whom I was now, as I have said, separated.

We were all hurriedly thrust into carriages, or rather trucks, like those for conveying cattle in Britain, without seat or other accommodation, save a little straw for the miserable wounded, whose numbers were greatly augmented by some fugitives from Khutor-Mackenzie.

The line of trucks might be, I suppose, about forty, including one which bore the gallant Trebitski with his "Araby steed;" and three quaint and old-fashioned locomotives, with large wheels and high chimneys, were getting up their steam—one in front, one in rear, and one in the centre; and these, after much wheezing and puffing, screaming and clanking, with other discordant noises, got into motion simultaneously, and in the dark we shot away from the streets and bazaars of the Karasu, for where was yet a mystery to me.

The Cossack escort was now reduced to twenty dismounted men, who left their horses and lances behind them, and were distributed among the carriages; but luckily there were none in mine.

We had scarcely left the lights of the town behind us, when an odour of burning attracted my attention, and the attention of those who were penned up like sheep in the same truck with me. We could only communicate our fears by signs, and heads were constantly put forth on both sides of the train, and withdrawn, always with exclamations of excitement, while the alarming odour increased strongly.

The lines of rail were laid on sleepers of wood, and I imagined that, perhaps, the hot ashes dropping from the three engines might cause the smell of burning that was filling the air heavily, as we tore along past hills and rocks, the domes of village mosques, or churches, tipped with silver light by the rising moon; along wooden bridges that spanned hoarse and brawling mountain streams; across open wastes, where the millet, rye, and hemp had been reaped and gathered, or where the wild tobacco still grew; past slopes clothed by dark waving woods, the

chestnut, the oak, and the wild pear tree, the rush of the train, and the scream of the engine scaring away the goshawks, the magpie, and kite from their nests; past round towers, arches, and aqueducts, the crumbling ruins of the old Genoese days; past where flocks and herds were grazing, till they fled on the noise of our approach.

And now the train dashed into a forest of pine and turpentine trees, through which it seemed to rush for miles upon miles, its speed augmenting every instant, while the odour of burning increased with every revolution of the wheels.

Anon, loud cries of terror and agony rang out at times upon the night breeze; and now a light—actual flames, other than those which came from the furnaces—occasionally shed its swift red gleam upon the gnarled tree stems that stood in thick ranks on each side of the way; and then came the appalling conviction upon all our minds that, in addition to having run off, or having been abandoned by its stupid Muscovite engine-drivers, the train was on fire!

In those open and rudely-constructed trucks, there were no windows to lower. I thrust my head through the nearest opening, and found that the two carriages in front of ours were a mass of flames, which burst forth fiercely from all the apertures, and these, as they rushed in streams behind, in consequence of the intense draught caused by the wild speed at which the train careered through the forest, were setting our carriage on fire also. Fortunately I was in the rear compartment, and for a time could look steadily ahead.

Oh, what a sight it was!

The footways on each side of the carriages that were on fire were literally alive with sick and wounded wretches, who had crept out, and now clung to the steps and handles, by which the guards usually clamber about, afraid alike to fall or cast themselves off; but every instant a shriek was heard, as the grasp of some maimed or feeble unfortunate relaxed, and he vanished from sight as the train swept on. Some fell into watercourses, some fell over banks, and were flung into the forest, the turpentine trees of which, in many places, were now in flames.

The straw amid which the more helpless wounded lay was soon on fire. Many of them were literally roasted alive, and I heard the pistols of the Cossacks exploding, as they went off in the heat, or as their despairing wearers shot themselves or each other.

The engine-drivers, for some reason unknown to me, must have jumped off and abandoned the train, for it swept through the forest unchecked, a mass of flames, from which the yells and shrieks were appalling. More than one carriage was literally burned down to its iron, all within perishing miserably.

Even at that desperate time the hope of escape grew strong within me, for every confusion was favourable. Being locked in on both sides, I crept through an aperture which served for a window, and found footing on the side gangway, with two or three others, who clung to the carriage and moaned fearfully, for the exertion had made their gunshot wounds burst out afresh. They soon dropped off, and I was left alone.

The rush of the glowing flames came hotly aft upon my face and hands. I saw the clinging mass ahead, swaying to and fro, their faces and figures reddened in the scorching glare, which lit up the line of rails like two red-hot wires that vanished into the forest—all this I saw for a moment, and a moment only.

I was about to drop off, and trust to Providence for the sequel, when there was a sudden shout, a crash, a vast shower of ruddy sparks, that seemed to fill the air with fire, a piercing yell, and then, in silence and darkness, I found myself rolling down a grassy bank for some twenty yards or so, until I was arrested from further harm by some soft tobacco plants, which there grew wild and thickly.

Unhurt, but greatly confused, and completely breathless I staggered up to look around me.

The coupling of two of the burning carriages had broken; they had tumbled heavily down the bank, breaking to pieces as they fell, scattering the brands of their blazing woodwork far and wide, killing outright some of the scorched and wounded occupants, several of whom I saw lying near me in the moonlight, blackened and mutilated, while the

remainder of the train, with its three engines, all abandoned by their cowardly conductors, swept on its errand of destruction and death through the now flaming forest.

As I rose from amid the strange débris of smouldering wood and shattered iron, of dead or dying, and half-burned men, and was considering in which way to turn, I was met face to face by one whose right arm was broken, but who, nevertheless, uttered a hoarse and guttural malediction, with which I was not unfamiliar, having heard it frequently from his lips before. Drawing a pistol from his belt, with his left hand he levelled it at my head.

Luckily the percussion cap snapped, and the weapon hung fire. But to close with Trebitski—for he it was—to wrench the pistol away, and knock him mercilessly down with the butt-end, were all the work of a moment, and then I felt that I was "the monarch of all I surveyed."

I was turning away, when a peculiar snorting sound attracted my attention, and in a well-padded horse-box, which lay on its side far down the slope, I saw the head of Trebitski's Arab charger, as the poor animal lolled out its red tongue, and threw back its small close ears in terror and anger, for the sides of the horse-box were all scorched by flame; and the mere odour of fire is sufficient to inspire a horse with the most bewildering fear.

Here had Providence given me an additional chance for escape. But I had no time to lose; the train might be stopped by this time (though no sound, save the moans of the maimed, now disturbed the silence of that woody solitude), and succour might be sent to the sufferers, though human life is but little valued in Russia, and human suffering is viewed there with an amount of indifference that savours more of Asia than of Europe.

My dragoon knowledge served me usefully here. I contrived to calm and soothe the Arab horse, to unbuckle the braces that secured it in the partly-shattered stall, and it came forth, half-scrambling and half-crawling, trembling in every limb, and every fibre quivering under its

glossy coat, which was flecked with white foam. Cowed, calmed, and terrified by the recent catastrophe, the horse was as docile as if Mr. Rarey had been whispering his magic in its ear.

A noble Arab, with all the peculiarities of its breed—the square forehead and fine black muzzle, the brilliant eyes and beautiful veins, the withers high and body light, and standing somewhere about fourteen hands and a half—it was whinnying, and rubbing its nose on my hand as if for protection and fellowship.

He was saddled and accoutred, and the bridle was hanging on the pommel.

In a moment I had it over his head, and buckled to perfection, the bridoon touching the corners of the mouth, but low enough not to wrinkle them.

I vaulted into the saddle, leaving the adjustment of the stirrups to a more leisure time, as Trebitski, in Cossack fashion, rode with his knees up to his elbows; and just as that redoubtable personage was reviving after his rough tap on the head, I dashed into the forest, and soon left the scene of suffering far behind me.

In several places the wood was on fire, and, being dry with the heat of the past summer, the branches and crisp leaves, particularly those of the turpentine trees, burned briskly. Thus I could see the wavering flames reddening the clouds above, while riding on, and ignorant of the route I was pursuing, through this dense old forest, the jungle and underwood at times completely retarding all progress.

I paused only to lengthen the stirrups, and give my newly-acquired steed—in which I began to feel all the interest of proprietorship—a draught at a runnel, and then sought the recesses of the densest thicket I could find to wait for day, that I might look warily about, and consider what to do next, for, if taken with the horse of the Parooschick Adrian Trebitski in my possession, the chances of being shot, or sent to life-long slavery, were great. Anyway, I feared there would be a vacant troop in Her Majesty's lancers—a troop, perhaps, given to Berkeley; and I feared that few Russian officers like the gay young Anitchoff or kind old Vladimir Dahl might come in my way again.

My more immediate fear was for the wolves, which there roam in packs, and were, no doubt, by this time howling and snarling among the victims on the railroad. If any of them scented me, I should have to take refuge in a pine, where I might be starved to death, after they had devoured my horse.

Every sound startled me; but I heard only the occasional gobble of the wild bustards, which usually go in great flocks through all the wild places of the Crimea.

I unbitted the Arab, and let him graze, but hobbled him so that he could not escape; and as day began to steal redly through the distant dingles of the wood, the light slowly descending from the summits to the lower stems of the lofty pines, I found some wild grapes whereon to breakfast, and quench the fierce thirst which recent excitement had induced.

When the light sufficed I drew forth the map given me by poor Captain Baudeuf, and began to study my whereabouts. Through the openings of the trees I could see, about a mile distant, the current of a broad and evidently deep river shining in the morning sun.

The railway had not, to my knowledge, crossed such a stream; it flowed from the west towards the east; hence, from its magnitude, it could only be the Salghir, which, after being joined by the Karasu, flows into the Putrid Sea.

This stream has usually little water in its bed, save after the melting of the winter snows; but recent rains among the mountains of Ac-Metchet had swollen it beyond its usual size. And now I beheld what must have been a bend or sweep of it flowing between me and the tract of country where our armies lay—the tract that stretched away towards Sevastopol, which I supposed to be at least a hundred miles distant; and that idea afterwards proved to be correct.

For a time my spirit quailed at the prospect before me. I was nearly in the middle of the savage and hostile Crimea, ignorant of the many languages spoken there, ignorant of the roads, and with no money to bribe or arms to intimidate.

No house or town was visible, or a sign of any living thing, save the goldfinches that twittered in the trees, and the heron and wild duck that waded or squattered among the green weeds and long trailers on the bank of the rushing stream. The latter was nearly eighty yards broad. I knew that it must be crossed, as the south side was the safest. Crossed! but how?

While considering this, the sound of a Cossack trumpet among the woodlands in my rear gave me a nervous start, and made me resolve on instant action. I put my treasured map carefully away, mounted, and urged my horse at once to the bank of the river.

I took my feet out of the stirrups, which I then crossed above the saddle—a precaution no dragoon or other horseman should ever forget when about to cross a river mounted; for if the horse should sink his hind-legs to seek for footing, or, worse still, should he "turn a turtle," while the rider's feet are in the stirrups, the most fatal results may ensue, and he will be helplessly drowned.

I was without spurs, yet I rushed him at the stream, for there are times when rider and horse feel as one. He took the water well, and struck out bravely, for I leant well forward, so that my body rested on his crest. I had no occasion to touch the rein or use the bit; but steered him by a switch torn from a tree.

With his neck stretched out like that of a dog, he swam coolly and steadily across, with the ripples of the water under my armpits. When he grounded, and scrambled up the other side, I dismounted, and led him by the bridle into a thicket beyond.

This was scarcely achieved, when some tall lances glittered on the other side of the stream, where a party of twelve Cossacks were scouting; and had my horse neighed they must have discovered me. However, they all disappeared in the wood; after which I breathed more freely, and proceeded to rub down my Arab with tufts of dry grass, and to wring out my wetted garments.

All that day I travelled through the woods, and at times along the highways, avoiding even the Tartar herdsmen and field-labourers, steering in the direction of Sebastopol, guided by my tiny map and the

sun; and towards nightfall I was lucky enough to meet with some French troops, though at first I narrowly escaped being shot by their advanced guard—a favour procured me by my Tambrov uniform. Luckily I could muster sufficient French to make myself known as an officer of her Britannic Majesty's service, and was conducted to the commander.

These troops proved to be the 77th Regiment of the Infanterie de la Ligne, under Colonel Jean Louis Giomar, Commander of the Legion of Honour, on their march towards Sebastopol.

I was in safety now, and was treated by him and his officers with every attention and kindness, and, in truth, after all I had undergone during the last twenty-four hours, I required both.

The 77th had landed but a few days before from *La Reine Blanche*[*] a French ship of the line, in which the Emperor had revived the old Parisian name for Mary Queen of Scots.

[*] Now an armour-clad, of six-inch iron plate.

CHAPTER XLVII.

In this manner we all sat ruminating upon schemes of vengeance, when our little boy came running in to tell us that Mr. Burchell was approaching at the other end of the field. It is easier to conceive than describe the complicated sensations which we felt from the pain of a recent injury and the pleasure of approaching vengeance.—VICAR OF WAKEFIELD.

It was fully three weeks after the affair of the Belbeck river, when I found myself sharing Jack Studhome's quarters in Balaclava, after duly reporting myself to Colonel Beverley, and making special inquiries for Berkeley, who had already procured a few days' sick leave, prior to

returning to Britain on "urgent private affairs," and was not with his regiment, but was very snug on board his own yacht, which for his convenience had come all the way from Cowes to Balaclava harbour.

"Leave—leave already—when we have barely broken ground before Sebastopol!" I exclaimed, with profound disgust.

"Already," said Studhome, with a grim smile, as he twisted up a cigarette, a luxury unknown to the "gentlemen of England" until introduced by returned Crimeans. "You may remember that I went home from India on sick leave, just before that Rangoon business."

"That was annoying."

"Not at all—I thought it would be a stupid concern, and I had a heavy book on the Oaks."

"But you were, of course, ill."

"What a Griff! Those who get home on sick leave are always in the best health. It is just like the 'urgent private affairs' of those who have swell friends in high places. Uncles who are grooms of the backstairs, and aunts who are ladies of the bedchamber. Take care of Dowb, you know, and Dowb will take deuced good care of himself."

"Home to England!" I was almost stupefied with rage at the prospect of his escaping the speedy vengeance I had schemed out for him, after Studhome told me that he had had the daring effrontery to accuse me of shooting my own horse!

"But now, Newton," said Jack, "for to-night, at least, not a word about Berkeley. The colonel, Travers, Wilford, the paymaster, Jocelyn, and Harry Scarlett are all coming here to sup with us jollily, in honour of your safe return, providing their own plates and spoons, of course. I omitted Scriven, because he is Berkeley's particular chum. To-morrow I'll get a boat and board his yacht. Confound the fellow! we must parade him—we must have him out now?"

"Or I shall shoot him in front of the line!" said I, grinding my teeth.

"Your Russian uniform would be quite in keeping with so melodramatic a situation. By Jove, you are a figure!" exclaimed Jack, turning me round, and surveying my Tambrov uniform with more

amusement than admiration; but his own "turn out" was the most comical of the two, for the kind of work undergone since we landed had made serious alterations in the gay uniforms of our troops.

Studhome had not enjoyed the luxury of washing his hands, perhaps, for a week; and as for shaving, that was never thought of now. All our officers had disembarked in their full uniforms. They had marched, fought, and slept in them; the lace was frayed, the gorgeous box-epaulettes all crushed, broken, and torn; the coats and trousers were a mass of mud; shakos and regulation caps had all disappeared, or, at least, the fez, the turban, the shawl, and the wide-awake were rapidly replacing them.

Every officer had a canvas havresack wherein to carry those edibles he was lucky enough to beg, borrow, or find; a revolver, with belt and pouch, was strapped to his waist, and all had become bronzed, hairy, gaunt, and brigand-like in visage and expression. "Oh for the mantle of Fortunatus," says one in his letters, "to place such an officer all at once into his London haunts, and among the old familiar faces. Put him down in Pall Mall, or Piccadilly, or on the swelling carpets of the Junior United Service!"

Such was the aspect of Lionel Beverley, that tall and stately soldier, and polished English gentleman; of Frank Jocelyn, our lisping dandy; of the usually clean-shaven M'Goldrick, our quaint old Scotch paymaster; of dashing young Sir Harry Scarlett, and all the rest of our once splendid lancer mess, most of whom came crowding into Jack's very queer bunk at Balaclava, to welcome me back among them, and hear the story of my adventures since I fell among the Russians.

Seated on boxes, chests, the camp bed, and even on the floor, they jested, laughed, and smoked, while the din of the distant cannonade told how the work of death was going on ceaselessly at Sebastopol.

"We are now, Norcliff, fairly in for the business of the siege," said the colonel.

"Ugh! and a jolly and lucrative business it is likely to prove," added the paymaster, with a grimace.

"Welcome back, Norcliff, old fellow!" said Travers, shaking me warmly by the hand; "we must look up a kit for you somehow, and a remount too. Beverley has a second horse; but I think its tail was eaten off by Scarlett's bay mare when the corn fell short."

"Our horses have no nosebags. Those infernal red-tape-worms in London are doing their best to destroy us," said Sir Harry Scarlett.

"Are Sir Nigel's suspicions to be right, after all?" thought I.

"You forget my Arab horse—my spoil from the enemy."

"Well, gentlemen," said Studhome, who had been uncorking several bottles, "you shall sup *à la carte*. I have a hare which is being jugged in that identical warming-pan which we picked up at Eskel; two golden plovers and a gallant bustard are being stewed with it. I shot the latter; the hare was caught by Travers' Kurdistan dog—a rough brute, like your Scotch staghounds, M'Goldrick. That is my kitchen," he added, pointing to a hole before the tent, in which some ashes were smouldering. "This is true Crimean fashion. Make a hole as a grate, and when you have aught to put in your kettle light a fire under it. 'Dost like the picture?' But here come the viands!"

The stew, which had been prepared by Pitblado and Studhome's servant (both of whom officiated in their stablejackets), was certainly savoury enough in odour, though not quite such as we might have welcomed at the home mess-table. It steamed and spattered bravely in two large tin dishes; and with their contents, and some biscuits of Trieste flour from the bakery-ship *Abundance* (on board which twenty thousand pounds of bread were made daily, and yet the army starved), a piece of cheese, some fruit, and several bottles of Bass, sherry, and brandy, we resolved to make a night of it.

"'Od, it's a queer mess, this!" said that constitutional grumbler, M'Goldrick, as he fished away with his fork. "I doubt whether the mastodon or the megatherium of antediluvian times would have faced it. What do you call this, Studhome?"

"Come, don't mock the blessings of war, most learned Scot! That is the gizzard of a wild bustard. Help yourself and pass the sherry. Pitblado, uncork the Bass."

"Wood is frightfully scarce here," said Travers. "Our fellows seized and burnt all the tent-poles and pegs of Hadji Mehmet's regiment of Bono Johnnies, and old Raglan made a devil of a row about it."

"We are put to odd shifts, certainly," added the colonel, laughing; "and it is seldom a supper like this comes our way, Norcliff. The green coffee, pounded between two stones, is not the worst thing we have to encounter; for, after it is pounded, we have no fuel wherewith to boil it, and men are actually flogged for taking dry-wood from the beach. We must do our best to keep ourselves alive, though the Russians and red-tapists are doing theirs to make an end of us."

"I have actually been thinking of turning Tartar, and speculating seriously on the merits of horseflesh," said Scarlett, as he tore away at a drumstick of the bustard. "I suppose you know that the chargers of the Heavies are dying like sheep with the rot?"

"Now, M'Goldrick, pass the bottle, will you!" said Jack. "By Jove! you Scotchmen are such slow fellows!"

"Slow or fast," growled the paymaster, "I don't know how in this war you would get on without us. You have the two Dundases, Charley Napier, Sir George Cathcart, two Campbells—Sir John and Sir Colin—Jamie Simpson, and Sir George Browne."

"Anything you like; but pass the wine from right to left," said the jovial adjutant, who began to sing—

Right about went horse and foot,
Artillery and all,
And as the devil left the house,
They tumbled through the wall,
When
They saw our light dragoons,
With their long swords, boldly riding,
Whack! fol de rol, &c.

Amid this kind of merriment and banter, we heard ever and anon the thunder of the heavy guns from the batteries of Sebastopol, as they fired on the lines where our brave troops were working to get under cover—working with old spades and mattocks, which the Iron Duke had sent home as unserviceable from Spain—and I felt saddened by the idea that every boom which pealed in the distance was, perhaps, the knell of at least one human soul. I had other thoughts that made me grave and stern.

No letters had reached me from home; nor had anything come, save an old *Punch* or two, addressed in my uncle's handwriting. Even Cora was forgetting me!

My blood was boiling against Berkeley. A long debt of cowardly wrong was about to be paid off, if he did not elude me by a hasty departure on leave. The clear grey eye of the colonel was fixed on me at times. He knew my thoughts; but he and the others, with the intuitive delicacy peculiar to well-educated and highly-bred men, forbore to speak of Berkeley, and the grave obligation which they were aware I was about to clear off in a manner that had become unusual now.

"You are listening to the cannon of the siege train," said Beverley. "We cavalry are in clover here, when compared to our poor infantry, who are potting the Russians like partridges, from amid the mud of the trenches."

"Mud, thickened by blood, and fragments of shot and shell—a veritable Slough of Despond!" added the paymaster.

"There, in the rifle-pits, our advanced parties have fired till the grooves of their barrels are lined with lead, and their aching shoulders are black and blue with the kicking of the butt."

"Yes, colonel; and if any one wishes to study the theory of sounds and atmospheric effects, my wigwam in the cavalry quarter is the very place," said Studhome. "Boom! there goes that Lancaster gun again. It must be playing old gooseberry with the Russians by moonlight. Only think of ten-inch shells, fired at point-blank range! I was up this morning at the trenches, and saw a long sixty-eight pounder from the *Terrible* brought into position by the blue-jackets, to bear on a heavy

gun on the left embrasure of the Mamelon. It was trained by a naval officer—a fine young fellow. The practice he made was perfect! The first shot tore away the left of the embrasure; the second struck the great gun full on the muzzle, shattering it, and then the eyes of the young officer flashed with delight! 'Bravo, my lads! load he again!' he exclaimed; and with the third shot he dismounted the gun completely. Lord Raglan then telegraphed to fire the sixty-eight every half hour, and effectually breach the Mamelon."

"But before the order came, a shot struck our brave young sailor, and killed him on the spot," added the Colonel.

"His fall was sudden, and his interment as rapid as his demise," said Studhome; "he was buried beside the gun."

"Poor fellow!" observed the Colonel, thoughtfully; "few would like to die thus. Yet that which was his fate to-day may be mine or yours to-morrow. This idea makes the memory, the heart, go home. We number those who love us there, and those whom we love. Their faces come before us, and their voices fall again on the ear. Little expressions and little episodes come vividly to mind. Shall we ever see them again, those home circles—those loved and treasured ones! Well, well; every bullet has its billet—duty is duty—(another old saw), and the first obligation of a soldier is obedience. And so we console ourselves, and hope on for the best, drowning dull care in the bottle, or boldly treading him under foot."

The poor Colonel's words often came back to memory long after he led us to that terrible charge through the Valley of Death!

Thus their conversation and anecdotes were all connected with the great siege then in progress; but after they had all retired, Studhome and I reverted, all at once, to the matter which was uppermost in my mind—the punishment of Berkeley.

"Take a caulker of cognac, Norcliff, and then turn in. Keep your head and your hand cool. I'll take a boat for his yacht after *reveillez* to-morrow, and though he has got sick leave for a few days, he is not so sick that he can't hold a pistol."

"Arrange this for me, Jack, and you shall win my lasting gratitude," said I, fervently.

Jack shook me warmly by the hand, and then we betook us to our not over-luxurious couches for the night.

When I awoke in the morning, Studhome had mounted and ridden off to the harbour.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

The tattoo beats, the lights are gone,
The camp around in slumber lies;
The night with solemn pace moves on,
The shadows thicken o'er the skies.
But sleep my weary eyes hath flown,
And sad, uneasy thoughts arise.
I think of thee, oh, dearest one,
Whose love my early life hath blest—
God of the gentle, frail, and lone,
Oh, guard the tender sleeper's rest.

I awaited his return with impatience, while our servants were pounding the green coffee for breakfast. After the lapse of an hour or so he cantered up to the door of our wigwam—for such it was, being half tent and half hut—sprang off and threw his reins to Lanty O'Regan.

"Berkeley?" I inquired.

"Has given you the slip for this time."

"The devil!—how?"

"Whether he has heard of your return or not I cannot say; but the yacht has left her moorings, and stood away towards the Straits of Yenikale. We shall have better luck another time; but meanwhile, here is something to solace you for your disappointment."

"His sick leave——"

"Was extended to the 17th of this month; but he was not to leave Balaclava harbour, it was presumed. I met Beverley as I was riding back, and he gave one of his quiet and significant laughs, on hearing that the yacht had put to sea."

"He then divined your errand?"

"Of course—the affair is pretty patent to the whole corps now; but here, I say, is something to console you in the meantime."

"Something—what?"

"The Sultan Abdul Medjid has already sent several medals for distribution among the officers of the Allies, and here is an announcement that to you—you only of all our corps as yet—he has accorded his star of Medjidie; and here also is the Colonel's memorandum concerning it for insertion in this day's regimental orders, stating that it is given for the bravery and zeal displayed by you in assisting the quartermaster-general to procure trains of waggons—those blessed *kabitkas*—before we advanced on the Alma."

With equal astonishment and pleasure I heard of this unexpected honour, though no way inclined to indulge in self-glory, when a Turkish officer of rank, a fat old fellow, wearing a blue surtout, a scarlet fez, and gold-hilted Damascus sabre—an aide-de-camp of the Seraskier Pasha—brought me the Order of the Medjidie—a silver star, inscribed, in Turkish characters, "Zeal and ardent sentiments of Honour and Fidelity," around the Sultan's cypher, which closely resembled the cabalistic figures on the side of a tea-chest—when he hung it on my breast, I say, the natural emotions of pride which rose in my heart were blended with joy at the pure satisfaction it would afford my dear friends at home.

A jolly cooper of old port would be started at Calderwood, and I already saw in fancy my uncle (to whom I instantly wrote of my safety and success) receiving the congratulations of his neighbours and old servants. And what of Louisa? Surely this would be soothing to her inordinate pride!

It was accompanied by a little diploma in Turkish, to the effect that "Captain Newton Calderwood Norcliff, of her Britannic Majesty's service, having distinguished himself prior to the battle of the Alma, as a gift in appreciation of his worthily-performed duty, his Imperial Majesty the Sultan grants him the fifth degree of the Medjidie medal, together with this warrant. Dated in the year of the Hejira, 1271."

Medals, save those of the old Waterloo veterans, were scarcely known in our service, as yet—thus a decorated man was a man of mark. Yet, amid the excitement of campaigning, this gift was but the gratification of an hour, and the dull craving at my heart to punish Berkeley and to hear from Louisa still remained unsatisfied.

Reduced by service, sufferings, starvation, and cholera, our regiment was very weak now, so all servants and grooms were turned into the ranks. Our chief duty was to watch the Russian forces that were gathered for the relief of Sebastopol. Their outposts were only four miles distant from the little secluded harbour of Balaclava, where under the shadow of an old round Genoese tower, several line-of-battle ships (including the gallant *Agamemnon*), and some dozen of transports, were daily disembarking troops and stores, as they lay within ten yards of the red and white marble rocks that rise into mountains and overlook the inlet, as the steep hills enclose a Highland loch at home.

To harass us, the Cossacks frequently galloped forward, causing a general turn-out of the whole line of British cavalry. Then the trumpets blew "Boot and saddle," lance and sabre were assumed, and arms were loaded; but our ranks would barely be formed, when they would ride quietly back again. We swept all the valleys of everything we could find either to eat or burn, and our patrol duties were incessant. We always slept in our dress-jackets, with boots and spurs on, our cloaks over us,

and arms and accoutrements at hand, ready to turn out at the first note of the alarm trumpet: and though the days were sometimes hot, the nights were cold now, and the dews were chilly and dangerous.

Once I had a narrow escape.

On the hilly grounds above the Monastery of St. George, seeing a Turkish officer busy with an old rusty bombshell, the fuse of which had long since burned out, and the contents of which he was investigating by sedulously poking them with the point of his sabre, as he sat cross-legged with the missile in his lap, I drew near. At that moment it exploded, blowing him nearly to pieces, while a splinter tore away my left epaulette!

"Allah be praised! so ends thy black and most unholy magic!" exclaimed a Turkish *onbashi*, who stood near; and then, in the mutilated dead man, I recognised the *hakim* Abd-el-Rasig, the magician and chief doctor of the 10th regiment of the Egyptian Contingent; and in the speaker, who coolly proceeded to search his remains for coins or valuables, the corporal whose mother's image he had failed to produce in the necromantic shell at Varna!

Squalid, dirty, and miserable, the sentinels of the once splendid 93rd Highlanders, with frayed tartans, patched jackets, and tattered plumes, while guarding Balaclava, presented a very different aspect now from that which they showed when their grand advance along the slopes of the Kourgané Hill struck terror to the souls of the Muscovites.

The Black Watch and the gay Cameron Highlanders were in the same condition. I saw the latter erecting a cairn above the grave of one of their officers—young Francis Grant, of Kilgraston, who had died at Balaclava, and it made me think of the words of Ossian: "We raised the stone, and bade it speak to other times."

So the time passed quickly in our cavalry quarters at Balaclava, while the siege was being pressed, amid misery, blood, and disaster, by the infantry of the Allies. Our duties were the reverse of monotonous, and were frequently varied by most desperate rows among the Montenegrins, Albanians, Arnauts, Greeks, and Koords, who all hated each other cordially, and were always ripe and ready for mischief, as

they swaggered about, each with a barrowful of pistols and yataghans in the shawl that formed his girdle; or it might be the alarm of fire, broken out none knew how. Then the trumpets were blown loudly; the gathering pipes of the Highland Brigade would send up their yells; and the fire-drum would be beaten on board the war-ships in the harbour. Then their boats would come off, full of marines and seamen, chorusing "Cheer boys, cheer," while rumours were rife of incendiary Greeks hovering about our stores and powder with lucifer matches and fusees; shots might be fired, a few men cut down, and then we would all dismiss quietly to quarters again.

Dreaming of cutting foreign throats, my groom and servant (until they got a dog tent) slept under a tree close by my tent, each with his martial cloak around him, as Lanty said, "Like two babbies in the wood, only the divil a cock robin ever came to cover them up with leaves."

Lying by night in my tent, around which a wall of turf had been raised for warmth, to sleep after a day of harassing excitement was often impossible. Through the open triangular door, I could see the same bright stars and the same moon that were looking down on the quiet harvest fields at home, where the brown stubble had replaced the golden grain; the line of camp fires smoking and reddening in the breeze as it passed along the hostile hills. I could hear our horses munching as they stood unstalled close by in the open air, and the baying of the wild Kurdistan dogs in the distance far away.

From these, and the nearer objects within the tent, its queer furniture and baggage-trunks, the varnished tins of preserved fish, flesh, and fowl, the warming-pan in which Pitblado stewed my beef and boiled my potatoes (when I had either), hanging with my sword, sash, pistols, and lancer-cap on the tent-pole; a cheese and a frying-pan, side by side with a tea-kettle and writing-case; boots and buckets in one corner, a heap of straw in another; empty Cliquot bottles and a gallant leather bag for holding six quarts of cognac—from all these my thoughts would wander away in the hours of the night to home, and all its peace and comfort.

I thought—I know not why—of the village burying-ground in Calderwood Glen, where my mother and all my kindred lay, and I shuddered at the idea of being flung into one of those Crimean hecatombs that studded all the ground about Sebastopol. On the grassy graves in Calderwood, how often had I seen the summer sun shine joyously, and the summer grass waving in the warm breezes that swept the Lomond hills. The bluebell and the white marguerite, the wild gowan and the golden buttercup, were there growing above the dead; the old kirk walls and its haunted aisle, covered with ivy and the lettered tombs where laird and lady lay, with all the humble dwellers of the hamlet near them, came before me in memory, and I felt intensely sad on reflecting I might be buried here, so far from where my kindred slept, though

> The stately tomb which shrouds the great
> Leaves to the grassy sod
> The dearer blessing that its dead
> Are nearer to their God.

Often had dear Cora quoted that verse to me at the old kirk stile, when the rays of a golden sunset were falling on the Falkland woods.

A letter which the Colonel had received from Sir Nigel, had, no doubt, induced this train of thought. It was all, however, about the Fifeshire pack and the Lanark race-meeting, "anent the bond," and Mr. Brassy Wheedleton and Messrs. Grab and Screwdriver, W.S., Edinburgh; that the bond had been got rid of, and Mr. Brassy, too, without having recourse to Splinterbar or old Pitblado's sparrow-hail—matters beyond the Colonel's comprehension, but of which he was to inform me, if he could, through the Russian lines, and discover whether I was well, as my friends were sorely afflicted to hear that I had been taken prisoner by Lord Aberdeen's friends.

Mail after mail came up per steamer from the Bosphorus; but there never was a letter for me from Lady Loftus, and my heart grew sick and sore with its old doubts and apprehensions. Nor were these natural

emotions untinged by jealous fear that her cold, aristocratic father, or chilly, imperious mother, had prevailed—or that a more successful suitor had urged his suit. The latter seemed not unlikely, as I heard of her having been seen at the Derby with the marquis, and his party at Brighton. That when in London she was still the cynosure of every eye; that at her opera-box every lorgnette was levelled when she entered; that she was ever smiling, gay, happy, and beautiful!

Letters to Fred Wilford and others of ours told of these things, and some hinted that a marriage was on the tapis with several persons as ineligible as myself; but, save Scriven, none ever hinted at my peculiar bugbear, the marquis.

When I lay on out-piquet, drenched with rain, and chilled by the early frosts, half dead with cold and misery of body, the fears her silence roused within me, added to other discomforts, made me reckless of my wretched life.

What would I not have given for liberty to return to Britain—the liberty which so many sought for and obtained, under a military régime so very different from that of the Iron Duke and the glorious days of Vittoria and Waterloo, until "urgent private affairs" became a byword and a scoff in the pages of *Punch*, as before the walls of Sebastopol; but the liberty for which I panted—liberty to return, and convince myself that I was not forgotten, and still loved by Louisa—a just sense of honour restrained me from seeking; so I remained like Prometheus on his rock, chained to my troop, with its daily round of peril and suffering.

A letter from Cora might have served to soothe me; but Cora never wrote to me. With all the love I bore Louisa, for Cora I had ever an affection that went, perhaps, beyond cousinship; for our regard had begun as companions in childhood, and no cloud had ever marred or shadowed it.

Had I loved her as I loved Lady Loftus, how much of sorrow had been spared me!

So time passed rapidly away until the evening of the 16th of October, when Studhome came to my tent, with a sparkle in his eye and a flush on his cheek.

"Jocelyn has been down to the harbour," said he, "and he has seen Berkeley's yacht. She is now at anchor close to the old ruined castle, and Scriven has boarded her."

"See him at once, Jack, like a good fellow," I exclaimed. "Delay is fatal with one so slippery."

"All right! I'm off!" replied Studhome, seizing his forage-cap, and in a few minutes after I saw him galloping past the redoubts of Kadokoi; for we, the cavalry, with the Highland brigade, were not exactly quartered in Balaclava, but among some vineyards two miles distant from the harbour-head in the direction of Sebastopol.

Lucky for us, too, that we were so, as the harbour of Balaclava was full of dead troop-horses, whose swollen bodies were used as stepping-stones in the shallow places, while all the ground about the little town was full of half-buried soldiers, whose feet, fingers, and fleshless skulls stuck through their shallow graves.

CHAPTER XLIX.

To-morrow? O, that's sudden! Spare him:
He's not prepared for death! Even for our kitchens
We kill the fowl of season. Shall we serve Heaven
With less respect than we do minister
To our gross selves? Good, good, my lord, bethink you:
Who is it that hath died for this offence?
There's many have committed it.

SHAKSPEARE.

"I have been on board the yacht, Newton. I have seen Berkeley and Scriven there, and the matter is all but arranged," said Studhome, as he tossed aside his whip and forage-cap, seated himself on the edge of my camp bed, and proceeded to light a cigar.

Much though I longed for it, the information gave me a species of nervous start.

"Thanks, Jack. He will come to the scratch, then?"

"Like the muff, or rather the knave he is, in a fashion of his own. I found him surrounded by every luxury on board his yacht, and she is a beauty—the *Seapink* of Cowes. He was lounging indolently on a rich sofa, in a velvet smoking-cap and gorgeous brocade dressing-gown, tied with yellow silk tassels. By Jove, the fellow was as grandly got up as a Highland piper, or Solomon in all his glory; and he and Scriven were having tiffin—not as we do here, on green coffee and pounded biscuit, but on preserved grouse pie, with iced hock and seltzer water. They asked me to join them, and offered me the chair, which had just been vacated by a—a—pretty Greek girl whom he has on board. His countenance fell rather when he heard my spurs rattling on the steps of the companion-way, and lower still when he discovered my errand. Before our Sybarite of a brother officer, with his bandolined moustaches and exquisite toilette, I was weak enough to feel almost ashamed of my tattered blue surtout, with its frayed frog lace."

"You reminded him of the arrangement made between you and Scriven at Maidstone barracks?"

"Word for word."

"And what did he say?"

"He grew rather pale and nervous, and so forth, and muttered, 'Aw—aw—doocid odd sort of thing. A demmed noosance to fight a fellah when he had just that morning got his leave to return home on—aw, aw—urgent private affairs.' And then he eyed me superciliously and defiantly through his eyeglass, stroking his bandolined moustache the while, till I felt inclined to punch his well-oiled head."

"Confounded puppy!" I exclaimed.

"One might as well sing psalms to a dead horse as appeal to the honour of such as he—the most contemptible fellow one could meet with in the longest day's march."

"So he has actually got his leave for England, then?"

"Yes; so I was not a moment too late. The yacht's crew were taking in water, prior to getting under weigh again. He hummed and hawed, and puffed himself out like a pouter pigeon for a time; but 'a change came o'er the spirit of his dream,' when Scriven, his own peculiar chum, acknowledged that all our mess knew of, and tacitly acquiesced in, the scheme for a hostile meeting within the French lines, or rather within range of Sebastopol, to account for any mishap that might occur. You should have seen how he winced at the word 'mishap!' Scriven and I then retired together on deck for a few minutes, and there arranged that, after sunset to-morrow night, at seven o'clock, as there will no doubt be a brilliant moon, we are to meet on the hilly ground midway between the British left attack and the right of the French entrenchments, about a mile from the South Fort of Sebastopol. There, if necessary, two shots are to be exchanged at twelve paces each, after which we will allow no more firing. The first shot to be tossed for; the others to follow in succession."

"Enough, Jack," said I, trembling with fierce eagerness, as I shook his hand. "When I remember all his perfidy towards me, his cool insolence at Calderwood, the mode in which he sought to compromise me with that poor girl at the Reculvers, his subsequent slanders at Maidstone, his act of treachery at the Balbeck, and his crowning it by the cool assertion that I, and not he, shot my own horse, to fall into the enemy's hands—I shall shoot him if I can, like the dog he is."

I passed the night as I suppose most men do who have such a dreadful business as a duel on their hands. It was all very well for Studhome to urge me again and again to sleep soundly, to keep my hand steady and my head cool; but strange thoughts *would* come unbidden—thoughts of those who were far away, and from whom I was now, perhaps, on the eve of parting for ever. Yet I could not bring myself to wish that Berkeley had sailed and escaped me.

Next morning ushered in the 17th of October, and with it the first formal bombardment of Sebastopol, on which the breaching batteries opened simultaneously from all quarters; and so terrible was the roar of sound, that in the rifle pits the discharge of the muskets could scarcely be heard. It seemed a mere snapping of caps.

I could not help smiling grimly when I heard the storm of war that was raging in the distance.

"What is one human life amid the numbers that are passing away there?—and such as Berkeley's, too!" said I.

"Too true," replied Jack. "But there go the trumpets for church parade. We are to have divine service in the cavalry camp, it seems."

"Why?"

"We missed sermon on two Sundays—the chaplains were so busy with burial services for the cholera dead—so we are to have our minds enlightened to-day."

As the regiment was for patrol duty, it paraded on horseback, and the whole formation of the parade—the lancers, with their fluttering banneroles; the appearance of the chaplain, with his white surplice and Crimean beard; the Bible on the kettledrums, which were improvised as a pulpit; and, in short, the entire affair seemed to me a species of phantasmagoria, for my thoughts and intentions were far away from that strange and stirring, yet somewhat solemn, scene. I was rather struck with the inconsistency of the text, however, on that a day of such importance to me and to the history of Europe.

"Love thine enemy, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you."

Such was the text of our chaplain on that morning. I heard him praying and expounding amid the thunder of the breaching batteries all round Sebastopol, from the Tchernaya on the right to the Quarantine Point on the left; but late events had turned my heart to stone, and with my mind intent upon a duel to the death, I heard him preach in vain.

Though still unflinching in purpose, he somewhat softened me in one way: and in the evening, after some reflection, and to be prepared for the worst, I wrote a farewell letter to Sir Nigel, with a full explanation

of my conduct, and my dearest thanks for all his kindness. My sword, pistols, saddle, and the Medjidie medal I left him as souvenirs, and to Cora some little jewels which I named as remembrances of her old boy-lover, Newton.

Then I turned me to compose a brief, bitter letter to Louisa. It contained but two or three lines. As circumstances stood between us, I could not trust myself to say more than "that I was called upon by the rules of honour, and the duty I owed to myself, to have a hostile meeting with one who had wronged me deeply; that God only could know the sequel; and while at this moment I committed my soul into His hands, I entreated her to be assured that, if I fell, I should die loving her, and her only."

This letter I had just sealed, addressed, and placed beside the other in my tent, when Studhome arrived, cloaked, and ready to set out. Our horses, with pistols in the holsters, were brought to the door.

It was long past five now, and the sun had set. I gave Pitblado the letters, saying—

"I am going to the front this evening, Willie, and, as we know not what may happen, if I don't return, you will carefully see these letters posted for Britain."

My voice must have faltered, for Pitblado looked at me earnestly, and said—

"Of course, sir—of course, sir; but, please, don't talk that way."

"Good-bye!" said I, clapping him kindly on the shoulder; and, as we mounted and rode away in the dark, I could see my faithful adherent looking alternately and wistfully at the superscription of the letters and after us.

Like a mighty shield of gold, the moon had long since risen from the Euxine, far across which its brightness came on the ripples, like a shining path, from the horizon to the red marble cliffs of Balaclava and Cape Phiolente, and now her disc grew smaller as she ascended into the more rarefied atmosphere; but her brilliance gave promise of a clear and

lovely night as we quitted the cavalry camp at an easy walk—trotting might shake my hand, Jack said—and took the road that leads direct from Balaclava northward to Sebastopol.

High and broken ground rises on each side of that path which so many trod never to return, and which was now thronged by mounted men pouring down to Balaclava. A mile distant on our left, we passed the hamlet of Karani, and on our right the long line of defence works and redoubts, which lay two miles in rear of Khutor Karagatch, the British head-quarters. Those of France were a mile farther on, to the left; and then, diverging in the opposite direction, in rear of the breaching batteries which crossed the roadway, we sought for a quiet path between them and the extreme left of our army, to reach the broken ground opposite to the bastions of the South Fort, the proposed scene of our little operations.

So grand, so wild, and stirring was the scene, that for a moment I reined in my horse, and, forgetful of the dreadful errand on which we had come, surveyed it with a curious eye.

As I have said, on this night "the moon, sweet regent of the sky," full-orbed and glorious, shone with wonderful brilliance, eclipsing even the fixed stars in the deep blue vault above, pouring ten thousand silver rays over everything, bringing out some features in strong light, or sinking others into deep, dark shadow.

The terrible panorama of Sebastopol lay before us. The noble harbour, with its tremendous batteries, its outer and inner booms, and myriad sunken ships, of all sorts and sizes, the mastheads of some, the mere stumps, bowsprits, and poops of others, visible, showing where the *Flora* of forty-four guns, the *Oriel* of eighty-four, the *Three Godheads* of one hundred and twenty, and all the rest of that vast scuttled armament, mounting more than one thousand five hundred cannon, lay, all sunk to bar our entrance.

We could see the white flag of Russia flying on its citadel; the cupola of the great church; the glass windows of the houses—the entire city, with all the domes and towers glittering in the moonlight, and girdled by its vast and formidable bastions of earth and stone, from which, ever and

anon, came a red flash, and the boom of a heavy shot, or the clear, bright fiery arc described by the whistling shell, as it curved in mid air, on its ghastly errand, towards the French or British lines.

All this stirring panorama we saw extending for more than four miles, from the lazaretto on the west to the light of Inkermann on the east, which was glittering in the distance on its tower, four hundred feet above the mouth of the Tchernaya.

Several dead bodies lying in the immediate foreground, and the turf all torn to pieces and studded with cannon-balls and fragments of exploded shell—a literal pavement of iron—did not "add enchantment to the view."

That softer effects might not be wanting, between the booming of the half-random cannonade that was dying away for the night, we could hear the brass band of the Rifle Brigade playing an old familiar air, which sounded sweetly in the distance. It was "Annie Laurie"—an air heard daily and hourly among our tents in the Crimea.

"Of all songs, the favourite song at the camp," says one of the lancers, in a published letter, "is 'Annie Laurie.' Words and music combine to render it popular, for every soldier has a sweetheart, and almost every soldier possesses the organ of tune. Every new draft from Britain marches into camp playing this old Scottish melody. I once heard a corporal of the Rifle Brigade start 'Annie Laurie.' He had a tolerably good tenor voice, and sang with expression; but the chorus was taken up by the audience in a much lower key, and hundreds of voices, in the most exact time and harmony, sang together—

> And for bonnie Annie Laurie
> I'd lay me doon and dee!

The effect was extraordinary. I never heard any chorus in oratorio rendered with greater solemnity; and the heart of each singer was evidently far away over the sea."[*]

[*] Letter from the camp.

Just as we diverged from the main road, we heard the galloping of horses in our rear.

"Thank God, we are *first* on the ground," said Studhome. "Here come Scriven and his man, with our assistant-surgeon, Bob Hartshorn, on his nagtailed bay."

As he spoke, they reined in their horses a little. Then we all bowed, touched our caps, and proceeded slowly along the eminence, towards a quiet hollow, which Studhome and Scriven had previously inspected.

Berkeley was nervous and restless; his eyes wandered vaguely over the moonlit scenery. I could see that he frequently passed his tongue over his lips, as if to moisten them; he drew his gloves off and on, and fidgeted with his stock and eyeglass a hundred times; yet he chatted gaily enough to Scriven and the doctor, who told us that he had quite patients enough on his list, without having them added to by fighting duels.

"How romantic!—how terribly grand is all this prospect!" exclaimed Hartshorn, pointing to Sebastopol.

"Aw—haw—doocid good!" drawled my antagonist; "but, Bob, my dear boy, I am an Englishman, and England has been too well fed, too d——d cosy, for centuries, to have much romance about her! and so—aw—aw—I have none, thank Heaven! It is behind the age, Bob—behind the age!"

"An Englishman?" said I to Studhome. "His worthy father was an honest Scotch tradesman, who could little have foreseen the despicable figure his son is cutting to-night."

"I was up to the front before to-day," said Scriven, "and got a rifle ball through my shako."

"It will serve for the—aw—aw—healthy purpose of ventilation," said Berkeley, with a laugh—a very little one, however.

"My old quarters in Balaclava have been nicely ventilated by three bullet-holes in the roof," said the doctor, a good-humoured, careless young fellow.

"Bob is quartered there, on an old Turk, whose third wife is a female so severely respectable, that she never feeds the hens without a veil on."

"Why?" asked Scriven.

"Can't you guess?" asked Berkeley.

"No."

"Because there is—aw—aw—a d——d cock among them."

This frivolous conversation was now interrupted by a hoarse voice in front, challenging—

"Qui va là?"

"Friends!" I replied.

"*Anglaises*," added the other, and we found ourselves face to face with a French mounted officer and a small party of workmen, with pickaxes and shovels. In the horseman I immediately recognised Colonel Giomar, of the French 77th Regiment, who demanded whither we were going in that remarkable direction.

"'Tis an affair of honour, *monsieur le colonel*, and we propose to settle it here," said I. "May we?"

"*Très bien!* but you have chosen a droll place and hour," replied the colonel, a short, pot-bellied little man, in a scarlet kepi, which had a great square peak, and who wore a frogged surtout, with a sabre in a brass sheath.

"We cannot fight within our own lines, monsieur."

"I comprehend. You don't permit duelling in your service, I believe?"

"No."

"Indeed—singular!"

"Public opinion is against it."

"The King of France, Louis XIV., in 1700, tried to put down duelling, on which an old field-officer said to him, '*Tudieu*, sire! you have put down gaming and stage-playing; now you wish to make an end of duelling. How the devil are officers and gentlemen to amuse

themselves?' But, with your permission, messieurs, I shall look and see how this affair ends. I haven't seen one since we marched out of Cambrai."

Berkeley bowed, and gave him a ghastly smile. When viewed by the moonlight, his face was so pale that even Scriven, his second, surveyed him with disgust and annoyance. There was a clamorous fluttering about my own heart. Thank that Heaven which I was about to face, my bearing was very different from his!

We dismounted, and the soldiers of the French working-party led our horses aside, as we had all come without grooms. The pot-bellied Colonel Giomar seated himself on the turf, to enjoy a cigar and see the sport; and the doctor, with professional *sang froid*, opened his case of instruments, and drew forth lint and bandages from the pocket of the Inverness cape which he wore over his uniform.

We now threw off our cloaks and swords. I wore an undress blue surtout; but Berkeley was dressed in an entire suit of black—a sack-coat, buttoned up to the neck, so that not a vestige of shirt was visible to attract my eye, or fix an aim.

Let me hasten over what follows.

Apologies were neither asked nor offered. The affair was beyond such amenities in the deadly game we were about to play. Twelve paces were measured; we tossed up for the first fire, and it fell to—Berkeley! Then I saw a smile of savage hope light up his eyes and curl his lip, as he took his ground and carefully cocked his pistol, just feeling the percussion-cap for a second with the fore-finger of his left hand.

Steadily I looked at him. I could see how he restrained his breathing, lest the aim might waver; how a white glare came into his eye, as it glanced along the barrel of the pistol, which he levelled full at my head, in the pale moonlight.

"*Gardez la bombe!*" shouted Colonel Giomar, as he rolled away over the turf like a butter-firkin. It was a moment of thrilling suspense, and, bewildered by the interruption, Berkeley permitted his pistol to explode, the ball going Heaven knows where! There was a whistling in the air overhead, with a rushing sound and then a heavy thud, as there lighted,

almost at Berkeley's feet, a five-inch shell, shot from the South Fort by the Russians, who must have seen our group in the moonlight; and there it lay on the turf, half-imbedded by its own weight, with its red fuse hissing and burning furiously.

For a moment I saw its upward glare, as it shone on the pale face of the terrified man, who was too much paralyzed by emotion to move; but, just as I flung myself flat on the earth to escape the explosion, there was a blaze of yellow light, a crash as of thunder, and I felt a kind of hot wind sweep over me. The shell had burst, and Berkeley lay a heap of mutilated blood and bones beside it!

We rushed towards him. Both legs were broken in many places, a large fragment was buried deep in his chest, and the man was dead!

"Poor fellow!" said I, after our first exclamations of astonishment and commiseration had subsided.

Berkeley had long and systematically wronged me deeply; and now the angry lust for vengeance passed away, and I felt ashamed of the bitterness of the emotions which had inspired me but a few moments before. I forgave him all now, and almost felt sorry for the sudden fate that had, perhaps, saved me—I say sorry, but I could feel no more.

That fate so unlooked for and mysterious freed me from all further trouble or responsibility. I could pardon him for all he had ever done to me, and to his dead victim too—poor Agnes Auriol.

"*C'est la fortune de guerre, camarades*," said Colonel Giomar, shrugging his shoulders.

Stretched on the grass, which was soaked and sodden with his yet warm blood, there lay De Warr Berkeley, the coxcomb of Rotten Row, the epicurean of the mess and dinner-table, the Sybarite of the clubs, the sensualist whom poor Agnes Auriol loved—not too wisely, but too well; the sporting man, whose splendid drag presented the gayest show, the best company, the brightest parasols, bonnets, and fans, with the loveliest faces and the most expensive champagnes on the Derby-day, or the yearly inspection at Maidstone—there he lay dead, mangled, like a very beggar's dog!

It was the fortune of war, as Giomar said; but a fortune on which he had never calculated—his mother's pet from childhood, "clad in purple and fine linen."

Bundled in a cloak, his remains were borne to the rear by the Frenchmen of the 77th; and full of much thought, and with many a surmise as to how the corps would view the story of the night, Studhome, Scriven, the doctor and I, rode slowly back to quarters, leading with us a riderless horse.

I entered my tent, bewildered, giddy with the startling episode in which I had been involved. I had but one satisfaction—his blood was not on my hands. My brain swam, my heart was beating fast, and I had an intense thirst. A bottle of Cliquot stood near. Studhome adroitly struck off the top with his sword, and gave me a generous draught.

Then, by the light of a stable lantern that hung glimmering on the tent-pole, I saw the two letters I had so recently penned lying on the top of a baggage trunk; but a third epistle, addressed to myself, was beside them.

It was from Sir Nigel: the mail from Constantinople had come in that afternoon. I tore my missive open, and almost the first words that met my eyes were—

"Compose yourself, my dear boy. Louisa Loftus, the tricky jade, is now a marchioness. I send you herewith the *Morning Post*, which details her marriage at full length."

"Read that, Jack!" said I, in a hoarse voice, while the miserable tent swam round and round me.

Studhome scanned the letter hurriedly.

"Oh, Jack! what do you think of all this?"

"Think!" said he with an oath. "I think Sir Walter Scott did well to call the world 'an admirable compound of folly and knavery.'"

So all her studied silence was accounted for now!

CHAPTER L.

The line divides: the right half, which is
Conspicuous for madder breeches,
Presses, like flock of hunted sheep,
Towards yon tower, so grim and steep.
STONE TALK.

On that day, never to be forgotten in the annals of the British cavalry, the 25th of October, when we fought the battle of Balaclava, no man in all the Light Division mounted his horse with a more reckless heart than I, and no man, perhaps, was personally more careless as to the sequel. War and its contingent horrors were a relief, congenial to my bitterness of spirit, and afforded me a relief from myself.

There is probably not a boy in Britain but knows how, on that terrible day, the six hundred horsemen rode fearlessly into the Valley of Death; yet I cannot resist the temptation to tell the gallant story once again.

We were roused early in our miserable quarters by tidings that the Russians, in great force, were menacing Balaclava, the harbour of which was of vital importance to the allies in their operations against Sebastopol. Sir Colin Campbell—Lord Clyde, of glorious memory—had been appointed governor; and to him and his Highland Brigade had this most valuable post been intrusted by the allied generals. On this day he was reinforced by a few marines from the fleet, and four thousand lubberly Turks, who occupied four redoubts, which commanded the road to the camp.

The cavalry division—led by Lord Lucan, and composed of the Scots Greys, the Inniskillins, 1st Royal, 4th and 5th Dragoon Guards, forming the Heavy Brigade, under General Scarlett; and the 4th and 13th Light Dragoons, the 8th and 11th Hussars, with the 17th Lancers and ours,

forming the Light Brigade, under the Earl of Cardigan—were to form between those Turkish redoubts and the Sutherland Highlanders, who were encamped under the cliffs, where the marines had a battery.

It was seven in the morning, when Captain Nolan, of the 15th Hussars, Lord Raglan's gallant aide-de-camp, dashed into our quarters on horseback.

"Get your men into their saddles, Colonel Beverley," he exclaimed. "A strong column of the enemy's cavalry, supported by artillery and infantry, some twenty-three thousand of all arms, are now in the valley before Balaclava. General Baur has already stormed one of the Turkish redoubts, and is opening fire on the other three. The Bono Johnnies are flying in all directions. Pass the word along for the whole line to turn out. We must floor them instantly!"

The trumpets blew loud and shrill among the tents, just as Studhome and I were making a hasty breakfast.

"The deuce!" said he. "So we must take a turn against those troublesome Cossacks; but if no Russian rifle bullet hath its place allotted in my proper person, we shall devil those drumsticks, and polish off that cooper of sherry in the evening."

Poor Jack!

We were soon in our saddles, with pistols loaded and lances slung. All were eager for the fray; and just as the sun arose General Bosquet, with a few pieces of artillery and two hundred Chasseurs d'Afrique, arrived to join us.

The surface of the valley into which the cavalry division advanced was undulating, and numerous green grassy hillocks served to conceal the movements of the various bodies of troops from each other. Above those hillocks we could see the light smoke of the distant conflict curling, as the Russians attacked and took in rapid succession the four redoubts, turning the guns of each, as they captured it, on the fugitive Turks, who fled in masses, and were decimated by round-shot and grape from their own guns, which, in their haste to escape, they forgot to spike.

The last redoubt was speedily abandoned by the brutal Colonel Hadjie Mehmet, who, bareheaded and without his sabre, was seen galloping ignominiously over his own men, as they rushed like a flock of sheep towards the steady line of the 93rd Highlanders, and there, by superhuman exertions, Sir Colin Campbell formed them in a confused body on his flank. But before this bourn was reached a Russian bullet had sent the soul of Hadjie Mehmet in search of the wonders of Paradise.

In fierce pursuit the Russian horse came dashing on, their polished lance-heads and black leather helmets shining in the sun, and, like successive human waves, squadron after squadron came in view. Pausing for a moment on the crest of a ridge, they looked with wonder—it might be scorn—upon the thin red line of Scotsmen, whom, as Campbell said, in his quaint way, he "did not think it worth while to form four deep or in square."

On came the Russians, with levelled lances and uplifted swords—on and on at a gallop, and from thence to racing speed—down like thunder rolling through the murky air. This sight proved too much for the red-capped Turks. Once more their line of red breeches was turned to the enemy, as they fled *en masse*; but calmly, steadily, and sternly, like their native rocks, stood the men of the slender Scottish line.

A command is given. Now the Minie rifles are levelled from the shoulder, the plumed bonnets seem to droop a little to the right as each man takes his aim, the withering volley rolls along from flank to flank, and, as the smoke rises, we see a confused heap of men rolling wildly over each other, while swords, lances, and caps are scattered far and near. Beyond these are the retreating squadrons—fugitives, and in utter rout!

The cowardly Turks were objects of intense derision to our seamen, and even to the little middies and soldiers' wives. Many of the latter kicked and cuffed the "Bono Johnnies" without mercy for their shameless abandonment of the Highlanders, and for plundering our cavalry camp, where they gobbled up the porridge which the Scots Greys had been cooking for breakfast when the alarm sounded.

Many other regiments of cuirassiers and lancers now joined the baffled horse, as they re-formed on the slope of a hill, from whence, for the first time to-day, they saw us, the heavy and light divisions of cavalry, drawn up in the small valley a little to the left of the Highlanders, and having had enough of them, with us they now resolved upon a trial of strength.

By many thousands they outnumbered us; but we knew that we were unaided; that upon our own bravery, discipline, and hardihood depended the honour and the fortune of the day; and all the many staff officers and other spectators, who had come from the French camp and the harbour to witness the result, knew this too, and looked silently and breathlessly on.

In two long, compact, and glittering lines, the Russian horse once more came on. Among them were some cuirassier regiments of the Imperial Guard, with magnificent helmets, adorned with silver eagles. But now, without waiting for orders, the two advanced corps of our cavalry—the Scots Greys and the Inniskillin Dragoons, galloped forward to meet them, one in heart, in ardour, and in purpose, as when those two noble regiments had ridden side by side, in the same brigade, in the Septennial War, a century before, and on the plains of Waterloo.

Overlapped by the vast extent of the first Russian line, we thought they would be literally swallowed up and exterminated. A ray of light seemed to pass along the ranks, as all their sword blades flashed in the sunshine; and then came the shock of battle.

The Scots on the left, the Irish dragoons on the right, broke through the Russians, cutting and treading them down; then both regiments actually disappeared! We held our breath; but anon a shout escaped us, as we saw them on the crest of an eminence beyond, cutting through the second Russian line!

All was then a wild and mingled chaos of uniforms, scarlet, blue, and green; of flashing swords and brandished lances, of floating plumes and swaying standards; of shrieking men, and horses kicking, plunging, and rolling on the turf; and many an episode of chivalry and hand-to-hand combat was there.

Then we heard the shrill trumpets above that infernal din, where no commands would have availed. The tall black bearskins of the Scots, and the brass helmets of the Irish dragoons, began to reappear; and, soon emerging from that human sea of glory and honour, we saw our gallant Heavies once more reforming in compact line, and retiring at a hand gallop, after having taught the thick-skulled Muscovites the strength of a Briton's arm, and the temper of our Sheffield steel.

Conspicuous by their colour, we could see that many of the Scots Greys' horses were covered with blood.

And now came our part in this terrible drama—the disaster of the day!

CHAPTER LI.

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league, onward,
Into the Valley of Death,
Rode the Six Hundred!
TENNYSON.

Recoiling before the glorious charges of our Heavy Brigade, the Russian horse and foot had retired into a narrow gorge at the head of the long green valley. There thirty pieces of cannon were in position, and in rear of them were formed six solid columns of cavalry and six of infantry, while other dense masses occupied the slopes beyond.

Notwithstanding this formidable array, in an almost unassailable position, a message was received by Lord Lucan from Captain Lewis Edward Nolan, of the 15th Hussars, undoubtedly one of the bravest of the brave, to the effect that the Light Brigade was to carry those thirty

pieces of cannon. Another account says that he simply pointed to the guns with his sword, and said, "We should take them," and that the motion was taken for an order.

Ere many minutes were passed, poor Nolan paid the full penalty of this misconception or error in judgment—if error it was.

Perilous, rash, and desperate though the attempt, Lord Lucan reluctantly ordered the Earl of Cardigan to advance with his brigade, and cheerfully we obeyed the startling order.

We numbered only six hundred and seven horsemen, officers included.

Each officer took up the words in succession—"The brigade will advance. First squadron, march, trot, gallop!" And then for the first time, as I led my squadron on, did I become aware how thirsty we unconsciously become when under fire. My lips were quite baked, yet the morning air was moist and cool. We had before us a mile and a half to gallop over, level and open ground, encumbered here and there by the dead and wounded men and horses of the previous encounter; but these we swept over in our advance towards where the black and grim artillery stood, with round and gaping muzzles, before the solid array of Russian horse and foot—those dark columns in long grey capotes, all cross-belted, with fixed bayonets glittering in the sun; those darker and less distinct clouds of horsemen, whose forest of lances, sword-blades, and brighter appointments glittered and flashed from among their umbered masses.

On and on we rode, and faces flushed red, and hearts beat wildly—while the Earl, brave as every English gentleman should be, with all his faults of temper—led us on with brandished sword. Every hand was firm on the bridle, every grasp was firm on the sword, every knee was pressed to the saddle-laps, every rowel was tinged with blood; so, holster to holster and boot to boot, the squadrons were pressing on.

"CHARGE!" escaped me, almost before the time, and then the maddened horses rushed on at full racing speed, with long, invigorating strides. Our lances were all unslung, and in the rest, the banneroles

fluttering before the horses' heads and outstretched necks, from which the manes were floating backward like smoke.

We were soon within the line of fire. Like the thunder of heaven the park of artillery shook the air, as cannon, mortars, and rifles opened like a fiery hell on front and flanks at once. An iron shower of round shot and grape, shells, and rockets, with a tempest of conical rifle bullets, whizzed past our ears, or tore through horses and men, and down they went on right and left at every stride.

Struck on the breast by a shell, the gallant Nolan fell back on his saddle, with a wild and harrowing cry, as his horse swept round, and bore his body to the rear, with his feet still in the stirrups, vindicating, even in death, his reputation as one of England's noblest horsemen.

Man after man, horse after horse, are now going down, thick and fast, and shrieks, and prayers, and curses rise together to Heaven; but the rest close in from the flank, and firmer, denser, wilder, and more resolute than ever we ride the race of death!

On, and on yet, steeds snorting, lances rising and falling, pennons fluttering, and sabres flashing in the sunshine.

"Steady, lads, steady!" cried Lionel Beverley, as another shower of grape tore through the squadrons, and many more went down, though some of the horses remained riderless in the rank, and galloped mechanically on. For a moment, amid the confusion, I saw the colonel for the last time, as he led us—that noble heart, that polished gentleman and gallant lancer. He was deadly pale, for he was mortally wounded in the left side. His life-blood was ebbing; but his sword was still uplifted, and a light was flashing in his eyes, which already could see "the glories and the terrors of the unknown world."

"Close up, gentlemen and comrades! Keep your horses well in hand; but spur on—charge, and charge home! Hurrah!"

A ball hummed past—a twenty-four pound shot, apparently—and where was Lionel Beverley?

Doubled up, a dead and ghastly heap, under a dying and mangled charger! The next who fell was my friend Wilford. If he was somewhat of a dandy in England, there was no want of pluck in him here. Leading his

troop, he fell close by me, and I leaped my horse over him as he rolled past, churning a mouthful of grass and earth, his features awfully convulsed, and his limbs trembling in their death agony. Poor Fred Wilford!

On and on yet! Many a familiar face is gone now; the gaps are fearful, and men who were on the flanks now find themselves in the centre. Yet, withal, it is impossible not to feel how—

> One crowded hour of glorious life
> Is worth an age without a name.

On we still gallop towards that mouth of fire—on, and fearlessly. The best blood of the three kingdoms is in our ranks, all well and nobly mounted, the flower of our gallant cavalry—on yet like a whirlwind, the hearty British "Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!" ringing in our ears; the heart's blood seems mounting to the brain; and *now* we are upon them!—now the red flashing muzzles of the cannon are passed; the gunners are throwing themselves under the wheels and limbers, where we cut them down, and spear or pin them to the turf. Others are rushing for shelter to their squares of infantry, under whose rifles they lie flat and securely, while sheets of lead are tearing through us!

Oh, the superlative bitterness of that moment, when, with all our horses blown, I look back and see that we are without supports!

The guns are taken—the gunners almost annihilated; our horses are breathless. We have no aid, and no resource but to ride back, under such a concentrated fire as troops were never before exposed to.

"It's all up—threes about—retire!"

A single trumpet feebly gives the call, and away we go.

Shot—in the heart, perhaps—my Arab steed sank down gently beneath me; but I received a severe blow from something, I know not what—the splinter of a shell, probably, which crushed my lancer cap, and almost stunned me. I must have remounted myself mechanically, for when we hacked our way back, and reached the rear, I was riding a bay

horse of the 11th Hussars, the saddle and holsters of which were slimy with blood. The horse fell with me soon after, as it had been disembowelled by a grape shot.

Of all those glorious regiments who formed the Light Brigade, there came back but one hundred and ninety-eight men; many of these were wounded, and many dismounted; and when the rolls were called over at nightfall, it was found that one hundred and fifty-seven were dead, one hundred and nineteen were wounded, and that three hundred and thirty fine horses were killed, leaving more than one hundred and thirty dragoons unaccounted for.

I had not the heart to number the forty men who represented the two squadrons which followed Lionel Beverley. There, on the green sward of that Valley of Death, lay our gallant colonel, cut in two by a round shot; Travers, torn to pieces by grape shot; Scriven, slain by three lance wounds; Howard, "the only son of his mother, and she was a widow;" Frank Jocelyn, our old sergeant-major, and an incredible number of others killed. The flower of our lancers were there, and among them my faithful follower, Pitblado, with a rifle bullet in his leg.

Hot, breathless, stiff, sore, and covered with bruises, I now discovered that in the *mêlée*—though I was unconscious of having struck a blow—there were, at least, twenty notches in the blade of my sword, that I had received three very severe lance prods, two sword cuts, and that my uniform was torn to rags. When we halted to girth up, I threw myself on the rich grass of the valley, and, taking off my battered lancer cap, felt the cool breeze most grateful, as it came from the distant sea. Then I buried my face among the verdure, less for coolness than from excess of weakness, and to hide the sorrow that consumed me for the losses we had sustained.

From a distance came the cheers of the Heavy Brigade, avenging us, and completing the work we had begun. Then the fierce excitement—the devil that had possessed me—passed away, and I thought only of the dying and the dead.

* * * * *

"Is that you, Lanty?" said a voice near me.

"Ov coorse it is—barrin' the tip of an ear."

"Well, thank God, there are at least two of our troop left."

"And the captain here!"

I must have fainted from exhaustion and loss of blood, for after a time I was surprised to find my jacket open at the neck, and that I was propped against my dead horse by Dr. Hartshorn, who was binding up my cuts and scars, while Lanty O'Regan attended, with a short black dudeen in his mouth, which had been enlarged by a sword cut, and then roughly patched with plaster, which did not, however, prevent poor Lanty from talking.

"Me mouth, is it, I'm to take care ov, docthor dear? Sure, if it is only for the sake ov the girls, I'll do that same; but, be gorra! I wish that dirty Roosian had been holdin' on the horns of the new moon wid his fingers well greased, before I came across him."

"Are you sure the farrier-sergeant is dead?"

"Quite sure, docthor."

"You saw him get the sleeping draught?"

"Sure, the draught it was that finished him right off?"

"What the deuce do you mean? I took orf his leg successfully in the Turkish hospital."

"And sure, afther ye war gone, the Turkish Hospital sergeant, who was blazing drunk with raki, made up a prescription of all the dhrugs in the place, saying some o' them would surely compose him."

"Well—well?"

"The farrier-sergeant took it, sir; and he's now composed enough, poor man, and laying in the trinches, waitin' to be covered up wid green sods, if they can be got in that red valley ov blood and murder."

Some brandy given by Hartshorn now rallied me a little, and I inquired for Willie Pitblado. Lanty informed me that he was in a hospital tent, and enduring great pain.

Pitblado's sword had broken in his hand; he was looking wildly round him for another, when poor Studhome, who lay dying beneath ahorse, placed his own sword in Willie's hand, saying—

"Use it, and wear it for my sake. All's over with me!"

Pitblado cut down two Russian gunners, and actually bore Studhome for some paces in his arms, before he discovered that he was dead, and then a rifle bullet stretched him on the field.

A few men were now crawling back from the valley, where several dismounted guns and dead bodies were all that remained of the Russian host, which had now fallen back.

Numbers of horses, many of them severely wounded, with bridles hanging loose, and saddles all bloody, careered along the green ridges, where they were caught by the Turks. Some came trotting quietly into quarters, when they heard the trumpet sound for "corn"; others cropped the bloody herbage in the Valley of Death; and not a few who remained beside their fallen riders were found by the burial parties.

Beverley's body was discovered, terribly mutilated, stripped, and deprived of the locket which contained the hair of his intended—the girl who was shot in his arms on the retreat through the Khyber Pass.

On surveying the horrors of that day, I asked myself—was it for such work as this that heaven created us?

But such was that glorious and disastrous episode of the war—the charge of the Light Brigade at the Battle of Balaclava.

In foreign armies—as I once heard a brother officer remark—one would have found plenty of officers to lead such a charge, but in what other army would one find soldiers to follow as ours did? Though surrounded on every side by the enemy, though apparently all was over with them, though suffering under a withering fire, and seeing their comrades falling in heaps around them, not a man flinched, or thought of shifting for himself; but all looked to their officers, and followed them as if they had been on an ordinary parade.

"There are eighty-one of ours, sir, to be buried in yonder pit," said a trumpeter named Jones, as he came to my tent next morning.

"Eighty-one!—my God!—the poor fellows!"

"Yes, sir—eighty-one," repeated Jones, sadly.

"Where are they?"

"Some are in the trenches—others coming."

They were borne from the field, where they had lain all night, and where the only tears that fell on them were the dews of heaven, and then they were half lowered, half flung in—eighty-one! all handsome young men—and the Highlanders began to cover them up.

"God rest them," said I, lifting my cap, as I leaned on the trumpeter's arm.

"Ay, sir," said he, sadly; "the next trumpet they hear will be a louder one than Bill Jones's!"

CHAPTER LII.

Then I thought of one fair spring-time,
When she placed her hand in mine,
And, half-silent, said she loved me,
And, half-blushing, seemed divine.

Then I thought of that same winter,
When the earth was dead and cold;
Fit time, in sooth, to marry one
She worshipped for his gold.

I had been some days in Messirie's Hotel, at Pera, before I realized or quite became reconciled to the idea that I was going home on sick leave, worn in mind and body, and smarting still with many wounds, for some of the lance prods had gangrened, the iron having been, perhaps, rusty. Many other officers were also at Messirie's, on their way home, some with amputated limbs, but all leaving the army with regret. All were pale and lean enough, with bronzed faces and bushy beards, their red shell-jackets or blue surtouts out-at-elbows, threadbare, patched, and stained

by the mud of the trenches, and there were one or two lisping idiots, with flyaway whiskers, hair divided in the centre, and yaw-haw tones, whose "pwivate affairs had become wemawkably urgent!"

I had with me poor Willie Pitblado, whose left leg was well-nigh useless now. No surgeon had succeeded in extracting the ball; their attempts had produced torture, which brought on a low fever, and Willie was going home with me now—only, I feared, to die.

And now, on the last evening of this most memorable year, I sat alone, muffled in my cavalry cloak, looking from the hotel window down a long and narrow street, paved with rough, round stones, where the *humauls*, or Turkish porters, British tars, half-furious with raki, Zouaves, with cigar in mouth and hands in pockets, dragomans, with pistol and sabre, indolent, sensual, and brutal Osmanli soldiers, and other nationalities and costumes, made up a strange and varied scene. From another window I could see Stamboul, its flat roofs, round domes, its mosques and minarets, stretching in the distance far away; the Golden Horn; with the three-deckers of the *Sultan* lying idly at anchor; and the new bridge that spans the harbour; and, over all, the weird-like glories of a crimson moon.

The December twilight stole on, and, as I mused, it seemed but yesterday since all those lancers who had died of cholera at Varna or elsewhere, and those whom I had seen cast into the great trench, had been alive, and riding by my side.

The embarkation of the wounded at Balaclava harbour, whither they had been borne on stretchers, minus legs and arms, hands and feet, with faces pale, slashed, gashed, and battered; our British men-of-war, the *Sanspareil*, *Tribune*, *Sphinx*, and *Arrow*, ranged in line, with open ports to sweep the valley; all the episodes of our departure—the somewhat mournful cheers given by the seamen as our transport, the *Napoleon III.*, of Leith, got up her steam and cleared the harbour—cheers to which we could scarcely respond; the receding shores, where the iron voice yet rang the knell of many a human life from battery and bastion; the last rays of the sun, as they lit up the impending bluffs of Cape Aya, and ruddied all the rocks of red and white marble that guard the rugged

coast, and repel the storms of the Euxine; all these, as they had melted into sea and sky, seemed like an old dream now, and, battered in body and broken in spirit, I was seated alone in Messirie's Frankish hotel, on my way home!

Well, well! For weeks past I had been as useless at Balaclava as at the Hospital of Scutari, from whence I had been transferred to the suburb of Pera. I had been unable to share in the two battles of Inkermann, in both of which the Russians were totally defeated, and in the last of which our losses were fearful; and I had no share in the battle of the Ovens, on the 20th of November. By landing at Scutari on the 13th, I escaped the terrible hurricane by which so many of the shipping perished in the Black Sea, and by which the survivors of their crews were subjected to be mercilessly massacred by the Russians.

My poor comrades! Be a soldier but for six months, and you will never forget the new world that is opened to you—a respect for your brother officers and soldiers, and a kindly feeling for the *old number* of the corps; it lasts with life.

But that ghastly trench in the green valley, and the pale, moustached, and upturned faces! God bless all who lie there, and green be the graves of our people in the Crimea!

It was on the second day of the new year that we—Pitblado and I—sailed in H.M.S. *Blazer* for Southampton, with many other invalids, and, as we steamed round the Seraglio Point, and stood away into the Sea of Marmora, I thought of that day twelvemonth, when I was at Calderwood Glen, sharing the contents of my good old uncle's ancestral wassail-bowl. How much had passed since then!

Trebitski's Cossacks had taken the miniature, the ring; even Louisa's lock of hair was gone too, and luckily now I had nothing to remind me of the beautiful traitress by whom I had been galled, befooled, hoodwinked, and so cruelly abandoned!

And Lady Chillingham could witness this horrible sacrifice, this English *suttee*, or act of immolation, quietly and approvingly. She had married without love herself—so had her mother before her—and both had been happy enough in their own heartless and stupid way. Such

alliances, made on mere worldly grounds, were part of the system of that society in which they moved; so Lady Chillingham viewed the whole affair as a matter of course.

As for Louisa Loftus, why should she be different from other women of the world, and of her aristocratic class? I must have been deluded—mad indeed, to think otherwise for a moment! And yet she could crash my hope for the future recklessly, as a child breaks the glittering soap-bubble he has so carefully developed, or casts aside the plaything he once treasured. She could cruelly trample on the best love of a true and honest heart, to make a marriage that was advantageous only in point of rank and wealth, both of which she already inherited in the fullest degree.

Yet something of pity mingled with my fierce and bitter scorn of Louisa—pity for the dreary years she would have to spend, while tending a senile dotard, whom she could neither respect nor love. She would suffer in secret, or perhaps console herself by some scandalous flirtation, that Sir Bernard Burke would never record in his usually flattering pages, though he might have to chronicle the unexpected appearance of an heir to the noble old Anglo-Norman line of Slubber de Gullion.

While Louisa, plunged in all the gaiety of London life, forgot all but it and herself, Cora—I learned this after—had thought it a crime to be even happy, while I was suffering or absent. Such was the difference in the nature of those two girls.

At Stamboul I had procured an inlaid Turkish rifle, a high-peaked saddle, a cherry-pipe stick, and some yataghans, as trifles for Sir Nigel; slippers, all sewn with pearls, a shawl, a veil, a little trunk of essences, and other pretty things, for Cora.

Our homeward voyage was rapid and pleasant, so we steamed steadily on, passing many a transport hurrying to the seat of war, with her human freight, ardent and eager to replace the fallen; on by Malta and old Gib. I was too ill to land at either; but I was well cared for on board, for the officers treated me as if I had been their brother, and were never weary of extolling the terrible charge of the Light Brigade on the fatal 25th of October.

On an evening about the end of January, we were off Southampton, and ran into the tidal dock, which has such peculiar advantages for first-class steamers. There out of the general traffic, and in the basin of quiet water, the *Blazer* could easily land her melancholy freight of wounded men. Many poor fellows whom she had embarked had died on the way home, and found a grave under the waves of the Mediterranean.

We were landed by gaslight. I must have been very weak at that time. I remember the cheers of welcome and the genuine commiseration of the kindly English folks assembled on the crowded quays as we were borne tenderly ashore in the arms of our good sailor comrades; and my wasted appearance was not the least exciting, for I was so worn now that my face was not unlike the Death's head on the appointments of the 17th Lancers—but with a goodly Crimean beard appended to it.

The lieutenant of marines conducted me to a fashionable hotel.

At Southampton I was separated from poor Willie. With all the other wounded soldiers, he was transmitted, per third-class train, to Fort Pitt, at Chatham. Save once, I never saw the poor affectionate fellow again. He became a confirmed invalid, and months passed away, during which he was neither discharged nor cured, though he longed to get home—home, that he might die where he first saw the light, in his father's cottage, and be laid beside his mother's grave in the glen.

But there is no cure for the home-sickness in the pharmacopoeia of Her Majesty's medical department, at No. 6, Whitehall Yard.

For many days I remained at the hotel, careless how the time passed. I had become perfectly listless, and lay on the sofa for hours, less to nurse my wounds than from pure inertia, and heedless of what might happen.

Thus, one evening, when the snow lay deep in the streets without, muffling the footsteps of the passengers and the wheels of the cabs and omnibuses—when the fire was burning cheerily in the bright bars of the polished grate—the crimson curtains drawn across the windows—the crystals of the gaselier glittering with a thousand prisms, and thus when, after Crimean experiences, it was impossible not to feel intensely

comfortable in the well-carpeted room of a fashionable English hotel, I was dozing off to sleep, and to dream, perhaps, of other scenes, when a sound roused me.

An arm—a soft and warm one—was round my neck, and two bright, sad, earnest, and tearful eyes were beaming affectionately into mine; a smooth cheek, rendered cold as a winter apple by the frosty air without, just brushed mine, and a kiss was on my forehead, as a beautiful and blushing girl threw back her veil, and I found my hands were clasped by those of Cora Calderwood.

"Dear, dear Cora!" I exclaimed, and pressed her to my breast.

I had longed for sympathy, companionship, friendship—for some one with whom to share the secret burden that crushed my heart; but I rapidly found the impossibility of doing this with my beautiful cousin, for now, as I embraced her, all her long-treasured and long-hidden love gushed up in her heart.

She smoothed back her thick dark hair with her pretty and tremulous hands, and then, placing them on my temples, surveyed me again and again, with eyes full of pity and delight, while half-kneeling beside me on the low *fauteuil* on which I lay.

"Cora!"

"Newton!"

She was too full of pure joy to speak; she could only throw her arms round my neck and whisper, with her rosy lip close to my ear—

"Newton—Newton—my poor Newton! my own love at last—and—and—here comes papa."

As if to relieve me from a situation that was as embarrassing as it was pleasing, the affectionate old gentleman hurried forward to meet me. He had been less agile than his daughter in springing upstairs, and threading the mysterious corridors of an English hotel. He took me in his sturdy arms. His eyes were sparkling with pleasure; his ruddy cheeks were now rendered redder than ever by the frosty wind; his white locks glittered in the light; and his handsome old face was beaming with pleasure, as it always did when he saw me. Warmly he shook my hands again and again. He surveyed my hollow cheeks with commiseration, as

Cora now did with tears; and then, with prodigious bustle, he proceeded to divest himself of numerous overcoats and wrappers, until he appeared at last in his black cut-away, with white corded breeches and top-boots, as of old the *beau idéal* of the master of the Fifeshire hounds.

"So we have found you at last, my dear boy—fairly run you to earth, eh? You must come home with us now——"

"To-night, papa?"

"Not exactly to-night, Cora; but as soon as he is fit for travelling. And a rare cooper of old port Davie Binns shall set abroach when again Newton is beneath the roof of the house in which his mother was born, and where she died, too, poor girl!"

My mother was more than forty when she died; but the old baronet only remembered his favourite sister as "the girl," of whose beauty he was always so proud.

Cora had now removed her bonnet and cloak. She was beautiful as ever, but paler, I thought, for the flush that dyed her soft face at first had now passed away, and she lowered her dark lashes at times when I looked at her. But her secret was out now. I knew all, but could scarcely foresee how matters were to end.

Cora wore at her breast the silver crescent and lion I had sent her from India. She had more. She had on her finger my Rangoon diamond, which the Marchioness had sent to her, and which I desired her to retain for my sake, till I replaced it by one more valuable still.

We were very happy that night in Southampton; and, with more alacrity than I thought remained in me, I prepared at once to return to Scotland.

My health was not now what it had been; but my native air in Calderwood Glen would restore it. To repine now would have been ungrateful to heaven and my kind kinsfolk.

I had passed through that dreadful ordeal, the Valley of Death, and had returned with life and youth before me, when so many better and braver than I had perished by my side. So I resolved to return thankfully and joyfully home, to water my laurels among the heath-clad hills and grassy glens of my native place.

CHAPTER LIII.

Away with my firelock!
Here, take my red coat!
On danger and glory
No longer I'll dote.
A train of soft passions
Now rise in my breast;
The soldier subsides,
And ambition's at rest.
And no more shall the sound
Of the trumpet or drum
Forewarn the poor shepherd
Of evils to come.
SOLDIER'S SONG.

Poor Willie Pitblado sank fast after the extraction of the ball, and the subsequent amputation of his leg.

In the pleasant month of June, when he knew that the golden laburnums and the hawthorns, pink and white, would be wearing their loveliest hues among the green hills and burnsides where he had played in boyhood, and when the summer breeze would be rustling the thick foliage that shaded his father's humble cottage in Calderwood Glen, Willie felt that his hour was coming nigh, and he grew very sad and restless.

On that day, the last he was to spend on earth, there was an unwonted bustle in and around the great military hospital of Fort Pitt, and, natheless the sick and wounded, the weary in body and subdued in

spirit, the dying men in the wards, and those whose battles and troubles were over, and who lay stark and stiff under a white sheet in the deadhouse, awaiting the muffled drums and the—now daily—funeral party, there had been a scouring of tins and polishing of wooden tables, a renovation of sanded floors and white-washed walls; an extra folding and arranging of knapsacks and bedding. Staff officers in full uniform, with aiguillette and plume, galloped to and fro, in and out, up and down the steep hill from whence the grim old fort looks down upon the quiet and sleepy Medway, with all its old battered hulks; and then whispers were passed along the wards that the Queen—Queen Victoria herself—was coming to visit the poor fellows who had carried her colours in triumph up the slopes of Alma, through the valley of Inkermann, and in the charges at Balaclava.

Then pale cheeks flushed and sunken eyes grew bright, and all were in high expectation, save one who lay in a corner on his iron bed and straw pallet under a poor rug, with eyes already glazed at times, for the hand of death was heavy on him; and this was my poor comrade Pitblado, with no friend near him save the hospital orderlies, who by this time were pretty well used to suffering and dissolution, and could behold both with stoical indifference.

It was on a day that many yet remember—Monday, the 18th of June —the fortieth anniversary of Waterloo, that all Strood, Rochester, and Chatham were startled from their usual rural tranquillity by the appearance of the Queen and her retinue, as she swept through their narrow and tortuous streets, at her usual speed, to visit the wounded soldiers in Fort Pitt.

The cold-blooded days of the "Four Georges" have passed into the waste of eternity, and it is our happy fortune to have upon our throne a queen whose true woman's heart no glory of station, or fortuitous grandeur of position, can alter.

On his poor pallet, in the sick ward, Willie heard the cheers in the streets of Chatham far below; he heard the clash of arms and the rolling of the drum, as the guard presented arms at the gate, and in his death-

drowsy ear he seemed to hear again the din of battle far away, Beverley's voice, and the rush of the charging squadrons; but the sounds brought him back to the world for a time.

He was too feeble, too far gone, to join the melancholy parade before the hospital; but the orderlies opened the window of the ward, and propped him up with pillows and knapsacks, that, like one or two other wasted creatures, he might see the Queen pass along.

"I wish that God had spared me ance mair to see my puir auld father's face," said Willie, whose Scottish dialect came faster back as life ebbed in his gallant heart; "but His will be done. It canna be—it canna be! I maun e'en bear it, and he that tholes, overcomes."

From the windows on the ground floor he saw the glorious noonday sun, on which his eyes were soon to close for ever, for the staff-doctor had rather curtly told him so. He saw the fertile plains of lovely Kent stretching far away towards Rainham, and the windmills tossing their arms on the green upland slopes. He saw the tower of Rochester Cathedral half hidden in the sunny haze, and the great square stone block of the grand old Norman castle towering against the clear blue sky, and casting a sombre shadow on the winding Medway, and poor Willie thought the world that God had made looked peaceful and lovely.

Before the hospital he saw paraded some three hundred men. The front rank lay mostly on the gravel, for they were unable to stand, either by debility or amputation; the rear rank was propped against the wall, on crutches or staves. All wore the light blue hospital gown, trousers, and cap; but many an empty sleeve and useless trouser-leg were there.

Every man of them has been face to face and foot to foot with death, and yet withal their hearts are strongly stirred within them by their Queen's approach. Their hair is long, and in elf-locks; their faces are hollow and pale, and their eyes shine out weirdly, and like bits of glass, as those of the sick usually do.

"Attention!" cries the sleek and well-fed commandant (who, perhaps, had not been at Sebastopol), as he comes along in full uniform, with his cocked hat under his arm, by the side of the Queen, who leans

on the arm of Prince Albert; and as they pass slowly along that remarkable line, their eyes and faces fill with pity and commiseration.

Mechanically, at the word of command, all the men make a nervous start. Those who are legless prop themselves on their hands and arms; and some stand painfully erect on their crutches, and their wasted fingers are raised in salute, to where the helmet or the Highland bonnet would have been; but, alas! a hospital nightcap is only there now!

Men of all regiments are there—horse, foot, and artillery, guardsmen, hussars, and lancers; but all wear one sad uniform now.

That morning was long remembered in Fort Pitt; and it was one which, no doubt, our good Queen long remembered too.

With a last effort, Willie rallied, and propped himself at the window, just as a hospital orderly pinned on his blue woollen gown a card like those worn by all the others, stating the age, name, and corps of the wearer. It bore—

"William Pitblado—aged twenty-four—lancer—leg amputated—Battle of Balaclava."

The card, as it was pinned on, caught the eyes of the royal group, and the terrible expression that none can mistake—even those who luckily see it for the first time—was read in Willie's face.

"Do not speak to him, please, your Majesty," whispered the commandant; "his aspect must distress you—the man is dying."

"Dying!" exclaimed the Queen; "poor, poor fellow!"

"Pulse sinking—hope all over—will be dead before evening parade," muttered a sententious staff surgeon.

The Queen had in her hand a magnificent bouquet, presented to her by the ladies of those in the high places of Chatham garrison—heads of departments, and so forth. She detached a white rose, and gave it to the poor dying lad, whose faculties were making a rally for the last time.

He looked at the high-born donor without shrinking or quailing, and, with a sad, sad smile on his face, so thin and wan—for the eye of One who is greater than all the kings of the earth was on him now—the sufferer spoke, but in long and feeble utterances.

"My auld father aye said I need never—never look for—my reward in this world; but—but this day I hae gotten it."

And he pressed the rose to his thin blue lips.

"Are you easy, my poor fellow?" asked the commandant.

"Ye-yes, sir—thank you—very easy,"

"Is there anything you would wish?"

"I would wish to be laid—in the old kirk-yard at hame, where my—my mither lies under a saugh tree—but—but it canna be. God has been gude to me—I might hae found a grave for ever far awa' in the Crimea—and—and no within the sound o' a Christian bell."

His head fell back and turned on one side, as the eyes glazed and the jaw relaxed. The Queen—good little woman—drew back, with her handkerchief at her eyes, and the spirit of my faithful comrade—this poor victim of the war—passed away.

The Queen's white rose is buried with Poor Willie Pitblado. His grave is in the military cemetery, under the shadow of the great Spur Battery.

I know the place well, and a stone placed by Sir Nigel Calderwood marks it.

CHAPTER LIV.

Banished every thought of sadness
In our home of quiet gladness;
Absence, separation o'er,
Together, and to part no more.
United, lovingly we glide,
Ever going with the tide.

Storm nor tempest fear we now,

Love sits watching at the prow;
Happy, trusting, silently,
Onward to the shoreless sea,
Together let us drift or glide,
Ever going with the tide.
ST. JAMES'S MAGAZINE.

"And you love me, dear Newton—and—and no one else?"

Soft autumn was in all her beauty; the forest leaves of Fife were already tinged with yellow; the harvest fields were bare, and the brown partridges were whirring up in tempting coveys from the hard stubble and the hedgerows, while the deep, fragrant clover grew green and rich on the upland slopes.

It was a glorious evening in September, when the days and nights are of equal length. The sun was setting beyond the western Lomond, and casting his dewy shadow far across the woodlands of Calderwood Glen, when Cora and I lingered, hand in hand, in the old avenue, and she asked this rather pleasing—I had almost said, perplexing—question, while her soft and beautiful eyes were turned tenderly upwards to mine.

And dearly I kissed her, for we had been but three days married—so Cora was my *kismet*, my destiny, after all!

I was lost for a moment in thought—even lance-prods and rifle bullets had not cured me of my habit of day-dreaming and memory flashed back to that strange episode in the quarters of the hakim Abd-el-Rasig at Varna, when poor Jack Studhome, Jules Jolicoeur, and Captain Baudeuf were with me, and the words of the conjuring Egyptian quack doctor seemed to come to my ears again—"*Allah kerim*—it is *kismet*—your destiny."

Cora repeated her winning question.

"And you love me, dear Newton—and no one else?"

"Could I fail to love you, Cora—you, who are all affection and perfection, too?"

"Now, in her memoirs, Mrs. Siddons asserts that 'no woman can ever reach perfection until the age of nine and twenty or thirty,' and I require a few years to reach that mature time," she replied.

Another kiss, and perhaps another—I don't think we counted them.

"Ah! how happy I am now!" she exclaimed, as she clasped her fair fingers on my arm, with her cheek reclining on my shoulder.

"And I, too, Cora."

"Shall I sing you a verse of an old song?"

"If you please. Is it the 'Thistle and Rose'?"

"No."

"What then?"

"It's gude to be merry and wise,
It's gude to be honest and true;
It's gude to be off wi' the old love
Before ye are on wi' the new.

But it is too bad to tease you, Newton dear!"

"My dear little wag of a wife!" I exclaimed; for while Cora's sweet voice rippled over the verse, I could smile now, and tenderly too, at the advice it conveyed.

So much for "Time, the avenger!"

In the second chapter of this long history of myself and my adventures I have related that the Calderwood estates were entailed, and were thus destined to enrich a remote collateral branch, which had long since settled in England, "and lost all locality, and nationality too," as Sir Nigel had it, the baronetcy ending with himself, to whom long life!

Thanks to the legal acumen of Mr. Brassy Wheedleton, and of Messrs. Grab and Screwdriver, writers to the signet, Edinburgh, there were "no end" of flaws discovered in the original entail of 1685, registered when James VII. was king of the realm. They boast that they could have driven a coach-and-six through it; so it was speedily reduced, and the lands of Calderwood Glen, with the place, fortalice, and manor-house thereof, and those of Pitgavel, with the mains, woods, and farm

touns thereof, which were Cora's own portion, were all secured to us, our heirs—yes, that was the word which made Cora blush—our executors, and assigns, for ever.

The old title of "*Primus Baronettorum Scotiæ*," the pride of Sir Nigel's heart, neither I nor mine could inherit; but I have my star of Medjidie, a medal and two clasps for the Crimea, with the French Legion of Honour, and that decoration which I value more than all: the little black bronze Victoria Cross, inscribed "For valour," which I received for the rash attempt I made at Bulganak, with a gallant few, to bring off the mutilated body of poor Rakeleigh, as the reader will find duly recorded in page 336 of the "Army List" for the month in which it was given, if he or she choose to look; and those four prized baubles, won amid blood and danger, shall long be prized as heirlooms in Calderwood Glen.

With the poet, I may exclaim—

> Yea! I have found a nobler heart
> That I may love with nobler love:
> True as the trembling stars thou art,
> Pure as the trembling stars above.
> And shall I live a nobler life,
> Come peace or passion, joy or grief?
> Remembrance brings a sweet relief,
> And points me to this nobler life.

* * * * *

The grass was growing green on the graves of the Alma, and where Albyn's warpipe sent up its yell of triumph on the Kourgané Hill; greener, perhaps, on the graves of the light brigade in the Valley of Death, through which our six hundred chivalry swept like a thunderbolt; and the sweet spring flowers were blooming in the abandoned trenches of Sebastopol, when I could hear the angel voices of glad little ones waking the peaceful echoes in our old woody glen; and there a dark-eyed

Nigel, a golden-haired Newton, and a blooming little Cora, with beaming eyes and dark brown braids, gambolled round the gaitered legs of old Willie Pitblado, and the boot-tops of the sturdy old baronet, or were learning "a taste of the brogue," as they rode on the back of Lanty O'Regan, now our head groom.

And when winter comes to strip the old woods, and hurl their rustling foliage before the west wind, seaward, down the lovely Howe of Fife; and when the snows of Christmas whiten the scalps of Largo and the Lomond Hills, we never forgot, after Cora has spiced the wassail bowl, to fill our glasses, and drink in silence—

"To the memory of the brave fellows who died before Sebastopol!"

THE END.

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