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## **THE NEXT CRUSADE**



**ABERDEEN UNIVERSITY PRESS.**

~~THE~~  
NEXT  
CRUSADE

BY

ROBERT CROMIE

AUTHOR OF

"THE CRACK OF DOOM," "A PLUNGE INTO SPACE,"  
"FOR ENGLAND'S SAKE," ETC.

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## PREFACE.

AN author's preface is so rarely looked at by readers with well-trained novel-reading minds that I am obliged to ask for special attention to the following necessary information. When in "For England's Sake" I wrote the story of the coming struggle between Russia and England in Asia, I did not foresee that the tremendous conflict was to be so soon renewed in another Continent. The period of this story is, therefore, placed at a date closely following that of my former work. I make no apology for taking upon myself to write the history of the future. This method has already many students; and certainly some advantages over that of writing the history of the past. It can hardly be so full of errors.

ROBERT CROMIE.

BELFAST, *September*, 1896.



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# THE NEXT CRUSADE.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE LAST STRAW.

“ON this race I am betting!”

“On this race I want to bet!”

“I wonder why they shout so much,” Miss May Winton said with some surprise. “Their clamour is perfectly deafening.”

“And quite superfluous, I should think,” Miss Louise De Courcy added. “Every one seems to know that they are betting a great deal and want to bet more ——” Her voice was silenced by the roar of the crowd as the horses in the first race of the day swept past in the preliminary canter.

The two girls, seated on a drag at an English county meeting, watched the proceedings carelessly. As a spectacle, the race with its large entry would



have interested them, but for their anxiety concerning a later event on the card. They had both handsome faces—one rather fair, one rather dark—and their figures were perfect. That is, their costumes had been made by the best London tailor.

There were other persons on the drag, but as they were mostly men, and army officers to boot, there is nothing in particular to be said about them. A matronly lady of large dimensions watched over the fair girl, her daughter, with some solicitude, and made remarks from time to time which suggested an original conception of racing matters. The officers were very attentive to Miss Winton, which was wise on their part, because, in addition to her mother on the drag, Miss Winton had a father somewhere on the course. And as this gentleman was extremely rich his daughter would be an acquisition to a marching regiment—a fact which had not escaped the marching officers' attention.

• Miss De Courcy, the dark girl, had no relatives

anywhere save a younger brother in the navy, and her means were limited to what she earned as Miss Winton's "paid guest". Her society was therefore monopolised without any general complaint by a young sporting squire, or gentleman farmer, of great stature, with whose attentions, however, she appeared to be irritated. The girl was out of temper, and the man had not the sense of instinctive observation which would have enabled him to see it sooner. She had at heart nothing but the best of goodwill and good wishes for him, but she had been almost cruelly slighted, and, as is usual, passed on the disagreeable experience to her best friend. He had grown accustomed to this graceless office, for he had fulfilled it for many years. His own great patience had cost him as much in her respect as it had gained him in her esteem. He was a necessity, and therefore unappreciated or not properly appreciated. A day came when he was missed.

"I hear that Cameron is to ride The Mandarin,"

a fair-haired sub remarked. The boy's name was Smith, but his disposition was aristocratic.

"I wonder is Mr. Cameron good enough to ride such a difficult course?" It was Colonel Crawford of the 10th Hussars who said this.

"Certainly," Miss Winton replied to the Colonel. "He is the best man at the weight in the county." May felt some justifiable satisfaction in the *technique* of her remark, this being her first meeting. Mr. Winton did not wish more than one of the family to take up racing seriously, and believed that he himself competently filled its requirements.

"I am—er—glad to hear you say so," the sub replied in the drawl which betrays great mental superiority. "But I heard that The Mandarin (Mr. Winton's horse) dropped a couple of points in the bettin' when it was known who was to ride him and I was—er—afraid."

"You need not be the least alarmed," Miss Winton interrupted a little sharply. "Mr. Cameron ——" She stopped short and blushed

prettily. On which she became furiously angry with Mr. Smith and thereafter snubbed him consistently for the remainder of the day, devoting herself meanwhile to Colonel Crawford. This fell in with the Colonel's views on the fitness of things.

The sporting giant, having utterly failed, as he thought, to interest Miss De Courcy, left the drag and went, somewhat forlorn of face, to see his friend Cameron mounted. He found the owner of The Mandarin and the man who was to ride him discussing the race with earnestness. They were indeed vitally interested in it. The Mandarin had been "kept" for this race, and it would be hard if the event should prove that the race had not been kept for him. Further, it would be a heavy pull even on Mr. Winton's ample means and annihilation for Charles Cameron—a handsome, reckless lad who had come into his property too early for his own advantage, and so had made haste to part with it. This race would make or mar him.

"They're off at last!" Colonel Crawford exclaimed, handing his racing glass to Miss Winton. But May gave it back, for her hand trembled so that she could not steady it.

"Is he riding—I mean is The Mandarin going well?" the girl asked anxiously.

"Perfectly! Nothing could be better than the way he put him at that bank."

The splash of colour formed by the jockeys' jackets stood out against a soft, grey bank of cloud, as the horses topped a hill forming a near horizon. It thinned into a line. The line broke into clusters. The clusters separated into dots.

"Ha! There goes one. Who is down?" Colonel Crawford cried. A trembling hand was laid upon his arm, but he did not notice it in his excitement.

"Well ridden! Well done! The Mandarin sails over." There was a sigh of great relief very close to the Colonel's shoulder. But he did not hear it.

"Now they are coming to the wall! Ah!

That is ridiculous. It is sheer madness. Such a pace at stone. What on earth does it mean? "

It meant that The Mandarin had a temper. His rider knew it, and the rider of Coomassie, second favourite, knew it too, and acted accordingly. The Mandarin's rider therefore had no alternative. He must keep his lead till he was over the wall. He hardened his heart and went at it too fast. It was not his fault, nor the other man's. All's fair in sport.

"I knew he would make a mess of it!" Lieutenant Smith cried. "Two down—three!"

"The Mandarin's down!" yelled the crowd.

And then the Colonel shouted too. "He is nothing the worse. He's up again. He's on again. And—yes—he *is* catching them up." The ring became less boisterous, but The Mandarin's chance was now a poor one.

Mr. Winton was watching the race from the top of the highest stand. He looked carefully at the horses through his glass. Then he went to the ring and backed The Mandarin for a place, taking

short odds. He felt safe then financially. But he was still desperately anxious to win the race. Coomassie, the second favourite, was owned and ridden by a local Viscount who was inclined to snub the retired merchant. The retired merchant wanted to be even, and he was a man that generally found a means to his own end. He would beat the Viscount at this race game to-day, or at some other game to-morrow.

The Viscount's colours were pale blue. They contrasted well with the oriental splendour of Mr. Winton's rider.

The Mandarin quickly overhauled the stragglers. But the Viscount's pale blue jacket was still terribly far ahead. The race was eventually reduced to a match between the two. When the Viscount looked back and saw with surprise that his only follower was the horse he thought out of the race, and which he sincerely wished had remained out of it, he knew that he must not allow his lead to be frittered away. There was no accounting for the wonderful finishing powers of The Mandarin, and

there could be no doubt from the way in which he was ridden that the man on his back would make him finish. So pale blue smartened up. The Mandarin did the same.

They jumped into the last field with a dozen yards between them. And then the Viscount knew that his horse could stay home. He sat down and "rode". The white-faced lad on The Mandarin rode too. But the long, stern chase had told. The horse did not answer as he used. Yet he did struggle on, and even up, on the pale blue horseman.

A great roar broke over the stands and the hill behind them. The crowd seethed and swayed and trampled upon itself. In the ring the betting men still screamed. On one drag a girl was nearly fainting. And on the sward two men and two horses fought out their joust of strength and speed and skill—fought it out doggedly to the end although fortune had been uneven in her favour, and one horse was strong, clean-flanked, unpunished, while the other's sides were red. But



in the veins of that other there ran the blood of equine kings, and the man who was up was riding for his life.

"The Mandarin has him ! The Mandarin has him yet !" rang in a terrific chorus from the crowd.

Only a hundred yards more—fifty now ! They close in. One more effort, gallant horse ! He answers with a bursting heart. His temper tells at last. He reaches the leader's girths, his neck. Head to head the post is passed.

Twenty or thirty yards farther, The Mandarin crossed his legs stupidly and fell.

"Who won ?" Lieutenant Smith asked excitedly.

"Is he killed ?" Miss Winton gasped.

"He seems all right for a man who has had two such croppers in one race," Colonel Crawford assured her.

It was not a dead heat after all. The Mandarin was second, and Cameron was ruined.

## CHAPTER II.

## STOP—THIEF!

“THE Purple East ! The situation strained !”

These words printed on an enormous placard which had been pretty widely posted on the dead walls of Cheltnam were serviceable to Cameron on his arrival there, in so far as they roused him from the apathetic despair into which The Mandarin's defeat had plunged him. He left the course immediately after weighing out, and drove to the county town, there to consider his position. The placard was the first thing that arrested his attention on his arrival. Close to it on the same hoarding was a freshly posted notice about recruiting for the army. This also received his consideration.

Charlie Cameron, a reckless lad at best, had been nearly as much sinned against as sinning. Society had irresponsibly elevated him to a position

which ought to be reserved for those who have rendered the State some service. He had lost his head in the process, and now he must pay the penalty. He did so, like a man ; that is, he did not whine about it. Any active athletic young Englishman can dig, after a fashion. Cameron could dig with skill, but he did not care for spade-husbandry as a means of livelihood. To beg he was not only ashamed, but he had not the tact and patience necessary to make that process profitable. There was only one thing left—to enlist. He did enlist, in the hope that “ The Purple East ” would require his early presence, and benefit by his intervention.

As to the rumours of unpaid bets which began to circle about after Cameron’s disappearance from polite society, they were altogether false. He made arrangements for paying to the uttermost farthing, and commenced life again with nothing save experience—he had nothing else left. But the rumours spread as quickly over the microscopic community of Cheltnam as the rumours of

a new struggle for the East were spreading over a terrified continent. Of course the "Sick Man" was the predisposing as well as the exciting cause of the great international imbroglio which for three fearful months convulsed Europe and finally altered its map. With this great episode in the history of humanity, however, I have nothing here to do further than as it affects the characters of my story.

Shortly after enlisting, Cameron, on a day's leave, went to say good-bye to the Wintons. He was not very cordially received—although not in uniform. Mr. Winton was extremely brusque at first, but he softened a little when Cameron gravely announced that he had obtained an appointment.

"Salary?" Mr. Winton asked sharply.

"Small—but progressive."

"All the better, all the better. The less you have, the less you'll spend. And look here, Cameron, if fifty or a hundred would get you out of the country decently ——"

"I'll ask it when I want it," Cameron inter-

rupted stiffly. He disliked the wording of the offer.

"It would be more business-like if you were to take it when you can get it," Mr. Winton answered drily.

"No doubt, no doubt! But I do not regulate my life on business principles." This was delivered very loftily, and was quite true.

"I never said you did. If you had, you would not now be in your present position. If I had not, I would not now be in mine. It was hard work, sir, and attention to business that built up the great house of Eglinton and Winton."

"With a little sharp practice," Cameron again interrupted, this time very rudely, "after the great house had got properly started. Sir John De Courcy, for instance, used to say that it was you who taught him how to gamble."

"That will do. Good afternoon! I mean, good-bye! I wish you better fortune and more sense." This was final. Cameron withdrew.

It should be explained that Mr. Winton had

spent what may be called the industrial portion of his career in the tea trade, but finding that method in the pursuit of wealth too slow for a man of active mind and predatory instincts, he abandoned it early and went on 'Change. Possessing considerable natural ability and an easy conscience, he soon acquired a large fortune, or acquired the fortunes of a large number of other people, to be exact. Having wearied in turn of the stock market, he retired from it also, and betook himself to the comparatively respectable pursuits of the turf. Sir John De Courcy, his nearest neighbour at Cheltnam, had developed in his old age a tendency to speculate, and it had chanced that on an important occasion, Sir John was "bear" to Mr. Winton's "bull," or *vice versâ*, with the natural result that the residue of De Courcy's property—with the exception of a small allowance which had been settled on the boy in the navy—was transferred to Mr. Winton. This broke Sir John's heart, and he died soon after.

Such was the story of Mr. Winton's changes of

fortune as it was written in the infallible archives of local gossip. There was another story, a strictly private one, and there was a touch of sentiment in it, so it must be received with caution. It included Mr. Winton's eldest daughter, who married a foreigner, a Greek, or a "black," according to Mrs. Winton, who thus described all persons residing outside the United Kingdom. This daughter's death was tragic, and, according to the sentimental story, her fate greatly changed her father's life. Her marriage was arranged to assist him in a commercial transaction. The girl's own wishes had neither been consulted nor considered. It was not much wonder, then, that Mr. Winton felt her loss, or that he should require the excitement of 'Change to enable him to banish her memory. Some men under strong emotion throw themselves into dissipation, others travel, but for the man of much business when in misfortune—give him more business ! Make it shorter, sharper, more decisive. It is not that he has no feeling or less feeling. He simply follows the distraction to

which he is best suited ; the only distraction possible.

Mr. Winton's conscience was not over exacting, but it had its limitations, which proved its owner's wisdom in retiring early from 'Change. As there was nothing left of the De Courcy family or its appurtenances save an attractive if penniless girl, Mr. Winton besought her to reside at the " Bungalow " as his daughter's companion—they had been school friends—and gave out that she was an heiress in a small way and that he was her trustee. Those who knew the complete wreck which Sir John had made of his fortune were confident that this particular heiress must be in a very small way indeed, and their evidence, being unfavourable, was generally accepted. Miss De Courcy had submitted to Mr. Winton's arrangement with what grace she could command, and solely in the interests of the midshipman, whose prospects might be seriously compromised if it were discovered that his sister was earning an honest living.



Considering everything, Cameron's spiteful allusion might well have been spared. Mrs. Matthews, the housekeeper, saw him out with some show of sympathy, for he had always thrown his money about, and servants love a cheerful giver.

"I am sorry you are going, sir. And there's them as will be sorry too. And if you should happen to take a little walk by the lake shore—Thank you, sir. You was always generous."

May was sitting on a rustic seat and watching idly the little mimic breakers of the lake which, stirred by the evening breeze, tumbled on a strip of yellow sand. Her air of dejection was too convincing to be doubted. She was in real distress. She did not hear Cameron's step on the soft turf until he was quite near. Then when she saw him she made haste to banish the sadness from her face so that she might not trouble him. She knew that it is the woman's place to suffer—at least, that it is the department usually relegated to her.

“Oh, Charlie!” she cried, calling him by his Christian name for the first time, “I am so very glad to see you. I thought you had gone away without even saying good-bye. Oh, why did you do it?” this with a half-suppressed sob.

“Do what?”

“Bet so much upon the race.”

“Why not?”

“Because it was wrong, was it not?”

“It depends on how you look at it.”

“It depends on whether you are able to pay what you have lost.”

“That’s exactly how I take it. And that’s the reason I have paid with every farthing I have in the world. It is also the reason why I am leaving the country as soon as possible.”

“Charlie—I mean Mr. Cameron—I have a little money of my own, I—I—have saved it from my allowance. It is really my own. We have always been friends, although I have been angry with you sometimes because ——”

“Because I was a brutal ass. But I am not

such a besotted ruffian as to take your money—dear little woman, don't look so pained—I only mean that I should be sorry to destroy the last vestige of a claim to your respect. I should like to keep that—or what's left of it. And now I must go. You will walk back with me.”

“You are going away. You do not say where, nor for how long. You tell me nothing. Is this fair?”

She looked him squarely in the face. Her blue eyes were full of tears. Her fair hair was burnished by the last rays of the setting sun. A parting kiss was surely pardonable. The temptation was very strong, but he put it aside. This was a new departure. There was hope for him after all.

“I cannot tell you where I am going,” he said in a low voice, “nor how I am going, nor for how long I shall be gone. But this much I must say, that I shall always hold you—as I have always held you—to be a true-hearted girl whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy ——”

Poor Cameron found himself straying into Scriptural language under the influence of his strong emotion, and stopped suddenly. Then he said quietly :—

“ We must go now. My time is nearly up.”

They walked back hand in hand without exchanging a word. There was so much to say that nothing was said. When they reached the house two guests for dinner had dropped in. Colonel Crawford was standing on the steps alone. He did not return Cameron’s greeting, but he was very attentive to Miss Winton. In his courtesy to the girl there was something pointedly aggressive towards the man who accompanied her. He made no effort to conceal the hostile expression of his face.

“ Mr. Cameron,” May said hastily, fearing mischief, “ will you come this way? My mother wishes to see you particularly.” It was a lie, but a very white one.

“ Pardon me a moment, Miss Winton,” the

Colonel interrupted, "I wish to speak to Mr.—to this man on important business."

"I wish Mr. Cameron to come with me *now*, Colonel Crawford," Miss Winton said sharply. "Your business will not suffer from a few minutes' delay."

"Miss Winton, you do not understand, you have not heard. He knows himself."

"Please go in," Cameron whispered to May. "He has heard the common report. I will explain." When she was gone he turned to the Colonel and said shortly :—

"Your business?"

"To prevent you from entering that house."

"Is that all?"

"No. I intend to prevent you from ever speaking to Miss Winton again."

"Then you had better begin to prevent me at once. I am going in. Miss Winton is waiting for me." The last sentence was strongly emphasised.

"Stop!" the Colonel commanded. "Miss

Winton will not speak to you when she hears what I have to tell her."

"Come and see," Cameron snapped back. "I have detained her too long."

"Stop!—Thief!" Colonel Crawford said harshly.

Cameron stalked up to the Colonel. The Colonel stood his ground. Cameron's face was livid, but by a strong effort he commanded his temper and said calmly, "Colonel Crawford, it would be very easy for me to dash your brains out on that step ——"

"Bravado," the Colonel interrupted stiffly, "and of a cheap quality."

"Must I then prove you a coward, as well as a liar and a fool?"

The Colonel interrupted again, "Cameron, I have thought hardly of you, I admit, but"—after a slight pause—"I cannot believe you would speak to me in this way if you were as guilty as they say".

"As *you* say. Do you think I am going to let

you off? You lied when you called me thief. And you would not have dared—you would not have dared if you had not discovered that I had enlisted, and that you were talking to a private soldier.”

When the Colonel spoke again his voice had earnest feeling in it. “Cameron,” he said gently, “you have punished me severely. I don’t call to mind having ever felt absolutely mean before in my life. I cannot say that I thank you for the experience. But if I take back what I said, will you do the same? I may be able to help you materially.”

“Is that a condition?” It was a most ungracious speech. But the man who made it was desperate, and he was weary with offers of assistance, which his pride did not permit him to accept.

“You suggest that I wish to bribe you in order to cover my own retreat from a false position. That insult is unworthy of a gentleman,” the Colonel began quietly, “it is unfit for a stone-

broke gentleman.” Then his temper mastered him and he added, “It is not even fit for a private soldier”.

Cameron quailed under the justice of the sentence. “Good-bye, Colonel,” he said in a choking voice. “I’ll—I’ll ask your help if I can do so honourably.”

“You shall have it whether you ask it or not. Here, you are not going away like that. Shake hands!”



## CHAPTER III.

## IN AT THE DEATH.

WHEN Colonel Crawford sat down to dinner he was mentally preoccupied, and it was with some difficulty that he was able to concentrate his attention on the conversation at Mr. Winton's table. The daughter of the house was evidently in blank despair and only replied to questions pointedly addressed to her. Miss De Courcy appeared to grasp the situation and rise to it. She talked well, almost brilliantly, and surprised not only the household with whom she was familiar, but one of the guests, Colonel Crawford. The other guest, Jackson, was not surprised. He had heard Miss De Courcy talk in that way before. Her vein was that of a well-educated, thoughtful and observant gentlewoman, who possessed a catholic mind with merely a vestigial relic of the

aristocratic bias. The dinner was soon something better than the dismal failure which it promised to be at first. It ended a pronounced success.

"That girl is worth what she costs," Mr. Winton reflected somewhat unctuously. "In fact, she's cheap at the money. No nonsense about her except the 'De' before her name." He dearly loved a winning deal, but he decided on the spot to increase the allowance of the "paid guest," excusing himself to himself by the simple comment, "good business!" Mrs. Winton concentrated her attention on the material rather than the conversational elements of the feast.

Colonel Crawford could not but admire Miss De Courcy's good generalship. Besides he had been, in spite of the threads of grey which were beginning to show in his hair, more taken with Miss Winton on the race day than he wished. He was at the non-marrying age, when a man is half-way between enthusiastic youth and overdone discretion—when he does not change the

even tenor of his life for the sake a woman unless she is unusually attractive, and when he usually regrets the change if he makes it. The confirmed bachelorhood which he was wont to ascribe to the toughness of his heart, but which was in reality owing to the moderation of Her Majesty's pay, had received a shock. He welcomed this aristocratic "lady's companion" as a counter-irritant, and found she answered his purpose admirably—and eventually that the remedy was worse than the disease. Which served him right!

After dinner, Miss De Courcy played for the guests. Some of the latest operatic selections were got through with creditable execution, and then Beethoven's magnificent *Sonata pathétique* startled the listeners into more than the attention of courtesy. The melancholy wail *adagio-cantabile* succeeded the *allegro* and all were silent. For some moments the effect was maintained, and then the performer ceased playing as if in absence of mind. She was recalled by Jackson saying softly :—

"I like that sort of music".

Miss De Courcy burst into the *Rondo*, and under cover of the sound Jackson went on, "You have heard about poor Cameron?"

"Yes, we hear a good deal about Mr. Cameron in this house—a change would be agreeable," Miss De Courcy said carelessly and again ceased playing.

"But I mean, have you heard the last?"

"No, nothing since the race."

"He has enlisted. No one is to know, but I don't mind telling you." This was not strictly true. He minded very much sharing even so poor a thing as that paltry secret with Miss De Courcy. He liked it immensely.

"I did not think he had so much in him," Miss De Courcy said with some show of interest.

"Ah, you do not know him, Miss De Courcy. He is foolish, but he is very young, and his heart is in the right place, as they say. Now I want you to do me a favour. You have been very kind to me since I came on this visit to Cameron which has lasted so long, and finishes so unhappily. I

am squaring up things for him. Of course everything is to be sold. It will take it all. There is a meet to-morrow at Trotter's Gorse. You have not ridden to hounds since ——"

"Since our misfortune. If my father had allowed you to manage his money affairs as you did his estate latterly, our misfortune would still be in the future."

"And you used to enjoy hunting more than anything," Jackson continued without noticing the interruption. "Most of Cameron's horses are rather hard-mouthed for a lady, but there is one—I believe he bought it as a present for ——" Miss De Courcy nodded. "He is as safe as a house, and can get over the ground wonderfully (long equine *technique* here) . . . I want you to borrow him for to-morrow. It is the last meet of the season. Don't refuse me, please."

Miss De Courcy thought for a moment and then said somewhat wearily : "As it is likely to be my last meet too, I think I shall accept your offer ; and I thank you very much".

"Your last meet? Surely Mr. Winton ——"

"I am already too much indebted to Mr. Winton," she interrupted. "But I do not mind accepting this favour from you."

Jackson went home with that sentence in his brain, and when he awoke next morning he had not forgotten it, nor was it altogether set aside by a telegram from Cameron, saying that there was news from the East, and that before night the country would be ringing with the intelligence from John O'Groats to Land's End. Very well, Jackson had still the day before him, and the good that might be in it was sufficient for him. The evil would arrive soon enough.

The morning was one of those soft, grey, winter days which an experience of our saturated climate enables one to appreciate. Great woolly clouds were piled across the sky in heavy banks, through which here and there a stray sunbeam managed to pierce and burnish up the pale green of the pasture lands. The roads were dry and white. Hedges were sprayed with bursting buds. The earth was

arousing from its winter's sleep. A breath of spring was in the air.

Jackson sent over the horse for Miss De Courcy early, and he himself arrived at the "Bungalow" in excellent time. Colonel Crawford turned up later, and was disappointed to find Jackson in attendance on Miss De Courcy, and the charge of Miss Winton of the doleful face allotted to him.

The meet was large and the day successful. They found at the first covert, and Jackson was delighted to see that Miss De Courcy rode as well as when her father kept a full stable. She seemed to have thrown care to the winds, and meant to enjoy the day as much as he did himself. When a momentary check was met with and they had time to exchange a word or two, her manner was almost like that of her schoolgirl times when he used to give her pony a lead over the same country. And plain John Jackson, too, surprised both the lady and himself by the courage with which he spoke to her, and the absence of that diffidence which lately

had been so painful to the one and partly contemptible to the other.

"How I wish, Miss De Courcy, that you were always so ——"

"Happy," she put in.

"It wasn't that. But I am glad that you are happy. Yes, I am very glad."

"I know you are," she said frankly. "Now they are off again!"

They dashed over the smooth meadows, side by side ; galloping over the brooks, cramming through hedges, struggling over occasional patches of soft plough. It was a glorious day ! The pace was fast, and the hounds were racing on, with a steaming scent breast high. Only two ladies were up now, Miss De Courcy and a little woman who rode like a jockey and stopped at nothing. The rivalry between them was already evident. Jackson meant Miss De Courcy to win. He knew that country well and was a splendid pilot. Very soon there was only one lady up, and Jackson was well pleased with his pupil.



Five and twenty minutes have passed ! The riders are hot and the horses nearly pumped, and two fields away a red ball is struggling gamely on, but hard pressed and sinking. At last the hounds sight him, and with a burst of music they dash on and the gap narrows. He with the red coat hears the savage bay grow nearer, and tries to put on more pace, but his tongue hangs, his weary limbs are failing, and his terror-struck heart has quailed. Still he has some score of yards to the good, and that demesne wall, if he can climb it, may stop a few. He is desperate now, for it is fearful for any living thing to die. He measures well the wall and makes a gallant leap ; he gains the top with his fore-feet and pauses for a second balanced. If he were fresh, a worse grip would get him over, but he is hard run and weak, and that merciless roar twenty yards behind sickens and saps his heart. He drops back and the pack spring upon him and rend him limb from limb, and tear his flesh in shreds, and in a moment half a dozen of the largest and strongest hounds are

fighting and scrambling over a ragged and bloody mop. Presently each has plucked off a portion and the mop has disappeared.

"That is what spoils all," Miss De Courcy said rather sharply, as if the fact that no one was up to save the brush was Jackson's fault, or that the end would have been very different if conducted with the regular formalities.

"I never did care much for the last scene myself," Jackson answered humbly. "But we have had a splendid run and there's no good in crying over a dead fox, I suppose."

Miss De Courcy was warmly congratulated on her splendid riding by a foreign prince, as well as by all the members of the hunt who were in shortly after the death. She received their sympathetic remarks with so much unaffected indifference that the story of her self-appointed trustee began to gain credence, and many were sorry that they had too long ignored the rumour. The gallop had left a dash of colour in her face. Her eyes were bright—but she dismissed the

belated admirers very curtly, and rode immediately over to where Jackson had drawn out of the crowd.

“Home, please,” she said playfully.

“Yes, ma’am,” Jackson answered, catching her humour, and with less than usual of his elephantine style.

They were walking their horses quietly along a narrow lane by which they hoped to strike the main road, when Jackson, turning unbecomingly red, said suddenly: “I have something very serious to say to you, Miss De Courcy”.

“Please don’t. Don’t ask me to be serious to-day. To-morrow!”

“To-morrow may be too late,” Jackson answered quietly and said no more.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE BEARER OF EVIL TIDINGS.

ALTHOUGH rather tired after his long day's hunting and long ride home, Jackson decided to attend a dance which was given on the same evening by a near neighbour of Mr. Winton's—his late partner, Mr. James Eglinton. Mr. Eglinton had given up business immediately after Mr. Winton retired from the firm, fearing that business would otherwise give him up immediately. He had not a head for commerce, but he was hospitable, kindly and unostentatious; a man of few words, and these usually as far as possible from the point at issue. Jackson had accepted the invitation in the hope of meeting Miss De Courcy. He kept his engagement for the purpose of resuming the serious conversation which she had already shelved so promptly. He was no dancer, and it

was doing violence to his feelings to be present. His big manly figure, which, clad in a shooting jacket, caught the eye of the most casual observer, did not appear to so much advantage in evening dress—with his neck-tie slightly crooked.

But notwithstanding his shortcomings as a society man, Jackson overcame his objection to dancing, and blundered into Mrs. Eglinton's ballroom in a nervous, self-conscious way that stamped him "rustic" as visibly as if a placard with the word had been pinned to his coat tail. By great misfortune he met a Miss Van Tromp in the doorway. The girl was an American heiress, whom her father had brought over to trade for a title, and he had just succeeded in effecting a deal with the local Viscount—Lord Sladen. When formally asked for his consent the old Yankee had given it with a very bad grace, for he had looked higher, saying with creditable candour :—

"I would not say yes so easy, and I'm darned if I would say it at all, but I'm told dooks are

running extraordinary high this season, and even a markiss costs a mint o' money". He settled £50,000 on the engaged pair, and although this was nothing to a man of his means it was more than Lord Sladen had put upon himself.

There were drawbacks to the Viscount's bargain which went far to counterbalance its financial advantages. Mr. Van Tromp had not made his money in any of the occupations which tend to civilise if not refine. His father had chanced to squat at the junction of two large rivers out West, the fee simple of which property he had acquired by the very simple process of shooting the Indian in possession. Later, when the whites came along and built a town there, they, instead of shooting the son for his father's freehold, paid him an enormous sum to go away, thereby bearing valuable witness to the march of progress. With this money Van Tromp the younger decided to see the world, having first educated his daughter after a fashion which left a few of the family mannerisms

to crop up occasionally both in her speech and method of thought.

As Jackson was aware of all this he might have known better than to ask Miss Van Tromp for a dance when she was actually waiting to exhibit Lord Sladen, who had just arrived. Such very short views of life however were never visible to him, and so he made many mistakes which otherwise might have been easily avoided. The Yankee girl refused curtly and with an impertinent shrug. Jackson distinctly heard her mutter behind her fan, "Guess I don't dance with farmers," as he stood agape.

"Mr. Jackson, I have been looking for you. I have kept you the dance I promised."

It was Miss De Courcy who spoke. She was simply dressed, but she was the best looking girl in the room. A little circle of hunting men were gathered around her. They were all chatting about the run, congratulating and complimenting her. Jackson felt very grateful for this timely intervention, although he could not remember

having previously asked Miss De Courcy for a dance. He was mightily proud too when she put her hand upon his arm and moved away from her circle of admirers. When he asked for her card to write his name in the solitary vacancy, Miss De Courcy said carelessly :—

“It is not necessary. I shall write it in myself.” To do this she had to strike out another name. But it was a merciful act to relieve the man’s embarrassment. Besides, Miss De Courcy knew his real worth better than any one in the room or out of it, and wished very sincerely that he had been born rich, and not quite so awkward in his manner.

Jackson danced with Miss De Courcy in his accustomed way, trod on her dress, tore it fatally, and to fill up the cup of his transgressions, apologised as if the matter were of little moment. Then he led his partner to a seat in an alcove on a balcony shaded with evergreens and shrubs. They were now far from the dancers, and the strains of the band were blended by the distance into a pleasant



lullaby. They could still distinguish now and then the wail of a reed or the mutter of a big bassoon. Laughter from the dancing room came rippling up. Hard by in the supper room champagne corks were flying. Gay dresses flitted hither and thither. The kindly host was delighted, for his guests were all well pleased. That repaid him both for the trouble and cost of the entertainment. Jackson was about to resume the conversation which Miss De Courcy had cut short that morning, when the music, which was swelling and sweeping in phrases of splendid rhythm, stopped suddenly. The comparative silence which followed came at an awkward moment for him, and had a bad effect on his power of speech. He began nervously :—

“I have something important—important to me—which I wish to say to you, Miss De Courcy. You would not listen to me this morning.”

“I shall be glad to listen now if you will promise me something in return,” she said coldly.

“Promise you something—anything! You

know that very well. And I think you must have known it for some time—for some years, I mean.”

“Yes, you have been a good friend to me all my life, ever since I can remember, and I would not mind asking for a further mark of your friendship if such were necessary. But this is only a slight matter. It is not at all important.” She still spoke coldly. She was not a woman scorned, but she was a woman with a torn dress.

“The slightest matter to you is very important to me,” he said simply, still taking her seriously.

“This need not be so. It is only that you must never expect me to dance with you again.”

She had acted with great kindness and thoughtfulness in extracting him from his social slough. But she had not anticipated the destruction of her only decent dress. He was hurt by the triviality of the remark in spite of his unaffected contempt for dancing. He resumed his subject, however, as if he had not noticed the interruption :—

“What I wished to say was, you know very well that I—care for you. Would you in the perhaps

distant future entertain the idea of being my wife if I tried to make myself worthy of you—if I achieved anything, possible to a simple man, which would set me a little above the contempt of, say, that Yankee woman—and these others? ”

“ Mr. Jackson, I esteem you —— ”

“ Your father’s ploughmen esteemed me.”

“ Then I will answer you directly. I cannot afford to marry a poor man. What you ask is impossible.”

He waited silently for a minute, and then arose and said quietly, indeed gently, “ Let us go back ; I have detained you too long”.

When they returned to the dancing room a great change had fallen upon the people. They were gathered together in white-faced groups. The men were serious, some of the women were weeping. The bearer of the evil tidings stood in the doorway. He was saying as they entered :—

“ No, there is no mistake. I have it on the best authority. Stop-press editions will be out in town by this time.”

“What is this? What does it mean?” Jackson asked a yeomanry officer with whom he was acquainted. The man was talking very civilly to a woman (considering she was his wife) who was hanging on his arm.

“It means that Austria has at last declared war on Turkey. It is believed that Russia will join the ‘Sick Man’. If so, it is certain that England will join Austria and we shall have the late struggle in Asia repeated on a larger and altogether a grander scale in Europe.”

To explain this it is necessary to say that the Bulgarian atrocities, the horrors in Armenia, which in their day had convulsed civilised Europe, had just been out-devilled in the provinces of Albania and Macedonia, where things were done by human beings which may not be described here. At last Austria had drawn the sword, swearing she would never sheathe it until she had turned the Turk out of Europe, and thrown his bag and baggage after him.

England was too deeply committed to hold

aloof. Traditional policy would be cast to the winds. Humanity was something more than a bundle of scrip, and civilisation of more account than a few large holders of Turkish bonds.

Miss De Courcy's hand closed on Jackson's arm. "You are going," she said in a low voice ; " I see it in your face."

" This will be what is called a fight to a finish," he answered. " England needs every man. Few can be so easily spared as I. Besides, I want to class myself. I am without occupation since your father's death. And I want to deserve you. You are at present—impossible, quite ! I know that as well as you. Yet I cannot live without you. You have taught me what love is, and what life with love might be. You are the only woman I have ever known intimately. I want to know no other. I will have your love or none. I will not take less. I cannot bear my life as it is. I have a chance now of mending it or ending it. Would it raise me in your esteem if I shirked ? "

" No ; oh, no ! But I have not many friends.

It is so sudden." Miss De Courcy stopped abruptly and turned away her face. After a few moments she said slowly and with an effort to steady her voice :—

"You think me heartless, I am sure. But it is not so. I have reasons. I have my brother. I—I—cannot ask any one—I cannot ask you to take up all my burdens for me. Good-bye! God guard you!"

He put her cold fingers to his lips, and went away without another word.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE FIRST STEP.

NOTWITHSTANDING Austria's threat of war, the "Sick Man" dissembled so well, pretending, indeed, to supernormal health, that more than a year elapsed before hostilities were commenced. Then, when the curse of Europe had been too long condoned, the Austrian armies, which had been massed for many months upon the southern boundaries of the Empire, crossed the frontier. This was instantly followed by the withdrawal of the Russian Ambassador from Vienna, and the adhesion of Roumania, Servia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Albania, Greece, and Egypt to the Austrian standards. Russia took the field for Turkey in the hope of eventually taking Constantinople for herself. Then England prepared to prove in earnest that she was still a force to be reckoned with in Europe, on land or sea.

For more than a month preparations for embarking an army to assist Austria and the Allied States were pressed forward with desperate energy. The ordinary arrangements for enlisting had been long suspended. Men were accepted irrespective of measurements, and allotted to any arm of the service they selected. Promotion was very fast. The Militia took its place shoulder to shoulder with its line battalions ; the Volunteers once more proved that they were real soldiers ; and the largest army which ever shipped from the shores of England, and which was now collected along the coast of the English Channel, contained contingents from all three.

At sea the subventioned cruisers, *Majestic*, *Teutonic*, *Campania* and *Lucania*, had all been requisitioned, and were engaged in the special duty of carrying the nation's food supply. Part of the fleet patrolled the coasts, and a special squadron, consisting of fifteen battleships and about thirty cruisers, swept the Atlantic from the Cove of Cork to Sandy Hook, and kept that highway of



British trade open. But by far the most important naval movement, in modern times, was the fleet now making ready for the Mediterranean. This contained all the biggest ships and fastest cruisers, and was to be attended by a swarm of torpedo-boats and "destroyers" which, in themselves, constituted a formidable force. John Bull had taken off his coat, and he meant to pull this work through. Fighting is the business of the savage and the very last extremity of the civilised. But when it must be done, the savage might as well go peaceably away. The Bashi-Bazouks and the Cossacks of the Don are not to be despised as fighting men. It was hoped, however, that the Buffs, the Connaught Rangers, the Black Watch, and other famous regiments, would deal with them as they have done with better men.

When the excitement in the country reached its climax, Mr. Winton shut up the "Bungalow" and moved to town. He wished to be upon the spot to learn how his native country fared in the struggle in which its existence was practically at

stake. Besides, he would be at hand to buy or sell Consols, according to the state of the market's pulse. It is a good thing to be an honest man ; but it is more profitable to be a business man.

Colonel Crawford, whose regiment, the 10th Hussars, was under orders for the East, had many demands upon his time, but he made room in his list of engagements for frequent visits to the Wintons. The retired tea merchant was flattered by the Colonel's calls, and Mrs. Winton made remarks about the object of them which caused her daughter some annoyance. May was as unselfish and unenvious a girl as ever lived, and she was still sore-hearted about Charlie Cameron. Nevertheless it is not pleasant to the sweetest-tempered girl to have attentions erroneously ascribed to herself which she well knows are meant for another. Not that May Winton grudged Louise De Courcy the Colonel's calls. Not at all ! But she did not wish to be so constantly reminded that his visits were not meant for herself. In short she admitted the

fact without reserve, but saw no reason to brag about it. Miss De Courcy did not brag about it either.

One morning the Colonel heard that some troops were to start from London to join the squadron assembling at Plymouth. He hoped that the bustle at the docks, the picturesque grouping of the soldiers on the troopship, and the martial music would interest his two girl friends—both of whom seemed to contemplate the European situation rather sadly. Lady Sladen—late Miss Van Tromp—accompanied the party on her own invitation. The Colonel detested her, and Miss De Courcy and her ladyship were at open war, but her presence could not be avoided. Lady Sladen usually managed to have her own way owing to her strength of character, or want of consideration for the interests of others, which is the same thing in different words. She pushed herself on the Wintons because she was thereby able to study, in the person of Miss De Courcy, the manners of the class of society into which she

had married, and in which she daily felt more ill at ease. She already owed Miss De Courcy a considerable debt of gratitude in this matter, and disliked her proportionately.

When the Colonel and his friends arrived at the docks the whole of the troops to be embarked were on board with the exception of a small party of hussars, which had been detained by a railway accident. Their baggage and horses had been sent on in advance and were already shipped. The vessel was waiting to start the moment the men were across the gangway.

At last the scarlet plumes and yellow busby bags of the "Queen's Own" appeared threading their way through the dense crowd. The sharp notes of the ship's telegraph rang, sending orders fore and aft. The crew moved about hastily. Men stood by the heavy shore warps. The hussars marched smartly up. Being strangers to the town they had not the usual following of blubbering sympathisers. The men looked neither to the right nor left. Only a faint cheer greeted them.

The two girls looked on listlessly, and Lady Sladen indifferently, until about half the troop was on board. Then something in the carriage of a man filing across the gangway struck May Winton as familiar. The moment his face was turned towards the shore she recognised him. Colonel Crawford felt a shaking hand upon his arm.

“Could you—Colonel Crawford—could you get me on board for a moment?”

Miss De Courcy heard the breathless appeal. She turned to Lady Sladen and tried to engage her attention, but did not succeed. Her ladyship had heard the appeal too and hoped for interesting developments.

“I am afraid I could hardly manage it now, Miss Winton,” Colonel Crawford answered apologetically. “The vessel is ——”

“I wish it very much,” the girl begged.

“This way then,” the Colonel said cheerily, although not very sure that he would be able to fulfil his mission. He did, however, get past the man on the gangway by saying “on duty” in his

parade voice. When they got on deck, May said in a trembling voice :—

“I wish to speak to that man—that soldier—the third from the boat”.

“Gad ! it’s Cameron,” the Colonel exclaimed as he went over to the man May had pointed out.

May blundered rather pitifully at first and the hussar could not help her out. The truth is, he felt wretchedly awkward—half ashamed of his soldier’s jacket, half angry with himself for being ashamed. He stammered indistinctly, muttered something about “kindness and condescension,” and stopped blankly. He toyed nervously with his accoutrements, lifted his sword and let it trail again.

“I thought you might like to see me,” May began again hurriedly. “I mean some one—any one—you knew before you went away.”

“You were wrong there. I should have preferred to see no one—least of all you.”

“Me—least of all ? ”

“Miss Winton, it would be too ridiculous to explain. Our relative positions are a sufficient

explanation. But I am deeply grateful. I shall never forget your kindness."

"You will write?"

"To whom?"

"To me," this boldly.

"Ah! no—that would never do." He was trying hard to act like a gentleman, should he never be an officer.

"You will try to get on—to get promotion, I mean."

"I will do my best."

She offered her hand, but he did not appear to see it. He saluted and returned to his place.

"So your friend's interview with the soldier is over," Lady Sladen said, somewhat disappointed at the slightness of the scandal.

"So it seems," Miss De Courcy agreed.

"Now, you," Lady Sladen continued, "you would not be so indiscreet if you had a common soldier friend."

"Certainly not," Miss De Courcy answered quietly.

“I just wonder?”

“Then you need not trouble. I have a common soldier friend on board the same ship—that—that splendid man who is now speaking to the officer—but you see me here.”

Lady Sladen looked at the man indicated, and said partly to herself, “Splendid’s the word and no mistake. Who ever would have thought the farmer could have developed into that?” To Miss De Courcy she said :—

“I understand your position—the disadvantage of having ancestors! One must act up to the memory of the great Sir John.”

“Not at all,” Miss De Courcy answered drily. “The disadvantage of not having money. Girls with the financial prospects of Miss Winton are permitted much. Ladies in the financial position of yourself are permitted—more.”

There was an emphasis on the last word which stung the American. She lost her temper and said rudely :—

“What a pity your famous relatives all lived



and died so long ago. They would come in useful now ; same's these common soldiers."

"I am glad to say that I have one relative still alive," Miss De Courcy replied quietly. "He is a lad of fifteen, and he is now on *The Terrible*, the flagship of the Admiral of the Fleet."

Lady Sladen surrendered without conditions.

The troopship began to move through the water. White helmets waved and scarlet tunics glittered. Two hussars, who were standing apart on the foredeck, removed their busbies in response to the fluttering handkerchiefs held by two English girls, and to do her justice, one American.

"Splendid's the word," Lady Sladen said with a sudden flush on her rather sallow cheek. "My husband is busy now in his stables, or his dog-kennels, and your sweethearts—bah ! your soldiers then, if you are so squeamish—are gone to fight for their country."

To Miss De Courcy : "Say, you 'bloated aristocrat,' shake !"

There was a ring of sincerity in the American

woman's voice, albeit her manner was so blunt, that touched the English girl. Their hands met for the first time in friendship.

The vessel was now well out into the river. Her speed increased. Men cheered, women wept, and so the soldiers sailed away.

## CHAPTER VI.

## IT IS FOR ENGLAND.

As the troopship dropped down the river the two hussars kept their own company, and only mixed with the crowd on deck when they could not help it. They had been silent until the last white speck of handkerchief had disappeared in the distance, and then Cameron spoke.

“Poor girl, I am sorry for her. As for ourselves, this at least is better than nothing. I should have died of dreariness if we had had another three months’ ‘soldiering’ at Aldershot.”

“I am not sorry to be on the move either,” Jackson replied in an absent voice. “But we can’t complain of our promotion at all events ; sergeants in the first year ! And you ! Why, you got on capitally, with your superior manner, and comic

songs, and banjo playing. You certainly could not complain."

"Oh, dear, dear! Perhaps not! Nevertheless, if I had to choose again between the hibernation of the country gentleman and the society of the gay *sabreurs* of the 4th Hussars, I should not take long to make up my mind. But did you notice Miss De Courcy? She looked nearly as much cut up as my own little sweetheart."

"Her brother on *The Terrible!*" Jackson interrupted.

"Yes, of course, I forgot about him. I could not make out why she should be in the tragic line to-day, for she's not the sort of girl to lose her heart about any man. Still she is a likeable girl enough when you get to know her. But it takes some time. Don't you think so?"

"Yes—I think so," Jackson answered coldly. Then he added abruptly to change the subject: "About your country gentleman scheme; would you go back now—I mean, till this is over?"

"No, I would not go back now, and, please the

fates, most potent, grave, and reverend seignior, we two will see it through and see it over together." His mood was already changed. His high spirits were not easily depressed and never for long.

"Perhaps," Jackson said, leaning over the rail and watching the curl of the water which the sharp prow of the big ship cleft into two thin lines of foam.

"Perhaps—rubbish! I mean to see it over, and you shall dance at my wedding with that dear little soul who had the pluck to come on board and see me off. For I mean to come back with my commission, although I did not think it would be fair to tell her that. I could not be such a cad—considering the numerous accidents which may happen. And you will come back with your commission, too. Meantime I would not ask a better chum than yourself, John Jackson, and if one of us should chance to have bad luck, I suppose the other will do his best for him."

Cameron said this seriously. Jackson nodded,

but did not speak. Their eyes met. Each read in the glance of the other the loyalty for which he looked. It was given to one of them to prove his comradeship.

Off Dover a bugle sounded, and Cameron and Jackson went to the sergeants' mess, picking up on the way their troop sergeant-major, a full-faced, full-bodied, grizzled man named Huggins. Huggins was an original character, at once the life and the nuisance of the mess. A thorough soldier of the old school and an experienced fighter, his vicissitudes and anecdotes made him a fund of interest or a seasoned bore, according to his mood. At heart he disapproved of "gentlemen" in the ranks, but he had made an exception in favour of these two, who were both smart soldiers, and who could either of them have taught the regimental riding master how to ride. He was rather subdued at the meal, but later, when the three returned to the deck, he began to expand conversationally.

The sergeant-major enjoyed a good cigar. He

drew one complacently from Cameron's case (a relic). Having lit this, and cast a glance at the hazy line of coast which was fast blurring into a cloud upon the starboard horizon, he delivered himself categorically on the condition of the Service and other matters. He talked on and on without paying the least heed to the want of attention on the part of his friends, swearing consistently and smoking cigar after cigar, till Cameron's supply was exhausted. Darkness came on gradually, but Huggins did not tire. He was in his boring mood.

"Yes, soldiering was soldiering in those days, I tell you. 'S truth, the way Terry Sullivan was drummed out of the 51st was a caution! It was before my time. The rascal was flogged, and marched between the lines, the band playing the 'Rogue's March' according to the old regulation, to where the Colonel was sitting on his horse and making up his mind what to say to the black-guard. Now what should the rascal do the moment he was a free man—drummed out, you

know—but turn on his heel and compliment the Colonel on the fine appearance of the troops, saying without a wink that he had never inspected a finer body of men on parade! 'That is what I call choice. It is indeed. Hallo!'

A bright gleam of light burst out of the darkness like a meteor. It played over the surface of the sea to and fro, east and west, north and south. Then in its sweep it fell upon the troopship *Crocodile*, and illuminated her from stem to stern for five seconds, and then it went out. The darkness was intense when the blinding glare was shut off.

On the *Crocodile* there was a great stir among the passengers—if so the soldiers she carried might be called—but in the management of the ship no change was made in the stations of the crew; nor was there any alteration of the ship's course. An order was sent from the bridge. It was to the engine-room.

"Stand by!"

After a few minutes, two great eyes, one green,



one red, began to stare out of the night. Then a small display of fireworks was exchanged between the *Crocodile* and the first-class battleship *Royal Oak*, to which those eyes belonged. Very soon it was known on the transport that she was in charge of the warship for her safe convoy to Plymouth Sound. It was evident that nothing would be left to chance on this voyage. British traditions were already set at naught.

“Which goes to prove, my young gentlemen,” said Troop Sergeant-Major Huggins, forgetting in his excitement his armour-plated discipline—thus to address his juniors!—“that you’re going to see some soldiering after all, but it won’t be like Fuzzy-wuzzy. Not by a lot. This will be what I call civilised warfare. Now when I was in the Soudan—I was a lancer then—we caught red-handed one of those throat-cutters who used to steal into the tents. We wanted to polish him off on the spot, but the Colonel wouldn’t have it. He must have a court-martial in the morning, and I was put on guard over the rascal for the night. It was a

lonesome night for me, but I made it lively for fuzzy. Every time I passed him in my tramp I gave him a prod of my lance."

"There would not be much life left in him for the court-martial," Cameron suggested.

"Oh, Lord bless you, I was not touching him in any vital part. I was just what I call a kind of sort of torturin' him all night. Yes, sir, I was indeed." Huggins had an inveterate habit of emphasising his last clause in this way. Also, he constantly claimed copyright in the most universal phrases, thus: "What I call a very strong sun," "What I call a very large ship," and so on. A man's mannerisms when sufficiently persisted in become part of his personality. They are only affectations when assumed by imitators.

Huggins was interrupted by the clatter of men changing over from port to starboard to watch the battleship turn in her circle. When her head pointed directly down channel, another signal was flashed.

The *Crocodile* then went full speed ahead in the

wake of the battleship, and Huggins and his reminiscences were forgotten in new interests.

Many of the officers remained on the deck all night. They were too excited to sleep, and those who were anxious to remain up found little difficulty in obtaining the necessary permission. In the morning, as the red sun was sending a burst of blazing colour over the green hills which land-lock Plymouth harbour, the *Crocodile* and her convoy dropped anchor in the Sound.

In and off this magnificent bay was gathered the largest fleet England had assembled for a century, and the most important since the British ideas therefrom to smash the Armada. 130 troopships or transports were there, carrying 150,000 men of all arms, and 10,000 horses, with over 400 field and machine guns. Of first-, second- and third-class battleships there were 29 ; cruisers, 72 ; torpedo-boat destroyers and torpedo boats, 97. This was surely the gravest responsibility ever committed to an Admiral of the British fleet—not excepting even that which Nelson assumed when he flew

his pennant on the *Victory*—since the day when Drake played out his game of bowls albeit Captain Fleming's men had sighted the ships of Spain. To Lord Charles Bryansford, a fighter from his youth, this magnificent responsibility was entrusted.

After a long day of preparation in the last week of May the Admiral signalled to his mighty fleet to put to sea. The harbour lights were just beginning to twinkle as the ships passed out, steaming slowly, for no sort of formation could be attempted for such a fleet until the open sea was gained. The Hoe was covered with a vast crowd of people, who watched the vessels go without a word. Dead silence reigned. Every man in that great assembly felt that this was not the time for vulgar enthusiasm or music hall bravado. This business was outside the scope of melodramatic accompaniments. It was altogether too serious, too terrible. When the great fleet was passing the Eddystone, a breach of rules occurred on the rock. For while the great white light flashed on at its registered intervals, another

light flashed more rapidly, signalling this last message to the ships :—

“ It is for England ! ”

“ Ay ! it is for England,” said many a gallant man who never saw her shores again.

## CHAPTER VII.

## A NEW CRUSADE.

THE English fleet passed through the Bay without fouling a torpedo boat or springing a rivet, a circumstance so novel that no apology is made for its special mention. Troop Sergeant-Major Huggins very soon proved that he was practically "soldier and sailor too," although he had never been in the Marines—a branch of the service for which, indeed, he expressed complete contempt. His knowledge of affairs naval as well as military was really very useful to his two friends, and saved them many petty inconveniences which were not worth counting individually, but of which the sum total was considerable. They were both grateful after their own fashion. Thus, Cameron gave evidence of his appreciation by imposing unconscionably and quite unconsciously on Huggins,

and Jackson showed his by sundry little services and routine assistance which only a considerate and unselfish man like himself would think of. Huggins, old soldier though he was, could not resist the curious personal fascination which Cameron seemed to compel without effort. But Jackson was quite different. "Sort of man you would like to have for a neighbour in a tight place ; yes, sir, he was indeed."

There was no news of importance at the Rock. The fleet would proceed on its voyage to the East, and call at Malta for final orders. It called there, and its last orders were such as made the heart of every man who heard the news beat faster. There was no going ashore this voyage ; no drifting about the pleasant harbour of Valetta in the little lamp-lit boats ; no flirting with the dark signoras who lean with eastern grace on open balconies in the street of steps ; no visits to the temple of St. John with its dim aisles and sculptured warriors and gorgeously coloured roofs and pillars. The purpose of this enterprise was

intrinsically barbaric and brutal, but, alas ! necessary. Absolutely it was wrong. Relatively it was right. It was the least wrong possible, for it would displace a greater wrong. It was a New Crusade, the grandest that had ever sailed from the West unto the East.

The news which Lord Charles Bryansford received at Valetta was this. Germany, who dared not detach a single soldier on land or France would be at her throat, had ordered her Mediterranean vessels, which, prior to England's embarkation of troops, had been purely neutral, to join the Russian and Turkish fleets. With this serious intelligence came an order to the Admiral to proceed to his destination, the Gulf of Saloniki, and there disembark his troops, irrespective of the enemy's movements, offensive or defensive.

Very soon after this order was received the whole fleet was sailing eastward, fast cruisers (too few of them) far ahead ; battleships on either wing ; transports between, with torpedo boats and "destroyers" hovering round. The whole flotilla



went under easy steam, for the historic truism was once more demonstrated, that the speed of a fleet is regulated by that of the slowest ship.

The glittering lights made a brave show as the vessels rose easily over the long swells of the summer sea. In the great distance to which the fleet extended, the farthest lights were dwarfed and clustered together like groups of fireflies. The ocean only muttered now and then in its heavy sleep. All was calm and peaceful. The storm of battle would arise soon enough, and end in the peace of death.

One evening, as the *Crocodile* was steaming in her place, Troop Sergeant-Major Huggins showed a side-light in his character—a sort of shadowgram, to use the new word—which Jackson never forgot, trivial though it was, if Cameron hardly noticed it. The man was admittedly rough ; a hard liver and a hard fighter, as his record of service proved ; utterly unscrupulous in many ways, if gauged by the standard of the civilised ; and absolutely merciless where women were concerned, after the man-

ner of the savage. But he had a code of honour of his own, and to that he was steadfastly true.

Half a dozen soldiers—sergeants, to be precise—were whiling away the time playing cards in the shade of a deck house. The heat had been intense all day, and the men were sprawling about with their tunics off, and their shirts unbuttoned at throat and wrist. A volcanic island rising sheer from the sea stopped all the moving air which otherwise might have blown its cooling breath over the *Crocodile* and her people. Cameron was playing rashly, paying even less attention to the details of the game than was usual with him. Huggins and Jackson joined the group. The stake had accumulated to a high figure, considering the means of the men who were playing for it. Cameron was the heaviest loser. He was now plunging to get back what he had lost. The cards had been dealt, and the game was about to recommence when Joe Huggins called out :—

“I forbid the banns !”

“What are you jawing about ?” a sergeant of

the Norfolk regiment said roughly. He had won considerably. "You are not playing. Mind your own business."

"I will," said Huggins. "I will indeed. And my present business is to stop this game."

Some strong language was used which meant—translated freely—that Huggins had better justify his objection or retire. Huggins, not at all abashed at being thus challenged, had no difficulty in stating his case. He spoke directly to the Norfolk sergeant :—

"I object to the game on the ground that you are cheating". This caused a great commotion.

"Bah!" said Huggins raising his hand to quiet the clamour. "Do you think I don't know my own trick even though you mugs play it so clumsily?"

The men were not exactly cheating Cameron in the ordinary sense of the word. They were rather acting in concert to take advantage of the boy's inexperience, a sort of sharp practice which

in another walk of life would have marked them as first-class men of business.

A great shout of laughter greeted the explanation Huggins gave, and again the language was neither printable nor complimentary to him. His position indeed was far from logical. He strengthened it after his own fashion. The first step in this process was to kick the improvised card table over the side. Then with purple cheeks and eyes ablaze he strode up to the Norfolk sergeant who had exclaimed: "We've all 'eard of Joe Huggins!" To him Huggins roared:—

"You say you have heard about me. Have you heard that I ever rooked a pal?"

"No," the man admitted willingly enough.

"Have you ever heard that I would go through a hell for a friend?"

"Yes," said the Norfolk sergeant, "and damme but I believe it."

Peace was restored. Joe Huggins had stated his own creed fairly and concisely.

Later, when Jackson came to him and said, "It

was very good of you to interfere for Cameron," Huggins answered shortly :—

" Good ! Not at all, not at all ! I'm no better than I was made, and that's nothing to shout about—it is not indeed."

" I wish he was a little wiser," Jackson went on. " He is anxious to get on and in many ways does his best, but one can never be sure when some act of folly occasioned by his craving for excitement may spoil all."

" He will do very well," Huggins replied ; " very well, indeed. Shouldn't like to see him altogether a milksop—but there are two or three fellows in that lot he should drop. Too much canteen ! What I call soakers ! When they want to sober up they only change their liquor."

No opposition was encountered in the whole voyage—its complete absence was indeed suspicious—and the British fleet broke another record by steaming through the Archipelago without even the accidental ramming of a single ironclad. Lord Charles Bryansford reached the entrance of the

broad Gulf of Saloniki as night was falling, and decided to lie to until the morning. The Austrians had been in possession of the town and harbour for some weeks, but the responsibility was so great, no risks must be run. He sent on a couple of fast cruisers to reconnoitre and report if everything were favourable for the disembarkation of the army under his charge. The rest of the cruisers in his command, and some of the fastest gunboats, were despatched seawards, in all directions, to patrol and report the slightest evidence of the enemy.

The sun was glinting on the highest peaks of the distant Mount Olympus when the reconnoitring cruisers came racing down the Gulf and signalled the disastrous news that the port had been evacuated during the night, owing to a heavy concentration of Russian troops, and that it was thought the Austrian army had moved south-east. It was evident, therefore, that either of the Gulfs of *Kassandra* or *Monte Santo* would be favourable points for joining forces. The mountainous

country north of these ocean inlets would, in the hands of the enemy, be of course impassable ; but in the possession of our Allies it could be negotiated. On receipt of the intelligence Lord Bryansford put his fleet in motion, and the ships were just off the Gulf of Kassandra when again cruisers and "destroyers" came rushing back on all sides to signalling distance. This time their message was more serious still. Northward the signal was :—

"The enemy in force in the Gulf of Contessa, twenty large ships !"

To the east the signal ran :—

"The enemy's ships are coming round the islands of Lemno and Strati, thirteen large ships now in view !"

Southwards, fifteen ships were signalled.

These last must have lain hidden among the islands in the Archipelago when the British fleet was passing through. It was a moment of tremendous responsibility. The Admiral decided quickly, and in little more time than it takes to

tell it the *Foam*, *Hornet*, and *Zephyr*, "destroyers" of immense speed, were dashing up the Gulf of Kassandra and searching the shores. They were back under two hours, and reported all safe so far as they could see. Lord Bryansford thereupon sent his transports into the Gulf, which with its five-mile entrance and long land-locked anchorage is so shaped as to form an almost perfect position for defence under the circumstances narrated. To attempt to fight in the open would with absolute certainty result in the loss of half his troopships in the first twenty minutes of the action, however his ironclads might fare. So, whether the step was defensible or not on grounds of tactics, it was a case of necessity which knows no laws, not excepting those of naval warfare.

By ten in the morning the transports were safe in the Bay of Kassandra from the heaviest projectiles that could be fired into it from the open sea, and the British fleet of fighting ships lay in two lines off the mouth of the bay.

The outer line contained many of the most



powerful first-class battleships, such as the *Majestic*, *Illustrious*, *Revenge*, and *Royal Oak*, as well as the Admiral's flagship, *The Terrible*, which was at the time the newest and most powerful ironclad afloat. The great armoured cruiser of that name had previously gone down at sea. The second-class battleships in this line included the *Colossus*, *Temeraire*, and *Dreadnought*. Close behind this line lay the torpedo fleet, both boats and "destroyers".

In the second line there was only one first-class battleship, the *Magnificent*, flying the Rear-Admiral's flag, but the line was helped out by the armoured cruisers, *Galatea*, *Narcissus*, and *Orlando*.

When these preparations were but half an hour completed, the combined German, Russian and Turkish fleets (with odds in men and ships of over two to one, but with fewer heavy guns and less powerful armour) attacked, and the battle of *Kassandra* began.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## 'T WAS IN KASSANDRA'S BAY.

THE men on the troopships could see nothing of the battle which was in furious progress round the entrance to the bay, save a faint cloud formed by the almost smokeless modern powder. But they could hear the tremendous cannonade which had lasted from eleven o'clock in the morning. It was now four in the afternoon. During all this time every man had kept his place on deck, waiting in intense excitement for the result. Disembarkation was not attempted in the absence of exact information as to the position of the enemy on land. The men were very weary. After five hours' constant cannonade, there occurred an incident which varied the monotony of this long watch.

Something important must have happened at the front. The *Magnificent* and *Edinburgh* fired all

their stern guns together, and the *Swiftsure*, which had drifted inward from the line of battle and was fast sinking, fired a whole broadside *up* the bay. Instantly the *Hornet* and *Spitfire* darted through the second line and dashed inshore at full speed. The long nerve tension of the watchers was relieved. Inaction had become intolerable. They would learn something interesting soon. In truth they did learn something in which their interest could not well have been more profound. A very serious mistake had been made at the front.

The *Crocodile* was in the first line of transports and those on board had an uninterrupted view of the bay. In ten minutes the foam banks against the bows of the two "destroyers" could be seen without glasses. They changed their course, which had been direct towards the troopships, and dashed obliquely across the bay towards the islet of Kelpho, three miles off the north-eastern shore. So intently fixed on the racing ships were the eyes of the watchers that it was still some moments before any one thought of looking ahead of the rushing

vessels. Whatever the “destroyers” expected to find emerging from the three-mile channel between Kelpho and the mainland, they apparently arrived too late for it. Their course was immediately changed and again they raced straight for the troopships.

“Look ahead there!” Captain Ingram of the *Crocodile* shouted, pointing with his glass in front of the gunboats.

Six little dark dots were skimming over the waves three miles ahead of the *Hornet*, and she was first of the two.

“What do you make of them?” Colonel Massy of the Norfolk regiment shouted back. His whole battalion was on board. He had therefore some cause for anxiety.

“German torpedo boats!”

The sudden silence which followed this terrible announcement was painfully oppressive. All the babel of tongues ceased in an instant, and men looked silently in each other’s faces. There was not a single piece of artillery available on the

*Crocodile* or on many of the nearest troopships, and if the torpedo boats outraced the "destroyers" they might sink half a dozen vessels swarming with men before they themselves were sent after them to the bottom.

"Come up here a moment, Colonel Massy," Ingram called from the bridge. The Colonel ran up the ladder and a hurried consultation took place. It was soon over. Not a moment could be lost. "At least we may as well try the experiment. We shall probably go to the bottom either way," the Colonel said as he left the bridge.

"Marksmen to the starboard side!" Colonel Massy shouted as he ran down the ladder. "Company officers will select the men and form them in double rank. All other men to port!"

The captain of the *Crocodile* rushed to his telegraphs. As the soldiers were being sorted and moved to starboard, hawsers were made fast to the nearest vessels, and in a few minutes the troopship was swung broadside to the course the German boats must steer in order to attack.

The troops had been standing to their arms all day, so the men selected had their rifles ready. Three companies of the 5th (Volunteer) Battalion of the Royal Scots were on the *Crocodile*, and nearly all of these men were crack shots. They were thrown into the first rank. Behind them all the best shots of the Norfolk regiment were formed up. Major Raymond, who was in charge of the Lothians, assumed command of the whole party for special reasons. He was the best judge of distance and the best snap shot in the British army. These dispositions had just been made when a great cheer announced first blood for the *Hornet*. She had been firing heavily on the sternmost torpedo boat, and at last got in a lucky shot. The boat went down in blue water.

Then the *Spitfire* stoked up, and got within striking distance of another. The German boats had wisely spread out so that the "destroyers" could not bear down on them all together. The *Spitfire* smashed the second victim's steering gear with a

six-pound shot, and left her without another touch—let her wait!

But the zigzag steering which the German tactics necessitated greatly nullified the speed of the “destroyers,” and when these had disabled or sunk all the boats but one, that one dashed at the fleet of troopships with a clear lead of a mile. She could not be overhauled in the distance that now remained. The captains of the gunboats gave chase, but they knew very well that the race was over. The lead was too long.

The German boat steered straight for the largest transport, an enormous vessel of the Orient line, with the Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of Conemara, and other distinguished officers on board. She came on at a fearful pace. Iron shields had been erected to screen her helmsman from rifle fire. Her crew were safe below. The tube was ready loaded, and surely never had a torpedo an easier mark. It would require some precision to miss. The boat was not approaching the troopships directly. She had been driven rather north

of the line by the pursuit, and it was only when she had a clear lead that she was able to bear down on the centre of the English transports. Her course then would bring her within about 400 yards of the broadside the *Crocodile* had prepared.

"Front rank!" Major Raymond shouted, as he watched the rushing boat through his glass. "At four hundred yards, Ready! Aim at the white smudge on the boat's side, amidships. You will see it when she is closer. Be very careful in your aim, and fire instantly on the order. She is nearly abreast now. Be very steady."

"Present!—Fire!"

The volley rang out like a single shot. Nearly one half of the five hundred bullets—practically chilled shot fired from the extraordinarily powerful new rifles—hit inside the circumference of a common clock-face on the torpedo boat's side, and with almost the impact of a solid ball they broke through the eighth-inch plate. It smashed like a piece of matchwood. The fountains of foam sank under the boat's bows until they became a slight



wash. The wash died down into ripples. The ripples ceased. The boat slowed gently down and stopped. A cloud of steam poured out of the hole in her side where the smudge of white paint had been.

"What I call a close thing ; very close indeed, sir," was heard in a stentorian voice in the bows of the *Crocodile*.

"Yes," said Cameron in a dry voice, "too close to be pleasant." He was a lad of mettle, as will be found later, but the strain all day had been intense, and the volley from the *Crocodile* was the first he had ever seen fired in earnest.

This little sea fight, indeed, might have had tragic results, but a miss is as good as a mile. To the *Hornet* and *Spitfire* every vessel dipped her flag, and three cheers were given for them. A rousing cheer was also given for the *Crocodile*. The "destroyers" acknowledged the salute, and, turning quickly, dashed down the bay, stopping only to sink the three disabled torpedo boats

which were still floating. There was no time to take off the crews. In half an hour they had rejoined the fighting fleet, and then the whole attention of the people on the troopships was again concentrated upon the cloud on the horizon which was still no bigger than a man's hand. But underneath that cloud the action was raging furiously. The slight pall scarce hid the scene it covered. Where it curled up in sun-gilt eddies, big ships were pounding, ramming, and torpedoing each other with appalling sacrifice on either side, and with the result that the enemy had lost more heavily than our fleet, which, however, he could afford to do and have a good balance over ; and that partly from stress of battle and partly owing to the knowledge that six German torpedo boats had slipped through the lines, our ships had been driven back or had retired into the mouth of the bay. This was serious.

When the German torpedo boat which had so nearly wrought disaster was towed in amongst the troopships and her crew made prisoners, Colonel

Massy hailed Captain Ingram, who had never left his bridge :—

“ Well, Ingram, that brush is over—well over !”

“ It is, sir, well over, but ——”

“ Don’t say you see another batch of German torpedo boats.”

“ No, sir, I won’t say that ; but I see something else !”

“ You see ? ”

“ I see artillery arriving on the southern shore of the bay.”

“ What ? How many ? What size ?”

“ The whole shore is covered with men.”

“ But the guns, man ? ”

“ About twelve ; very long range apparently.”

The troopships instantly moved towards the north shore, there to find heavy guns being mounted also, and then the great helpless mass of vessels huddled together in mid-gulf—a mark that no gunner could miss if his projectile carried the distance. And this was an experiment which the enemy was evidently about to try. The masking

of the enemy's fleets and the concentrated attack on the British was not then a haphazard tactic but a well-planned movement. The bay, which appeared to be a sanctuary, was in reality a death-trap. Thus the enemy had won in the battle of wits. It still remained to be proved which side would win in the other order of battle. It is in the latter that the Britisher fights best.

The disastrous news was taken by one of the fastest vessels available to the Admiral of the fleet, and on hearing the message he came to his great decision. Both fleets had lost enormously. But they had not both gone simultaneously to the bottom on the first interchange of shots as was prophesied by the best authorities until the war between Japan and China demonstrated that even an ironclad will stand a good deal of hammering.

In the proof of this, the *Revenge*, which had early got damaged in her steering gear, and drifted practically into the enemy's lines, after blowing up three old Turkish tubs, engaged the Russian ships *Poltava* and *Admiral Ushakov*. The three

were soon a mass of scrap iron, but they still floated and continued firing into each other all day when a gun could be got into its place and discharged by the few men left alive. Several other Homeric combats had taken place, torpedo boats had been sunk on both sides by the dozen, but many large ships had been stung to the death by these wasps of the sea before they received their own death-blow. These details, however, have their own historian in another place.

It was seven in the evening, and the sun which had all day glared down on this dreadful scene was sinking behind Cape Paliuri when Lord Bryansford's pennant fluttered down on *The Terrible*, and over all the fleet that was still left above water a great cry arose :—

“ The Admiral has struck ! ”

It was from the raging fighters that the yell came first. Mutiny was abroad, and grimy gunners roared that they would fire on the ex-flagship. Even hard-headed captains who had borne them-

selves coolly through all the long agony of the day without a single mistake of calculation, who had never thrown away a chance, who had never allowed the hysteria of battle to move them a yard out of their assigned position, spoke passionately to their own officers. And down in the blood-gutted cockpits the weary surgeons paused in their merciful butchery, and many a poor, mutilated fragment of humanity upon their tables turned in his chloroformed sleep, and with his last breath cursed the Admiral of the Red and the mother who bore him.

Then the pennant of command which had been run down on *The Terrible* was run up on the *Magnificent* far back in the second line, and, simultaneously, up went the string of flags with the grand old signal which, more than a century ago, fired the hearts of unpaid, weevil-fed, dog-kennelled men, and turned them into heroes :—

“England expects that every man will do his duty !”

A tremendous salvo of cheers roared out and

ceased suddenly, for the *Magnificent* was now signalling :—

“ The whole fleet will advance ”.

Another raging yell, and then another signal :—

“ *The Terrible* will lead ”.

## CHAPTER IX.

*THE TERRIBLE LEADS.*

WHILE the partly disabled ships were getting up what steam they could, *The Terrible*, still practically uninjured owing to the almost impenetrable strength of the new armour in which she was clad, raced out from the line and steered for the enemy's centre. The hostile fleets by this time were lying very close together. Many of the heavy guns on both sides had long ago put themselves or their opponents out of action. Some were disabled by hostile fire, but most were cracked or burst by their own. The Russian flagship, the *Oslablia*, had massed all the biggest ships of the allied fleet around her early in the action.

*The Terrible* went straight for the *Oslablia*. A decisive blow must be delivered and that instantly. The whole morale of the British fleet must be



quicken for a tremendous effort, and the morale of the enemy must be weakened or destroyed by a single stroke. Lord Bryansford's action, therefore, was not that of a feather-headed bravado who would rather be infamous than not notorious. It was a coldly calculated sacrifice, the reasons for which, and the probable results of which, had been mathematically summed up, and when decided upon the matter was put through with energy.

When *The Terrible*, 18,000 tons of steel, moved out to lead the fleet of England into close action, guns shotted, men at quarters, for a minute or two dead silence prevailed on deck, as it had been proudly maintained while the whole fleet were yelling at the flagship. But when the ship passed clear of the line, some reckless spirit struck up the first lines of "Rule Britannia," and then the chorus was roared by every man from the petty officers to the stokers below, tearing at their bunkers like demons, unchecked by the engineers, who never troubled to glance at their boiler gauges. Thus the vikings sailed out manfully on their last cruise

for England, as they have done any time these thousand years.

*The Terrible* crackled over a flotilla of disabled small craft, which she smashed like eggshells as they drifted inward on the tide. Then with a hardly perceptible shock she sailed through an unarmed cruiser which was floating helpless in her path, and now at full speed she bounded on the German ship *Kaiser Wilhelm*. The blow was delivered obliquely, but the whole of the enemy's port side was crumpled up and she went down like lead. Steaming full astern to spit the fragments of the *Kaiser Wilhelm* from her ragged fangs, the late flagship of the British fleet got under weigh ahead again, and by the time she had full speed on the British ships were all getting through the water and closing up. They were in time to see *The Terrible* ram the new Turkish *Lutfi Djelil* and sink her ; vomit two broadsides, port and starboard, into the Russian *Poltava* and *Sevastopol*, and then, wounded to the death herself, her massive frame shaken to the keel, her bows in

ribbons, *The Terrible* rose upon an incoming swell and leaped upon the huge *Oslablia*, the flagship of the allied fleet.

For some minutes the leviathans, locked literally in a grip of steel, rocked and swayed and ground their great ribs together, and then, with colours flying, the two went down, and Lord Bryansford and every man on board his ship found a sailor's grave a hundred fathoms deep in the waters of *Kassandra's Bay*.

A great gap was now in the line of the allied fleet, and the British ships were fast bearing down. A few more thunderous volleys from the twelve-inch, six-inch, and quick-firing guns ; more deafening explosions as torpedoed ships blew up ; savage cheers as boarding parties dashed with cutlass and pistol on the enemy's shot-shattered decks ; then flags which were never struck were torn from their halliards and tossed over broken sides, and, along with them, the best and bravest of the crews who had so long kept the colours flying on sinking ships. All order of battle was

lost. Every British ship fought the nearest ship of the enemy or the nearest half-dozen, as her fortune chanced. Chaos was supreme—ferocious chaos! The enemy still held on. Not a captain gave way a yard, although ship after ship was captured by those terrible boarding rushes which had long been thought to belong to history so far as ironclads were concerned, and which did belong to it so far as even partially disabled ironclads were concerned, but which in a battle like that of *Kassandra* were practicable, terrible, irresistible.

At last the *Magnificent*, with the remnant of the second fighting line, steamed into the mass of struggling battleships, and the enemy's heart was broken. Every vessel that could get up steam went full astern until the open was gained, where the mass broke into units, each of which sought its own safety after its own fashion. Many were overtaken and sunk or captured. Others, badly injured, went down at sea. Very few reached their own ports, and these were ever afterwards only serviceable as object lessons on the impact

of modern projectiles. The battle of Kassandra was over.

As the last rays of the setting sun tipped the rugged mountains of Sithonia, which rise forest-clad on the bay's north-eastern shore, the surface of the water was thrown into a deep gloom—very fitting for the business now on hand. All night long the dreadful work went on silently; no funeral service; no chanted prayers; no solemn words as the bodies were committed to the deep; nothing but the long list of the dead ever lengthening, and the constant splash, splash as the ships were cleared of the human offal which encumbered them. In some the work was quickly done, and the ship, once more in a sort of fighting trim, sailed out to harry any stray vessels of the enemy which might still be lurking about, unable to put to sea, or unwilling to risk the venture. In others it sped but slowly. These were short-handed for the duty, and upon them were hardly men enough alive to throw their late comrades overboard.

The tale of dead ever lengthened as the hours of that still summer night went by. For as fast as the bunks were emptied new contingents from the amputating tables filled them up. Some of the weary fighters were allowed to snatch a short sleep. But the engineers never rested, patching up deadly hurts to hull and engines; and the surgeons never rested, carving up the wounded for their own sakes; and the burying parties never rested, turning out the dead. No man knew what the next day might bring forth.

In the morning the Gulf of Kassandra was a sad sight. The English troopships which had slipped down the bay before the shore artillery could be brought to bear upon them, threaded their way slowly through the mass of wreckage and assembled off Cape Paliuri. From this point the new British Admiral (promoted by the issue of the fight) with his great convoy, accompanied by only a make-believe protecting squadron, steamed out, and again course was laid for the Gulf of Saloniki. Fortunately, it did not now matter what the

strength of the protecting fleet might be, for there was nothing from which to be protected.

The Russian and Turkish forces, before which the Austrians retired from Saloniki, evacuated the place on receipt of the news of the naval battle and its result. Admiral Matcham disembarked there an army of 150,000 without the loss of a single man—excepting, of course, the six or seven thousand sailors lying at the bottom of the Gulf of Kassandra.

But the lives of a few thousand sailors do not signify in glorious war !

## CHAPTER X.

## THE BEST OF THREE.

THE position now was this. Turkey had overrun Eastern Roumelia, and occupied the Balkans as soon as war was declared by Austria. Profiting by the severe lesson of 1877-8, the passes were properly fortified and occupied in sufficient force. She was now impregnable on the north. Russia, in addition to her large army in the field, was hurrying troops across the Black Sea, and pouring them into the country in great masses at all the ports, from Varna to Constantinople. The Austrians had lost an immense number of men in the severe engagements which had been fought around Saloniki, but with the magnificent reinforcement now received, a forward movement was at once decided upon, and the Russian and Turkish armies were driven back on the Betchik mountains, whence



their line of communication was strongly guarded to Philippopolis their base. Here an enormous entrenched camp was formed, and as fast as fresh troops reached it from Varna or Constantinople on the east, others were pushed westward to garrison the passes in the Betchik range.

The men with which this story is principally concerned had their share of hard campaigning, and two of them, Cameron and Jackson, early distinguished themselves. It was hard upon the third that his two companions should win their V.C.'s in almost their first fight, whilst he who had been in a dozen desperate battles owned nothing better than medals with numerous clasps. Besides, the two lucky men owed their distinction solely to their splendid horsemanship. Of course their courage counted also. But without the horsemanship the courage would only have brought them into the danger—and left them there.

The incident arose from one of those stupid blunders to which English generals are so liable, and which serve no purpose save that of giving

English soldiers an opportunity of showing how such mistakes may be remedied. The 4th Hussars and the Inniskilling Dragoons had been ordered to charge a division of infantry which was retiring in some disorder, and did so. By an oversight, however, it was not noticed that the ground over which the cavalry had to pass was within easy range of four batteries of horse artillery which had galloped into position while the English cavalry leader was making up his mind as to whether he should order the charge. As soon as he had decided the point, the charge was splendidly delivered and effective. And the "Queen's Own" came back with about as many officers alive as would have sufficed for a troop.

It was on the return ride—which need not be described more harshly than as a retreat at full speed and in disorder—that the great opportunity came to our friends. In spite of the excitement of the desperate ride, Jackson observed a battery of machine guns which had been abandoned early in the day by the Austrians. These were protected

by a slight earthwork, and pointed directly at the position of the Russian artillery. There might be a gun left loaded. Even a harmless discharge might create a diversion, and the Inniskillings, who had still to gallop through the zone of fire, might consequently get past without the annihilation which had fallen upon the Hussars.

The possibilities were remote, but the experiment was worth trying, notwithstanding its dangers, which included the leaping of the wide chasm of a mountain cataract, and the landing of one's horse on almost bare rock on the other side. Jackson drew out of the *melée*, and rode at full speed for the bank of the torrent. He was shaking up his horse to rush him at the chasm, when a voice behind cried :—

“Let me give you a lead, Jackson. You are a heavy weight for a place like that.”

Cameron shot past, and Jackson's horse, encouraged by the lead, managed to land well over. They were the only men in the regiment who could have sent ordinary troop horses safely over

such a leap. The hard riding to hounds of the one, and the steeplechase experience of the other, now proved practically useful. It is an ill wind that blows no good.

Two of the machine guns were fortunately loaded. Very soon they were rattling away. Not a bullet went within a hundred yards of the Russians, but they mistook the fire for an ambushade, and limbering up, galloped away. The Inniskillings were thus saved much additional loss, which was cheaply purchased by two little bits of metal with "for valour" stamped upon them. There was indeed some talk about a court-martial for quitting the ranks without permission, but the Commander-in-Chief anticipated it, very agreeably to the men it was proposed to try.

The "Queen's Own" were now practically *hors de combat* until reofficered. The regiment returned to Saloniki, where Huggins was able to arrange for his old billet in the house of a Jew, named Lazarus. This man had already pretended to the poverty of his prototype without imposing on his

uninvited and most unwelcome guest. As usual, Huggins managed the affairs of his friends as well as his own. Jackson and Cameron therefore shared his quarters. They were waited upon by a young girl whom the Jew called Janita, and said was his niece. The relationship was doubtful, for the girl, if not a pure Greek, had nothing of the Jew in her face. Her tall slim figure, thin straight nose, and the perfect oval of her face belonged to the classic race. But she was handsome beyond the average of her nation, whose feminine charms are not extreme. An Anglo-Greek would be, perhaps, her best description.

Janita waited with quiet dignity upon the men who were billeted on her uncle. She resented at first the imposition of strangers in the house, but soon accepted the situation with composure, and finally—owing to the influence of Cameron—discovered that the happiness of her life had commenced with the billeting of the English troops. Huggins was very demonstrative in his attentions, and she disliked him in proportion.

Jackson was very kind but rather indifferent. He, therefore, did not matter one way or the other. But Cameron ! Ah, milord Cameron was a wonderful person in the opinion of the poor girl, who had never seen anything of life outside a squalid street in Saloniki.

Cameron taught Janita a few more words of English than she already knew. Her uncle's business, that of a money-lender, being cosmopolitan, customers of all nationalities visited the primitive bank. Janita had picked up from them a smattering of several languages, and could express herself in two or three, but in a quaint medley, the phrasing of which it would be impossible to reproduce. Cameron did not like the pronunciation of most of her English words, and barred others altogether, although he used them himself. He also stroked her hair very gently when the others were away, and told her she was very pretty, and made himself agreeable generally. The girl was in some ways a puzzle. Her graceful little mannerisms and gestures seemed so

familiar to Cameron he thought he must have met her before. But if so, where? This was his first visit to the East, and Janita could not remember having lived anywhere but in Saloniki. The matter, however, was not important, and Cameron was content to leave the puzzle unsolved.

Meanwhile the regiment was being reorganised and reofficered, a work which proceeded slowly, for although the war was only in its first stage more regiments were in want of men than men in want of regiments. The rapid rate of promotion in the British army, owing to hasty mobilisation, had been still further and immensely accelerated by the casualties in the field. It seemed as if the time was at hand when a man might be a full private and in command of his regiment within the same twelve months' service. The sergeant-major of the 4th Hussars died of his wound received in the charge which nearly exterminated the regiment. There were only three men available for this important post. Huggins, who was too old a soldier for it—soldiering had changed

since his day, he was behind the time ; Cameron, who was, so to speak, a little in front of it ; and Jackson, who was, to continue the comparison, at the moment. His retiring manner had been displaced by the air of a determined soldier. He was the most popular non-commissioned officer in the regiment. Even his drunken troopers, with whom he was sometimes obliged to be severe, liked him while they grumbled at him. Cameron threw his money about in the old way, and was much admired. Jackson was respected.

"Who do you think is to be our new colonel ?" Cameron cried, bursting into the room where his stable companions, as he called them, were smoking and talking regimental shop and about other matters on which they were not so well agreed.

"Drayton of the 7th," Huggins answered with as much authority as if he had the appointment in his own hands.

"No, Crawford of the 10th exchanges. Yes, sir, he does indeed," Cameron added with a laugh, for Huggins looked incredulous.



"I am very glad to hear it," Jackson put in. "Colonel Crawford is a gentleman. Oh, of course they are all gentlemen, but Crawford is different."

"He's what I call a first-class soldier," Huggins said with the usual confident note in his voice—implying that when he had spoken the question was disposed of.

"This means that you will be sergeant-major, Jackson. And I am glad of it," Cameron said heartily. "Huggins will sulk for a week—and make it up."

"Perhaps you are assuming too much," Jackson began, but Cameron interrupted him quickly:—

"Rot! I know what Crawford thinks about you. I have a letter—I mean I heard it from a friend at home. I tell you, you are as good as promoted."

It was now Jackson's turn to interrupt, and he not only cut short the speaker, but the subject under discussion.

"In that case, I want to say to you now, Cameron, when we three are all of the same

rank, so that you must take it from me as your friend, and not accuse me of the miserable vulgarity of taking advantage of any microscopic difference of position."

"Which I wish you joy of. Beastly fag!" Cameron put in.

"Huggins and I have been talking about you and this child, Janita," Jackson continued.

"Devilish good of you, 'm sure."

There was a sudden and nasty ring in Cameron's voice, and a glitter in his eyes that would have stopped most men. They had no effect whatever on Jackson. Huggins, who had taken off his coat owing to the sweltering heat, relit his pipe and smoked with unassumed composure. He knew that his two protégés were "rare plucked ones," and he was interested to see the little breeze between them. He had absolutely no doubt as to the result. He always backed the "slow man". Since the campaign began, however, he had been actively engaged in "making a man" of Cameron, and he hoped, as he afterwards expressed it, that

his pupil would "give him a run for his money". Under his tuition, the pupil had already made some progress.

"I wish you would not speak to me in that tone, Cameron," Jackson said with a pained look in his serious eyes. "It hurts me, and I am certainly very far from wishing to hurt you."

"Got him his cross! You did indeed," Huggins muttered behind a wreath of dense tobacco smoke.

"Perhaps then you will allow me to mind my own business and we shall be all the better friends." Cameron said this honestly, and in the hope that the matter would be dropped.

"No, not in this instance. I cannot allow you to proceed with business which I believe to be dishonourable and continue to be friends—good or bad."

"Dishonourable! Be careful, sergeant-major—of the future." The ugly glitter came back to Cameron's eyes, and his face paled. Huggins grunted approvingly.

"I will not be careful," Jackson said quietly.

"I will be as careless as I choose. I say to your face that you are treating the girl badly, whether you mean it or whether you do not mean it."

"Dress him up as a Methodist parson! Turn him out as a charity curate! Zenana missions—mothers' meetings—all that sort of thing—quite in his line! No business to be a soldier!" This came fiercely from behind the tobacco cloud which now almost hid Huggins from view.

"He has no business," Jackson said still quietly, but his temper was rising, "to be the kind of soldier you are. I do not mean unnecessary offence. You are a brave man and honourable in your own way, but your way is not mine, and it ought not to be his."

"Keep your infernal preaching for those who want it," Cameron burst out.

"Hypocrite!" Huggins snorted with sudden passion.

Jackson walked over to the smoke cloud which indicated the locality of Huggins. He passed Cameron on this short journey without a glance

and without a word. He stopped opposite Huggins and said in a calm but hard voice :—

“You permit yourself to throw that word in the face of a friend, well knowing it to be untrue. You have lowered yourself in my respect. I have no more to say.” He turned on his heel and walked out of the room without any martial swagger or stagey attitudes. When he was gone, a painful silence was maintained until Cameron could no longer support it.

“Don’t you think,” he began weakly and quite uncandidly, but he must say something, “that he does the Regimental a bit too soon?”

Joe Huggins smoked furiously for several moments and then replied :—

“I think he is worth you and me together, and a bit over—about half a troop over”.

## CHAPTER XI.

## JANITA.

CAMERON sat silently for some time after the oracle, Huggins, had spoken, and then said :—

“But he is altogether wrong, for I mean the girl no harm (Huggins’ eyebrows went up). No, I don’t, you accomplished reprobate. You don’t understand. How could you? But he ought ——”

“So far as I gathered from his manner,” the “reprobate” interrupted, “he knows quite as well as you do that you *mean* no harm. But your good intentions won’t go down with him. No, sir, he was not born the day before yesterday. He was not, indeed. Still, I think he should have been a parson. All the same, he is a devilish good soldier. Well, well, times are changing. He would not have done in my time. Oh, no, not by a long way. The world is turning upside down—

but I wish I had not called him a hypocrite. What the, etc., etc., possessed me to do it, I can't think. And about the girl, don't you bother—the Bashi Bazouks may be here next week. It will make no difference."

Cameron was, as we know, self-willed, and sometimes rather selfish. But this meat was too strong for his palate. He left the room without a word and sought out Jackson, to whom he apologised fully and freely, and by whom, of course, he was at once as fully and freely forgiven. He expected a little lecture. But he did not get it. There would be no more lectures from Jackson, and, consequently, no apologies afterwards. Jackson would keep his good advice in future until it was so well appreciated that it would be asked for. Meantime, Cameron determined that his pleasant little lessons in the English tongue should be still more carefully preserved from outside interference. His purpose was interrupted promptly and unpleasantly.

Enormous bodies of Austrian troops were daily

arriving at Saloniki by the Belgrade Railway. The town had been turned into a camp, and the conduct of the men, although good upon the whole, could not be always relied upon. The wretched streets were often unsafe for men and nearly always for women. This may be put down as exaggeration by those who are accustomed to read their war history in the despatches of Commanders-in-Chief. Such details are of too small moment to occupy a busy Commander-in-Chief on whom tremendous issues depend, or take up a page in his despatch, the subject matter of which may mean his own recall.

Janita had business connected with the commissariat which took her out of doors at an hour of which her special protector, Cameron, did not approve. Lazarus appeared to be absolutely indifferent. The girl had been accustomed to a degree of liberty unusual in any Turkish city, and so far had come to no harm. It was not his fault that the town was full of the soldiers of half a dozen nationalities. It was not his business



either if the girl did come to harm. That was her lookout. His business was more important—and much more profitable—since the soldiers came. He was deaf to Cameron's remonstrances, partly because he had no time to attend to them, and principally because he trusted Janita and had always found she could take care of herself.

"But can't you see, you old man of the sea—I mean the scriptures—that if I do not approve, if we do not approve, you are offending your best customers?"

"My worst customers," Lazarus answered lazily. "You pay very well and promptly. But your keep costs. Others pay—sooner or later—and they cost nothing at all." He made a gesture of impatience at the trespass on his time and turned again to his accounts, saying shortly, "If you disapprove, see to it yourself".

"I will see to it myself," Cameron replied sharply, "and if any harm comes of it I'll balance up those books of yours in a way that the best

actuary in London could not honestly audit. See if I don't!"

The Jew shrugged his shoulders. He was accustomed to threats—but not from Englishmen. These were comparatively a new commodity which he did not appraise at their intrinsic value. His commercial ineptitude was corrected later.

Cameron dashed out of the house and hurried along the place which was called a street in the direction he knew Janita had gone. It was not quite dark, but he had to pick his steps in the twilight. He had not to go the whole distance of Janita's journey, for he met her on her way back. Her merchandise had been cast away to aid her flight, and she was running at her best speed. Half a dozen Austrian officers were scrambling after her. The girl's beauty had been noised abroad. Her unprotected position had been discussed as rendering her an object of much academic sympathy. The officers had dined as soldiers do sometimes on a campaign—and civilians domestically. Janita's charms had drifted

into the gossip. Some of the wilder spirits made a wager that they would enter the English quarter and carry her off. Bets were made, and although the officers at first meant nothing worse than a foolish prank, the man who would now meddle with them required a stout heart and a steady nerve. Cameron certainly possessed these qualifications. He did not stop the girl, which would have been a serious loss of the lead she had, but turning sharply as she passed him he ran after her and soon caught up with her.

“It is I, Janita,” Cameron cried. “Don’t be frightened. Take my hand.”

The breathless girl snatched at the outstretched hand, and the two went on at twice the pace Janita was able to make unassisted.

They gained their own street corner with the Austrians left a little behind in the race, but by the time they had done fumbling with the fastening of the door the chase was up, and all burst together into the room where the hussars were boarded. The Jew ran straightway to a back

room and barricaded himself in. Jackson and Huggins were out !

Cameron tried to slam the door in the faces of the Austrians, but he was too late. The whole six were in the room, talking excitedly. Janita, who for a moment had felt almost safe, now despaired again. Although terribly frightened and panting painfully, she did not embarrass her protector by a single sign of fear other than the piteous look in her eyes. Jackson, Cameron remembered in a flash, was on duty. Huggins would certainly be at the mess. No help was near. The girl then would have been safer outside, for one of the Austrians had turned the key in an English lock on the door, and it was not likely one man would be able to maintain himself against such odds. So far, Cameron had made no attempt to defend himself or Janita by force of arms. That must be the last resort. He was only a non-com., and the Austrians were all officers in a crack regiment. If any harm were done there would be a court-martial. Cameron

did not even mentally impugn the impartiality of courts-martial in the British Army, but he did not like the idea of facing one on a charge of assaulting our ally's officers. He tried moral suasion.

"Gentlemen, I entreat you to retire. These are the quarters of an English officer." They were—of a non-commissioned officer.

"Bah!" one of the Austrians exclaimed. He spoke English fluently and almost idiomatically. "You think we believe that. You have already proved yourself a very persistent rascal. Give up the girl and escape the chastisement which otherwise will certainly overtake you."

"I will not, sir," Cameron said resolutely. "I am on guard here, and I only deserted my post when I heard that my officer's attendant was molested in the street."

"It seems you English sentries have very liberal ideas in discipline if you can leave your post so easily. Your discipline differs from ours."

"Yes, sir. Your presence here proves that."

“Insolent ! As you will not give up the girl, we will take her from you. Gentlemen !” to his companions, “this *canaille* will not dare to resist us. Advance !”

“On my sword’s point,” Cameron cried passionately, as he flashed out his sword and stood on guard. A heavy table was between him and the officers. He overturned this in order to advance his rampart somewhat, and to gain him greater room to parry thrusts. The table fell with a resounding crash, and instantly a hasty footstep could be heard in the room above.

Meantime the swords clashed freely, but as the only light remaining was in Cameron’s favour, and in consequence of the generous liquors the Austrians had consumed, the first few passes were harmless enough. The fight, however, could not have lasted very long. It was interrupted by a loud knocking at the fastened door. And, then, as no one went to open it, the door itself and one of the jambs were dashed into the room, followed by Troop Sergeant Huggins’ jack-boot.

Huggins, who had a general's cocked hat in his hand, seemed to be still half asleep. Indeed, it was the fall of the table which had awaked him. He took in the position at a single glance, and before a man could move, he placed the general's hat on his head, and without swagger or bravado said quietly, "'Tention !"

Cameron sheathed his sword and stood to attention. Huggins was playing a bold game, but he seldom played to lose. The Austrian officers sulkily lowered their points, but did not salute. Huggins turned to Cameron and said in the same quiet voice, so different from his usual blustering swagger :—

"They have not obeyed my order. They do not speak English? "

"The one on your right, sir, speaks English," Cameron replied, saluting.

"Then perhaps you, sir," turning to the officer indicated, "will explain what this means." Huggins spoke now with marked asperity. "Are your party really officers of the Austrian army?"

My question may be rude, but I am not accustomed to have my quarters broken into."

"If these are your quarters, may I ask whom I have the honour of addressing?" the Austrian asked stiffly.

Huggins raised his general's hat about a quarter of an inch—his uniform could not be distinguished in the darkness—and said without a moment's hesitation, "Lord Creighton, commanding English Light Cavalry".

The situation was now serious. The Austrians saluted and their spokesman apologised, but added : "We regret to have report to you, sir, that your orderly drew upon us ——"

"Please let me have your charge circumstantially," Huggins interrupted, drawing out his troop note-book. "My orderly, let us say, surrounded you and drove you into my quarters, and then wantonly sought to commit suicide by attacking without provocation—*six* armed men !"

"Pardon me, my lord, your pencil runs too fast. That is not our charge." After a momen-



tary consultation with his friends, the Austrian added, "We withdraw our charge".

"Very well," said Huggins, shutting his notebook with a smack. "But permit me to inform you, Herr ——"

"Unghvar."

"Herr Unghvar, that if it had been your evil fortune to have murdered my orderly—in defence of your own lives, of course—I would, without reference to your Commander-in-Chief, have had the six of you shot against that wall. I would, sir ; yes, indeed." Huggins stopped suddenly on finding himself drifting into his own phraseology. Then, with an air of frigid dignity, he added :—

"Afterwards I would have apologised !"

The Austrians, owing to their condition, did not notice flaws in Huggins' claim, which could not otherwise have passed them. They filed out of the room sullenly, but more soberly than they entered it. When they were gone, and the main door closed and barred, Huggins expressed himself at length upon the scene which has been

described. His remarks, however, can be profitably omitted. At last he dried his eyes and mopped his bursting cheeks, and then Cameron, who had been waiting for an opportunity, asked seriously—although his question is not unfamiliar in the music halls :—

“Where did you get that hat?”

“It’s General Lacy’s. He was my captain in the Soudan. I once put the feathers right for him after he got his command, and he was so pleased with the way I did it—I’ve a knack of it—that he won’t let any one touch them if I am within call. I had dropped into a snooze when you knocked over the table, and having the hat in my hand, I ran down without thinking of laying it aside, which turned out a good job too.”

“Yòu certainly carried it off well,” Cameron agreed.

“Oh, you trust an old soldier. What he doesn’t know you can have for the asking. But as to you, my Maid of Athens,” Huggins said to Janita, “you take an old soldier’s advice and get

away from here. Go back to your own people in the isles of Greece or wherever you came from. Go to the seaside for your health. Get away anywhere out of this. You're a doosid sight too good looking for a camp. Yes, sir—I mean miss—you are indeed."

In answer to this Janita went up to the rugged soldier, and, taking his right hand in both her own, said simply but very earnestly in her broken English :—

"You saved him. I shall never be vexed at your rude speeches again."

Poor Janita! Before long even the rough pleasantries of Troop Sergeant-Major Huggins belonged to the one bright spot in her life.

Next morning Janita came to Jackson as he was about to leave the house, and from the shy way in which she accosted him he assumed at once that her business dealt with Cameron. She often came to Jackson to inquire about his friend's preferences in the matter of provisions, so that the friend had from time to time pleasant little surprises in his bill of

fare, which he ascribed to chance. This morning, however, the business was evidently of special importance, for Janita had some difficulty in explaining it. Her nervousness made her English more broken than usual, and after a few careless answers to the inconsequent questions which the girl asked, purely for the purpose of gaining time, Jackson took pity on her and said in a kindly voice :—

“What is it, Janita? You are anxious, and afraid to tell me. That is not right. You know I am your friend ; we are all your friends, I mean. It is unkind of you to be afraid of me.”

“Oh, no,” she said quickly ; “I am not afraid, but—what is the other word which sounds like it? Oh, yes, ashamed ! I am ashamed to trouble you because you never trouble any one—and I cannot ask any one but you.”

“Mr. Cameron, you know, would be very glad to help you,” Jackson said, without any thought of trivial chaff.

“Oh, not him—not Mr. Cameron !” Janita exclaimed. “I do not wish him to know about it.

And the other! He is rough, but I think he is kind. Yet I could not ask him. He would laugh and swear. Besides, he would not understand. You are different." She stopped and hesitated.

"Come, come, Janita, what is the trouble? My time is up, and I wish to hear it before I go."

Janita made a little gesture of despair and plunged into the heart of the business:—

"I wish you, before you go away from here, to send me to England. I have money. He pays me—Lazarus." (She never called him uncle, although he insisted on the relationship.) "I have saved it all. But I would not know how to go or what to do when I got there. You will arrange it for me, will you not? I want—yes, I want to learn to be an English girl. I hate them here, I hate everything, I hate Lazarus!" Janita spoke fiercely now. "I don't believe Lazarus is my uncle. I believe he pretends it because customers come—people say I am pretty——" she stopped short in confusion.

"And so you want to be an English girl," Jackson said to restore her confidence.

"Yes ; I do not know how it is, but I have never been happy ; never in my life till—till you English came. And when you go away I could not bear it any more. Oh, Mr. Jackson, help me to get to England and I will try hard to learn, so that you may not be sorry for having helped me. And then when you all go back to England I will be there." She wrung her hands nervously as she pleaded.

"Why are you so anxious to get to England—a country of which you have only heard?"

"I have heard that they treat women there as human beings," she answered simply.

"Some of them," Jackson admitted. Then he said : "I will see Mr. Cameron about it, and I am sure we can manage somehow to arrange this for you".

"Oh, no, no ; I asked you not to tell Mr. Cameron. I do not want him to know until—until I have learned to be a real English girl."

"I see," Jackson said thoughtfully. "You want it to be a little surprise for him."

Janita reddened, but did not answer. Jackson's time was now up. He promised honestly to help the girl, and passed out, leaving her in a beautiful dream of happiness.

"Poor child," the tall hussar said to himself as, very erect and soldierlike, he clanked down the rough street. "It would be a surprise for him—perhaps not a very pleasant one."

## CHAPTER XII.

## BOOT AND SADDLE!

AT last the welcome trumpet sounded, and the reconstructed regiment of hussars prepared to march. It was really glad tidings to many of the men whose billets were—well, not exactly modelled on English ideas. Nor were all the non-commissioned officers as comfortable as those on whom Janita waited with so much zeal. To Jackson the order was specially welcome, because it meant action instead of moping, and the saving of the friend of his life from what he regarded as a particularly mean intrigue. Long before the marching orders came he had made arrangements for Janita's passage as soon as the hussars left Saloniki, and for her protection when she arrived in England. But as the days passed the girl seemed to become less fixed on the project, and when the



time for parting came her manner was so strange Jackson felt that he might as well have spared himself the serious trouble he had taken.

The regiment, Colonel Crawford now in command, started as the moon was rising, and made its way slowly up the steep acclivity on which the city is built until it passed the four-mile circuit wall. Passing out from that white-washed rampart of ancient and mediæval masonry (with a few modern patches to keep it together), the hussars walked their horses through the plantations of cypress and other evergreens which are scattered about beyond the walls. Then, when the domes and minarets of Saloniki were beginning to catch the soft rays of the summer moon, the trumpet sounded again, and the regiment broke into trot. The brilliant moonlight shone and sparkled on the glittering harness of men and horses, and the chill night breeze was delightful after the almost unbearable heat of the day. All hearts were glad. This time, surely, they would have better luck than to be sent on an impossible task.

Huggins was a new man. The unpleasantly boisterous swashbuckler had been supplanted, and a watchful, earnest under-officer had taken his place. The new man, by the way, noticed a misty shape crouched under the last of the cypress groves as the regiment rode by, and thought he caught the sound of a suppressed sob.

"Dashed if it ain't Nita Juanita! 'Fraid her dark-eyed splendour will get her into trouble when we're gone," was all he said, and as he made the remark to himself there was no comment upon it.

Cameron's prophecy had proved partly true. Jackson had been appointed regimental Sergeant-Major. Joe Huggins, however, had not sulked for the prophesied week. He had not sulked at all. On the contrary, when the promotion was known, he went straight to Jackson, who was keeping, as it were, in hiding—feeling guilty in depriving a senior man of what he had some reason for thinking was his due—and roared out in his great voice:—

"What I call the right man in the right place, and I am proud to see you in it. And any man

who says you're not fit for it, Joe Huggins wants to talk to that man. Yes, sir, he does indeed."

Thus there had been no breach in the friendship of the three, not one of whom had a point of sympathy in common with either of the others, save one. Let Huggins name it.

"We are a queer lot to run together, we are indeed." Then meditatively, "But we all know how to stand by a friend. It is what I call a good point, and I suppose that's what accounts for it."

The night march of the "Queen's Own" was not quite like one of those picturesque and delightful promenades which the great English war correspondent can so well describe. It is not suggested that he cannot describe the real business too, or that any living man can describe that business better. It is only inferred that he can paint so well the make-believe soldiering, the marching across peaceful shires when the haymakers are at work and the breath of wild flowers is heavy on the air; when the dust on the road has been laid by a gentle summer shower, or the green grass

on its border drenched with the morning dew ; when "singers to the front" is the most important business of the march, and the warbling of the troopers drowns that of the birds, only to be quenched in turn by deep draughts of British beer—not blood ; when soldiering is such a delightful pageant and pastime, that the only pity is it could not be kept so.

This march of the hussars, although not quite a funeral ceremony, was something very different from changing quarters in England. Of course they were passing along a line on which it was unlikely, if not impossible, that the enemy could have encroached. Still, there were challenges and halts, and sometimes delays, when no man knew what the next order might be.

Modern warfare had not yet taken the measure of the temerity any more than it had gauged the brutality of the Cossacks of the Don, the Circassians, the Kurds, and the Bashi Bazouks. Fortunately this campaign before it closed did so, and swept these factors out of the path of

civilisation by a simple expedient—namely, their decimation.

By this time the Russians and Turks had been pushed out of the passes in the Betchik mountains, and they had retired in good order on the river Struma to cover their lines of communication with their base, Philippopolis. Fresh reinforcements which had arrived encouraged the Russian Commander to offer battle, with the river as his first entrenchment. Upon this position the Austrians and English were about to deliver an attack in such force that it was hoped the enemy's route would thereafter be easily traced by the number of fugitives using it as an avenue for flight.

The "Queen's Own" were not up in time for the great battle, but they were up in time for a greater, so far as cavalry were concerned. The Russian and Turkish infantry, overwhelmed by the accurate fire of the British Army, consisting largely of trained volunteer marksmen, broke up completely, and their cavalry, in gallantly endea-

vouring to cover the retreat or rout, got into an unfortunate position. There was nothing left to them but to surrender *en masse*, be absolutely exterminated by artillery and infantry fire, or strike off the line of retreat and gallop at top speed up the V-shaped plateau which is bounded on the north by the Sultanitza and on the west and south-west by Tchengel mountains. While then the whole of the available infantry and what cavalry could be spared pursued and slaughtered impartially Muscovite and Moslem along their lines of communication, a large cavalry force was massed to pursue and capture or kill the enemy's cavalry, who were unwittingly riding into a *cul-de-sac*; for every opening in the mountains was already held by fresh Austrian troops which had been pushed forward through Servia by that invaluable railway from Belgrade. The British and Austrian force contained many of the finest cavalry regiments which either nation could put into the field.

The only weak regiment in point of numbers

which was included in the pursuing army—if a body composed exclusively of cavalry can be called an army—was the 17th Lancers. This regiment was attached to it for two reasons; one was the urgent request of the Lancer Colonel, rather an unusual feature in military history, but not more so than many others which this extraordinary campaign had developed; and the other was that the regiment, in addition to its losses in killed and wounded in the action just fought, had lost a whole troop in prisoners. The residue, therefore, was so weak it mattered little where it went. Lord Creighton made no complaint when it was attached to his command. If it could not help him, it could not hinder him.

Arrangements are rapidly made on a battlefield; but, with the utmost despatch, it requires some time to detach a force of 7000 cavalry, reform it, hand over the command of allied troops to a common leader, and despatch it on its mission. By the time all these details were discharged and a forward move was made, the darkness was

coming on. The *cul-de-sac* was still ten miles wide when night fell. Strong bodies were posted at equidistant intervals, signals arranged, and the troops bivouacked in the open field. The enemy would not be likely to move during the night, for the all-important reason that the country within the mountain ranges with its many streams and tributary rivers and great natural obstacles was as unknown to him as to our own troops. And as for guides—there were none ; the Bashi Bazouks had been there !

The Sergeant-Major of the 4th Hussars had a busy evening, and he was absolutely tired out when Colonel Crawford found him trying to settle a dispute about forage. The argument was ended by the Colonel's presence, but Jackson's work was still far from finished. Colonel Crawford, however, had business with him which must have precedence.

"I have been asked by the Commander-in-Chief to send in one recommendation for a commission. I should like to recommend you. But there is Cameron. He has been very deserving too."



"He has been very deserving, sir," Jackson answered.

"Now when two men are equally deserving and qualified, the personal equation becomes a factor to be considered. There are reasons why Cameron should welcome his promotion other than for its own sake—I think you understand me. You remember the incident when the *Crocodile* was leaving London?"

"Yes, sir."

"Your case is different. His promotion, as it were, includes others besides himself." The Colonel looked hard at the Sergeant-Major as he said this. The latter gave no sign. "But there will be many promotions before this war is over. I shall not forget you."

Jackson saluted and retired.

Colonel Crawford duly sent in his recommendation. There was a troubled look in his grey eyes as he wrote the name of his selection—John Jackson. He changed his mind at the last moment. "I cannot do otherwise," he reflected.

“He is the better man—and he has his personal equation too. I wish I had never seen her, or could forget her. I wonder what the end will be. To-morrow may end it all for me. If not it will pass—with the years. Everything does.”

The cooking fires slowed down one by one. Sentinels were posted. Tired men drew their cloaks around them, and lay down on the bare ground. The half-starved horses tramped for a time uneasily in their pickets, pawed the ground, neighed now and then harshly, and grew quieter from sheer fatigue. Officers with clattering scabbards went their patient rounds. Orders for the morning were noted by under-officers with an everlasting running comment of :—

“Yes, sir ; yes, sir ; quite so, sir ; certainly, sir ; yes, sir ; no, sir ; of course not, sir”.

Then the great honey-coloured moon arose. The noises waned—ceased. The camp was silent now. The last trumpet went, regiment by regiment, all along the vast extended line :—

“Lights out !”

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE DEATH'S HEADS.

BEFORE the sun was up the next morning the trumpets were sounding, and sleepy troopers, blinking, heavy-eyed, untethered their horses, and with a touch here and a burnish there made what show of neatness they could upon that early parade—which would be the last on earth for many of them. They knew it well, and did their best to do credit to the regiment which a few hours later would write their names off its muster roll.

Very early in the morning an advance had been made as far up the enclosed plateau as Lord Creighton thought desirable, and suitable ground was selected which would allow the whole of his large force to strike at once. The Russians and Turks would not require sending for. They would come of their own accord as soon as the

Austrian mountain artillery began to play upon them from the passes.

Lord Creighton was galloping down his tremendously long line when he noticed a squadron of about a hundred horse forming up on a spur of hill across a mountain stream to his right—about a mile distant. The men appeared to be in grey, and the officers in white patrol jackets. All wore a peculiar mask over their faces.

“Who are they, Ainsworth?” the General asked sharply, as he pulled up and got out his field glass. “This is no time for masquerading nonsense.”

“I do not know them, sir,” Ainsworth answered.

The moment the General put his glasses to his eyes he started visibly, and it was with a white face that he sat his horse silently for a moment. “Oh, my God!—too terrible.” This he said in a low voice, but Ainsworth heard it distinctly.

“They must be got out of that. They must go to the rear at once.”

"Very well, sir," the aide replied, gathering up his bridle reins.

"No! no! not you, Ainsworth!—I want you elsewhere. I cannot send that boy," he muttered to himself in a rather quaking voice for a man who was about to lead one of the great cavalry charges of the world's history. Lord Creighton was halted opposite the 4th Hussars.

"Colonel Crawford!" he called. The Colonel rode up.

"Crawford, I want the most resolute man—I will say two of the most resolute men—in your command—for special duty."

"Sergeant-Major Jackson! Troop Sergeant-Major Cameron!" Colonel Crawford shouted.

The two non-commissioned officers dashed from their places, cantered up, halted smartly at ten paces, and brought their swords to the "carry".

"I recommend these men," the hussar Colonel said quietly.

Lord Creighton looked sharply at the men and said, pointing toward the hill where the

strange troop were sitting motionless on their horses :—

“ You will tell them that I order them to the rear. To cross the river you must ride to the valley where the stream broadens out and the banks are practicable. The ford, I believe, is within range of that Turkish battery which wandered out of the action yesterday and took position there last night.”

The two troopers were already sitting very erect on their horses. Unconsciously they stiffened up. Lord Creighton noticed this and approved it.

“ And you have something worse than Turkish gunners to face when you get to the end of your journey.”

Again the troopers moved slightly.

“ I look to you, Sergeant-Major Jackson, to see that my message does not miscarry.”

Jackson and Cameron wheeled their horses and dashed down the valley at a hard gallop. Cameron was wildly elated. His promotion he believed was now secure, that of his friend would

come later. Picked out for special service in front of the whole division ! It was unbelievable. May Winton, Janita—he became confused when he thought of all the happiness this would bring to others—the others being mostly girls.

The fine horses—selected by men who were both good judges—swung along at a pace which hard training had made easy to them. When the remnant of a rough fence or straggling bush that might have been avoided by the detour of a stride came in their way, they did not swerve a yard. Cameron raced at the obstacle and landed with a laugh and a jangle of accoutrements well on the other side, followed stride for stride by his silent Sergeant-Major. Jackson had not spoken since they started. At the ford a shell from the Turkish battery whistled over their heads and burst in mid-stream a hundred yards up. Cameron shouted derisively, and shaking his fist at the battery dashed into the water. A thousand shells would not have stopped him unless they hit him. Jackson followed without

a word, although his comrade was chattering gaily all the time. But Jackson had seen the troop on the hill through a glass before even Lord Creighton had observed it.

When they left the river the men galloped hard up the rising ground until they were out of range of the Turkish battery, for another shell had fallen too close to them to be agreeable.

"Now for the mysterious troop. Let us call it the 'White Company,'" Cameron cried with enthusiasm. Jackson began unconsciously to slacken his pace. This threw the other a few lengths ahead.

"Come on. What has happened? Your horse is all right?"

"My horse is all right." This was the first time the Sergeant-Major spoke since they left the lines.

"And you are all right?"

"Not—quite!"

Cameron dropped back and peered into the face



of his friend. His own lost some of its colour at the sight, and a sick feeling came over him. What was before them that could turn "Stonewall" Jackson's cheek to chalk—"Stonewall" Jackson, V.C., whose nickname had been conferred as a mark of the men's respect?

"Jackson, you are afraid!"

"I am."

"Then, by God, I am not!" This was partly hysterical.

Jackson answered coldly: "No, it is the old story. If you were half as much afraid as I am, you would not be here."

"That's hardly fair, Jackson"—this less arrogantly.

"We shall see. We shall crest the hill in a minute."

They were up. The "White Company" was before them—sixty yards off.

Cameron whirled his horse round, with his hand over his eyes and a dry groan in his throat. Jackson leant over and touched his arm, saying:

"Courage, lad, we have been through worse than this".

"Worse! Worse! Nothing like it. Let me go back, Jackson. I dare not go farther."

"You must go farther. You must do your duty. Do you hear me, boy?"

"I hear you; but this is not like a charge, or fair fighting. I cannot do it."

"Then I command you as your superior officer. Right about wheel!"

Cameron automatically faced round at the command, but quailed again when he saw the awful "White Company" sitting silent and as motionless as statues on their horses.

"I cannot do it, Jackson."

"I order you. Advance!"

"Not a yard, for the Commander-in-Chief! Report me as insubordinate."

Whereat Jackson said sternly: "Then give me your sword and return my prisoner. Don't you see, idiot, that when we ride out from the cover of that bank we'll be in view of the whole division?"

A hundred glasses are watching for us at this moment. We must ride up together. Now, march ! ”

Cameron shut his eyes and rode forward without another word. He heard Jackson rasp out the General's orders, and the impatient champing of bits and jingle of little chains as the horses of the “ White Company ” flung up their heads to shake off the maddening flies. Then as no motion of assent was made, nor word spoken, Jackson roared out :—

“ You have your orders, will you obey them ? ”

The leader of the “ White Company ” must have done something terrible by way of reply—no word was spoken—for “ Stonewall ” Jackson gave a cry that might have been heard a furlong away, and raising his sword arm high he shouted, “ You shall be avenged before this day is over ” .

“ We shall,” a white horseman on the leader's right answered. He at least could speak, if in a horrible, mumbling way ; and it was a fearful

sight to watch him do it. "We shall avenge ourselves."

The two hussars galloped off, and never once looked over their shoulders. When they got back to their places a great cloud of dust was spreading over the whole plateau to the north-west. At last the Turkish cavalry had begun to move. The nature of the horror which Jackson saw on the hill was now known to every man in the British force. The Turk had beaten his own atrocious record. He would be repaid in full. When the order to draw swords was given, a growl went along the whole line, the like of which certainly was never heard on sea or land in modern warfare before. It concentrated finally into the single pregnant sentence passed from trooper to trooper without necessity for further elaboration :—

"The Turks are coming !"

## CHAPTER XIV.

## NO QUARTER!

WHEN Lord Creighton considered that the enemy was within striking distance he ordered the advance. He had chosen his ground carefully. This battle was to be a fight to a finish, as Jackson had prophesied the war was to be. The General was a master of tactics, but indeed, as will be seen, there was no opportunity for a display of his skill. Still nothing had been neglected. Nothing that could happen had been unforeseen. The Turks were coming, as the troopers said in that great chorus of strained voices. The dispositions for their reception were complete. Let them come !

As soon as our line was in motion, the white plumes of the 14th Hussars and the pennons of the 16th and of the two skeleton troops of the

17th Lancers, far out on the north slope, began to flicker, while on the southern or south-western spurs which enclosed the plateau the solid scarlet line of the Scots Greys, and the black helmets and blue dolmans of the 12th Austrian Dragoons, moved downwards towards the plain. Across this plain ten English and Austrian cavalry regiments were now stretched in line. There would be something novel, if not altogether new, in the combat which was well on the way to its initiation. There would be neither infantry nor artillery fire to be reckoned with on either side ; no question of forming line too soon or too late ; nothing more intricate than the effort of one immense body of horse striving to break through another immense body of horse. It would simply be a horses' battle—nothing more and nothing less.

When the two lines and their supports were still about an English mile apart, the Turkish regiments saw our flank attack developing, and broke out of hand. The Russian regiments, which included the

Horse Grenadiers, Dragoons and Lancers of the Guard, and several Cossack regiments of the line, the pick of their cavalry, kept their formation rigidly, and maintained the easy canter at which both sides were closing in. It would have been a splendid spectacle, only that it was too dreadful. The sun flashed brightly on the polished sword blades. The ground trembled under the thundering hoofs of nearly twenty thousand galloping horses. Mountain hares and ground birds dashed about distraught. The timid things of nature had no business here where man, their master, was out man-killing. Trumpets sounded in all directions. Formations were corrected. Officers roared orders. Men strove as well as they could to obey them. Discipline worked wonders. It means much. It means practice. It means everything. The tension was terrible.

The Turkish regiments lost all semblance of order, and it was only a raging mob which broke upon our extreme left formed by the Kaiser Franz Dragoons and the 10th Austrian Uhlans. But the

attack was so furious that, had it been delivered in any kind of order, or been met with less determination, it would certainly have hampered Lord Creighton, and left him no alternative but to break his formation, or allow the Russians who were now coming on at full gallop the fatal advantage of charging a stationary line. The moment was serious, but the danger was sabred aside, and the Turks were soon swarming back. The Dragoons and Uhlans rode on with dripping swords. Then the great shock came, and the plain was filled with an enormous mass of raging and slaughtering men.

For fifteen weary minutes the two armies were inextricably mixed together—a desperate mob, murderous and murdering. The crashing of sword blades as they smote together ; the dull crunch as they crushed through men's skulls ; the snap of carbines ; the bellowing of orders unheard and unattended to ; the yells and oaths of stricken men ; the bitter British shout : "Quarter for the Russians, but death to the Turks" ; colonels and



corporals, princes and privates, all slashing and stabbing and slaying !

At last the flank attacks which Lord Creighton had planned were delivered. These only concentrated the whole body of fighters into a solid mass, in which neither side could gain much advantage, nor could any object be attained save that mutual slaughter which is only justifiable homicide when a purpose is by it fulfilled—some say not even then. In the midst of this dreadful mass, hundreds of horses had fallen or been thrown down, and these, being unwounded and unable to rise in the press, spent their energy in smashing the limbs and kicking the brains out of their late riders.

Lord Creighton, nearly in despair, managed to get his old regiment, the blues, and a score or two of dragoons, pulled out of the *melée*. Retiring fifty yards to gain momentum, these wheeled and drove again into the mob. Other regiments did the same. The mob gave ground. It was pushed still more strenuously. It burst into fragments.

The flying mass was harried over the plain. It fought little battles in detached clusters of momentarily rallied men. It sacrificed a few more hundred lives purposelessly, and then what was left of it surrendered. Stray troops broke off here and there, and slipping through the broken English and Austrian lines, gained the Demir Hissar road, and so left the field with their lives and without dishonour. A Turkish regiment, which early in the day recollected business elsewhere, escaped by a pass in the Sultanitza mountains, through which a tributary of the Strumnitza river flows, overcoming in their passage the Austrian guard. But the cavalry of the Russo-Turkish army in the field had ceased to exist as a fighting factor, so far as this war was concerned.

While the great cavalry fight was in progress, the "White Company" went silently about its own business. This consisted in garrisoning a small defile, known only to it and the 12th Bashi Bazouks. The 12th Regiment of Turkish Light

Cavalry was in the first mob that charged the English and Austrian left, and it was also conspicuously early in the flight. What remained of it rode straight for the pass. It was expected there, and was met with a crushing and long-continued volley from repeating carbines. It turned in complete confusion, and would have ridden back, but it was again met from the mouth of the ravine with another long-continued fire of repeating carbines. Then they—or what was left of them—threw down their arms and cried for mercy. In answer, the “White Company” threw down their empty carbines and drew swords. No prisoners were taken. The white and grey horsemen spared none. They kept rank perfectly, and pursued their work calmly, at times it almost seemed indifferently. The monotony of the killing was occasionally broken. For sometimes, when a particular Turk was hurled forward by the press behind, a trooper would break rank, ride over and slay this man, and return to his own place. The tall leader of the company looked on at all

this and watched—and waited. His turn came at last.

The captain of the Bashi Bazouks rode forward to beg for quarter, but his blood turned to water when the captain of the “White Company” looked him in the face. The pasha screamed for mercy, but the garish sun gleamed on the sword blade of the “Death’s Head” as it whirled back for the cut. The sword fell—and the sword-arm of the pasha was among his horse’s feet. Another dreadful cry for mercy, and again the sword fell. The arteries of the pasha’s left arm spouted from its stump. Then for the last time that terrible back-handed slash that splits a bar of lead like a wax candle, fell, this time on the pasha’s neck—enough! No Turk was left alive.

When the “White Company,” having sped their business, were about to mount, they came upon a wounded Russian who had lost his troop and ridden with the Turks, having no alternative. Two of the company went to his assistance, for here was at least a human being. The man turned

on his back to thank them for their aid, but when he looked in their faces he screamed aloud and buried his head in his hands. On that the company mounted and rode silently away, leaving the work of their hands to fester in the sun.

## CHAPTER XV.

## THE "WHITE COMPANY" DISBANDS.

Two hours after the last straggling combat was fought, Lord Creighton and his staff rode over the plain. They passed a piece of clean untrodden ground on which the 4th Hussars were picketed. The General spoke a word to Colonel Crawford, and was moving on when his eye, very keen in the game of war, whether in the abstract or the concrete, caught the figure of the veteran Huggins busy at the work of reorganising his troop. There was something in the rigid exactitude of detail displayed by the old Troop Sergeant-Major which pleased his lordship, who believed, by the way, in old soldiers, provided they were not so old as to be decrepit. Besides, he knew the fighting record of the man as well as his burly person. He spoke to him.

"Well, Huggins, what do you think of it?"

The General's question referred more to the possible effect of the battle on the issue of the war than its special features.

"I think, sir," Huggins answered respectfully, and meaning no offence, but misunderstanding the question, "that we gave 'em hell, I do indeed—beggin' your pardon, sir, for the word."

"It was a colourable imitation, Huggins," the General said with a sad smile, and before passing on he added a word of praise for the veteran's troop.

"Seem to be a smart set of men, Huggins."

"Yes, sir, we make 'em that way. They're not born so, like the poets. Some of them at first don't seem to have as much straight bone in their whole skeletons as would make a pair of dominoes. They do not indeed. We turn 'em into what I call Light Cavalry."

The General smiled again, and was about to reply when he observed Jackson and Cameron, and recognised them as the men he had detailed

for special duty before the fight began. "Ainsworth, call those men forward," he said to his galloper. Jackson and Cameron stepped forward.

"You delivered my message, men. I saw that."

Cameron was about to speak, but Jackson put the heel of his regulation boot upon the other's foot with an emphasis that cut him short.

"Yes, sir," Jackson said, "we delivered your order."

"You did it pluckily, all things considered."

"We did our duty, sir."

"Very well, I shall remember you.—I accept the correction," he added to himself.

After a long ride covering the whole of the mountain-guarded plain, in which every point of offence and defence was carefully noted, Lord Creighton was riding back from the extreme end of the *cul-de-sac* when he noticed a small but dense grove of waving pines. He rode forward leisurely to examine this, for he was a man who would miss nothing in his inspection of a landscape on which



alarm arrested their fiendish work, and the miscreants rushed headlong to their horses.

Thus the "White Company"—Death's Heads indeed—was formed. The mutilated wretches recovered their own arms and horses and hid themselves from the face of man till night fell. Then they marched miserably to the position from whence next morning they watched the first of the great cavalry fight. They had removed their blood-splashed tunics and paraded in their shirt sleeves. It was this which made them appear at a distance to be wearing patrol jackets. The rest you know. Their vengeance was complete. Death was sweetened by it.

When Lord Creighton and his horror-struck staff ran through the outer fringe of the wood, the first act in the tragedy, so to speak, was over. Five men lay dead on the ground—one white shirt. The officer had gone in at the head of the troop to give the men a lead. The firing party consisted of the whole of the men still living. After each volley four men stepped

from the right flank, marched fifteen paces, halted, wheeled right about, shouldered their carbines and stood to attention. The leader, the tall man who had been noticed in command upon the hill that morning, lowered his sword. Another volley ! The line of dead was added to by four. The firing party closed to the right to correct their position. Four more men moved from the right and took their ground. Again the leader lowered his sword—and so on ; the line of dead ever lengthening out, the firing party ever shrinking in.

“ Stop, in the name of God ! ” Lord Creighton shouted as he dashed forward. “ Cease fire ! ”

The leader of the company made a sign. Fifteen men—mutilated remains of men—wheeled about, shot the empty cases out of their repeating carbines, and covered the General and his staff. The leader nodded, and the firing recommenced. Always the four men from the right detaching from the main body ; advancing fifteen paces ; wheeling right about ; standing

to attention ; then the volley ; then four more men ! Thus the line of the slain waxed, and the line of the slayers waned. And all the time these featureless, grinning Death's Heads pursued their deadly work without flinching. No man compassioned his fellow. No man had pity for himself. They were removing their hideous carcasses from the land of the living. Their dead past was burying its dead. They were disbanding by mutual consent.

“ Let us go ! ” Lord Creighton said in a low voice to his staff ; “ the heart of man was not made to suffer this.”

The next volley was louder than the last. Fifteen carbines had been added to the firing party by the General's retreat.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## TO SQUARE ACCOUNTS.

EARLY in the morning after the great cavalry fight the whole English and Austrian force was in motion. It should have started, if possible, the evening before, but men could not fight such a battle and march to much advantage on the same day. The Russian and Turkish infantry and artillery were pressing forward on their long flight to Philippopolis. And the English and Austrians were pressing after them, lamentably short of cavalry. If, however, they had too little cavalry to push home the victory, the enemy had still less to cover his retreat.

In the flight the enemy split into two sections, each taking one of the great roads to Philippopolis. The section which took the northern route went by the Demir Hissar and Melniki road until after

many days' forced marching it struck the river Maritza at Tatar Basardjik, whence the railway proved of immense assistance in transporting sick, wounded, and worn-out men and field impedimenta to Philippopolis. The other division never reached its destination at all. Marching more directly east, it was overtaken on the historic plains of Philippi, and there shared the fate of Brutus and Cassius. This battle was absolutely decisive. Unprotected by sufficient cavalry, the retreat from the field could not be maintained. Wholesale surrender was the only alternative to extermination. The result of this engagement was greater than what would be gathered from the figures representing the lists of killed and wounded, or even the enormous number of prisoners. It enabled the invading allies to threaten the enemy's lines of communication, thus causing a hasty surrender of the otherwise impregnable natural rampart formed by the Despoto Dag range of mountains, and when this disastrous news reached Philippopolis, a council of panic rather than a council of war was held.

It was soon resolved to abandon the place and fall back on Constantinople, disputing the ground and fighting where possible, or where natural advantages favoured the defenders. The long-drawn agony was nearly over and the Turk and Russian were soon pushed eastward almost to the gates of Stamboul, leaving the great cities on their line of march so many heaps of blazing refuse from the artillery fire by which they had been dislodged. On the blistered trail left by the armies, rose-gardens were trampled into dust heaps, vineyards laid flat ; the olive and the plum were cut down for over-juicy firewood or blasted out of root by dynamite shells. Burnt-out buildings, blighted fields, blackened forests, flocks and herds devoured, marked the great ruin which moved sternly eastward, sweeping before it all the social putrefaction of the Turk and stamping out all the brightest and best features of his landscapes. Very lamentable the latter, and very terrible ; but from all this havoc and massacre a new harvest of human happiness would spring forth. Old systems of civilisation perish in blood and flame. New

systems spring from their ashes. The law of change has no exception.

On the line marked by the ruins of the ancient wall which crosses the short peninsula on the extreme end of which Constantinople is built, and which runs from the Sea of Marmora to the Black Sea, the armies of Moslem and Muscovite made their last stand. Before the final battle is described, the thread of this narrative must be resumed.

The three comrades, Jackson, Huggins and Cameron, passed through all the changes of the campaign without serious hurt. They had, every one, a few minor scratches which were not physically dangerous, and which, if they lived till the war was over, would have a certain picturesque value. They were all three certain of commissions if they outlived the war, but for the time none of them could be spared from their posts—not even Jackson, in spite of Colonel Crawford's recommendation. It had been found easier to fill up the gaps in the superior ranks than to procure

experienced non-commissioned officers, of whom an enormous number had been lost.

One night in the tent the comrades shared—they had tents now, wonderful to relate when the methods of British transport are considered—the conversation took a somewhat gloomy turn. This was a novel phase in their intercourse, but the dangers they had passed had been so many, and the dangers they had yet to face bade fair to be so desperate, that the bravest man who ever lived would hardly talk lightly in their place. This conversation limped lamely on ; then ceased. The silence was abruptly broken.

“I forgot to tell you that I had bad news to-day of our little friend Janita,” Huggins was beginning lazily, and with a yawn, when a strange soft sound came faintly from without. It might have been a human sigh, or only the rustle of the whispering trees. Neither Jackson nor Huggins appeared to notice it, but Cameron sprang to his feet, snatched up his sword and rushed from the tent. Jackson arose as if to follow him. Huggins intervened.



"Sit down, Sergeant-Major, sit down. You're not wanted in this job. You are not indeed."

"Not wanted! What do you mean? Do you know what he is after?"

"I surmise I do."

"Then what is it, Huggins? He seemed seriously upset. What has happened?"

"I think Janita—has happened!"

"I am glad it's nothing serious," Jackson said coldly. "I wish she had gone to England as I arranged."

"It's rather serious for her if I am not mistaken," Huggins answered, lighting one of Cameron's cigars (these came regularly from England, the boxes addressed in a lady's handwriting), and puffing placidly. The brand was good, and the subject of the conversation was temporarily dropped.

Cameron meantime hurried as fast as he dare without attracting attention after a figure that was just vanishing in the darkness. That soft cry which he heard in the tent could not be

mistaken. The voice was Janita's, and there was sore trouble in it.

Janita was not easy to overtake. When Cameron increased his pace she did the same. When crossing little open spaces which were free of tents and soldiers, and Cameron ventured to run a few steps, the girl ran faster. At last, fearing that she would altogether escape him, Cameron called out :—

“Janita, Janita, stop ! It is I, Cameron. You cannot go farther in that direction—you will be stopped by the patrol.”

The words were scarcely spoken when a sentry challenged. Janita was thus caught. She dared not go forward. Cameron answered the sentry for her. Her partial knowledge of English always deserted her in moments of emergency, and her speech would not be intelligible to a trooper of the “Queen's Own”.

“You very foolish girl,” Cameron said to Janita in the tone of mild reproof which covers and conveys the keenest sympathy. “How dare

you run away from me? I have not seen you for such a long time."

She did not answer. The girl was sobbing piteously. Cameron took her hand gently, but she pulled it away, not angrily nor rudely, but with a gesture of despair that touched the man deeply.

"Janita, what is this—what is the matter? You must tell me at once what your trouble is." He spoke seriously now and imperatively. "How in the world did you get here?"

The girl pointed to her arm. She wore the Red Cross. Cameron had not noticed it in the darkness and in the confusion of the meeting. The moon was rising. It was already lighter than when the chase began. He took her arm and made her turn towards him. She buried her face in her hands, and the piteous sobs again shook her slight form.

"Janita, this is terrible," Cameron cried. "Will you not tell me what I can do for you?"

"Only this," she said at last in a breaking voice.

"Do not ask me—anything. And forgive me for troubling you. I could not go without seeing you once—just once before I go away."

"What are you going for?"

"For ever," she answered, slightly missing the meaning of his last word.

"And where are you going?"

"Ah!—it is a long journey that I am going." She shivered and unconsciously moved a little closer to him. Then she suddenly drew back with a moan.

"Listen to me, Janita. Your moods are maddening. You are in trouble, and you do not wish to tell me of it. Very good. I can't complain of that. But this new manner is very distressing to me. Now, here you are at your own quarters." They had walked slowly as they spoke. "And when I next see you I shall expect to find my little friend of Saloniki in the place of this sorrowful girl."

They were now close to the Red Cross Hospital tent. They stopped, and looking up to him, the

girl said : "Stoop a little, please. Be patient with me. I shall never trouble you again."

The man bent his head down to the same level as the girl's. She put out both hands timidly, and turned his face to the moonlight, which was now bright. For an instant she looked into his eyes. It was well for his peace of mind that he could not see clearly the expression that was in hers, which were turned away from the bright rays.

"Good-bye!" she said with a gasp.

"Good-bye, for how long?"

"I said for ever," she answered and turned away.

"For ever! Nonsense!" he exclaimed, catching her arm. "You are unwell, Janita, and you fancy foolish things. I am not going to give in to your silly humour. You must stop this foolish talk and be a good girl——"

"Ah! Have mercy on me and let me go. Why did God bring me into this dreadful world? Let me go, I say," she sobbed. "Let

me go. I have looked my last upon your face." She tore herself desperately from his clasp. When he recovered from his surprise at this wild speech she was gone. It was useless to attempt to follow her.

"Poor thing!" Cameron said softly as he went slowly back. "It is heartbreaking. Ah! here are the others. I am in no humour for their company."

Jackson and Huggins were strolling down the main road, which had been roughly made through the cavalry camp. They were looking for Cameron, although neither mentioned the circumstance to the other.

"So you've got back, have you?" Huggins hailed. "You're what I call a surprise party, you are indeed. How's the girl?"

"Do you know anything about her?" Cameron asked, ignoring the question.

"Yes, sir, I know all about her."

"Tell me what you know. I am really very anxious."

"Better come back to our tent. Tent! It's what I call a marquee. It is a Hotel Metropole after the bare ground."

"Oh, bother the marquee and the Hotel Metropole and the bare ground. We have had enough of all three. What about the girl? What's the matter with her? Out with it! I want to know it now. You can talk here as well as in the tent. You can talk anywhere. Commence talking!" Cameron spoke the last words with a pretence at raillery. It was a poor pretence. Huggins, however, accepted the curt invitation and began without further preamble.

"When we left Saloniki she followed the army and hocus-pocussed her way into the Red Cross Society. I found out that; I did, indeed, and a little more. She was present at that affair of Eski-Baba, where you remember the nursing staff was raided by the Bashi Bazouks and Circassians—damn their souls, if they have any. Hallo! are you so hard hit as that?"

Cameron's exclamation of horror having inter-

rupted Huggins, the veteran did not know whether it would be wise to continue.

"Go on; finish it," Cameron said presently in a dry forced voice which he found hard to steady.

"She was one of the missing when the roll was called," Huggins went on, "so she must have escaped later on. It is what I call devilish hard lines, for Janita was a doosid nice girl. She was indeed."

Huggins turned the matter over in his mind and then said something to Cameron in a low voice, evidently not meant for Jackson's ears. Jackson, indeed, was not in the least anxious to eavesdrop. He moved a few steps off, as had become habitual with him during these confidences. But he caught a phrase or two which was couched in the usual manner of Huggins, "What I call a square girl with the corners off," and the like. He assumed, therefore, that the subject was nothing more important than a piece of the usual "good advice" to which Huggins



was prone, and he observed with satisfaction that Cameron appeared to listen more unwillingly—or less willingly—than usual. The whole matter had almost left the Sergeant-Major's mind when it was brought back to it with a jerk.

"You inhuman brute!" Cameron cried furiously, and instantly struck Huggins in the face with all his strength.

The elder man reeled back from the force and suddenness of the blow, and stared a moment, stupefied. Then he tore out his sword (Jackson and he had brought their swords) and roared:—

"On guard, you hound!"

Cameron drew, and two or three fierce passes were exchanged before Jackson could run forward and strike up the weapons, saying:—

"Are you mad? Do you know where you are? Huggins, do you want to lose your stripes?"

"Stand back, or on your own defence," Joe Huggins answered grimly.

"Cameron, is your promotion no longer worth while? Put up your sword!"

"I will," Cameron said passionately, "when I have put it through that pig's heart of his."

The situation was not only critical, but dangerous in the extreme. There was more to be feared than even the serious injury, if not death, which might take place in the duel. There was the imminent risk of discovery and consequent disgrace. If the raging duellists had a moment to cool, they would surely see the wanton folly of their conduct. Jackson made a bid for that moment.

"Very well, Huggins, I take you at your word. I forbid this ruffianism to proceed, and I stand upon my defence. The man who moves farther in it must reckon with me." He stepped between the duellists. They lowered their points but did not return their weapons.

"I am surprised, Huggins, that you should draw upon him in spite of the extreme provocation—you who are so much his superior with the weapon! He would have about as much

chance with you as if his hands were tied behind his back ——”

“I’ll let him see, if you’ll stand aside,” Cameron interrupted bitterly.

“And I don’t see anything very heroic in that,” Jackson continued, as if he had not heard Cameron’s remark.

Huggins stood undecided for a moment, his purple cheeks bursting in his rage. Then he snapped out doggedly :—

“I spare him for your sake. And that squares our account for calling you ‘hypocrite’ the day you tried to come the Nonconformist minister over him.” He sent his sword into its scabbard with a vicious crash, and added as he marched off :—

“I am even with you now, John Jackson. Yes, sir, I am indeed.”

## CHAPTER XVII.

## THE PURPLE EAST.

"WHAT came over you?" Jackson asked coldly as he and Cameron walked toward their tent. "Why did you strike him?"

"You would have done the same yourself if he had said to you what he said to me. But if you had hit him he would have dropped in his tracks. I was only able to stagger him. You would have knocked him down."

"You have not answered me. Why did you strike him? I would report you on the spot only for the sake of your promotion for which you have worked hard—that is, hard for you."

"I struck him and I would have killed him in spite of his fencing," Cameron said, with the masterful ring of passion in his voice to which very few were insensible, but which was wholly

lost on the man to whom he spoke, "if you had not interfered, because—because he said something about the girl, about Janita—made a proposal that—that—I cannot tell you. Don't ask me. I am not quite a Nonconformist minister as he called you, but I am not altogether a beast. You would not believe me if I did tell you."

"You are quite wrong," Jackson answered coldly. "It does not follow because a man strives to maintain some standard of honour and self-respect that he is necessarily a fool. I dare say I could guess his proposal, which I have no doubt was thoroughly characteristic of the man. In many ways he was obtaining an influence over you which I deeply regretted. I am not sorry that it is now at an end."

"Don't be too severe," Cameron pleaded. "You chummed with him just the same as I did, and appreciated his friendship just as much as I."

"Certainly as much—but altogether differently. I appreciated him fairly. That is, I was sensible of his limitations. The balance, notwithstanding

these—which are neither few nor far between—seemed to me to be on the right side. I gave him the credit, therefore, to which I considered him entitled, and no more. You swallowed him whole, so to speak. You'll learn sense in time, if you have the luck to live a thousand years. And now, as to the girl and my Nonconformist ministership, does it occur to you that, if you had listened to my pastoral advice when it was given ——”

“I did not act against your advice in any culpable way.”

“Bah!” the Sergeant-Major said in a tone he rarely used. “Any way which directly or indirectly makes misery for others is culpable. Can't you grasp that but for your mean”—Cameron winced and Jackson repeated the word—“your mean flirtation, the girl would now be safe in Saloniki, or better still, in England, and not—not ——”

“That will do,” Cameron interrupted in a low voice. “You need not go any farther. If all mischief makers were punished in proportion, this

world would soon be purged." Then, devil-may-care and campaigning soldier as he was, he had to gulp down something in his throat once or twice before he was able to say :—

"I hope, Jackson, you do not think I am indifferent or callous".

"I do not. You are thoughtless. That amounts to the same thing."

"It is evident that you have judged me beforehand, so I will say no more. I am sorry if you think me guilty in this."

"I am your friend," Jackson replied simply and as though there was nothing more to be said. With him and such as he, that claim covers a multitude of sins. In this case happily the sins were not quite a multitude—only a few desultory peccadilloes ; hardly a microscopic drop in the ocean of human misdeeds.

Further conversation was cut short by a great flare of night signals. Drums beat, bugles brayed, and in less time than a suburban party would expend on the welcome of a freshly-captured

social lion lured far from his beaten track, the whole of the British and Austrian armies were under arms. Before morning was well begun, the last grand struggle commenced for Byzantium, the keynote in that long discord which for many centuries has clanged about its battered walls and squalid purlieus ; through which is drawn that line which separates the East from the West ; over which Nemesis has long sat on close guard, so that the reckoning when it comes to be paid may be paid in full. At last, this reckoning would be paid with splendid interest. The Purple East would in the coming day witness a blaze which would burn its damnable conventions into something less than dust. And the fire would be cheap even if its flames were fed with dead men's bones. This was more than a milestone in the march of progress. It was an epoch in the history of humanity.

At daybreak the first shot was fired. By eight o'clock both armies were fully engaged. At noon the issue was in doubt. The Osmanli



Turk can fight when driven to it (Moltke's contemptuous appraisement of him had previously been proved to be not altogether correct)—and the Russian soldiers when decently led—when less absolutely squandered in thousands by lazy, incapable, ignorant and imbecile commanders, than in the Russo-Turkish War—can work wonders. They did work wonders. So effectively did they work them that the Duke of Connemara was for the long space of three hours in as poor a plight as Wellington at Waterloo. The consuming fire of this dreadful conflict ate up men by regiments, by brigades, by divisions, and still hungered. Fresh troops were thrown bodily into the great gullet, and disappeared. Then more and more, and still no change. No doubt the enemy suffered equally or in even a greater degree. But it seemed as if he had made up his mind to die to his last man or win this fight, and against the courage of despair it is hard to prevail.

Our left, which had suffered desperately from

a concentrated artillery fire, began to give way. It was formed by the 6th, 31st, and 14th Austrian infantry divisions. The scene on this part of the field could not be described, and would not bear description. For four hours these divisions had been mowed down by whole companies, and had yielded not a yard. But the carnage was more than man could bear. Staunchly as the living stood to their ground, the great gaps piled thick with dead could not be borne with for ever. The sickening sights at last visibly affected even the best regiments. Scraps of gay clothing pinned together by shattered human bones or plastered with men's brains ; bodies without limbs ; limbs without bodies ; headless trunks ; trunkless heads ; dismembered corpses ; disembowelled corpses ; corpses cut in twain ; corpses cut piecemeal ! Sedan multiplied ! Hell incarnate ! Then the rush of the Cossacks and Circassians on the broken lines, on the fragments left alive ! Don Cossack and Circassian hurled back ; begin again

the scream of shells, the thud of heavy shot plunging through the body of a horse or smashing a man to pieces ; again the wild horsemen with gleaming swords ; again the fierce command :—

“ Magazine fire ! ”

Back scurry the savage troopers with hundreds of empty saddles, and the artillery plays anew ! To the Duke of Connemara was brought the news :—

“ Our left is breaking up ! ”

Next :—

“ The left is broken ! ”

And at last :—

“ The left is retiring ! ”

Detaching four divisions from his right centre—two English and two Austrian—the Duke sent them to the relief of the hard-pressed left. An enormous force of Russian infantry was now massing under the cover of their artillery, and preparing to convert our reverse on the left into a rout. Upon this body the comparatively fresh

divisions advanced steadily. Owing to a deep depression in the ground, the Russian artillery could not play upon them without damage to its own infantry. The divisions advanced smartly across the valley and up the hill beyond, encountering in their route some regiments of Turkish redifs, who rushed upon them shouting fragments of their prayers : "*La Allah il Allah ! Allah Akhbar !*" But the dogmas of Mohammed are not serviceable against Austrian rifles or British bayonets. The redifs were brushed aside, and the divisions marched on unchecked. Reaching the crest, the whole lines broke into flaming volleys. No doubt they received a fearful fire in return, and nothing short of the splendid self-sacrifice of officers and men—who gave their lives to animate their comrades—would have kept the long lines steady under its awful impact.

When the last sheet of flame had blazed from end to end of their badly broken lines, the attacking divisions were within fifty yards of the fumbled mass of Russian infantry, now in hopeless disorder.

A moment lost might cost an army. There was not time to slip a single cartridge into a rifle. In the sudden lull of firing the English bugles, and after them the Austrian, were heard far over the stricken field, and where their sound began to fail it was taken up again and passed on and repeated in its articulate equivalent by a great chorus of general officers, regimental officers, company officers, and down to the non-commissioned grades :—

“Charge !”

The men let out a short yelp as they started, and then saved their breath for the work that was before them. There was a little sputter of ill-directed firing from the blocked Russian masses, and then the attacking lines broke against their dense columns—fell back a little after the shock like the receding waves of an incoming tide—burst on again—back again—on again ; each time a few yards gained ; a few hundred more men stabbed to death—then a great effort and the charge was successful ! It was terrible. As mass murder it was magnificent, and it was war.

A general advance was now ordered by the Duke of Connemara. The broken Austrian left hastily threw itself into something approaching formation and pressed forward desperately, hoping to regain the martial honour it had never really lost. On our right all resistance was over, and the enemy hastily withdrew his centre, fearing a flank attack. Our cavalry had so far been very little employed during the battle. Their turn came now. They had a good time amongst the flying savages. They had their fill of slaughter.

This was the last battle in the campaign. It ended the Ottoman Empire, which the experience and history of four and a half centuries had proved could not be mended. For from that morning in May in the year 1453 when, in the name of the Prophet, Mohammed II. entered the city of Constantinople over the dead body of Constantine XIII., till the day of Grace, when the English and Austrian armies reoccupied it in the name of humanity, the dominion of the Turk had been a running ulcer in the side of

Europe. By this war he was driven back into that Oriental obscurity from which he never should have emerged ; there to await, for a generation or two, it may be, his final extermination. Then it must be hoped that the human slate will be wiped clean from his lazy, barbarous, useless personality, and his memory be relegated to the tradition which already contains all that is known of the cannibals and cave-dwellers of prehistoric times.

Austria flew her eagles over Saloniki. The English flag was run up in Stamboul. Roumelia and the autonomous states were incorporated in the Austrian Empire, and only a small portion of the peninsula on which Constantinople is built was absorbed by Great Britain. But although that portion was small it was important. For with Constantinople on the east and Gibraltar on the west, the Mediterranean was at last a British lake. And there may her fleets manœuvre at their own good will until some Power more civilised or humanised arises from out the azure main or else-

where to guide the destiny of mankind. Meanwhile, as the signs of the coming of the new aurora are not yet very evident, we may as well be content with what the gods have given us, and wish humanity better helpers.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

## JACKSON'S LAST BATTLE.

ONE episode remains.

Early in the morning of the last fight the 4th Hussars were riding back with a loose rein and reddened spurs across the shell-swept plain separating the two armies. They had been engaged in one of the very few cavalry movements which had taken place during the first stages of the battle. As usual they had lost heavily, for any force commanded by Colonel Crawford soon developed a habit of charging "home". On the ride back, Troop Sergeant-Major Cameron threw up his hands and fell from his saddle without a word. The regiment swept on. Men were falling fast and it would not be out of range of the Russian guns for another mile. The word was passed to the regimental Sergeant-Major that his friend was down,

and when the message reached him he rode out of his place and did not pull up till he was a hundred yards to the right of the line—for stragglers were galloping back in no order, and a man might be ridden down with the best intentions.

When all had passed, Jackson drove in his spurs and dashed back on the line of retreat till he came on Cameron, who was lying in a huddled heap, which meant death or a dangerous wound. Jackson leaped from his horse and ran up shouting :—

“ How is it, Cameron ? Are you badly hurt ? ”

To this there was no reply.

Jackson turned the fallen man over on his back and saw that he was still alive, which cheered him greatly, but he also saw that a small party of perhaps a dozen Cossacks were riding down upon him, and that his own horse had bolted, carrying away his repeating carbine in its case. It would, therefore, be a hopeless fight, but he might as well die fighting as fainting.

The first action taken by Jackson was to drag Cameron, or his dead body. (he hardly knew

which), against a bank of earth which had been thrown up early in the day as an entrenchment, and had since been liberally added to by the explosion of a heavy shell. This had piled the earth still higher on the bank and rendered it a tolerable shelter from one side at least. Then as the Cossacks were very near, John Jackson drew his sword, pulled his chin strap down, and prepared for his last fight as became a man of good courage, albeit with no great name or very high esteem for his own valour. And by the time he had put his back to the bank and moistened his palm to grasp his sword hilt firmer, the whole cavalry brigade had re-formed on the crest of the hill on which our right wing rested, and the episode which follows took place under the eyes of every man in the Division. But Jackson had no thought of this when he took his stand.

A puff of smoke spurted from the cavalry line. It was Braithwaite, the crack shot of the "Queen's Own," who had by special permission tried a snap shot at one of the Cossacks, the farthest out

from Jackson's line. The man dropped with the bullet in his head, and his comrades instantly threw themselves into threes, keeping Jackson between them and the possible line of fire. The under-officer in charge of the party halted it, and ordered two of his troopers to dismount and despatch the man at bay, and his wounded companion, with their lances.

Every Cossack carries arms enough for half a dozen, but this party had not a cartridge left. The men obeyed the order and ran up, thrusting together with their long black, flagless lances at Jackson's body. One lance shaft he shored with a cut which sent the head flying a score of yards, and, dodging nimbly for a man of his great bulk, he caught the other lance in his left hand and jerked it forward so suddenly that the Russian actually had not time to unloose his clasp until he had stumbled within a couple of yards of the British hussar and received his death-thrust through the neck. The other whose weapon had been sliced in two plucked out his sword, but not

in time. He fell with his comrade's lance showing two feet through his body.

The busbies of the 4th Hussars were waved furiously, and a rousing cheer went up from their ranks, but no movement dare be made to assist their comrade. Issues too momentous were at stake to allow a single man to leave the ground where the General had ordered the regiment to form, unless indeed his direct permission was received.

The Cossack under-officer swore liberally, and ordering his men to follow, spurred his horse so sharply that it nearly threw him by its sudden leap. Recovering his seat smartly, he dashed up with his lance lowered to strike, and another moment might have been Jackson's last. But the report of a revolver rang, it seemed, from beneath the hussar's feet, and the Russian's horse dropped instantly. The man himself pitched forward on his head and lay still. His long lance plunged deeply into the sod three feet from Jackson's side.

"That's all I can do. I am done—but ——"

Cameron, who had partly raised himself from the ground, sunk down again. The barrel of a revolver which he had picked up on the field where he first fell smoked in his hand. It was a chance shot, but a lucky one. The next two Cossacks' horses fell over the one Cameron shot, and their riders were cut down by Jackson as they struggled dazed to their feet. Four were down, but six were still alive and Jackson himself had been badly cut across the head by the fourth man. The odds were still too great.

Fortunately for the man who was fighting for his life, the two horses which had fallen became entangled in their own bridle reins and accoutrements, and could not readily regain their feet. With the horse that was dead, they formed a barricade which prolonged the conflict by affording Jackson some protection. With the Cossack lance in his left hand and his sword in his right he awaited the next attack. He was severely hurt, but his fighting blood was up. The "slow"

man's face was white, with an ugly red gash dripping from the left brow. But the eyes were steady. He was not beaten yet. For a few seconds the Cossacks kept off and began to jabber, still keeping very close together so that Jackson's head and shoulders showing above the bank of earth would be between them and the English line. Something must have happened on the hill, for the Russians suddenly ceased arguing and rode furiously at him. Jackson had not dared to turn his head to see what had alarmed his foes. It might be that help was coming. If so, it must reach him soon, for he knew he could not long continue the unequal fight, nor hope for such extreme good fortune as he had had to last.

Unable to approach within striking distance owing to the fallen and still kicking horses which formed a barricade their own would not approach, the Cossacks threw themselves from their horses, which they left in charge of one of their number. Together the five remaining men fell upon the stronghold with its garrison of one. Two of them

died at its threshold, and the garrison still held out.

Now Jackson knew that no single swordsman could long parry three antagonists unless clad in armour, and three men were upon him, sword in hand, having thrown down their lances owing to the confined space, so he decided to let the Russians do the parrying. Drawing a great breath, he fell upon them, slashing and stabbing with such extreme violence that all three began to give ground, and back to their horses. A wild cheer sounded from the hill. It might mean relief. The Englishman gathered all his far-spent strength for a supreme effort, and aimed a terrible cut at the nearest Russian. The man parried stoutly, and Jackson's sword blade flew in fragments. He dashed his great fist, still clasping the hilt, in the man's face and sent him off his feet as if a round shot had struck him. But in another moment he himself fell, and his blood was upon two Russian swords.

Lord Creighton, while his command was re-



forming, had been watching the field with anxious eyes, and the incident described did not pass without his notice. He really had no time to waste on such a triviality, but seeing through his glass how gallantly the English soldier bore himself, he said shortly to his aide-de-camp :—

“ That man is too good a soldier to be spared. He’s a hussar, I see. Ask Colonel Crawford for a small party of volunteers to bring him and his wounded comrade off.”

That shell-swept plain was a dangerous riding school, but Lord Creighton had seen the yellow busby bags and scarlet plumes waving over the line formed by the 4th Hussars, and knew that there would be volunteers enough to fill the bill. In fact it mattered very little whether twenty men or two thousand went. For it was almost certain that a proportionate force would be simultaneously detached by the enemy, and so a score would be as effective as a hundred, or as ineffectual—according to the fortune of war.

When Ainsworth galloped up to the 4th

Hussars he waved his hand towards Jackson and shouted :—

“Colonel Crawford, the General asks for volunteers to bring that man off!”

Four hundred swords rasped out of their scabbards as if the order to “draw” had been given by the Colonel.

“I say distinctly, Colonel Crawford,” Ainsworth called back over his shoulder as he rode off, “that the General asked for volunteers.”

“The 4th Hussars volunteer,” Colonel Crawford answered shortly.

The whole regiment swept down the sloping ground and arrived at Jackson's fortress in time for Troop Sergeant-Major Huggins, who was riding out of his place and far forward, to split the skull of the last Cossack who was drawing his sword from Jackson's body. They carried back the two comrades, unaware whether they were living or dead, and when they got back to their position sent them to the surgeons in the rear.

When that long day of battle was over ; the

enemy defeated and destroyed ; thousands of men slain, and tens of thousands mutilated ; millions of pounds sterling blazed from the mouths of machine guns, and the British and Austrian armies were about to lie down and sleep on the hard-won field—living, dead and wounded, all in close company—a strange thing happened in the picket of the 4th Hussars. The regiment had returned from a long pursuit ; the order to dismount was about to be given when a slight commotion was observed. The regimental surgeon was struggling with a big man, and the big man, all blood and bandages, flung the surgeon off roughly, and also put aside a slender nurse girl who tried to stop him. It was noticeable that, even in his delirium, the man handled the girl very gently. He did not put her roughly from him as he had done the surgeon, but unclasped her clinging fingers gently as though she were a persistent child. Janita looked after him with tearful eyes, as he advanced to Colonel Crawford and saluted. Then he tried to stand to attention, but his big body swayed. The Colonel

jumped from his horse and said hastily, "Jackson, hold on by me and tell me what you wish to say".

"I want, sir, to—to—bid the regiment good-bye—if I may speak to the lads".

"4th Hussars, 'tention!" the Colonel ordered. The wounded man was crazed, but he would humour him.

Jackson twisted his fingers in Colonel Crawford's shoulder strap and steadied himself. He was a heavy man, but the Colonel drove his heels into the ground and the two stood firm. Then the dying man faced the regiment and said hoarsely :—

"I only wanted to say, lads, that—that although I am not so old a soldier as—as Huggins ——"

"You're a damned sight a better," Huggins snapped out, and then swore at himself under his breath. It was the first time he had ever spoken on parade except to give an order or answer a question.

"But I would—what was it, Colonel?" He straightened himself up and nearly pulled the

Colonel off his feet. "Yes! I would give my life for the regiment: the 4th Hussars." Then he became quite dazed and stupid. His fingers were still twined in the Colonel's shoulder strap. But for this he would have fallen. Suddenly his voice sounded almost at its best, although his mind wandered:—

"Eyes centre! Draw swords!"

It was against discipline, but the swords came out.

"Salute—salute—I have forgotten, Colonel, what it was I meant." On that, "Stonewall" Jackson loosed his hold on Colonel Crawford's shoulder and fell forward on his face.

"Carry swords!" from the Colonel.

The regiment remained at the salute until the surgeon had examined Jackson's body and found that he was dead.

"Return swords!" the Colonel ordered in a low voice, and the blades were silently sheathed. Some of the youngsters newly joined had wet eyes, although they had seen many terrible sights that

day, and there was a sound like a sob, followed by a torrent of subdued blasphemy in the immediate neighbourhood of the Sergeant-Major of A troop.

When they buried Jackson at sunrise next morning the whole effective strength of the regiment paraded, and, although many thousand funerals were in progress, it was with something more than "regulation" ceremony that the men removed their busbies as the earth was shovelled in.

## CHAPTER XIX.

## HOME.

LONG before political negotiations were sufficiently advanced to permit of the withdrawal of the English and Austrian armies of occupation, Cameron was sent home invalided and promoted. Before he left he discharged one duty, and tried conscientiously to perform another. The first was to make friends with his old comrade Huggins, with whom he had quarrelled so bitterly. It is doubtful if Huggins would ever have forgiven the blow, but that the peacemaker was dead. His action in doing so was an *in memoriam* tribute.

"Want to part friends," Huggins began not very graciously. He was sitting in the shade of a broad-leaved sycamore. His costume was suitable to the climate and agreeable to himself.

He had taken off his tunic and eased his waist belt, for he was getting stout in spite of hard campaigning. He smoked a very large pipe, which he allowed to go out frequently as he talked—Huggins always used a good deal of tobacco and an immense number of matches. “Want to part friends,” he repeated in the same voice, and paused again. “Well, I don’t know. I think we can do very well as we are. The world is what I call a very large place. It is indeed. There’ll be room enough in it for both of us without crowding either ; especially as you will be giving up soldiering now.”

“Who said I would be giving up soldiering ? ”

“Who said it ? Jackson used to say it.”

“What did Jackson say ? ”

Huggins did not answer for some time. His pipe required lighting. He attended to this with deliberation and then resumed:—

“Yes, sir. He said that when you got your commission you would go home and marry the girl



who came on board the *Crocodile* to see you off. Devilish fine girl, too. Good face and good figure. She wants no tailor's fat. She does not indeed. Miss—what's her name? ”

“ It does not matter about her name, Huggins, and I wish you would not speak of her in that way ——”

“ Feel as if you would like to hit me again? ” Huggins interrupted, but without anger. “ Well, then, I won't talk common-sense when you are so infernally particular as to what I say about your young women, and I'll tell you what I have been thinking. I have been thinking that as you seem so mighty anxious to part friends, and as our Sergeant-Major that was would wish it if he were alive, and —— There's my hand and that's an end to it.”

Cameron's next duty was to find Janita if possible, or at least to learn her fate. He was told that she had nursed him through the worst period of his hospital spell, in which he was unconscious or only rarely conscious, but she

disappeared before his senses were fully restored. It was in many ways an awkward subject to introduce to Huggins, but the old soldier had made up his mind to bear no malice. When he said the quarrel was at an end he meant it.

"She's gone back to Saloniki," Huggins said bluntly in answer to a judiciously framed leading question in which the girl was not even mentioned.

"Might I ask, Huggins, are you quite sure?"

"Yes, I am quite sure."

"How do you know? I am not asking from mere idle curiosity."

"I'll tell you how I know," Huggins answered. "Because I paid her passage."

"You?"

"I did indeed."

"But she had money herself. Lazarus paid her well ——"

"And robbed her of every penny before she started for the army."

Then in answer to Cameron's look of inquiry

Huggins continued, "Yes, sir. I did not think I could be so sorry for anybody—barring *him*. I did not indeed. But the chit seemed so cut up, and—and—a fool and his money are soon parted, you know."

"You must let me repay you this money, Huggins."

"If I do, I'm damned," Huggins said with emphasis, lighting his pipe for the tenth time.

"Then I must stop at Saloniki and see if I can do anything for her."

Huggins arose, stretched his large body and yawned. Then he went up to Cameron and said in his oracular way :—

"Go home and marry the girl with the figure. Don't stop at Saloniki. You won't see Janita unless you hurry. You wouldn't like to see her, and if you did you'd not know her, she's so much 'off'. She's what I call heartbroken. That's a straight tip." He would not say another word on the subject. It was quite evident that he felt ill at ease. He had not in this matter acted up to his

reputation. He was trying hard not to be ashamed of the most chivalrous action of his life.

"Heard about Unghvar and the other?" he asked suddenly.

"No; what have they been doing?" Cameron said carelessly. He had no heart for camp gossip at the moment.

"The two—that's all's left of the six—came over here and were very civil. Inquired about you. Glad to hear you were better and got your commission. Praised you up all sorts and me the same. Sorry to hear about the girl, and asked me to send her some money from them. I sent it on right enough, but don't think it will be much use. Said they were sorry for their rowdyism, which all began as a joke, and would have come to say so soon's they heard the trick I played on them, only their regiment was moved out before they knew about it. Altogether they were devilish polite. That Unghvar's a nice chap after all."

Cameron soon after took his leave of Huggins, and when they parted it was evident that all trace

of ill-feeling had vanished from the veteran's mind.

The return of Lieutenant Cameron, V.C., to England was, of course, noticed in the papers, and an invitation from the Wintons was awaiting his arrival at his old hotel in town. He accepted it with pleasure. The events of the past three months had made a deep impression on his character. He had not passed the age when a man can profit by his experiences, and he was now very thankful for the peaceful prospect of a holiday in the "Bungalow," which at one time had been considered rather dull. He was welcomed with as much enthusiasm as any conquering hero could desire, and for a time was obliged to submit to be exhibited to the neighbourhood. One evening, when this social function had begun to pall, he begged off duty, and in consequence the casual visitors of the day were not asked to stop and dine. Lady Sladen indeed remained, but she invited herself.

Cameron smoked a cigar after dinner with Mr.

Winton, and then, finding his host had become absorbed by the financial news, he joined the ladies. It was the first evening free from a crowd he had had since his arrival at the "Bungalow," and he thought it would be a pity to spend it in the smoking room.

Mrs. Winton was fast asleep in an armchair. Lady Sladen and Miss Winton were talking in low voices, but with great animation. May's happiness was extreme and very apparent. Her transparent nature did not easily conceal any emotion, and she would certainly have had difficulty in hiding a joy so great. Her soldier was back from the wars safe and covered with honour. He had not forgotten her. All was well with the world.

Miss De Courcy sat silently apart, and looked into the fire. The lights in the room were turned low. Cameron's entrance caused a stir. The ladies vied with each other in a rivalry of service which was altogether unnecessary, but extremely agreeable to the convalescent soldier. They wheeled a low couch to the fire for his comfort—

winter was creeping on and the evening was chilly —and when he was seated May said with a certain proprietorial air :—

“ This is almost the first moment we have had you to ourselves, and we want you to tell us all about the dangers you have passed ——”

“ And the anthropophagi, and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders,” Miss De Courcy put in with an attempt at frivolity which would not have deceived a girl of twelve, and should hardly even have deceived a man. It did not pass Lady Sladen.

“ Oh, bother the dangers ! I am heartily glad they are over,” Cameron said, as he stretched out his hands to the cheerful blaze. He did not continue for some moments, and it was in an altered and serious voice that he added : “ I am glad the whole thing is over, the whole horrible savagery ; don’t ask me to think of it ! ”

“ Surely you must be proud of all the glory ——” May was beginning, when Lady Sladen put in :—

“And to see your name in all the papers. Why, the tiniest paragraph costs me no end of worry ——”

“And to be complimented by the Queen,” Mrs. Winton interrupted, now fully aroused and interested.

Miss De Courcy said nothing.

“Oh, it's all very well talking about the glory and so forth,” Cameron replied in the same serious voice. “Mind I am not saying it has not got to be done sometimes, or that a man should shirk his duty, or anything like that. I did mine as well as I could, and now that it is over, I don't want to talk about it, much less to brag about it. ‘Where are the boys of the Old Brigade?’ Faugh! where are the boys of a hundred and fifty brigades? Where's old ‘Stone-wall’ Jackson, the best man I ever knew? Lying in a hole upon a hill-side, with ten thousand dead men to keep him company!”

“It is nothing, dear—only a twinge of neuralgia,” Miss De Courcy said hastily, for



May had turned to her on hearing a smothered gasp.

“Tell us about poor Jackson’s death,” May said in a low voice and with tears in her eyes. “He was such a kind-hearted fellow. And then to think he gave his own life to save yours! It is too terrible. Please tell us.”

So, sitting in the soft twilight of the room, Cameron told them how his friend had died. Most of the story he only knew by hearsay, for he himself had been unconscious during nearly the whole of the episode he was describing. But every man in the “Queen’s Own” was letter perfect in this lesson, and none had such good reason as Cameron to remember it. Mrs. Winton and May wept freely, and with all her bravado Lady Sladen’s eyes were wet more than once during the story. Mr. Winton, who had come into the room, coughed in an uneasy manner oftener than was necessary on strict business principles. Miss De Courcy sat quite still, her hands clasped tightly together on her

lap, her white teeth clenched, her head carried high.

When Cameron had finished his story he said suddenly: "I have forgotten — the strangest thing! When I was lying in the hospital tent, Huggins brought me an unopened letter which was in Jackson's pocket. I was not good friends with Huggins at the time, but I must say for him that I think he forgot all about our quarrel for that day at all events. He had not forgiven me at the time, I found out afterwards. He had simply forgotten our row, he was so much cut up about Jackson."

A log fell from the grate and hissed and smoked against the fender. Miss De Courcy attended to it, saying as she did so:—

"This soldier, Huggins, that you speak of—who was first up at—at ——"

"No, he was not first. It was a dead heat between him and the Colonel, but it was Huggins who cut down the Cossack," Cameron said.

"And Huggins is ——?" Miss De Courcy asked pointedly.

"Sergeant-Major, A troop."

"Still—in the service?"

"Oh, yes; Joe Huggins is still very much alive."

Miss De Courcy did not pursue the subject. "You were speaking about a letter when I interrupted you," she said with dry lips.

"Yes, the mails had just been delivered that morning as the assembly trumpet went. We all crammed our letters unopened into our pockets, and some of us, like poor Jackson, never opened theirs. I did not know what to do with the letter. It was in a lady's hand, and I had not the heart to send it back, for I thought that the girl, whoever she was, would like to think that he had read it."

Miss De Courcy looked swiftly in the speaker's face and then turned away her eyes. "That was a very kind thought of yours," she said.

"And then, of course, I did not like to destroy

it. I could not think clearly in the state I was, so I gave the letter back to Huggins, and told him to put it where he got it, and consequently poor Jackson's letter was buried with him. The strange thing is that although the writing on the envelope was as familiar to me as yours"—May, who was addressed, seemed rather embarrassed—"I could not think whose it was. Perhaps, as my wits were wool-gathering, I may have imagined it all, for Jackson had no lady correspondents that I ever heard of."

"It is most probable that you imagined it," Miss De Courcy said.

"Oh! I should have remembered, Miss De Courcy, that you always hated slop," Cameron blundered. "That little incident, I suppose, has spoilt the whole story for you."

"Yes," Miss De Courcy said, rising and standing erect, "I am afraid, as you say, that it has spoilt the story for me."

## CHAPTER XX.

## CONCLUSION.

MISS DE COURCY was passing from the room when May Winton followed and caught her hand. "Let me go with you," May whispered in an agonised voice. "It is too dreadful that I should be so happy and you so—so ——" She could say no more. They left the room together.

Lady Sladen went to a side table on which a good deal of feminine debris was heaped. She easily found what she required—a bundle of letters all addressed in the same writing. They were a bundle of invitations addressed, as usual, in Miss De Courcy's bold, stylish hand. She brought these to the couch where Cameron was sitting.

"Say, is that the same writing as was on Jackson's letter?" She passed the packet to Cameron. He had only glanced at the writing

when he exclaimed : "How stupid of me ! Of course that was the writing—Miss De Courcy's !"

"Thought so," Lady Sladen said drily.

When she came to her own room, Miss De Courcy turned to May, and said : "Good-night, and thank you". Then she impulsively took the pitying face in both hands, and bending down, she kissed the girl's forehead with cold lips, and said : "Not now, dear—not even you. Let me go," she cried suddenly, flinging away the caressing arms which still clung to her. "I wish to be alone. It is more than I can bear."

May returned to the drawing-room in despair. She had long since learned one of the great lessons of life. She knew what sorrow was, and that knowledge makes its student sympathetic. Lady Sladen took charge of her, and, in spite of prior prejudice, May could not but confide her trouble and that of her dear friend to this woman whom, not very long ago, they had both scornfully called "the Yankee".

The Yankee listened to the tale patiently and

with less than her usual harshness of manner. When the story was told she excused herself for a minute to Miss Winton, and went over to where Cameron and the master of the house were chatting. She touched Cameron lightly on the shoulder :—

“ Can you speak a word ? ”

Mr. Winton, who was well acquainted with her ladyship’s occasional peculiarities of manner, found business in another part of the room.

“ This letter which your friend received—were there any postmarks on it—and dates ? ”

“ Yes, I remember the London postmark and the date, 12th September. I remember that perfectly.”

The room was so quiet now that Cameron’s voice carried all over it.

May, unconsciously eavesdropping, said, “ That was the very day she got the legacy, father —— ”

Mr. Winton rustled the paper he was reading—upside down—and pretended to be very busy with it. Lady Sladen looked at him with an expression which conveyed as distinctly as if the words were spoken :—

“Brazen it out, can’t you? See me!”

She did not question Cameron further. “Poor Jackson,” she said to herself somewhat wistfully as she recrossed the room to May. “I am sorry for you. And I am sorry, too, for the ‘bloated aristocrat’. I guessed she would not be long in writing to him when she got her ‘legacy’. I am glad I put old man Winton up to that. It was the best thing I ever did in my life. And I must say he did his share.”

Reaching the chair where she had left May Winton, her ladyship found herself in some trouble for subjects for conversation, which was unusual with her. As she was not at the moment in the humour for troubling herself in such a trifling matter, she caught up a locket she had noticed that May always wore, and said carelessly :—

“Whose miniature is this? The ‘Warrior Bold,’ of course!”

“It is my sister’s,” May said without taking offence. The American had proved that she was woman first and Yankee afterwards.



“ May I see it ? ”

“ Oh, yes ; with pleasure. Was she not beautiful ? ”

“ What’s the name scrawled across it ? I can’t read it.”

“ Janita. That was the name of her child.”

Cameron came to them with a white face. “ Is that your sister’s portrait, May ? ” He did not notice that he used her Christian name without the conventional prefix. “ And was that her daughter’s name ? ”

“ Yes, my sister’s child was called Janita. Don’t you know their sad story ? They were killed by the brigands in Thessaly. My father, I am told, has never been the same man since, although the tragedy is now fifteen years old. It must seem little—less than nothing—to you after all you have undergone. I should not have mentioned it if Lady Sladen had not opened the locket. The subject is forbidden in this house. Indeed, my sister was so much older than me and I was so young when she went abroad I do not remember

her very well." May closed the locket with the slight sigh which is the only tribute that can be spared for an association so remote.

The rush of emotion which swept over Charles Cameron at that moment put all social canons aside. To the astonishment of the whole party some strong language was heard, which would have been more fitting for a camp than a drawing-room. It ceased at a word from May.

"You are wrong about Janita's fate," Cameron then said more quietly but in a voice that shook. "She was not killed by the brigands. She only died last week—so Huggins writes. I—I—met her, and was sensible of her slight resemblance to you, although I did not mention it to the others; they would only have laughed at me. Your sister's portrait would almost pass for your own, but it still more closely resembles Janita. I could swear to it in a thousand, in spite of Janita's Greek features."

"You met my daughter's child?" Mr. Winton said huskily, joining the group. Cameron's voice had reached him.

"Yes, yes! I met her certainly," Cameron raged. "And what is more, I had a Turk in my power in the affair at Eski-Baba and I let him go alive!"

The latter circumstance was not very relevant, but the speaker was beside himself for the moment, and it was some time before he could recount for Mr. Winton the manner of his meeting with Janita. And then the details he gave amounted to no more than that the girl was Greek in appearance but English in character; that she was amiable and appeared to be respectable in her conduct; and that she had died in a fever. Mr. Winton multiplied his questions, and May, too, was curious, but Cameron would recollect no more.

. . . . .

The winter was far spent, and spring had again begun to breathe upon the dead earth and quicken it to its resurrection, when General Crawford returned from the East and renewed his friendships at the "Bungalow". His was a welcome visit

to all. Miss De Courcy noticed with genuine pleasure that the great campaign had not laid a heavy hand upon him. His hair was a little greyer ; but otherwise he was not much altered. They were walking in the walled garden, where the first blossoms of the spring were bursting from their buds. The girl's manner was friendly, but a little reserved. That broke down when the General led her to a garden seat and said, as if he were taking up the thread of an interrupted conversation rather than a new subject :—

“ We tried to bring him off ”.

“ Yes, Mr. Cameron has told us.”

“ The whole regiment went.”

“ With you at their head.”

“ My slight share in it was done for the man's own sake —— ”

Miss De Courcy felt the strain imposed by the General's pause and said :—

“ Then you thought him worth it ? ”

“ Yes ; but if I had not, I would have done the same or more for your sake.”





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