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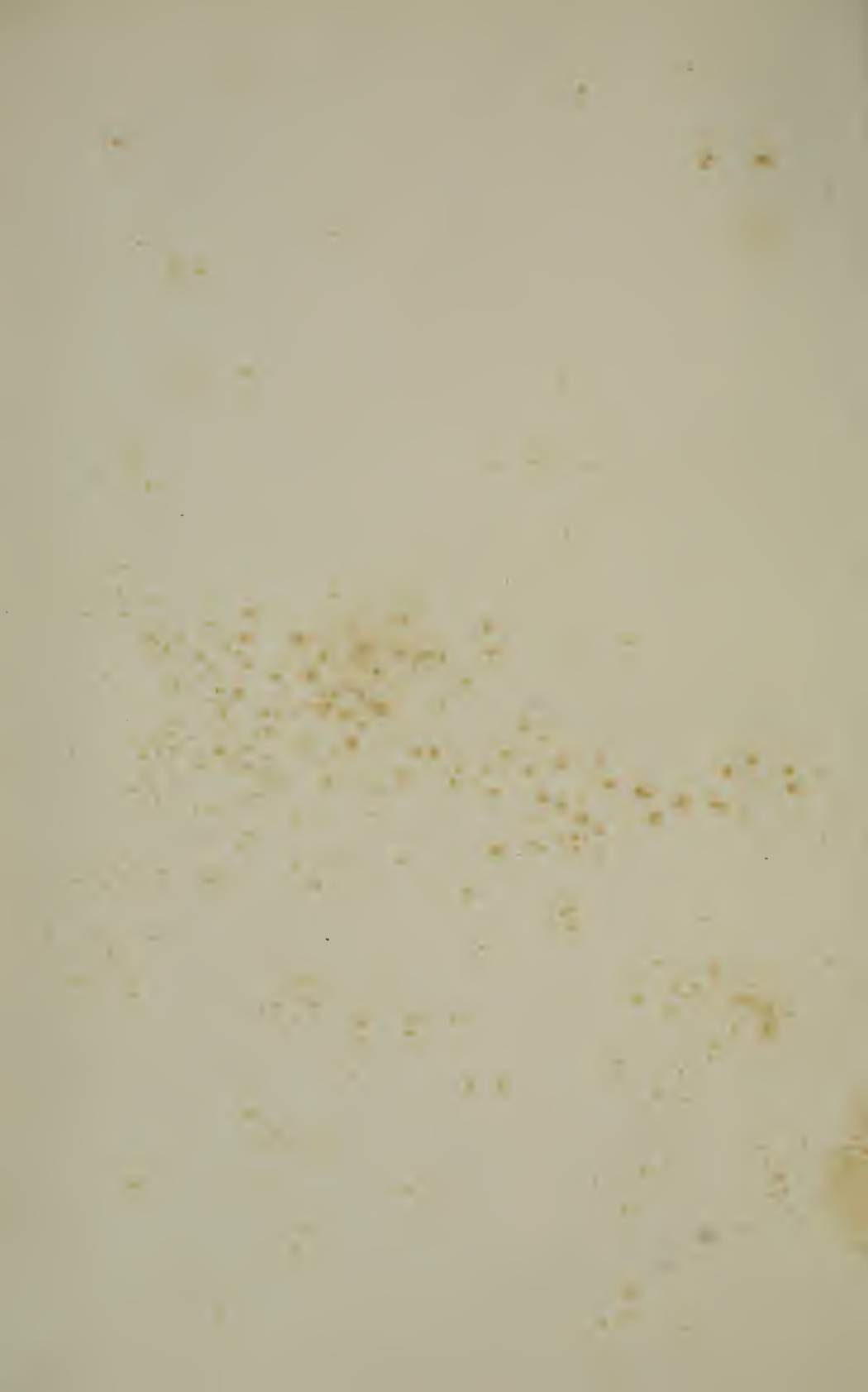
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COLVILLE OF THE GUARDS.

VOL. III.

COLVILLE OF THE GUARDS

BY

JAMES GRANT

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“THE ROMANCE OF WAR,” “THE CAMERONIANS,”

“THE SCOTTISH CAVALIER,”

ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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COLVILLE OF THE GUARDS.

CHAPTER I.

THE 'FLYING FOAM.'

WHEN Ellinor, whom we left some pages back in a very perilous predicament, opened her eyes again it was on an unfamiliar scene—the cabin of a ship—and on several male faces, all of which were also unfamiliar save one; and her eyes half closed again, as she was too weak and exhausted to disentangle the confusion of her thoughts and, half imagining she was in a horrible dream, would have striven to sleep but for

the wet and sodden garments that clung to her.

‘What has happened?’ she moaned.
‘Where am I?’

‘Safe aboard the “Flying Foam,”’ said the voice of the man who had rescued her, the sailing-master of that vessel, Mr. Rufane Ringbolt, whom we shall ere long describe more fully.

Her miserable plight and imminent peril had been seen from the deck by that personage, who at once had a boat lowered from his craft, which lay at anchor in the Elbe. He had saved her, and in a spirit of mischief—or not knowing what else to do with her—had brought her on board the yacht of his employer, Mr. Adolphus Dewsnap, whose present companion and bosom-friend was Sir Redmond Sleath, whose first emotions of perplexity and evil on Ringbolt bringing off a lady changed to those of blank astonishment and high

triumph on recognising in the half-drowned girl—Ellinor Wellwood!

Dewsnap rubbed his hands with satisfaction. They had just landed two or three peculiar lady friends at the Brandenburgerhafen to go back to London by steamer, or remain in gay Hamburg as they listed, and already the *Flying Foam* seemed a little lonely.

'By Jove, you look more beautiful than ever, Ellinor!' exclaimed Sleath, taking her hands in his, as she reclined helplessly on a sofa. 'My friend, Mr. Dewsnap—let me introduce him—Miss Ellinor Wellwood. This is a most unexpected joy!'

'I am glad of the accident which gives me the honour of making your acquaintance, Miss Ellinor,' responded Mr. Dewsnap, near whom she recognised the grinning visage of Mr. John Gaiters, Sleath's devoted valet.

Seeing the helpless and terrified con-

dition she was in, Mr. Ringbolt almost forced her to imbibe a little weak brandy and water from a liqueur-frame that stood on the cabin-table; and then, as there were no female attendants on board the yacht, with considerable readiness and forethought, brought down from the deck a Vierlander boat-woman, who had come off with vegetables for the steward and cook, to attend upon Ellinor.

The Vierlander had some doubts and scruples at first; but when a few twenty-groschen pieces were slipped into her hand these evaporated, and a smile of acquiescence spread over her weather-beaten but pleasant-looking countenance, for she had soft, dark eyes, a *nez retroussé* decidedly, and, if rather a large mouth, full red lips, as Mr. Ringbolt could remark appreciatively.

She took Ellinor into an inner cabin, and soon changed her wet garments for

some that the late fair voyagers had left behind them; and when, in fear and terror, she implored to be set on shore, she was told that it was impossible, as a heavy fog had suddenly settled down on the land and river.

'Oh, heaven, what will become of me? Mary! Mary!' wailed Ellinor, as she clung, as if for protection, to the hands of the picturesquely-clad Vierlander.

'Hope I haven't brought you a Scotch prize aboard, gentlemen,' said Mr. Ringbolt, winking knowingly, as he mixed himself a glass of grog.

'A Scotch prize—what the devil is that?' asked Mr. Dewsnap, whose cognomen among his chums was generally 'Dolly.'

'Well—it means a mistake—worse than no prize—one likely to hamper the captors with heavy legal expenses.'

'A Scotch prize, and no mistake!' ex-

claimed Sleath, as Ellinor, weak, tottering, and scarcely able to stand or articulate, appeared with her new attendant at the door of the cabin, which was now so darkened by the evening fog that the steward was lighting the lamps.

Sleath, approaching, attempted to take her hand.

‘Don’t, sir—dare to touch me!’ she cried, in a weak voice, while starting back.

‘She knows you, Sleath, by Jove!’ exclaimed Mr. Dolly Dewsnap, becoming interested.

‘Rather,’ said Sleath, with an ugly wink. ‘Are you not glad to see me so unexpectedly, Ellinor?’

‘Glad!’ said she, shudderingly.

Her old repugnance was now increased tenfold, and mingled with genuine terror. A man with such a bearing and with such an expression as she read in the cold blue eyes of Sleath, would, she knew, have no

mercy, so she turned to Dewsnap; but there was little to encourage her in his leery and *blasé*, though rather rubicund, visage.

'Put me on shore, sir, I entreat you,' she said.

'It is impossible—utterly impossible, till the fog lifts,' said he, emphatically.

'I shall die!' exclaimed Ellinor, in a low, husky voice, as the light seemed to leave her eyes.

She put her tremulous hands to her slender throat, for a painful lump seemed to rise there—nay, was there—catching her breath, while this meeting again, under all the circumstances, with Sir Redmond Sleath seemed 'one of those strange and almost incredible things which, however, we meet with every day in that marvellous volume of romance, real life.'

She cowered and shrank back before

Sleath as if he were some wild animal, which only excited in him a spirit of anger and banter, while his friend Dewsnap knew not what to think of the situation as yet.

‘Altona agrees with you,’ said the baronet, jauntily. ‘You are handsomer than ever. Womanhood gains instead of loses by maturity. But don’t be so devilish stuck up! And *what* were you doing in Altona?’

She made no reply, but now glanced imploringly and appealingly to Ringbolt, while Sleath resumed in this fashion—

‘I did not entrap you this evening—I did not run away with you,’ said he, surveying with admiration the volume of her rich brown hair, which was then brushed out, and floated damp and at full length over her shoulders, and she figured now in a species of costume such as she had never worn before, including a tailor-made

jacket and a round felt hat, part of the wardrobe of one of Mr. Dolly Dewsnap's recent fair voyagers, left for conveyance back to London, and now likely to prove exceedingly useful. And Ellinor was almost passive in the hands of those among whom Fate had so suddenly cast her.

After her recent narrow escape from a dreadful death, and now her present misery, she was too feeble and too full of fear to summon proper pride and just indignation to her aid.

'Fate has given you to me again,' continued Sleath, 'so, why not stoop—yield to the inevitable, and the delight of living for and loving each other! We shall remain on the Continent now, Ellinor, and never again set foot in that cold-blooded England.'

A comical expression twinkled now in the eyes of Mr. Dewsnap, who was an

undersized, but fleshy and flashy, personage, about thirty years of age, and vulgar in style and aspect, though dressed in accurate yachting costume, with gilt buttons and glazed boots. He knew not what to think of the situation, we say. Though far from straitlaced—though a thorough-paced scamp, in fact—he was puzzled and doubtful what to think of the past relations of his chum Sir Redmond and this young lady, who, he saw at a glance, was neither fast nor vicious, as most of the baronet's lady friends were; that she was no dove from St. John's Wood, or 'girl of the period' in any way.

While Ringbolt beckoned Gaiters on deck to obtain some information on the subject from him, Sleath began again, in low and softer voice, while hanging over her.

'We were about to run away together before, and would have done so, but for

the brute your sister's dog. Now, Ellinor, darling, we shall elope in earnest, and we shall not be the first couple who have done so, and lived happy ever after, like couples in the old story books.'

'Don't be alarmed—don't fear, Miss Ellinor,' said Dewsnap, thinking it necessary to say something, as she turned her haggard eyes on him, and ignored the presence of Sleath.

'Don't fear!' says a writer. 'How often in this world of terror and trouble has that phrase been spoken, and how often will it yet be spoken—in vain.'

'Oh, sir, will you, in mercy, if you are a man, set me on shore?' she implored again.

Dewsnap shrugged his shoulders, and looked at Sleath, while muttering something about 'the fog.'

'No!' exclaimed the latter, emphatically; 'and no accident but one sent from heaven or hell shall rob me of you now!'

he added, almost savagely, through his set teeth, as he recalled the castigation he had met with at the hands of Robert Wodrow and his own muttered vow of vengeance.

She gave him but one glance, yet it was expressive of loathing and fear that were unconquerable—as though he were something of horror; but somehow her strength of purpose and defiance piqued or attracted him, and he loved her with all the coarseness of his low nature.

‘How she fears that fellow!’ thought Ringbolt, who was peeping down the skylight. ‘There is some secret — some strange story in all this.’

Of this strange interview, the Vierlander woman could make nothing; but, seeing that her charge was about to sink at their feet, she conveyed her into the little cabin or state-room, in which Ellinor’s attire had been changed, and, closing the

door, laid her on a bed to recover strength and composure, and there, fainting, feverish, and well-nigh delirious, she clung wildly, as if for protection, to her attendant.

Meanwhile the night darkened, and the fog undoubtedly deepened, so the yacht's bell was clanged ever and anon, while the two 'gentlemen,' with the sailing-master, Ringbolt, and the mate sat down to a luxurious dinner produced by Joe Lobscouse, cook of the *Flying Foam*, who, as a *chef*, was not equal to that of Dewsnap at home, Ragoût—but Monsieur Ragoût flatly declined to go to sea with that vessel, or 'any oder Voam,' as he always said. But in cooking Joe Lobscouse chiefly excelled in the famous *olla podrida* which bears his name, and is a compound of salt meat, biscuits, potatoes, onions, and spices, all minced and stewed together, and though dearly loved by those before the mast,

such a dish was never seen in the cabin, of course.

The wine went freely round, for Dewsnap was lavish with his Clicquot and Mumm's extra dry.

'With all her air of ineffable innocence, I believe that girl to be a deep one,' said he, with a wink to Sleath, as he had no belief in female purity whatever, and had detestable views of society in general.

'She agreed to run away with me once, so why should I not go in for running away with her now?'

'Right you are, my boy!' said Dewsnap.

'You remember that cad, Colville of the Guards?' said Sleath, viciously.

'I have heard of him,' replied Dewsnap, evasively. 'Well?'

'He trumped up a story about this girl being a cousin of his to keep her, and her sister too, by Jove, to himself—a fact, Dolly; told me in London they were his

cousins, though he never said so when we were at Dunkeld's place in Scotland. But now he has gone to Cabul, and the devil go with him !'

'What are we to do if the Vierlander woman won't remain on board after the fog lifts ?' asked the sailing-master, Ringbolt.

'In that case we should have little difficulty in getting a sharp girl to attend, or, better still, some knowing and suggestive elderly party,' said Sleath.

'All right, sir—one has not far to look in Hamburg for what you want.'

'Dash it all !' exclaimed Dewsnap, who was fast becoming rather inebriated (this was not precisely what he said, but it looks milder in print). 'This girl of yours, Sleath, is likely to give us a deal of bother.'

'Not at all. I shall soon find a way to put an end to her nonsense,' growled Sir Redmond.

Like the latter, Dewsnap always sus-

pected everybody until he knew they were innocent, and, if innocent, he deemed them fools. Thus he never doubted in his mind that the apparent repugnance of Ellinor was all coyness and affectation.

Mr. Adolphus Dewsnap, son of the late Alderman Sir Jephson Dewsnap, Knight, a soap-boiler in Bow, where he made a colossal fortune, was a fool and a cad of the first water, who looked up to Sleath, having a title, as one of 'the upper ten,' though Sleath's father had been, like the said alderman, a boy of the Foundling Hospital, from whence perhaps emanate many of the grotesque names we find in London.

The story of their titles is simple, and one of everyday recurrence.

The fathers of Sleath and Dewsnap had been made respectively a baronet and a knight for services rendered to the Ministry; but as those of the former, though

equally important, had been performed with less scruple, he had been rewarded with the diploma of a baronet of Great Britain, and a coat-of-arms, which taxed the ingenuity of the entire College of Heralds.

Sir Redmond Sleath was a man of violent temper naturally, especially when his will was thwarted; thus he felt himself humiliated, and, when inflamed with wine, rendered almost savage by the spirit of opposition and dismay he encountered in Ellinor Wellwood, whom he still viewed as a poor girl, without parents, friends, or protector other than Leslie Colville, and he now was far away indeed.

Dewsnap occasionally had half-tipsy thoughts of pretending to befriend this stray girl, and getting her away somehow 'on his own hook,' as he phrased it to himself.

But he had a wholesome fear of Sleath,

for, notwithstanding all his wealth, the latter had obtained somehow a great ascendancy over him.

‘She knows too much about me now,’ muttered Sleath to himself. ‘The marriage dodge and the ailing uncle won’t do again—so how to deceive her?’

“Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men are deceivers ever.”

so says Shakespeare,’ said Dewsnap, tipsily rolling his head from side to side; ‘and he was right; devilish few of us are worth sighing for, I think.’

‘Dolly Dewsnap turned moralist!’ exclaimed Sleath, with a scornful laugh.

‘Steward, some more moist!’ cried Dewsnap. ‘We’ll drink Miss What-her-name’s jolly good health. What says Byron, or some other fellow?’

“Man, being reasonable, must get drunk;
The best of life is but intoxication.”

So let us—drink—drink as long'sh—there'sh—a shot—in—the—locker!' he added, in a voice that became every moment more thick and 'feathery.'

So in these perilous hands was Ellinor Wellwood now.

But for the presence and companionship of the honest Vierlander woman, to whom she clung, though of whose patois of Danish or North German she could make little or nothing, Ellinor thought she must have died.

Her own clothes had been destroyed by her immersion, and meantime, when quite conscious, she felt it something odious and repellant to wear the clothes of others of whom she knew nothing, but suspected much.

How long was this atrocity to be continued?

She remained resolutely in the little cabin, declining to enter the saloon, or

take food or refreshment of any kind, and, when sense quite returned, she watched from the little eyelet-hole—the port was nothing more—of her sleeping-place for a passing ship or boat, to which she might shriek for aid; but dense dark mist obscured everything, and she cast herself on the bed in despair.

The *Flying Foam* was cutter-rigged, and sat in the water gracefully. She was about a hundred and fifty tons burden, and consequently had an immense fore-and-aft boom-mainsail. Her deck was of narrow deal planks, and was always white as snow—white as swab and holystone could make it. Her ten guns were all burnished brass; the binnacles and bitts were of polished mahogany; the cabins were all panelled maple, with gilded mouldings; everything there was alike luxuriant and *recherché*; for the purse the old soap-boiler left to his only son and heir

was a pretty long one; yet he was sometimes a little in debt, and found yachting then convenient.

The crew consisted of twelve men all told, including the sailing-master and Joe Lobscouse, the cook.

The former, Rufane Ringbolt, was, if not a good, not a bad-looking man, about forty years of age; his eyes were clear, blue, and penetrating, but cunning, leery, and shifting at times. The expression of his mouth, about the curves especially, was sinister and lascivious. There was a self-confident and reckless bearing about him too aggressive to be that of a gentleman or officer, for he had been the latter once, having served in Her Majesty's navy, but been—dismissed.

He and his captain had both fallen in love with one of those fast young ladies who are to be met with on the promenades of Portsmouth and Plymouth; but, as she

preferred the young lieutenant to the elderly captain, the latter was always 'down' on the former, who from that moment became what is known in the service as 'a marked man.'

His temper was sorely tried, and he soon found himself before a court-martial, charged with neglect of duty and insubordination. Never while he lived did Ringbolt forget the day of that court-martial in the cabin of the *Victory*, and amid his potations it always came most vividly before him in its bitter details, with the sunshine streaming through the cabin windows, the ripple on the harbour waves, and Portsmouth Hard in the distance.

There was the exulting and malevolent face of the prosecutor when the court was cleared for 'finding;' there was the ringing of the bell that announced it was reopened, and in custody of the master-at-arms, with cocked hat and drawn sword, he—the

prisoner—appeared before the court, all captains in full uniform, whose faces were graven on his memory.

During the proceedings his sword had been laid on the table, with the point towards the president and the hilt towards himself; now he saw that its position was *reversed*, and he knew that all was over, and he went down the ship's side into a shore boat a broken and degraded man!

And as the young lady, the cause of all the mischief, soon afterwards bestowed her hand upon the elderly captain who had 'smashed him,' Ringbolt had ever after but a very poor opinion of womankind.

He felt some natural curiosity about the damsel he had been the means of bringing on board the cutter, but there all further interest in her ended.

He thought if Sir Redmond Sleath, whose general character was well known to him, knew the lady it was all right; he

had no fear of being deemed an accessory in an abduction ; for though Mr. Ringbolt did not fear God, like many other men in the world, he mightily feared the police.

As for the Vierlander woman, she thought the ailing girl was the wife of one of the two Englanders, though she saw no wedding-ring on her finger ; but then, like all foreigners, she thought the Englanders very eccentric.

For several days the fog, consequent to swollen tides, rested on the Elbe, and the cutter rode with her foresail loose, Sleath having proposed a trip to Heligoland ; but Ellinor was ill—almost oblivious of everything, while Dewsnap dared not land her, and yet feared to keep her on board, thinking that Sleath's story of her utter friendlessness might be falsehood after all.

CHAPTER II.

ELLINOR.

SIR REDMOND SLEATH had no pity for the suspense and agony of mind now endured by Mary ; and as for Dewsnap and Ringbolt, they knew nothing about her.

During the days just mentioned the clanging of the ship's bell from time to time, and the din of fog horns from vessels passing with less than half-steam up, informed Ellinor that the fog still rested on the river ; yet every morning she heard the rasping of the holystones as the deck was cleaned, and the mysterious cry of 'soak

and send'—the order to pass the wet swabs along.

The terror she had undergone, the subsequent affronts, unblushing and terrible—for such she deemed Sleath's love-making—and the uncertain future, all throbbed in hot and wretched thought wildly through her heart, till at last, when the yacht was fairly under way, fainting-fits and the torment of sea-sickness made reflection, fear, and regret alike impossible, for a kind of delirium came upon her, and she grew oblivious of her surroundings; but we are anticipating.

'The girl may die on our hands, if this sort of thing goes on,' said Dewsnap, 'and that might prove deuced awkward for us all.'

'I have thought of that, sir,' said Ringbolt; 'but one may as well whistle psalms to the taff-rail——'

'As attempt to move me—you are right,

Mr. Ringbolt,' interrupted Sleath; 'but there is no dying in the case.'

'Why not send her ashore——?' began Dewsnap.

'And relinquish her? Not if I know it.'

'I mean to the boarding-house of the old Frau Wyburg, near the Bleichen Canal—you know the place.'

'Few rascals in Hamburg don't. She would keep her safe enough for me—it is not a bad idea; but I shall try my luck with her again before resorting to *that*.'

At the cruelty Dewsnap's suggestion involved, even Ringbolt shook his head dissentingly, and said,

'Whatever you do, steer clear of her husband—the Herr Wyburg, as he calls himself—he is a dangerous and a shady party—worse than the devil himself.'

'You know Hamburg, then, Mr. Ringbolt?'

‘Rather!’ replied the other, with a wink that inferred a great deal.

If this affair of Ellinor’s abduction found its way into any of the social weeklies, it might form a very awkward thing for her; but neither for Sir Redmond or his friend, Mr. Adolphus Dewsnap, as both were now rather out of the social ‘scratch race.’

‘A pleasant story for the fair Blanche to hear,’ surmised Sleath, as he laughingly made up a cigarette.

‘Who is she?’ asked Dewsnap.

‘The daughter of Lord Dunkeld.’

‘He is, of course, a topsawyer,’ said Dewsnap, superciliously, as, notwithstanding his wealth, he had been rather ignored in society, ‘and speaks in the House, I suppose?’

‘Yes.’

‘But I have never heard of a word he said.’

‘Likely enough—he never gets beyond

“Hear, hear!” He is a Scots’ representative peer.’

‘With a family tree, of course. D—n’m, I would rather have a good gooseberry-bush!’

The little state-room or cabin occupied by Ellinor she saw had evidently and recently been used by ladies before. In the drawers of the dressing-glass were hair-pins, an old kid glove, a broken jet bracelet, and other etcetera.

The door had a bolt on the inside.

One night she found, to her terror, that this had been removed!

Her heart grew sick within her; but, with the assistance of her attendant, she contrived to barricade the door most efficiently by placing a chair between it and her bed, on which, without undressing, she lay down with her temples throbbing like every other pulse with terror.

All grew still in the cutter, and not a

sound was heard but the ripples that ran alongside as she strained at her anchor—so very still that Ellinor was about to sleep, when a sound startled her, and she sprang up in dismay.

Some one without was attempting to force her door. Who that some one was she doubted not; but, after a time, finding himself completely baffled, with a half-suppressed malediction, he went away.

Ellinor lay awake in an agony of mind till morning dawned, when she opened the eyelet port of her cabin, and looked out. The fog was less thick, and a gasp of joy escaped her on seeing a boat with several men in it approaching. She shrieked to them for succour, and waved her handkerchief. On this they paused on their oars, and seemed to confer with each other, but, instead of drawing nearer, they laughed, kissed their hands to her in

mockery, resumed their pulling, and vanished into the mist.

Had any boat's crew actually boarded the yacht to make inquiries, Sleath was quite prepared to assert that the lady on board was his demented wife.

With the fog resting on the Elbe, she could see nothing of the land, and as the cutter might—she thought—have shifted her position in the night—she knew not where she was. Altona, she thought, might be miles away, yet it was only a rifle-shot distant. But for its extreme protraction, she might, at times, have thought she was in a dream, and that all her mental misery was but a provoking and ghastly phantasmagoria.

Days had elapsed now since her separation from Mary and Mrs. Deroubigne. They must, she knew, deem her dead—drowned—and might have gone away, she knew not where.

Torn in this outrageous fashion from the society of the only persons she loved on earth! Exiled from happiness, doomed to probable disgrace and misconstruction of conduct.

Her whole soul was wrapped up in one idea—escape! But how was she to achieve it, out of that accursed vessel, unless she cast herself headlong into the river? She certainly shrank from self-destruction, and hoped that something—‘that vague something, the forlorn hope of the desperate’—might intervene to save and set her free.

Sir Redmond’s persistent love-making could draw no response from her.

This enraged him; he ground his teeth, while longing to take her in his arms, and kiss her whether she would or not; yet he dared not attempt to molest her when he was sober and in daylight; something in the girl’s purity and disgust of him

repressed him. He dissembled, and said, submissively,

‘With your love, Ellinor—in offering mine—I would be a very different man from what I have been.’

‘Your love!’ she muttered, in a low voice of scorn.

‘Yes.’

‘Dare you offer it again to me after all I know?’

‘What a little tragedy spit-fire it is! Well, it is perhaps too much to ask you to love me, so I will only crave permission to love you.’

‘Insult on insult! Oh, this is intolerable!’ exclaimed Ellinor, covering her face with her hands. ‘It is useless to remind a man like you of his marriage.’

Sleath’s eyes gleamed dangerously. He and Ellinor were alone in the saloon, as Dewsnap and the sailing-master were smoking on deck, and the companion-way

was kept bolted to prevent any attempt at escape.

‘What did I know of life, of the world, or of human nature when I met that artful woman with the absurd name, Fubsby, and took vows—if vows they were—for a lifetime. Married! Well, even if I were so legally—which I don’t quite admit—what then? In the society in which we move—’

‘We?’

‘Dewsnap and I—flirtation forms the great occupation—even accomplishment—of married life on the part of those who are bound by it. You have much to learn yet, my simple little Ellinor.’

‘Do you call this conduct of yours flirtation—this illegal and punishable abduction of me—and insulting, loathly love-making?’

‘Loathly—an unpleasant phrase to use. Instead of the wretched life you lead at Paddington, I can give you one well worth living,’ said he, as if he addressed a girl at

a bar or a buffet, and in ignorance of all that had passed since he had discovered their residence in St. Mary's Terrace; 'and in turn, Ellinor, you will learn that a faithful old lover is not to be despised.'

'I have already learned that,' said Ellinor, her tears beginning to fall hotly as she thought of Robert Wodrow.

'I am glad to hear you say so,' said Sleath, thinking of himself, 'and to find that after all you cannot forget a man who has once loved you—and loves you so fondly still, in spite of the coldness you manifest and the obliquy you heap upon him. How grand it is to forgive!' he continued, attempting to take her hand. 'The literary bear Samuel Johnson never seemed so wretched as a man and a moralist, than when he gloried in loving a *good hater*.'

Ellinor prevented him from capturing her hand by shudderingly retreating to

the other end of the saloon. The contrast between the two men—the one who had sought, and still sought, to ensnare, and he whom she had wronged—who loved her so well, and had found, as she thought, a grave in that far away land, burned itself into her heart and brain with growing intensity, and wringing her hands, his name escaped her in a low voice.

‘Robert—oh, Robert!’

Would time ever heal—ever conquer her reproachful heart-wound?

Fury gathered in the heart of Sleath.

‘So,’ said he, ‘our mutual friend, Mr. Robert Wodrow, was not born to be hanged, if the newspaper accounts were true, by Jove; ha! ha!’

‘Sir?’ said Ellinor, scarcely understanding his brutal jest.

‘Cheated the gallows—that is all.’

In that speech he revealed the underlying brutality of his nature—of the par-

venu—the son of the foundling; and, in his wrath, he followed it up by another home-thrust.

‘What will be said of you—what thought, when it becomes known that you have been alone, cruising on board this yacht with us—with *me*?’

He saw without pity the start, the pained flush and pallor that crossed her face by turns, as he coarsely put into words the fear that had been hovering in her own mind.

She tried to reply to his cruel mockery; her white lips unclosed, and then shut again, for her voice died away upon them.

With all his love-making, never once did Sleath’s heart—or what passed for that organ—really soften towards the helpless girl, and times there were when he regarded her as a wolf might have done. He still made a mockery of the ‘cousin story,’ as he called it, and,

though Ellinor on one occasion condescended to partially explain it, he did not, and could not, believe it to be anything else than some cunning scheme of Colville; and as that individual, whom he hated, was now in India, he had nothing to fear from him, and only hoped he might soon get 'knocked on the head.'

At times there was something—what shall we call it?—almost savage in the admiration and exultation with which this man regarded the creature who was so entirely at his mercy, and who had been brought to him as flotsam from the sea!

He keenly relished, too, in one sense, all *blasé* as he was, the air of resistance with which she repulsed him; her bearing was so different and apart from that of most of the conventional girls he had generally met—not that he much affected the society of ladies generally.

But he regarded them chiefly as a means

of excitement—like champagne, an unruly horse, or a close run at *écarté*, and, so far as Ellinor was concerned, he had a firm desire to prove that his will was the stronger of the two.

At last he left her and went on deck. She stretched out her arms on the saloon table, and bowed her head on them in a kind of dumb despair, as she thought over all the degrading speeches to which she had been subjected.

‘Oh,’ thought she, ‘that I could bury my hot face among the cool, dewy roses that bloom at Birkwoodbrae! There I think I should get well—get well—get strong and be myself again perhaps.’

But instead, she was fated to get worse, for the moment the fog lifted, sail was made on the yacht, and—as stated in the beginning of this chapter—the horrors of sea-sickness assailed her, and she lay prostrate in the little cabin.

She had often been afraid to eat or drink, lest what she partook of might be drugged; she had read or heard of such things; but she was past all such reflections or considerations now.

There was something daring and lawless in the conduct of Sir Redmond with reference to the whole affair; but of that, too, she was—for the present time—oblivious.

CHAPTER III.

THE GALE.

THE crew of the cutter knew not what to make of the solitary and singular passenger they had on board, and whom the Vierlander woman agreed to attend till they reached Heligoland.

They had often seen ladies on board during runs to the Mediterranean and elsewhere, who were certainly not quite the *crème de la crème*; but that was no business of theirs, and now, though Sleath would have disdained to acknowledge it, and Ellinor knew it not, the presence of Dew-

snap and Ringbolt (though neither of them were very meritorious characters) proved a species of protection to her, but the sturdy, honest Vierlander more than all.

Thus her tormentor resolved that he would take her ashore with him in some place, where she would be more completely at his mercy among absolute strangers and dependent upon him for existence.

The crew of the yacht had saved her life, so they could scarcely be accused of abduction in keeping her on board during the bewildering fog or the blowy weather that succeeded it; but, without making the slightest effort by the use of a well-manned boat to put her ashore at Altona, they were now beating against a rough, head wind, and attempting to get out of the Elbe for sea.

To where and for what purpose? Heli-
goland could only be touched at in passing.
Were they to haul up for England after

that? Such were a few of the surmises among the men forward.

Mid-day after the fog lifted saw the *Flying Foam* under weigh, with canvas set, the foresail braced sharp up, the jib and fore-and-aft mainsail set, the boom of the latter well on board, as she was running close-hauled against a head wind for the mouth of the Elbe, some eighty miles distant, and making long tacks as the river widened.

Altona and then Blankenese, a tiny fishing village, with its houses scattered along the green slope among the trees, terraced over each other, were soon left astern, and the head of the cutter pointed towards Hamburg and then Stade, with the Prussian flag flying on the ramparts of Swingerschanze, where the White Horse of Hanover will never fly again.

The wind was blowing half a gale, and some reefs were taken in the boom-main-

sail when the low batteries of Gluckstadt, on the Danish side of the river, were in sight, and darkness fell soon after the last rays of the sun faded out on the spire of Freyburg; and still the close-hauled cutter, with her lights hung out, laboured on, and ere long, as the river, with all its treacherous shoals, widened, she became assailed by impetuous attacks of the sea.

The past day had been dull and hazy, and the half-gale now subsided almost entirely, but then the cutter rolled heavily, adding to the misery of the unfortunate Elliñor. Then the wind, blowing from the level coast, would recover its strength, and, changing its direction, become furious, while a heavy swell came on, and when dawn stole in the *Flying Foam*, still close-hauled on the port tack, was standing over towards Cuxhaven, the shore of which is so low that the only objects seen against the sky were the flagstaff of a

battery and the guns of the latter mounted *en barbette*.

There the river pilot went on shore, when the cutter, lying on the next tack, headed off to seaward, steered by Ringbolt himself, close to the wind, with her head just so near it as to keep the sails full without shaking them.

The baffling head-wind soon increased to a tempest; the timbers of the cutter groaned as she strained in the trough of the sea one moment and rode over a great wave the next, while the water poured in volumes over her deck, gorging the scuppers and carrying every loose article to leeward, and ere long the canvas was reduced until none was left than what was necessary for steering purposes.

All on board, even Dewsnap and Sleath, had donned their 'storm toggery,' and appeared on deck in oilskin jackets, with sou'-westers tied under their chins, the

baronet making vows, as ever and anon he clutched a belaying pin, floundered into the loose bight of a rope, or had to oppose his back to a drenching sea, that if he were once safe on German or Danish soil, he would tempt the perils of 'the briny' no more.

All day the cutter, though so beautifully modelled and built, beat against the wind without making progress, and now one of those tempestuous gales that so often sweep the North Sea began to spend its fury on her.

Rufane Ringbolt began to look thoughtful; he had the well sounded; glanced at the binnacle and aloft ever and anon; put a fresh quid of tobacco in his cheek, and took a survey of the weather.

A cloud darker than usual and lower down obscured the sky, spreading over the zenith. A lambent glare of lightning shot through its darkest or densest part; another

and another followed, and like the roar of artillery the thunder hurtled through the stormy air.

The wind lulled for an instant, permitting the *Flying Foam* to right herself from her careen, but again the wind bellowed over the sea, tearing away the foam and snow-white spindrift from the wave-crests, and again the cutter was pressed down to her bearings by its force and fury.

Pitchy darkness came on, but the vivid lightning flashes were incessant.

Owing to the obscurity, the difficulty of the watch on deck in passing ropes to each other became great, and the alternate gleams, with a deluge of rain, so blinded them that they were scarcely able to execute an order; so, hoarsely and angrily, Ringbolt summoned on deck the watch below, and as they were somewhat tardy in obeying, he resorted,

we are sorry to say, to much strong language.

‘Show a leg and turn out!’ he bellowed down the forecastle hatch, ‘tumble up the watch—quick, you infernal chowderheads, you’ll find it no child’s play now.’

As this reinforcement, only three or four in number, came ‘tumbling up,’ half dressed, the wind suddenly burst—but for a few minutes only—from an unexpected quarter, taking the cutter aback and throwing her nearly on her beam-ends.

The man steering was hurled right over the wheel, the rest, with coils of rope and whatever was loose or had become loosened, were heaped in a mass of confusion among the lee scuppers. In alarm that the craft was foundering, Sir Redmond Sleath, forgetting all about Ellinor, then praying on her knees with arms stretched over her bed—praying till sickness again overpowered her—sought some Dutch

courage in the steward's pantry by imbibing more than one stiff glass of brandy.

Ringbolt was the first to gather himself up. With an oath he reached the wheel; the spokes revolved rapidly in his powerful grasp, and the cutter was righted in time to save the mast, but still intense darkness reigned—the lights of Cuxhaven had long since melted into the sea—with tremendous peals of thunder, while vast masses of water passed over the buoyant and gallant cutter, and the blinding rain and the bitter salt spray were mingled together.

The lamp still burned in the binnacle, and the wetted garments and bronzed visage of Ringbolt shone in its wavering gleam as he grasped the spokes of the wheel, planted his feet firmly on the deck grating, and looked from time to time aloft, though he could discern nothing.

Day began to dawn, but the gale still

continued. The cutter was in the Elbe mouth, though no land was in sight; but Ringbolt knew that the two sandbanks between what is called the Southern and Northern Elbe lay ahead, but northward of Nierwark Island; and, just as this reflection occurred to him, the mate came aft in the grey dawn, his face expressive of concern, to report 'the lower mast sprung!'

This startling intelligence proved true, for Ringbolt found the mast had been thus injured in the gale—a great crack ran obliquely through it, rendering it quite unsafe for carrying the usual quantity of sail thereon, and he knew that unless instant precautions were taken the cutter might speedily become a wreck aloft, tidings which made the teeth of the selfish Sleath chatter in his head.

With all his errors and backslidings, Ringbolt was equal to the occasion, and

became the English seaman and the officer at once.

‘Sprung it is, by heavens!’ he exclaimed. ‘Take in sail—away aloft to the cap with the top-maul, out with the fid, stand by the mast-rope, and lower away the topmast.’

Three active fellows were soon up at the cross-trees. A stroke or two of the maul knocked out the square bar (with a shoulder at one end) that supported the weight of the topmast, which quickly slid down in front of the foremast through its upper and lower cap, and was at once made fast.

This eased alike the cutter and the mast, but it was necessary to put her before the wind, and run up the river again, as it would have been rashness to venture into the North Sea with a crippled mast. The storm had nearly spent itself, but thunder could still be heard in the distance between the lulls of the wind.

So the *Flying Foam* was once more running up the Elbe, to be repaired at Hamburg, with her topsail-yard down on the cap, her jib and staysail set, her fore and aft mainsail close reefed, and the boom so well eased off that its end skipped the waves at times as she rolled heavily before the wind.

At Cuxhaven another pilot, to take her up the river, came on board from the yacht, which, by their statutes, the inhabitants of that place are bound to have always at sea, or near the outermost buoy, to conduct any vessel requiring assistance; and, aided ere long by a tug-steamer, the *Flying Foam*, passing Altona in the night, when dawn came in again, was moored for repair in the outer portion of the Binnen Hafen, under the shadow of the lofty and wonderfully picturesque old houses of the Stubbenhuck.

And now, having recovered from his

fear and tribulation, Sir Redmond Sleath began to consider in what way he could delude his luckless victim ashore.

CHAPTER IV.

ALONE!

IN furtherance of his own cruel and nefarious schemes against Ellinor, Sir Redmond had forbidden the Vierlander attendant to inform her of where the yacht was now, and a few silver kassengelds effectually sealed her lips, while Ellinor, still confined to her little cabin, was prostrate in strength, and only thankful that the din of the storm had passed away, and the awful pitching and rolling of the cutter was at an end.

Dewsnap had fortified himself with so

many potations of brandy and water during the last few hours that he was scarcely sober now, and swayed about on his feet swearing it was still 'the roll of the ship.'

'My watch has stopped,' said he, in a thick voice, to Sleath.

'Indeed,' said the baronet, not much interested in the matter.

'I tried to wind it up last night, and mistook the corkscrew for a key.'

'After such a devil of a time as we have had of it I don't wonder at anything.'

Meanwhile Sleath was still considering how he would induce Ellinor to trust herself on shore with him, after writing to announce her coming to the Frau Wyburg's residence, or *pension* as she was pleased to call it; and Dewsnap was busy imbibing a 'pick-me-up' of iced seltzer and brandy, while conning over the sporting intelligence at several recent meetings—the plates run for, the bets at starting, the

Welter sweepstakes, and so forth, without even caring to open the letters the steward had brought him from the Poste Restante at the Post Strasse, when suddenly a loud interjection escaped him.

‘What is up?’ asked Sleath, looking up from his coffee.

‘The devil to pay in the East!’

‘How?’

‘A Reuter’s telegram announcing the murder of Sir Louis Cavagnari, and massacre of the entire embassy at Cabul!’

‘The entire lot?’

‘Escort and every man-jack of the Europeans!’

Sleath was of course interested, and read for himself the brief and alarming despatch.

‘So that cad Colville is wiped out then—a devilish good job too!’ was his first comment, and he contrived soon to let Ellinor Wellwood know the fate of her

'cousin,' as he called Colville in mockery.

Her first thoughts were of Mary.

More than ever did Ellinor long to be with her now. She strove to leave her bed, but sank helplessly back upon the pillow, and lay there still choked by dry sobs, her face pallid to the lips; in her half-closed eyes an unnatural gleam that came of mental and bodily suffering, while her hands were clenched at times till the nails almost cut the tender palms.

Ringbolt, the sailing-master, had a keen appreciation of the charming in female nature, and was able to admire every variety of the sex that came under his observation.

The wonderful beauty and delicacy of Ellinor inflamed his fancy. He saw that she seemed, somehow, utterly helpless—a mysterious waif, cast upon the waters; he saw that she trembled under the unpleas-

ant gaze of Dewsnap, and simply loathed Sleath, who sought to make himself the arbiter of her destiny; so Mr. Rufane Ringbolt thought why should he not enter stakes for this prize? Why should not he try to make his innings when others failed?

She had been picked up like a derelict craft, and by himself, too; and then Hamburg—dissipated Hamburg—filled with people of many races and creeds—was just the place where people may play the wildest pranks with ease.

Thus Ringbolt had been a kind of protection in one way to Ellinor, over whom he kept an eye, on his own account, and, as Sleath began to think, was always on the watch, as he was one who took what he called ‘dog watches,’ or ‘dog snoozes,’ and could sleep by night or day with wonderful facility, and apparently with one eye open.

And now that the yacht was moored along the quay of the Binnen Hafen, close by such thoroughfares as the Deich Strasse, and would soon be dismasted and in the riggers' hands, he thought the time had come when he might venture on some scheme of gaining Ellinor's gratitude first by pretending to succour and free her.

And, as these ideas occurred to him, his eyes sparkled, the colour in his grog-pimpled cheeks deepened, and he mumbled about with his lips like a man who had been in the habit of chewing twist tobacco, which was the case with Ringbolt after he was turned out of the navy and took to the yachting line of business.

The watchfulness we have referred to had not been unnoticed, and Sleath began to suspect that, if Ringbolt was not doing this for himself, he must be acting in the interests of Mr. Dolly Dewsnap, and thus

some action on his own part was imperatively necessary.

He was becoming exasperated, piqued, and disgusted, moreover, with Ellinor's trembling abhorrence of him, and began secretly to arrange with the faithful and unscrupulous Gaiters a scheme for having her more completely in his power ashore, and luring her quietly from the yacht on the pretence of restoring her to Mrs. Deroubigne.

'The embassy massacred—every officer and soldier destroyed!' exclaimed the latter, when she read the same startling telegram that gave Sir Redmond such extreme satisfaction. 'The hope of her future—her soul—her existence gone—poor Mary! Poor darling! *How* am I to break this to her?'

But broken it had to be, and then to Mary came hours of agony—such hours as in our lives count for years!

‘Ellinor drowned and—and Colville slain.’

Mary Wellwood was stunned and sorely stricken, and bowed her head as if the waves of Destiny were rolling over her.

She read the paragraph, so comprehensive and yet so terrible in its brevity, again and again, till it seemed to pierce like burning needles into her heart and brain.

So Leslie Colville was gone—dead—destroyed in what manner or after what torment she would never, never know.

His face and figure—his voice and smile came vividly and poignantly to memory as she sat like one turned to stone, with the kind arms of Mrs. Deroubigne around her, caressing her head on her bosom.

The dire calamity she had hourly dreaded might happen, had come at last, and yet there seemed to be an impossibility in the realisation of it.

Oh, why did men become soldiers ?

‘Alone—alone in the world now!’ wailed Mary.

‘My darling, you have me and my little girls to love you as sisters,’ said Mrs. Deroubigne, folding the deathly-pale girl again and again to her motherly breast; but, passionate though her sympathy and regard, Mary shivered, and thought who could ever replace Ellinor as a sister, and felt, as she said, most fearfully alone.

Her mind at times became confused. Something more had happened to her—she scarcely knew what it was.

Never again did it seem possible that she could take any interest in the life of the world and its daily routine. She was apathetic—careless of what was done with herself or anything around her.

Existence and its ties seemed over and done with, yet her present calamity seemed also a kind of dream to her. ‘Sometimes

in great trouble,' says a writer, 'the brain acts in this way of itself—it will return to events of long ago and recall them vividly, while the immediate moment becomes remote. But the reaction is all the more intense for this mental rest; and when the mind returns to the contemplation of the *present* it is to see with greater vividness.'

'The embassy massacred to a man!' How often was she to reiterate mentally that appalling line?

It was now Mary's evil fortune to feel perhaps—nay, surely—more keenly than her sister had done this new calamity, for poor Ellinor had certainly ceased for a time to love, though she had never failed to respect Robert Wodrow, now deemed also with the dead.

All was silent in that pretty villa by the broad and shining Elbe—shining in the light of the moon. The fire glowed in the tall, cylindrical, porcelain stove in a

corner of the room; that room ere while decorated and prepared for her and Ellinor so lovingly by Mrs. Deroubigne, and there she lay restless, sleepless, and alone, too bewildered to realise the dire calamity that had befallen her, and been acted in blood and wrath so far, far away, and yet but a few hours ago.

The curtains were drawn back, and the red glow of the half-open stove and of the night-light shed a radiance on her surroundings, but whenever her eyes wandered they seemed to see something that was familiar and yet strange to them.

Her mind was every way confused and involved, and poor Jack from time to time licked her hand unnoticed.

There was, however, always the one prominent idea. Leslie Colville, the one love of her heart, her affianced husband, was dead—killed cruelly—horribly, she doubted not, but in what fashion she

knew not, and, fortunately perhaps, should never know.

And ever and anon aching memory went back to that sunny noon when she first met him, yet knew him not, as they fished together by the bonnie Birks of Invermay.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE BALA HISSAR.

OUR advanced post was in the Kurram Valley—the only part of the Afghan border which had been trodden by the foot of a Briton since the previous Cabul war—a post, the boundary of the so-called ‘scientific frontier,’ which had been held by a body of our troops, European and native, for some three months during the summer of this eventful year; and all had been suffering more or less from the breathless heat and malaria, dulness, and that growing *ennui* which a languid game of polo or

lawn-tennis (without ladies) utterly failed to ameliorate; and all thought that, as anything exciting was better than nothing, a brush with the Mongols, the Ahmed, or Hassan Keyls would be a relief.

Many officers began to think, even to talk, hopefully of leave of absence to visit India, to look up old chums in Peshawur, Rawul Pindi, or Lahore; or when longer leave for Europe must be given; when news of the attack on the Residency at Cabul, and the massacre of the envoy and his people fell upon them like a clap of thunder!

These terrible tidings were brought by Taimur, a Usbeg Tartar, who served as a trooper in the Guide escort—a man of undoubted daring, bravery, and hardihood—who had achieved his escape from the city of blood by the aid of some of his own race who were among the Cabulee troops that had come in from Herat.

After twelve days' wandering, and enduring great suffering in those savage and stupendous mountain gorges that lie between Cabul and the Kotal of Lundikhani, he reached the advanced post in the Kurram Valley, in rags, famished, and every way in a deplorable state of destitution, to make his report, which was instantly telegraphed by the officer commanding to the Viceroy at Simla.

'Everyone cut off as close as a whistle! By Jove, colonel, we'll have to be up and doing something,' said Algy Redhaven, the hussar, as he lounged, pipe in mouth, and hands in the pockets of his pyjamas, into the tent of old Spatterdash.

The early summer months had been passed peacefully and pleasantly by our embassy at Cabul, notwithstanding the petty insults and annoyance we have already referred to. In the cool, breezy morning, when the sun was coming up

above the hills that look down on the clear, shallow, and rapid Cabul flowing towards the Indus; or in the evening, when he was setting behind the summits of the Haft Kotal, Sir Louis Cavagnari, attended by Colville and others, escorted by a few of the Guide Corps, rode through the city to view places of interest in the neighbourhood, sometimes towards the Chardeh Valley eastward, or the plains of Killa-Kazi on the west.

Their quarters in the picturesque and ancient Bala Hissar were rendered as comfortable as furniture of English style and make—relics of Elphinstone's slaughtered army and plundered cantonments—could make them; but the walls of the rooms were scribbled over with ribald pencillings, anti-English hits and insolent political allusions there was no mistaking, left there by members of the late Russian mission; while 'from the Ameer himself,

as from the commandant, dails of fruit and vegetables, fish, milk, and sweetmeats were daily provided; and whatever Cabul could offer in the way of entertainment or amusement was readily forthcoming.'

All seemed so peaceful, and the chances of renewed hostility so remote, that Colville was about to make arrangements for quitting the Embassy, resigning his appointment, and procuring an escort through the passes to Lundi Khani Khotal in the Kurram Valley on his homeward way.

He also intended to take with him Robert Wodrow. The latter had changed greatly of late for the better. In his face, that which had been mere good looks had deepened into earnestness of purpose in every feature. If, under the heat of the summer sun, his cheek was browner and less round, his mouth, in expression, was a trifle harder and more set, changes

indicative of one who was aware that he had his way in the world to hew out, and due to Colville's influence, presence, and friendly encouragement.

He found him one day whistling loudly while grooming his horse in the stables of the Bala Hissar.

'Wodrow, old man,' said Colville, laughingly, 'by Jove, I am glad to hear you whistling. Your lips seemed only capable of sighing once. But the air you indulge in is a sad one.'

'It is "The Birks of Invermay," sir. I was thinking as usual of old times, and of those from whom we are so far away.'

'Many a thousand miles, even as the crow flies.'

All remained, to all appearance, peaceful, we say, at Cabul, till one fatal morning, about eight o'clock, when the Turkistani and Ordal Regiments, consisting of several battalions in the Ameer's

army, were mustered for arrears of pay in one of the stately courts of the Bala Hissar.

Daud Shah, a sirdir or general of the army—a venerable soldier—could only distribute one month's pay, but, with shrill and vehement shouts that made every carved arcade and shaded balcony re-echo, they demanded two.

‘Two months’ pay or blood!’

The sirdir attempted to remonstrate with them, on which tumult and disorder pervaded their ranks, and they broke out into open mutiny.

Then another sirdir—whose name is not unknown to the reader—exclaimed, with a voice loud enough to be heard above the fast-growing disturbance,

‘Let us kill the Envoy and then the Ameer who would sell us to the Feringhees!’

‘Deen! deen! deen and death,’ shouted

all, and, rushing into the greater court of the palace, they proceeded to stone and loot without mercy the servants of the Residency.

Enraged by this rough treatment, Taimur, the Usbeg Tartar, and some of his Guide comrades, without temporising or waiting for the orders of their officers, betook them to their carbines and opened a fire upon the multitude from the open windows and stately galleries overlooking the court.

Colville and other officers called upon them to cease firing, and they did so for a time.

Then it was that the Sirdir Mahmoud Shah, a man whose fanaticism made him all but a Ghazi, shook his hand upwards at the gallery where they stood, and called, with a shrill voice,

‘ Brutes ! beasts ! vermin ! filthy Feringhees ! Enjoy the pleasures of life for a

brief time, but your speedy departure shall be into the flames of hell, with water like molten brass to drink, and ye shall say, as the Koran tells us—"Oh, Malec, intercede for us, that the Lord may end us by annihilation."'

He spoke in Afghani, yet many understood him, and an officer said,

'These beggars quote their Koran as glibly as Cromwell's Puritans did the Bible, and with the same view to blood and slaughter.'

Led by Mahmoud chiefly, the mutineers rushed away to procure their arms and ammunition, with which they returned in a few minutes, inflamed by all the hate and rancour of race and religion, and pitilessly resolved to massacre all.

The time of their absence has been given as about fifteen minutes, and, with horses at hand, it is said that all in the Residency might have made their escape, had they

chosen to attempt it, but either they trusted to the sacred character of the embassy, underrated the actual amount of peril, or, like bold Britons, were determined to face it, and show fight.

The roof of the Residency was an untenable place, being commanded by the flat roofs and windows of loftier houses, yet there Sir Louis Cavagnari and his little band were gathered, and there, making a kind of rampart or shelter-trench with what they could collect, they resolved to sell their lives as dearly as possible in conflict with the savage hordes—the sea of human beings that surged around them.

The mutineers, all well-armed with rifles and bayonets, and supplied with excellent ammunition, were now joined by the fanatical multitudes of the city, by robbers intent on plunder, budmashes, and villains of every kind, seeking blood and outrage, brandishing long juzails, sabres, and

charahs, or deadly native knives, with points like needles and edges like razors—blades that flashed and glanced in the sunshine like their bloodshot and malevolent eyes; their strange garments, wide-sleeved camises, sheepskin cloaks, and bright-coloured loonghees or caps, adding to the picturesqueness of the savage and bewildering scene, overlooked by the pillared arcades, with horse-shoe arches, and the carved balconies on ponderous marble brackets projecting from the palace walls, and all half revealed and half hidden amid the eddying smoke of pistols and musketry.

All were yelling, till their yells ended in a death-shriek, as a shot struck them down; many were quoting the inevitable Koran, or hurling offensive and abusive epithets, as they crushed upon and jostled each other, while seething and surging around their victims.

Hope of victory—even of successful de-

fence—the latter could have none. For them nothing was left now but to struggle to the last of their blood and breath, and until the last man perished in his agony!

Colville, while handling the carbine of a Guide who had fallen near him, even in that desperate time, thought how hideous looked the sea of human faces into which he was sending shot after shot, as fast as he could drop them into the block of the breechloader.

‘The faces of the Afghans,’ says a writer, ‘often develop into those of the most villainous-looking scoundrels. Shylock, Caliban, and Sycorax and his dam all have numerous representatives, though I think the first is the commonest type, on account of the decidedly Jewish cast of most Cabuli features, and the low cunning and cruelty which supplies the only animation in their otherwise stolid countenances, true indices of the mind beneath

—fatalist by creed; false, murderous, and tyrannical by education. In this description,' he adds, 'I do not include the Kuzzil Bash (Persian), or Hindoo settlers, who preserve their own distinctive features, both mental and physical.'

For five hours had the unequal conflict been waged, when Sir Louis Cavagnari, who was in the thick of it, was wounded in the forehead by a ball that had ricocheted from a wall near him.

Close and terrible was the fire poured by the Guides with their carbines and by the few European officers into the dense masses of the foe beneath, and deadly that fire proved—the front files, if they could be termed so, melted away or fell over each other in heaps, but fresh men pushed forward from the rear and took their places, serving only to feed the harvest of death gathered at the hands of those who fought not for existence—the hope of that

was quite lost now—but for vengeance.

‘Allah! Allah! Allah! Deen! Deen! Deen!’ were the shouts that loaded the air below, rising above the sputtering roar of the firearms. On the other side was no sound, but a yell or a groan as a man fell wounded, too often mortally. ‘La Ilah illa Allah!’ (‘There is no God but God.’)

Yet devilry, cruelty, and slaughter were there supreme.

‘I wish we could make a headlong rush on them and clear the square by a charge—cut our way through,’ cried Colville; ‘but we have not men enough, and then Sir Louis Cavagnari and all the wounded would be butchered if left behind.’

‘How fast the devils fire!’ exclaimed a young officer; ‘my revolver barrel is quite hot already.’

‘You’ll soon get used to the whizz of the bullets,’ replied Colville, whose face if now pale with desperation, was filled with

an expression of determination too. 'Keep cool, men—aim well, and let every shot tell.'

But amid that dense mob below—a literal sea of upturned and dark, revengeful faces, with glistening teeth and flashing eyes—no bullet could miss a mark; while all around were heard the crash of falling bricks, beams, and plaster, the yells of the Afghans, the shrieks of their women, and the roar of the fast gathering flames.

'Mark that fellow!' cried several officers, indicating a leader in a green *loonghee*, who seemed to have a charmed life—Mahmoud Shah, in fact.

'I should like to pick that devil off,' said Robert Wodrow, dropping a cartridge into the breechblock of his carbine. 'He seems to be head cock and bottle-washer of the whole shindy!' he added, in the phraseology of his student days. His bullet sped, but only grazed the shoulder

of the old fanatic, and added to the latter's fury.

A soldier of the Guides who had been wounded in the temple fell headlong from the flat roof into the mass below, and was hewn by tulwars and charahs to pieces—literally chopped into ounce pieces.

In the desperation of their circumstances it was resolved to appeal for succour and protection to the Ameer, who, while all this deadly work was in progress, remained with indifference apparently in his palace, and amid the ladies of his harem.

The ambassador, whose wound had been dressed by Dr. Kelly, desired a moonshi to write a letter imploring royal aid, but the scribe was so terrified by the uproar that his fingers were unable to hold the pen; so one was written in Afghani by Taimar, the Guide, and this missive Robert Wodrow boldly volunteered to deliver in person.

‘ You are throwing your life away, Wodrow,’ said Colville. ‘ The risk is frightful.’

‘ So be it, Captain Colville; but better mine than yours. You have something to live for. What have I?’

Untwisting a couple of cartridges into a saucer, he made a species of black paste therewith, and, blackening his face before a mirror, contrived still further to disguise himself with some Afghan clothing that was found in the Residency—a brown *camise* with loose wide sleeves, a furred *choga* or mantle, a *loonghee*, and armed with a tulwar and shield, like a budmash. He placed the letter in his pocket, and issuing from a secret underground doorway passed from the Bala Hissar unnoticed by the crowds which surged around it, and brandishing his weapon and shouting ever and anon like the rest, ‘ Deen! Deen!’ he contrived to reach the Ameer, to whose hands

he forwarded the letter through Daud Shah, a friendly sirdir or general.

It was speedily brought back with a brief reply written upon it by the prince—

‘If God willeth. I am just making arrangements.’

The brave Wodrow experienced many difficulties in making his way back, for the hostile crowds were increasing every moment, and to reach the Residency he had at one time literally to act the part of a leader, and risk the fire of his own friends, among whom, however, he soon found himself, and delivered the message of the Ameer to the half-conscious Cavagnari, who was suffering sorely from his wound.

But no succour came, and the hopeless and desperate resistance was continued.

A second letter to the Ameer was now despatched; but its bearer, a Hindoo, was discovered and cut to pieces.

After two hours more fighting—hours

that added to the heaps of dead and dying below the Bala Hissar walls, and to the fearful casualties in the ranks of the small band fighting for existence within the Residency—Lieutenant Hamilton sent out Taimar, the guide, with an open letter promising the Ameer's mutineers six months' pay if they dispersed.

Courageous Taimar, clad in his uniform as a guide-soldier—drab, laced, piped, and faced with scarlet—went among them, but he was not listened to. The letter was torn to shreds; his uniform was rent off him; he was robbed of all he had, severely beaten, and tossed into a vault, where he lay insensible till he made his escape under cloud of night; and that he was not slain outright was simply due to his Usbeg blood and features. And eventually he reached our outpost at Lundi-Khani Kotal in the Kurram Valley.

After his return to the Residency, amid

the confusion and defence of so many points of the roof on which the whole of its slender garrison were now gathered, Robert Wodrow for a time was unable to discover Colville, and feared that he had fallen.

After a little time he discovered him on the summit of an isolated tower, where, with four men, he had taken post to enfilade the fire of the mutineers; but his four soldiers were all shot down in quick succession. Wodrow saw him turn them on their faces, take the ammunition from their pouches, and proceed single-handed to defend with a musket the tower which was now in flames, and was ere long enveloped in smoke.

When a puff of wind blew the latter aside for a moment a cry escaped Robert Wodrow, for Colville had vanished, and in a few minutes after, the tower fell thundering down in a mass of blazing ruins.

The assailants had now discovered that loftier buildings, as stated, commanded the flat roof of the Residency, the upper storey of which was open on every side, being merely a sleeping place during the hot months of the year, and consisting of a roof, wattled and plastered, resting on slender pillars of wood, painted and gaily gilded.

Thus the insurgents were enabled by a fire, chiefly directed from the loftier windows and roof of the arsenal, to drive the desperate and now despairing defenders downward from floor to floor, till they ultimately reached the last, upon the ground; and there, for no less than four hours more, they made a noble and heroic resistance against the fanatical and furious multitude which hurled its strength against them, so close at times that the young officers of Cavagnari's suite were seen to fire their pistols right into the

mouths and eyes of their savage assailants.

Weary, breathless, and suffering from an intense thirst, incident to hot exertion and fierce excitement—a thirst they had neither the means nor the time to allay—their eyes bloodshot, their lips baked, their undressed wounds in many instances streaming with blood, their faces pale as death—the death that was so soon to overtake them all—the handful of Europeans and Guide soldiers maintained the unequal conflict with a heroism that mingled with despair.

It was at this crisis in their fate that Daud Shah, a fine old Afghan sirdir, came riding from the Ameer's palace, through the crowds of people, and called upon them 'to desist from their infamous crime!'

He was a man above fifty years of age, with a stern face of a decidedly Jewish type, an aquiline nose, and high cheekbones, dark and restless eyes, having beet-

ling brows tufted with grizzly hair, and a long grey beard that descended to his shawl-girdle.

But his appearance only added to the rancorous fury of the people and the mutineers. Rushing on him with rage, Mahmoud Shah tore him from his saddle; he was wounded by a bayonet, severely stoned, and borne away to the palace, covered with blood and in a dying condition.

Two other officers of high rank—one a sirdir or general—also strove to quell the disturbance, but were fired on and compelled to seek safety in flight.

That portion of the Bala Hissar assigned as a Residency was far too large for the little garrison that had then to defend it, and it was now surrounded on its four sides by that ferocious multitude of armed men bent on slaughter and cruelty, led on by an equally frantic band of moollahs.

‘They are flinging lighted brands on

the roof from the arsenal,' cried some one, and overhead the roar of flames was soon heard as the open upper storey we have described became sheeted with fire.

'If that is the case, a little time will see us all gone to the bow-wows!' cried Robert Wodrow, whom danger always seemed to exhilarate and make more reckless.

Despairing of all succour from the false Ameer, and as if eager to die hard, and in doing so to anticipate their doom, the few surviving heroes of the little garrison charged out sword in hand, and plunged—thrusting with the point, and hewing with the edge—into the human sea that filled the court between the Bala Hissar gate, just as night was closing, and there they all perished to a man, save one—perished just as the roof of the Residency came crashing down amid black smoke and

crackling flames, thus preserving the bodies of Sir Louis Cavagnari, of Dr. Kelly, and several others from the last insults of a savage enemy.

Aided by the wild confusion, the sudden darkness of the tropical night, and not a little by his disguised visage and native costume, Robert Wodrow achieved a passage into the streets of the city, and from thence, as all thoroughfares save those in the vicinity of the Bala Hissar were deserted, into the open plain near the city, and there he threaded his way without molestation among the apple, citron, and olive groves, the mud forts and garden walls, till he found a plantation of sugar-canes, and then, weary, worn, covered with bruises, famished, and athirst—ready almost to weep—after the past excitement of that terrible day, and the loss of all his friends and comrades—last, not least, Leslie Colville, he flung himself on

the ground to recover breath and to think over the situation.

Day was dawning, and tipping with red and gold the summits of the Bala Hissar, when Wodrow awoke to find that he had been asleep for some hours, and now rose, stiff and sore in every limb. The flames of the conflagration had died out, but a black pall of smoke overhung the towers and battlements of the ancient and picturesque palatial fortress, which, with a recklessness of courage for which it is difficult to account, he actually resolved to revisit, as if to see the last—the end of everything.

He had the caution, however, to re-adjust his disguise, to carefully load his revolver, and by untwisting another cartridge and mixing the powder in a dew-laden leaf, to carefully retouch his face, using the case of his watch as a mirror, and to re-blacken his hands and wrists,

before he ventured near the scene of the last night's horrors.

Of the Residency, the blackened walls and smouldering ashes alone remained, and as these furnished no 'loot,' the place was deserted by all save the dead.

Of the latter there lay heaped over each other, and soaked in each other's blood, some five hundred Afghans, attesting—irrespective of wounded—of the stubborn vigour of the defence, for every cartridge fired by the desperate few must have told more than double among the masses.

The marble arches and pillars of the beautiful carved arcades and open galleries, the walls and pavement, were all spotted and starred by the bullets of rifles and carbines, and clots and splashes of blood were everywhere, with the corpses of the Europeans and Guides, easily distinguished by their uniforms. The solitary survivor saw the body of the young and

gallant Hamilton, stripped of his braided jacket and woefully gashed, lying across a mountain gun, over which he had fallen or been flung by his slayers, 'and beyond it, in a trench which the Afghans had failed to storm, were heaped, thick and charred by fire, the corpses of the heroic Guides. Each man had died where he stood, and in their rear were the smouldering ruins of the building wherein Cavagnari, Kelly, and others were lying.'

Robert Wodrow gave a glance at the blackened ruins of the tower on the summit of which he had last seen Colville, rifle in hand, resisting to the last, and a bitter sigh escaped him as he quitted the city, and resolutely turned his face and steps towards the passes, through which he hoped to reach our outpost at Lundi Khani Kotal, more than a hundred and fifty miles distant, amid hostile tribes and savage ways, by the Latband Pass, Jug-

dulluk, Gundamuck, and the Khoord Khyber, at the very contemplation of which his heart sank with despair.

‘All about the city,’ said a print of the time, ‘there were Afghans enough—the whole hive seemed restless with multitudinous motion; but when the solitary traveller (after the hideous uproar of the past night) had cleared the city precincts, the old desolation of the dreary hill country lay stretched before him, and along the rugged ways hardly a man was moving.’

Yet the rugged paths through the stupendous passes had many dangers for the disguised hussar. Tigers, wolves, and hyenas were to be met with, making sleep and night alike perilous and horrible; and to these were added by day the chance of discovery by the equally savage tribesmen, and a death by torture, such as only the Oriental mind can conceive, at their merciless hands.

Yet, though aware of all he had to encounter, Robert Wodrow took to the hills as a mountaineer born, and strode resolutely and manfully on.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FORT OF MAHMOUD SHAH.

RESOLUTELY had Leslie Colville defended the summit of the somewhat isolated tower on which he had taken post with only four chosen marksmen, intending to enfilade the front attack on the Residency, and pick off the best shots in possession of the lofty arsenal roof; but he had soon the mortification to see each of his men perish in quick succession, and to find the tower in flames beneath him, cutting off his descent, and leaving him helplessly exposed to a fire from those who must

soon have smitten him down but for the frantic fury with which they impeded each other's aim and operations ; and while thus perilously situated he heard friendly voices—or such he thought them to be—calling to him from below in Hindustani.

He looked down, and on a gun-platform about twenty feet from where he stood were four natives, Hindostanees, as appeared by their costume—the turban, with a couple of scarfs each, one wrapped round the body, and the other over the shoulders, leaving the rest of the body uncovered—holding outstretched a strong horse-rug or blanket, into which they invited him to drop himself, and trust to them and to their united strength for breaking his fall.

‘Chullo, sahib—golee chulte!’ (come along, sir—the balls are flying) cried one.

‘Chullo, bhai—chullo, pultania sahib!’ (Come on, brother—come, battalion officer)

cried the other three, also in a kind of Hindustani; so Colville never doubted but that they were Hindoos—perhaps camp-followers—and Hindoos they certainly were.

He paused for a moment, irresolute whether to trust to them or—what? Meet death amid the flames which had cut off his retreat, and all chance of rejoining his struggling companions—the flames that were fast ascending in the tower from storey to storey, and would soon be bursting through the flat roof on which he stood, for already the smoke was rising like a black column through the trap-door by which he had reached it.

He failed to see the fierce expression of mockery and derision which was in the dark faces of the four men below, and, deeming it wiser to risk and trust them than to perish amid the flames, he dropped into the rug, in which they received him

with shrill yells of triumph, for the plunder of his person, combined with his murder, were their objects.

But Colville was too quick for them. In leaping over he had relinquished the rifle he had been using for his sword, and with the latter, after baffling an attempt they made to muffle or bundle him up in the rug, while they were staggering beneath his weight, he waved them back just as they rushed upon him with their sharp *charahs*, and such blind hate and fury that they all wounded each other.

He then put his back against the wall, and kept them at bay with his sword-blade and levelled revolver, which, although they knew not, was unfortunately empty.

Streaming with blood from the wounds they had inflicted on each other, they strove to close in upon him, and speedily several budmashes with sword and shield, and other villains variously armed, came

upon the scene, and their cries were loud and fierce.

‘Astafferullah! put his head in a bhoosa bag, or one stuffed with chillies!’

‘No, let it be in a bag of red pepper, and then let him die the death of the doomed!’

That he would have been bayoneted or shot and cut to pieces there and then was beyond a doubt, had not a horseman furiously intervened by dashing his steed between him and the rabble, who recoiled in recognition of his presence and authority as a sirdir, and he presented his right hand to Colville, exclaiming,

‘I ate of your bread and salt on that night when you saved me from the Wahabi dogs in Jellalabad, and when I swore by the Koran and by the Five Keys of Knowledge never to forget your kindness--nor do I now!’

As he spoke Colville, even in that su-

preme moment of excitement and most deadly peril, recognised again Mahmoud Shah, the mock Hadji, with the Israelitish features, the complexion fairer than most Afghans, and the livid sword-mark that traversed his right cheek.

The fanatic, for such he was, had for Colville gratitude, and when that exists there is always good-will.

Mechanically the latter grasped the hand held out to him, while the scowling mob, with gleaming eyes and weapons, dark and scowling visages, drew back.

‘So—sirdir—you and the Hadji Mahmoud are the same?’ exclaimed Colville.

‘One and the same—I am that eater of dirt!’ he added, to show his humility.

He ordered Colville to give up his arms, and, sending him under a strong escort of his own people out of the city, once more addressed himself to the congenial task of pressing the attack upon the Residency—

a task which he continued to the bitter end.

Meanwhile Colville was conveyed, a prisoner, to one of the many forts which stud the plain of Cabul and the heights of Beymaroo that overhang it.

Mahmoud had suddenly become his protector in fulfilment of the old precept of being true to his salt; and Colville, who in his heart was intensely thankful to Heaven for the succour afforded to him, while so many poor fellows were perishing without mercy, felt confident that while with Mahmoud, or under his care, he was tolerably safe; for it is well known that after eating the bread and salt of another, or even salt alone, one, according to Oriental ideas, comes under peculiar obligations of protection and friendship.

As an illustration of this, Lane tells us, in one of his valuable notes to the 'Ara-

bian Tales,' of a daring robber, who, one night, excavated a passage into the palace of the Governor of Sijistan, where he made up a great bale of gold and jewels; he was in the act of carrying it off, when, in the dark, his foot happened to strike against something hard on the floor. Believing it to be a jewel of some kind—perhaps a great diamond—he picked it up, and on applying his tongue to it, found that it was nothing else but a lump of rock *salt*.

Bitter was his disappointment, 'for having once tasted the salt of the ocean, his aversion gave way to his respect for the laws of hospitality; and throwing down his precious booty, he left it behind him, and withdrew empty-handed to his habitation.'

But Colville remembered, as old Colonel Spatterdash had told him scores of times, how Asiatics can quibble in this very mat-

ter; and that in the great Mutiny how often the Sepoys swore 'to be true to their salt,' and not to murder their officers, but stood placidly and approvingly by while the Pandies of other regiments slaughtered them.

In this fashion Mahmoud Shah might be true to *his* salt. Who can say or fathom the cruel duplicity of the Oriental mind and nature?

And, with these painful surmises and doubts in his mind, Colville heard the roar of the conflict in and around the doomed Residency dying away in the distance as the gates of the fort by the Cabul river were closed behind him.

As he entered, he looked back to the fatal Bala Hissar. The smoke of the conflict, mingled with that of the conflagration, was eddying about its picturesque towers and embattled masses on the mountain slope, all bathed in ruddy splendour

by the setting sun. What was being enacted there now? he thought. Was all over now? Had the last of the brave fallen?

After sunset Mahmoud Shah arrived at the fort, which was his own patrimonial stronghold, and assured Colville that all was ended—the last man was slain, and the valour of the Cabulees had been successful.

‘Success shows the hand of God, and of Mahomet the Prophet, blessed be their names!’ he added.

His arrival at the fort was the signal for a species of ovation among his followers, who mustered some hundreds, all villainous but picturesque tatterdemalions, whose arms were as varied as the fashion and colours of their costume. Many had girdles of leather, from which hung bags for bullets, slugs, and flints, powder-horns and cases for cartridges. Others had

cummerbunds, in which were stuck pistols, daggers, charahs, and British bayonets in such numbers that it would have been puzzling to find room for one weapon more.

In addition to all this paraphernalia, every man had a tulwar, and a juzail, or flint or match-lock rifle, in his hand.

Colville was compelled to dissemble his hatred and horror of those who had so wantonly slaughtered his brave companions, many of whose bright, joyous, and handsome English faces came so painfully to memory at that time, all lying cold and gashed and bloody among the ruins of the Residency; and that horror was blended with a great disgust of his host and protector, when he recalled the tragedy his treachery was supposed to have brought to pass with the squadron of the 10th Hussars; that he was a spy who had imposed upon himself at Jellalabad, and

had led the Ameer's rebel tribes against us on more than one occasion; but with all this, policy, and his own personal safety, and hope of ultimate freedom compelled him to dissemble.

'Are you thirsty, sahib?' was the first question Mahmoud asked him on quitting his saddle.

'Yes; dying with it! Who could be otherwise after the horrors and exertion of the past day?' exclaimed Colville.

'Drink, then—the commands of the Prophet are nothing to you,' said Mahmoud, as he gave him a large cup filled with Cabul wine (which has a flavour not unlike full-bodied Madeira), and with it a bunch of the grapes of Ghuznee, which are greatly superior to those that grow in the plain of Cabul; and Colville, half-sinking with exhaustion caused by bodily fatigue and fierce over-excitement, thought he had never had refreshment more grateful and acceptable.

Built of mud and sun-dried bricks, the fort of Mahmoud was strong and spacious ; it was square, with a squat, round tower at each angle and a keep in the centre, well loopholed for musketry, armed with jingals, and those huge swivel blunderbusses named zumbooracks, which, as fire-arms, are often as perilous to those who work them as to those at whom they are levelled.

The fort had two gates, in its eastern and western faces ; these were protected by demi-bastions, and there was a moat, once filled by the Cabul, but now dry, neglected, and overgrown by vines and orange-trees.

The courtyard was spacious. In the keep was *Dewan-i-Am*, or audience-chamber, surrounded by a divan or continuous seat ; beyond it was the *Dewan-i-Kas*, or principal private apartment, and in the towers were lodged the servants of the

establishment ; apart from all was a zenana, or women's apartments, and elsewhere, in every corner, were stowed away the garrison, composed of the *budmashes* and other tatterdemalions just described.

When not in the courtyard or on the summit of the keep—always closely watched—Colville was generally in the *Dewan-i-Kas*, where he shared the meals of the Mahmoud. Here carpets were laid on the floor, and there was a kind of chair or stool of state, with cushions for arms, and before it lay the tulwar, shield, and pistols of the sirdir, as in a place of honour.

The fort stood—and no doubt still stands—close to a bend of the clear and otherwise shallow Cabul, a river which is formed by the junction of the Ghorbund and Panjshir, and after dividing into three branches it reunites and flows into the Indus, three miles above the great fortress of Attock.

And Colville, in his prison in the fort—for a prison to all intents and purposes it was—lay for many a weary hour on a *charpoy*, or native bed, listening to the murmur of the stream as it flowed over its pebbled bed towards the mountain passes that led to India, and marvelled what was in store for him; how long his captivity would last; whether Mahmoud wanted a ransom or held him as a kind of hostage: for that the destruction of the embassy would be amply avenged none could doubt. Then how would it fare with the crafty Ameer?

‘He is the son of an animal!’ said Mahmoud, on one occasion, scornfully; ‘he plays fast and loose with your people and his own. According to an old fable, every man bears on his back a wallet in which are deposited his weaknesses and his vices, which, though concealed from his own eyes, are open to the inspection of those

of others. Thus we see that the Ameer, if not the tool of Britain, will be the slave of the Russ.'

'Through his duplicity I am a prisoner.'

'Better that than lying yonder in the Bala Hissar,' said Mahmoud, with a cruel leer in his glittering black eyes.

'I am most unfortunate!'

'It was to be, and so it is.'

The doctrine of fatalism meets and covers everything with the Mussulmans, who can thus throw on the Deity the results of their own negligence.

'If it is God's will that a man should die, let him die,' said Mahmoud, sententiously. 'If it be His will that he should live, let him live.'

Colville thought this was uncommonly like the creed of the 'Peculiar People,' in the city of London.

Though somewhat bored by the prayers and piety of Mahmoud Shah, and greatly

disgusted by his ferocity, Colville had not much otherwise to complain of during his detention in the fort; and preferred those times when he was left to himself, when the sirdir secluded himself in his zenana, or was absent at the many weighty and evidently important conferences which were being daily held in the palace of Yakoub Khan. 'It is not good that man should be alone,' we are told; so, as Mahmoud the pious had at least four wives in his zenana, he spent much of his precious time there.

The food which he shared with his host was excellent—it could not be said at table, as it was spread on the floor; but, as knives, forks, and spoons are things unknown as yet under the shadow of the Hindoo Kush, it was rather repellant to our fastidious Guardsman to see Mahmoud rend asunder with his fingers a boiled chicken or daintily roasted hill *chuckore*

(or Greek partridge), to hand him a piece with his brown-hued digits, which ever and anon he put half-way down his throat.

‘Eat, sahib,’ he would say; ‘remember the proverb—touch the stomach and you injure the vitals, but cherish it and you gain heart.’

‘But my heart sinks when I think of the friends I have lost through vile treachery.’

‘It was the will of God your people should perish in the Bala Hissar,’ replied Mahmoud, quietly, as he filled his mouth with a handful of boiled rice and green chillies. ‘What says the Koran? “When God willeth evil on a people there shall be none to avert it, neither shall they have any protector beside Him. It is He who causeth the lightning to appear unto you, to strike fear, to raise hope, and who formeth the pregnant clouds.” Praise God for His bounty; eat and have no heavy

thoughts. The Prophet has written every man's fatal hour upon his forehead. It is done at his birth. Yours had not come, on that day in the Bala Hissar.'

Then Colville would think how strange and striking were his surroundings, and from the bearded face of the sirdir who squatted on a carpet opposite to him his eyes would wander round the *Dewan-i-Kas* where they were eating the evening meal.

A piece of raw cotton floating in oil that was held in an old ladle wedged into the bare stone wall cast its fitful and lurid glare on the dark faces, the gleaming eyes, the quaint costumes, and oriental weapons of the sirdir's men, who marvelled that he fed and housed an unbeliever, instead of cutting his throat and tossing his carcass to the jackals of the Beymaroo hills; an unbeliever, who shaved his chin and not his head; but Allah! how strange were the customs for the *Feringhee-logue*!

‘And fortunate it was for you,’ Mahmoud resumed after a time, when his chibouque was brought him, ‘that your hour had not come; but come it will, and how will it fare with you then? The paradise which is promised to the pious is not for you,’ he continued, plunging at once, as usual with the Afghans, into the Koran; ‘therein are rivers of incorruptible water and of milk, the taste whereof changeth not; rivers of wine, pleasant unto those who drink; and of clarified honey; and therein shall be fruit of a thousand kinds, and a pardon from the Lord. Shall the man for whom all these are prepared by the Lord of the Daybreak, be as he who must dwell for ever in the fires of hell, and will have boiling water given him to drink, which shall burst his bowels?’

And ever and anon Colville was treated to quotations much to the same purpose.

Seeing him one day gazing at a photo of Mary Wellwood, the sirdir became at once full of curiosity.

‘One of your wives?’ he asked.

‘No; but one who is to be my wife, I hope.’

‘She cannot be of rank—she has no ring in her nose. Is she moon-faced?’ (*i.e.*, handsome.)

‘Very; as you see.’

‘And you love her very much?’

‘I do indeed.’

‘Better than your best horse, your camels, and all your fat-tailed sheep?’

‘Better than all the world.’

‘Inshallah; perhaps you may see her soon again.’

‘Please God, I shall.’

‘Do you keep her locked up—in care of your father, or who—as you are absent, and gone to the wars?’

‘Why should I do so?’

‘Many of our people, if of rank, lock up their wives when they travel.’

‘Why?’

‘They may be false and artful.’

‘And what do you do then?’

He only smiled grimly, and touched the carved silver hilt of the *charah* in his crimson shawl girdle.

‘You treat them with a spirit of selfishness,’ said Colville; ‘but I know that even Christian men do the same, by making more severe laws for women than themselves, forgetting that by so doing they raise them above themselves.’

But the sirdir knew not what to make of this idea, and so remained silent.

Nearly three weeks had passed since Colville became a prisoner in the fort of Mahmoud Shah, and no tidings had reached him of what was doing in the world of India, beyond the Kyber and other passes, or of what was transpiring in the city of Cabul.

He knew that tidings of the massacre then must have been flashed home by the electric telegraph long since, and that poor Mary would now be mourning for him, as one who was no more !

CHAPTER VII.

THE FUGITIVE.

IGNORANT that Taimur, the Usbeg Tartar, the Guide soldier, was preceding him, Robert Wodrow—full of longing for dire and terrible vengeance on those who had destroyed his comrades and friends, among them more especially Leslie Colville, as he never doubted—trod resolutely on to reach Lundi-Khana Kotal, or any outpost at the head of the Kurram Valley.

From the circumstance of Robert Wodrow being a gentleman by birth and education, and that both had loved two sisters,

there had been a bond of friendship between the staff-captain and the luckless private of hussars.

They were Europeans—another tie; and more than all, when so far away from all who loved them, they were ‘brother Scots.’

Hungry and athirst—though the latter suffering could be appeased at any passing stream—the evening of the day after the massacre, when Wodrow finally turned his back upon the smoking ruins of the Residency, saw him disguised and armed as we have described, resolutely pursuing the mountain-path which led, he knew, from Cabul, past Buthak towards the Lataband Pass, a distance of twenty-two miles; but, disguised though he was, he felt that it was necessary for his safety to avoid all towns and villages, among which, no doubt, news of the destruction of the Feringhees must have spread like wildfire.

He found himself in a solitude—a place

of the most intense loneliness, so he paused to rest himself awhile beside a runnel that trickled down the rocks, and to gather a few wild apples and grapes. On one side rose the Katcha mountains to the height of eight thousand feet; on the other were mountains quite as lofty. It was such a scene and place as would require the pencil of Salvator Rosa to depict, so deep were the shadows in the dark and savage passes, so red the light that glowed on the eastern slopes of the mighty hills as the sun veered westward.

Vast groves of jelgoozeh pines, black and solemn, cast a gloom in some places; in others the sturdy, snake-like roots of the banyan-tree curled and twisted themselves among the rocks, and through the holes and crevices of a little ruined musjid, or wayside house of prayer, built of red and white marble, which was open and empty.

Wodrow looked at it wistfully, as if he would select it as a place wherein to pass the night and escape the mountain dews; but he thought of the snakes he had seen, and scorpions too, and remembered, with a shudder, the huge and venomous reptiles of that kind he had seen on the plains of Peshawur.

He selected a crevice in the rocks where a quantity of dry and dead leaves had been drifted by the wind, put his Afghan shield and tulwar under his head as a pillow, muffled his furred choga around him, and, soldier-like, accustomed to sleep anywhere, anyhow, or at any time, he slept till morning was well in, so much had he been overcome by the weariness of the preceding twenty-four hours.

Another ten miles would bring him, he knew, to Jugdulluk—that place of evil omen and blood—towards which the lonely fugitive trod on through black and frown-

ing gorges, where fantastic rocks, savage and weird, flung grey and purple shadows that made the deeper passes dark as midnight, and there the waters of the mountains could be seen reflecting the sky above, as they rolled through the obscurity so far down below.

In some parts the mountains rose the perfection of naked desolation, appalling in their silence and sublimity, looking like the scene of some Titanic conflict in ages unknown, and yet every foot of the way there had been traced in British blood—the blood of Elphinstone's massacred army in the war of 1841.

At one point, as Robert Wodrow was proceeding along a narrow ledge above a giddy precipice, where the mists of a foaming torrent streamed upward from the deep dark chasm below, he had a narrow escape, at the thought of which his blood ran cold.

At one place, treading over a loose spot, the earth and splintered rock gave way beneath his feet, and before he could recover himself he fell upon a lower ledge, some fifteen feet beneath, where he lay for a time, half stunned and scarcely daring to breathe.

At that moment death seemed close indeed!

He was only five yards from the edge of a precipice, the height of which his mind failed to fathom, and, as one in a dreadful dream, he crawled upward and away from it on his hands and knees, till a surer and less perilous route—path it could not be called—was won, and he resumed his way with a prayer of thankfulness on his lips and in his heart—one of the prayers he had learned as a child at his mother's knee in the old manse of Kirktoon-Mailler.

His anxiety and disquietude were in-

creased now by hearing more than once amid these profound solitudes the moaning yell of a hyæna, responded to by that other peculiar sound which seems to be something between the wail of a child and the howl of a dog—the cry of the jackal; thus, the peril of hostile men apart, he was not sorry when he came suddenly upon a species of village in a hollow of the hills—we say a species of village, as it did not consist of built houses, but only some seven or eight huts.

The dwellings, poor and mean, were formed of stakes cut from the adjacent forest, with walls formed of wicker-work plastered with mud, and called 'wattle and dab;' leaves of trees and jungle grass formed the roof, and all around them was jungle tainting the air, and to the European very suggestive of fever and miasma.

The inhabitants were rude and simple shepherds, whose *doombas*, or fat-tailed

Persian sheep, were grazing in the neighbouring valley, and they seemed somewhat awed by the gaunt, tall, and keen-eyed warrior, who, with shield and tulwar, pistols and dagger, his floating loongee and cloak, alike stained with what was too evidently blood, suddenly appeared among them and asked for food, offering for it a handful of *kusiras*, or Afghan pence.

From them he got milk, chupattees, and a *cuddoo*, or gourd full of curry and rice, of which he ate like a famished kite, while the wondering shepherds looked on without questioning, and evidently impressed by the swagger and adopted ferocity of his bearing, believing he could be no other than 'a very devil of a *budmash*' (or swashbuckler) steeped in the blood of the Feringhees.

Refreshed now, he resolved to lose no time in pushing on, saying that he was going to Tezeen, which was not the case,

as it lay some miles on his right, but pursued the path towards the Suffaidh Sang, and was warned at parting to beware of a certain place, marked by some ruined walls, which were the abode of the Ghoule Biaban.

Had these shepherds penetrated his disguise or doubted him? He almost feared so, as he saw a little group of them, clad in their loose blouses and conical caps of black fur, conferring together and watching him as he disappeared over a *kotal*, a place where the road dipped down.

Sunset and falling darkness—after which it was perilous to travel in such localities—found him at the ruined walls referred to as the abode of the Ghoule, and there in a little clump of wild pistachio trees he took up his quarters for the night, rightly supposing that all natives would sedulously shun a place haunted by such a dreadful demon as the

Ghoule Biaban, or Spirit of the Waste—a gigantic and hideous spectre, with a red tail and claws like a *syces* sickle, who is supposed to haunt all lonely places in Afghanistan and devour any passenger whose evil fortune casts him in his way.

No ghoule came to Robert Wodrow in his sleep, but a delightful dream, which made him long remember the pistachio tope amid the lonely waste—a dream of Ellinor Wellwood!

So powerful, so vivid, was this dream that he almost said to himself was it in sleep she came before him?

He dreamed that she was beside him and imploring his forgiveness, took his hands in her own, and pressed her lips passionately to them. Then her cheek seemed to touch his, and he could feel her soft sweet breath, and her dear eyes looked tenderly into his.

So vivid was that dream that he turned his head on the root of the tree against which it rested, towards the vision, if we may use the term, and then, of course, it vanished, and the light of the African sun streamed between the branches into his eyes.

Robert Wodrow's heart beat hopefully and happily; he felt that he had looked into the face of his other soul, with the assurance that they would one day meet again; and that notwithstanding their separation, and all that had come to pass, they were—perhaps—kindred spirits after all; and that phrase has a deeper signification than most people think. 'It is my solemn belief,' says a recent writer, 'that spirits are wedded before their birth into this world, and that somewhere, perhaps separated by barriers of space and circumstances, there exists for every soul its fellow, its complement, whose imperfections

joined to that other's, will make a perfect whole, if only men and women would not so rashly take the counterfeit for the real.'

So Robert Wodrow flattered himself that Ellinor, perhaps in a dream of her own, had somehow come to him in the spirit, a wild and mystic idea; but, as he examined his arms and ammunition before again resuming his journey, he found that there had been perilously near him in the night something as bad, if not worse, than the Ghoule Biaban!

Amid the sandy mud of a runnel that ran not far from the ruined walls there were distinctly traceable the prints of tigers' feet, quite fresh, like the paw-marks of a gigantic cat; so on this night, when he thought that by the influence of superstition he was unusually safe, he had been in more than usual peril!

A few miles more would bring him to

Gundamuck, a walled village, twenty-eight miles west of Jellalabad, surrounded by luxuriant wheat-fields and tall groves of sombre cypresses—the place where Yakoub Khan and the ill-fated Cavagnari had signed that treaty of peace which the former had so basely violated; but Gundamuck was a place to be avoided by the fugitive, who kept among the mountains above it, thus having to ford more than one tributary of the Surkh-ab river, and while sighing to think he had still nearly seventy miles to travel on foot before he would hear the sound of a British bugle, he struck manfully into paths which presented themselves here and there, but seemed to be only marked by the tread of beasts of prey.

Among rocky mountains, divested of all verdure and green clothing, his way lay now for miles, and, if the utter loneliness of the scenes ensured safety, it was at

times not the less impressive and appalling
to the solitary man, and made him think,

‘The silent gloom around hath power
To banish aught of gladness ;
The good with awful dreams to thrill,
The guilty—drive to madness !’

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GHILZIE.

IN avoiding the village of Gundamuck by making a detour to the right, Robert Wodrow came upon a handsome Moslem *edgah* built in a solitary place. The mausoleum—for such it was, erected over the remains of a santon or holy man—was built of white marble, with a dome and finely carved horseshoe-shaped entrance door.

The oleander and rose shed perfume around it, with many a flower grown wild, as the garden which once environed it,

either by dissensions incident to Afghanistan or the departure of a tribe, was completely neglected now. The custard apple, the pomegranate, and the citron hung their golden but untasted fruit around it, and the snow-white blossoms of the sweet jasmine hung in garlands from tree to tree.

The tomb looked solemn and picturesque, and Robert Wodrow was in the act of pausing in his lonely way to admire it, when, somewhat to his consternation, there stalked forth from the interior a tall and grim-looking Afghan warrior, completely armed.

His rosary of ninety-nine beads—each representing an attribute of the Diety—dangled at his left wrist; thus he had evidently been saying his prayers at the shrine of the santon.

By some of the details of his costume he was evidently a Ghilzie, a tribe above

seven hundred thousand in number, who occupy the central portion of that mountainous district which lies between Candahar and Cabul—fierce, hardy, and warlike people, led always by many chiefs of undoubted valour, under whom they have always given, and will yet give, the British troops infinite trouble.

His long, aquiline face was fair for an Afghan, being what they term ‘wheat-coloured,’ but his glittering eyes were dark and keen, and his beard was black as the conical fur cap that surmounted his beetling and shaggy eyebrows.

Seeing that Wodrow’s hand instantly wandered to the hilt of his sword, as if instinctively he saw a foe, the Afghan became alarmed, suspicious, and, pausing close by the door of the *edgah*, scrutinised the stranger; and whether it was that some of the dark paste had left the latter’s

face, or that there was some discrepancy in his costume, it is impossible to say, but the Afghan unsheathed his sword and shouted,

‘Feringhee!’

He then levelled a pistol at the head of Wodrow, but it hung fire, and the latter, ere he could draw another, instantly closed with him.

He was a man of enormous stature and great muscular strength; he was, moreover, fresh and well-fed, while the luckless Robert Wodrow was faint, weary, and worn, having been feeding on fruit and wayside herbs, or little better, since the morning that saw the slaughter at the Residency inaugurated.

Wodrow carried an Afghan shield of tanned buffalo hide, elaborately gilded and furnished with four brass bosses; but simply as a portion of his disguise, which the Ghilzie had so quickly penetrated, but he

knew not how to use it effectively, while his antagonist had a small one, not much larger than a dinner-plate, on his left arm, and when grasped in his left hand, it proved a defence which he used with wonderful skill and dexterity.

Both men were brave, completely master of their weapons, full of perfect confidence in themselves, and what Wodrow afterwards called 'a rattling set-to, in which the pot-lid,' as he styled the little Afghan shield, 'bore a great part,' now ensued.

The Ghilzie fought in the spirit of rancour, excited by difference of race and religion; Robert Wodrow in a spirit of desperation, to preserve his life and liberty, and to achieve this nothing was left him but to kill his assailant outright, if he could; but all that he had been taught by the hussar drill-sergeant and fencing-master—cut one and left point—two and

right point—three and right point again—cut four and left point, &c.—was useless here.

They both used tulwars of equal weight, keenness, and length, but the Ghilzie was fresh for the combat, and his tiny shield of tempered steel grasped by a strong and active hand, if small, was handy, impenetrable, and was ever opposed to the shower of cuts and thrusts that Wodrow intended for its owner.

Ever and anon they paused to gather breath, though they panted rather than breathed, and their eyes glared into each other, as the rage of conflict and lust of destruction grew in their hearts—Wodrow the while feeling that every moment was to him most precious, as he knew not what succour or comrades his foe might have at hand.

He hewed, slashed, and thrust away, but there was no circumventing the use

of that pestilent little iron shield, which rang and emitted red sparks beneath his strokes, and which there seemed no means of getting over, under, or round about.

The Ghilzie warrior was compelled, by the activity and desperation of Wodrow's attack, to stand more on the defensive than he expected, and his mountain blood waxed hot. Drawing back a pace or two, he hurled three pistols in succession, which he snatched from his girdle, at the head of Wodrow, who adroitly 'dodged' them, and suddenly closing, struck the Ghilzie's tulwar from his hand to the distance of some yards.

The sudden wrench this action occasioned his wrist disconcerted him, and Wodrow's sword having completed the sweep of the stroke, was descending on his head ere he had time to draw the deadly *charah* which, among other weapons,

was stuck in his girdle, when up went the tiny shield, and in saving his head he left his face exposed, and right into it Robert Wodrow planted his clenched hand with such force and fury that the Ghilzie stumbled backward, and in falling was twice run through the body and slain. Choking in blood, his last words were :

‘I am gone. Oh, place my feet towards the Keblah.’

Robert Wodrow felt neither pity nor remorse just then, as his blood was boiling in fever-heat, and the Ghilzie had sought his own destruction.

The victor cast a rapid and furtive glance around him, and then hurried on his way. Save the dead man, no other enemy was in sight.

In a little time Wodrow looked back to the place where the Ghilzie lay, and already he could see hovering over the latter in mid-air several great black vultures wheel-

ing in circles prior to swooping down to begin their horrible banquet.

That his disguise had been seen through by this unfortunate fellow greatly disconcerted Robert Wodrow, and deprived him of much of the confidence he had hitherto possessed, and he thought of travelling only by night, and lurking in the woods or among rocks by day; but his ignorance of the country, and the necessity of studying such landmarks as he remembered, and keeping to the beaten path as much as possible, together with the necessity for procuring food at all risks, compelled him to relinquish the idea.

He untwisted another cartridge, and again, with water from a runnel, made some dark dye in a leaf, and carefully rubbing therewith his face, neck, and ears, betook himself to the mountain ridges that overhung Bahar; the latter is only twelve miles from Gundamuck, but so rugged was

the way he had to pursue, and so many the detours he had to make to find fords on the streams he had to cross, that evening was drawing on by the time he had passed on the right flank of the village.

He continued his way a few miles beyond it, and then, feeling overcome by profound weariness and prostration after the events and toil of the past day, he lay down among some thick, soft grass a little way apart from the road, and, oblivious of snakes, wild animals, and dew, dropped into a deep and dreamless sleep.

How long he lay thus he knew not, but he was roused by voices and other sounds. Starting up he found a moon of wonderful brilliance shining clearly as if a second day had dawned, and close by him a group of men with laden camels—a group that had halted on finding him prostrate

there, in doubt whether he was alive or dead.

On seeing the turbans and dark faces, Wodrow thought all was over with him, and his hand went at once to the hilt of his sword, and he longed for the ring of Gyges, or anything that would render him invisible.

But the men among whom he found himself evidently took him for an Afghan, and evinced no sign of hostility, though they were all well armed.

They proved to be five merchants from Ghuznee, having camels laden with those dried fruits which constitute the principal article of trade between Afghanistan and India, and these, together with oranges, citrons, tobacco, and jars of red and yellow Derehnur wine, they were now conveying to the banks of the Indus to exchange for British goods, or sell, if possible, at the first British fort.

Like themselves, their *syces* and *bheesties* (grass-cutters and water-carriers) were all well armed, but were Hindoos, and with the whole party Robert Wodrow had no occasion for much fear, as his residence in the house of the Hakim, together with his knowledge of the natives, picked up elsewhere, stood him in good stead now.

‘What are you?’ asked one of the merchants.

‘A tchopper of Cabul,’ replied Wodrow.

‘Then where is your horse?’

‘He fell under me on the way,’ replied Wodrow, seeing at once his mistake, for in Afghanistan, as in Persia, State despatches are carried by mounted messengers called *tchoppers*, or mounted couriers, and private letters by *cossids*, or foot-messengers, who will sometimes travel seventy leagues in four consecutive days.

‘Then you are the bearer of a royal despatch?’

‘From the Ameer, whom God long preserve, to the officer commanding the outpost at the Lundi-Khana Kotal. In the name of the Prophet, give me some food; I am starving.’

The unsuspecting merchants hastened to supply his wants, and one said,

‘Your despatch, no doubt, refers to the vengeance of heaven which has overtaken the Feringhee dogs at the Bala Hissar?’

‘I presume so,’ replied Wodrow, eating cold meat and buttered chupatties with infinite relish. ‘If it isn’t an angel they are entertaining unawares, they little think it is one of the 10th Hussars,’ was his thought. ‘As for the Feringhees, they are now eating other food than this,’ said he aloud.

‘True,’ added the merchant; ‘the tree of Al Zakkum, which issueth from the

bottom of hell, and the fruit whereof resembleth the heads of devils.'

'May all their kindred come, as they have done, to a knowledge of their fiendish idolatry,' said another, his voice becoming hoarse in the extremity of his hatred; 'the heathens—the savages that they are—dogs who come among us to cast a slur upon civilised men and a holy religion—who eat of the unclean pig, a brute like themselves; but we shall not cease to strike and slay, Bismillah! till not one of them remain alive on this side of Attock!'

'Oho, my friend,' thought Robert Woodrow; 'by Jove, I must keep my eye upon you, now that I know the amiability of your sentiments.'

He then learned with extreme satisfaction that they meant to pass Lundi-Khana Kotal. He was accommodated with a seat on one of the camels, which, though laden,

travelled at a good average pace, and he resolved to be very taciturn and careful in his bearing and demeanour, especially after the morning dawned.

‘Fate and fortune have long seemed dead against me,’ thought he; ‘yet, heaven knows, it is not because I have been faint of heart; and heaven always helps those who help themselves.’

With these merchants he now travelled in ease and security for the remainder of his journey, passing undiscovered through Sador, Baru, Basawul, and other villages, and traversing the upper end of savage Khoord Khyber Pass. Ere long he found himself approaching Lundi-Khana Kotal, a post two thousand four hundred and eighty-eight feet above the level of the sea, just as dawn was breaking, and there came to him on the morning wind a sound there was no mistaking—the pipers of a Highland regiment playing the morning

reveille, 'Hey, Johnnie Cope,' among the white tents of the British camp, and then he knew that he was safe.

CHAPTER IX.

A NEW SNARE.

IN detailing the adventures of Leslie Colville and Robert Wodrow in the distant land where fate and the fortunes of war had cast them together, we have somewhat anticipated the time and the troubles brought upon Ellinor by the daring of her unscrupulous abductor.

The snares that had been laid for her, the loyal heart she had lost and now believed to be cold in the grave—all came before the girl with painful vividness, and she loathed herself for ever having lis-

tened, as she had done at Birkwoodbrae, to the artful wretch who from first to last had sought to lure her to destruction by so many specious falsehoods ; for, in many ways, the baronet had now become so degraded in character that, so far as truth went, he was like the man mentioned by Mark Twain, who had such a sacred regard for truth that he never by any chance used it.

Sooth, however, to say, prudence and weariness at times suggested to Sir Redmond the abandonment of his enterprise and designs regarding Ellinor ; at other times, obstinacy, distorted pride, and, more than all, inflamed passions and her apparent helplessness, spurred him on in his schemes. He felt now that, if these were unsuccessful, they could only be relinquished at peril and *exposé* to himself.

Her inertia provoked and alarmed him. He would have preferred some of her

former desperate energy, even though accompanied by undisguised repugnance of himself.

He knew that now, with Mary Wellwood, the luckless Ellinor must be numbered with the dead; the last despairing advertisements he had seen in the *Hamburger Nachrichten* and other journals led him to infer that such must be the case, and that the sorrowing sister had no doubt left Altona in a state of grief, for which he cared not a jot.

He knew also that Ellinor was ignorant of Mary's precise whereabouts, whether she was still in Altona or had gone back to London or Birkwoodbrae; that she could not communicate with her, even by letter, save through him, and was thus completely in his power, as a baby or a bauble might have been; and he vaguely thought that if he could get her away, on any pretence, to Brussels or some quiet

little village in the Netherlands, she would be still more so, and for the contingencies of the future he drew heavily on his bankers through Herr Burger, in the Gras Keller.

For the future—let the future take care of itself! He had broken with English society, if not with the police. Who was there, as a relation, to call him to account, and who had the right to do so? he asked of himself.

As he was not without fears or suspicions of his friend Mr. Adolphus Dewsnap, he resolved to get her away from the yacht.

‘Tears—always tears!’ said he, angrily, on the day after the *Flying Foam* was moored alongside the jetty in the Binnenhafen. ‘I daresay, like your sister, you are sorry for that fellow Colville—your “cousin” as he called himself—a good joke that! Very terrible, of course—cut

off by the Cabul niggers, and so forth; but we can only die once. Hope he was duly prepared, as the devil-dodgers say, and all that sort of thing.'

In furtherance of his plan to get her away from the yacht, he said, quite deliberately,

'Your friend Mrs. Deroubigne has left Altona.'

'Left it—gone!' exclaimed Ellinor, in a weak voice, and grieved but not surprised.

'Yes.'

'For where?'

'To another residence in Hamburg, whither I shall shortly take you and leave you to relate your own adventures, for I am deuced tired of this kind of work.'

A gush of joy, but joy without the least gratitude, welled up in the heart of Ellinor, and she prepared with wonderful alacrity to accompany him, never suspecting that he was cajoling her and meant to

put her in the hands of Frau Wyburg, who for a sum paid down had promised to keep her safely till he made other arrangements.

He could not take her to the *Kron Prinzen, L'Europe*, or any of the great hotels, for there she would have claimed and found protection, and for him she would, he knew, be quite helpless in the hands of Frau Wyburg and her husband ; thus he resolved to keep his own counsel on leaving the yacht as to where he was taking her ; but Mr. Dolly Dewsnap and Ringbolt too had shrewdly their own ideas on the subject.

‘Sorry we are not to have your company to the coast of France, Miss Ellinor,’ said Dewsnap, as he pressed a glass of wine upon her ere she departed.

‘I don’t think you’ll miss much,’ said Ringbolt, as the pale girl made no reply. ‘There you get sour wine, and they call it

vin ordinaire, and all kinds of offal cooked with fine French names, so that I defy you to tell whether you are eating a bird of the air or a fish of the sea. Ah, there is no place like Old England.'

Mr. Dolly Dewsnap was about this time, as his subordinate Ringbolt said, 'three sheets in the wind,' even before going to a late dinner at *Hotel de Russie* in the Jungferensteig, and he was propping himself against the cabin table while sipping his sherry, and regarding Ellinor with a leering expression of admiration.

'Won't you have a cigarette, Miss Ellinor?' said he, suddenly producing his cigar-case.

'Scotch girls, and English ones too, don't smoke,' said Sleath, angrily.

'Why not?' responded Dewsnap, sharply; 'by Jingo, I knew a Russian Princess—the Princess Wroguenoff—who always smoked Turkish tobacco in a Manzanita

pipe; and a charming woman she was.'

'So you don't know her now, Dolly?'

'How do you know?' asked the other, who was disposed to be quarrelsome just then.

'You speak of her in the past tense.'

'The droski waits, sir,' said Gaiters, suddenly appearing in the companion-way.

Sir Redmond gave his hand to Ellinor, who was ready, hatted and shawled, and barely gave a bow of farewell to Dewsnap, as she ascended to the deck, and bade adieu to her Vierlander attendant.

Evening had fallen now, and the gas-lamps were reflected in the murky and muddy waters of the Binnenhafen, as she stepped ashore, and entered a close droski (as those cabs are named which ply for hire in all the principal thoroughfares of Hamburg) unnoticed by any but some dock porters, and an organ-grinder with a monkey 'appropriately dressed in High-

land costume,' as Sleath remarked while putting his head out of the window, and telling Gaiters, who was seated beside the driver, where they were to go.

The vehicle proceeded slowly, and Ellinor, while in a fever of impatience, and without hearing what Sir Redmond was saying to her, looked forth from the windows alternately, and recognised the church of St. Nicolai as they passed through the Hopfen Market, the street called the Gras Keller, and the long and stately Neuerwall, after which they seemed to traverse streets that were unknown to her, old, mean, and dirty.

'Need I urge upon you how strangely our paths seem to cross each other—how strangely our lives seemed linked together, Ellinor?' said he, attempting to take one of her hands caressingly.

This roused her, and she withdrew it sharply.

‘Still perverse!’ he resumed, with knitted brows. ‘Fate has thrown us together for a third time. You escaped me twice; but the third time mine you shall be, so sure as you hear me speak!’

She made not the slightest response, and surveyed with surprise the network of canals and wet ditches the droski crossed by a succession of iron bridges.

‘Ellinor,’ said Sir Redmond again, ‘you are over-excited; you have not recovered from the terror of your accident—the sickness and storm at the river mouth.’

Her face was pale and rigid; her eyes alternately flashing fire at the prospect of freedom, and then growing cold as steel with indignation.

To her it began to seem impossible that Mrs. Deroubigne and Mary could have left their pretty and airy villa at Altona, on the grassy bank of the Elbe, to dwell in such a locality as that in which she

found herself when the droski stopped.

‘Here we are, sir,’ said Gaiters, jumping down and touching his cockaded hat.

A bell that emitted a dismal sound resounded to the downward pull of the iron handle, and a large door—but all the doorways are large in Hamburg—unfolded, showing a gloomy porch, lighted only by the oil-lamp that burned feebly before a madonna perched on the wall to give the house an external air of respectability.

After a conference with some one within, Gaiters reappeared at the droski window.

‘Madame Wyburg,’ he said, ‘tells me that Mrs. Deroubigne has left this place two days ago, and gone, she believes, to Brussels.’

‘To Brussels!’ exclaimed Ellinor, sick with disappointment and dismay, as she sank back on her seat. ‘I cannot go there vaguely in search of them——’

‘Of course not; so what then?’

‘Oh, let me get back to London—to Grosvenor Square!’

‘You are too ill to travel just now, and must remain with kind Madame Wyburg for a few days till the exact address of Mrs. Deroubigne is found,’ said Sleath, in the most persuasive tone he could adopt; ‘but here comes the master of the house,’ he added, as a very singular figure appeared.

A man short in stature, but thick-set and powerfully built, with leery grey eyes, dissipated and bloated features, and a ragged red moustache, wearing a quaint garb, entirely black, with a plaited ruff round his neck, a wig curled and powdered, a short Spanish cloak, and a long Toledo sword, with a Mother Hubbard hat on his head, sharply pointed, and about two feet high.

This strange apparition of the sixteenth

century doffed his steeple-crowned hat to Ellinor, who after a time discovered that the Herr Wyburg, among various other less respectable avocations, whereby to eke out a living, was one of the sixteen *Reiten-Diener*, or hired mourners, who—instead of the friends of the deceased—attend funeral processions in Hamburg, carrying out Charles Dickens's well-known definition of such a ceremony as 'a masquerade dipped in ink.' He had just come from having a 'deep drink' with his comrades after an interment at the *Begrabnisplatze*, or grand cemetery, outside the Ulricus Bastion, for in their ways these fellows are precisely like the human carrion crows we may see daily perched on the top of London hearses returning from Kensal Green, Brompton, or elsewhere, in a state of hat-band, jollity, and gin.

He also bowed low and leeringly to Sir Redmond Sleath.

This was not the first of the baronet's acquaintance with these people. He had been aided by the Frau Wyburg in more than one nefarious intrigue, the victim of which had dropped out of society, and by her husband in more than one shady gambling transaction in a 'hell' of the Adolphus Platze, ere he succeeded to the title his father's shady politics had won; so the trio knew each other thoroughly.

Ellinor, conceiving that she must be safer in the care of one of her own sex than on board the yacht, agreed to remain with Frau Wyburg till she proceeded to London or Brussels, and from that moment found herself more than ever a hopeless prisoner.

The frau was a pale, little woman, with black hair, wicked dark eyes, a square and resolute-looking jaw, a cruel mouth, and a face generally on which, after a time, Ellinor could not look without a shudder

when the woman's real character became known to her; but as yet she was disposed to cling to her as a friend—a protector—in her helplessness and excessive debility after all she had undergone, and she gratefully accepted at her hands a cup of hot coffee in her cosy parlour, with its gay chintz curtains and polished oak floor, while her husband, with an eye to monetary business, drew Sir Redmond aside to another apartment.

CHAPTER X.

THE HOUSE BY THE FLEETHEN.

THE abode of Herr Wyburg was situated in the oldest part of Hamburg, where the streets are narrow, crowded, irregular, and, if picturesque, squalid. They are generally of great height, built in the Dutch fashion of brick and wood, and those inhabited by the lower orders have their narrow windows so near each other as to give them the aspect of huge manufactories, but with a heavy and gloomy character about them.

Many of these brick-nogging, tumble-

down dwellings are admirable subjects for the pencil. Numerous canals called *Fleethen* intersect this quarter, and run along the backs of the houses, giving the streets a resemblance to those of Holland. In summer the muddy exhalations from these are very unwholesome, and might prove pestilential, were it not for the agitation in them caused by the current of the Elbe.

In this odious and unsavoury, but picturesque part of the city, which escaped the great fire of 1642, and which has undergone little change since the days of the Hanseatic League, the back wall of Herr Wyburg's house was washed by the waters of the Fleethen, while on one side it was isolated from the haggard district in which it stood by a large market-garden.

The original frame of the house had been altogether wood—Baltic pine—but would seem to have been patched and repaired with bricks.

The arms of Holstein and Schleswig, the nettleleaf and two lions respectively, were reproduced in various parts of it, for in other times it had been a residence of the old Counts of Holstein, the ancient Lords of Hamburg, a dignity claimed by the Kings of Denmark till 1768; but in rank it had come sorely down in the world, just as in Scottish towns we find the ancient abodes of nobility, and even of royalty, now abandoned to the squalid and the poor.

Its walls were in some places panelled with almost black mahogany, quaintly, if uncouthly, carved, and much discoloured by damp from the adjacent Fleethen. The windows were high, jealously grated with iron, and admitted but a foggy kind of light, even by noonday, and the whole edifice had a general aspect of dreariness and desolation that sunk like a weight on the young heart of Ellinor Wellwood.

The back windows alone were ungrated, but then they overlooked the Fleethen, that system of canals and intersecting ditches which conceal many a crime, and where the body of the murdered—if found before being swept into the Elbe—passes often for that of a suicide.

When Wyburg withdrew with Sir Redmond, he offered that worthy his hand, but the latter ignored the action, and did not respond to it. In this he only acted 'snobbishly,' not because he knew the other to be a finished rascal; and over the face of the latter there passed a flush of rage and affront, while a dangerous gleam came into his watery eyes.

'It is no use, Sir Redmond, your attempting to come the fine or arrogant gentleman over me,' said Herr Wyburg; 'you and I are too old acquaintances for that.'

His English was remarkably distinct,

though of course the foreign accent was very marked. He had been a billiard-marker in the Strand, but had to quit London in some haste, having become too well-known in the vicinity of 'Lester Square.' Hence it was that he knew English well, and London too, in all its worst, foreign, and most disreputable phases.

He was a billiard-marker and gambler still, and ready to do any rascality for which he was sufficiently paid. His wife—the Frau Wyburg—had once been a dancer in the Schweitzer Pavilion and Ambiguity Circus, during her less disreputable days, and was no more above taking a bribe than himself.

'Sir Redmond,' said he, pocketing the gold by which his services were to be secured, 'I have seen some pretty faces in my time, but the fraulein is downright beautiful!' he added, as he thought with

genuine admiration of the clear, creamy skin which so often accompanies such hair and dark-blue eyes as those of Elinor.

‘This young lady is my wife,’ said Sleath, a little emphatically; ‘and I wish you and your worthy frau to take all requisite care of her for me—for a time.’

Herr Wyburg closed one eye, and, with intense cunning in the other, surveyed the speaker.

‘Your wife?’ said he.

‘Yes.’

‘She has no wedding-ring.’

‘If it is not on her finger, it ought to be.’

‘And you wish us to take care of her—that she does not escape, you mean?’

‘Precisely.’

‘Why?’

‘Need *you* ask me why?’ said Sleath, with irritation. ‘She is ill—strange,’ he

added, putting a finger to his forehead.
'Poor girl—you understand?'

Herr Wyburg winked his cunning eye again. He *did* understand, and shrewdly disbelieved that the girl was Sleath's wife; yet her bearing, her fear, repugnance, and bodily weakness all puzzled him, and, like his wife, he knew not what to think, save that Sleath's golden sovereigns were very acceptable, and the latter now prepared to depart—his droski was still at the door—and he bade Frau Wyburg 'good-night,' after she had recommended him not to insist on again seeing Ellinor, who had retired to her room.

'Ah,' said the frau, with one of her detestable but would-be suave smiles, 'the Fraulein has got what the French call a *migrain*—perhaps it is periodical—any way the kindness and love of mein Herr,' she added, curtsying, 'will soon make it pass away.'

Ellinor felt intense relief when Sir Redmond drove away, and strove to hope that he had wearied or repented of his persecution, and would really discover the address of Mrs. Deroubigne; but how was she to travel without money, and she had scarcely a trinket about her!

She was left, with a slipshod girl in attendance, in a tolerably comfortable little room, with panelled walls, and having in one corner a pretty little bed (with one of those enormous square pillows peculiar to Germany), in another corner a tall cylindrical iron stove, in which a fire was glowing redly across the polished floor and on the panels of an antique clothes wardrobe.

She looked from the casement window, and saw the lights in houses opposite about fifty yards distant, and between them the still, deep, and gloomy Fleethen ditch, or canal, in which these lights were tremulously reflected; and something in the chill

aspect of the water, or what it suggested, as it lay just beneath her window, made her shudder involuntarily.

She was soon to find that she was snared, and more a helpless prisoner than she had been when on board the *Flying Foam* ; for Sir Redmond had placed her in this abode, knowing where he could find her again when he chose, and where, if he did *not* choose, she might disappear, as so many entrapped English girls do on the Continent, and never be heard of again ; and in gambling, dissipated, and dissolute Hamburg the muddy waters of its Fleethen hide many an unknown crime and many a secret sorrow.

Lenchen (or Ellen), the girl who attended her, if slipshod, was pretty and rosy, but saucy and flippant, though clad, like the usual Hamburg housemaid, with a piquant lace cap, her white arms bare to above the elbow, always scrupulously

clean, and when she went to market wore long kid gloves and the gayest of shawls, so disposed under the arm as to conceal the basket, which is always shaped unpleasantly like a child's coffin, but containing butter, cheese, eggs, or whatever has been purchased.

Ignorant of the German language, and ignorant also, as yet, of the true character of the Frau Wyburg and her attendant Lenchen, and as their broken English gave—as it always rather absurdly seems to do—an idea of childish innocence even to the most rascally foreigner, Ellinor became inspired by a new sense of protection in the presence of these females—especially of Lenchen; but this confidence might have received a shock had she seen how that young lady comported herself with Rolandsburg's uhlands, and other *soldaten* in the vicinity of the Dammthor Wall and the *Burger Militair Kauslie*.

Three days passed, during which she saw and heard nothing of Sir Redmond. The truth was, that worthy member of the 'upper ten' and his *Fidus Achates*—his friend Dolly Dewsnap—having, through the tipsy insolence of the latter, become involved in a street row at night with a member of the *Neidergericht*, or Inferior Court, to avoid the police, who 'wanted them,' had remained closely on board the yacht in the *Binnenhafen*, where she was now remasted, and fast becoming ready for sea in Ringbolt's skilful hands.

As the evening of the third day was approaching, Ellinor, feeling stronger and more impatient of action and restraint, attired herself for the street in the best of the garments found for her in the yacht.

'For what purpose?' asked Frau Wyburg, angrily.

'To have a walk in the city,' replied Ellinor.

‘Mein Got, alone! and for what reason?’

‘To make some inquiries for myself at the post-office, or elsewhere.’

‘It cannot be permitted!’ said Herr Wyburg, emphatically, and with knitted brows, as he interposed.

‘Why?’

‘The Herr Sleath has forbidden such; moreover, it is not safe!’

‘Not safe in the streets of Hamburg?’ questioned Ellinor, while tears started to her eyes. ‘I am not a child!’

‘No.’

‘Then why?’

There were disturbances abroad, he told her; trade-union mobs were about, and the uhlands from the Damnthor were patrolling the streets with lance and carbine.

This was not true, but Ellinor was compelled to believe it, and relinquished the attempt with a sigh of bitterness and disappointment.

Lenchen daily brought her fresh flowers from market, as she said, by order of *Herr Sleet*.

The latter had often heard Ellinor say at Birkwoodbrae that she was never dull or lonely if she only had flowers about her.

But his gifts of flowers were unheeded now, she loathed them as if their petals exhaled not fragrance but poison.

Yet once she could not resist toying with some of them—the Dijon roses especially, and with their odour across the tide of memory there stole gently and subtly a memory of the past.

Who has not some association of this kind?

Ellinor's were of happy years at Birkwoodbrae and Robert Wodrow, and a torrent of tears came with the memory, and a kind of lethargic despair came over her as the little hope that dawned upon her

began to die again—the hope that Sleath had relented and really meant to relinquish his persecution and restore her to her friends.

CHAPTER XI.

IN HAMBURG STILL.

ELLINOR was altogether unlike any other girl on whom the evil eyes of Herr Wyburg had rested, in Hamburg at least. Her face was so clearly cut, with pride in its contour, a dreamy thought its eyes, and something almost angelic in its purity—as Tennyson has it,

‘A sight to make an old man young.’

The three days’ unexpected absence of Sir Redmond rather alarmed Herr Wyburg. He knew not how to account for

it, and mightily, with all his ruffianism, dreaded the gendarmes; thus he was genuinely glad when, in the dusk of the third day, the baronet presented himself at his house and inquired for his charge.

‘She is silent and dull as usual, and anxious for the address of a lady friend,’ replied Wyburg. ‘I don’t understand all this,’ he added, in a growling tone; ‘have you made a fool of this girl or of yourself?’

‘Of myself as yet, I think,’ replied Sleath, with an oath.

‘Every man does so, once in his life at least, and generally oftener,’ said the German; ‘but I thought you were too wide awake for that now. With her sadness and her tears this girl is a profound bore to us, even if paid for! I wish you would take some means to cheer her—to please her—if you can.’

‘Don’t talk to me about the idiotic vagaries of a girl!’ snapped Sir Redmond.

‘I do not wish to do so, mein Herr; but what would you have me say?’ replied Wyburg. ‘Look here—it is all stuff and gammon about the Fraulein being your wife. I lived too long in England not to have my eyes opened.’

‘Well?’

‘You love her in your own fashion, I suppose?’

‘And she?’

‘Seems to hate you,’ replied the German, with a grin.

‘Perhaps she is not the first of her sex who has said no when she meant yes.’

‘You don’t mean to marry her, I suppose?’

‘I have a wife already,’ replied Sleath, as he carefully manipulated and prepared a cigar.

‘Der Teufel!’ said Herr Wyburg, puffing out a cloud from his huge meerschaum, ‘but such things will happen.’

‘I have been engaged in many a lark and scrape, as you, Wyburg, know well enough, but never in one so peculiar as this. The girls who eloped with me before were always willing enough.’

‘She may turn ill—downright ill—on our hands unless some change is brought about, and may have to be sent to the Krankenhaus ; and then—what then?’

Sleath had not thought of this contingency, so he became alarmed and asked to see Ellinor.

On his entrance she rose at once and came towards him, her eyes dilated with hope or expectation and her lips parted, but without offering him a hand.

‘You have news for me at last?’ she said.

‘News—about what—about whom?’

‘Mrs. Deroubigne and Mary.’

‘I have sent or gone daily to the post-office in the Post Strasse, but neither by

telegraph nor inquiry can I discover their whereabouts in Brussels,' he replied, unblushingly; 'and even if we went there—'

'There! that is not to be thought of. I shall take the steamer for London,' exclaimed Ellinor, looking round her as if she would start that moment.

'No, you won't, my dear girl—yet a while, at least.'

'I shall go mad—mad if I am kept here prisoner for another day!' exclaimed Ellinor, wildly, as she wrung her hands and then pressed them on her temples, while Herr Wyburg looked with a kind of gloomy scorn from one to the other.

He had many experiences in his career, but this was to him one somewhat new.

Ellinor was so painfully agitated that Sir Redmond was fain to resort to the most specious falsehoods to soothe and calm her; he promised most solemnly to write or telegraph to the British Amba-

sador at Brussels, to the postal authorities there, and so forth ; and, with intense anger and mortification in his heart at his bad success, he left her to rejoin Dewsnap, and have a 'deep drink' at the Hotel Russie, and perhaps a turn into the Schweitzer Pavilion, feeling inclined on one hand—all inflamed as he was with her beauty and helplessness—to force her in some way to love him ; and on the other, to sail away with his friend in the *Flying Foam*, and leave her to her fate in the hands of Herr Wyburg !

He did neither for a day or two yet, but showered presents upon her ; he ransacked the Neuer Wall and the Alster Wall for all kinds of pretty things, and bought up the best bouquets of the Vierlander flower-girls by the score ; and Frau Wyburg only looked forward to the time when she could appropriate all the presents, when the girl was away or—dead.

All his presents and pretty trifles, over which Lenchen went into ecstasies, remained, as he saw, untouched in their cases or packing paper.

‘You disdain all these things which I feel such delight in offering you,’ said he, reproachfully.

She wrung her interlaced fingers, but made no reply.

A red gleam shot out of Sleath’s eyes; he bit his lip, and the Frau Wyburg laughed, while her black orbs glittered mischievously, and her mouth wore its cruel expression more unpleasantly than usual.

But for his early entanglement with his mother’s maid—Seraphina Fubsby, whose absurd name he loathed now—an event which too probably had warped his whole life, he felt at times—but at times only—that he would gladly have offered his hand and all he possessed to the sweet and gentle Ellinor; and, though he knew how she

shrank from him, and loathed him, he could not help trying to play the old game he had begun at Birkwoodbrae, by urging again and again that his marriage was untrue, illegal, that he would prove it so, and also urging his wild, blind passion for herself, on the plea of her wonderful beauty, as Richard of England did his passion for the Lady Anne, having rarely found an appeal to a woman on *that* score fail him.

But he might as well have spoken to a statue now, and as she could extract no tidings of her sister or Mrs. Deroubigne from him, she thought only of escaping from the house of his odious friends. She was now aware that she had been entrapped by a specious story, and that neither Mary nor Mrs. Deroubigne would seem to have resided with them after leaving Altona, as Frau Wyburg and her husband, though 'coached' by Sleath and

Gaiters, evidently knew nothing about them save their names, and a new dismay seized the unhappy girl.

Escaping—but how? The avenues to the street were too closely secured, and the window of her room was too high above the water of the Fleethen to afford the least chance of escape there; while the only boats that passed were those of the Vierlander people, laden with vegetables, pulled swiftly along at rare and distant intervals.

To appeal to the Wyburgs she knew would be vain. Her pure, pale face with its dreamy eyes, into which there now came a hunted expression, failed to win either their pity or commiseration; but escape she must, or die!

Ellinor knew now that in Sleath the animal nature predominated, and that she might have to suffer from his cruelty and violence if she remained in his power.

But how was she to escape without money, without a knowledge of the language, of the very locality in which he had placed her, without bodily strength, and with only intense horror and aversion to nerve and inspire her?

On whom could she cast herself?

Certainly not the repulsive Frau Wyburg, with her wicked black eyes and square, resolute jaws, or her equally repellent husband, with the leering eyes and ragged red moustache? What had she done that Fate should have cast her into such unscrupulous, and to her altogether inconceivable, hands?

‘She grows paler, if possible, every day,’ said Wyburg to Sleath. ‘If this sort of thing goes on, it will be an affair for the Krankenhaus,’ he added, in a growling voice, referring to the great public hospital in the suburb of St. George.

Dewsnap’s yacht was getting ready for

sea, and was now anchored by the dolphins, outside the Binnenhafen, and Sleath was resolved to end his affair with Ellinor in some fashion or other, for the hints of Wyburg alarmed him.

So he recommended to Ellinor a drive in an open droski, attended, not by himself—he was too wary for that—but by the Frau Wyburg and Gaiters, who was to have a seat on the dickey. He thought there was little to fear in this, as Ellinor knew not a word of German, and Gaiters was a careful fellow.

Indeed, Mr. John Gaiters—though to all appearance a thoroughly well-bred English serving-man, automaton-like in movements, reserved, and when it suited him most civil in speech, and without an atom of scruple—had one redeeming bull-dog feature in his character, and that was intense fidelity to his dissolute, yet liberal, master.

The afternoon was beautiful and sunny.

The drive along the Jungferensteig and Alster Damm was charming enough to rouse even Ellinor from her lethargy, but not to still her resolution to escape, if she could.

The scene, after all she had undergone of late, proved a gay and enchanting one—the rows of stately mansions; the quadruple lines of trees in full leaf; the deep blue of the Binner Alster, its bosom studded by pretty pleasure-boats, tiny steamers, and flocks of snow-white swans; and the German bands playing before the great hotels, which were all gaily decorated with the flags of various nations, as if for a holiday. But ere long there occurred that which to her was a crushing episode.

While Frau Wyburg stopped the droski to listen to a band that was playing amid a group of people before the great Kron Prinzen Hotel, Ellinor perceived a handsome open carriage close by, and in it were

seated an elderly gentleman and two ladies, who had their eyes fixed on her.

The trio were Lord and Lady Dunkeld with their daughter, Blanche Galloway!

Ellinor started from her seat, as they were quite within earshot, and in their power lay succour—help—rescue!

‘Lady Dunkeld—Lady Dunkeld—Mrs. Deroubigne!’ she exclaimed, wildly; ‘you can doubtless give me her address? You know me—you know me—Ellinor Wellwood!’

They all heard her; but Lord Dunkeld looked steadily askance, showing only the facial angle which he thought so like that of the Grande Monarque, while the two ladies gazed with wonder at first, and then with frigid hauteur; and Blanche, who, we have said, was strong in love, ambition, and hate, said something to the coachman, who drove away at once, while the usually imperturbable Gaiters, in some alarm, took

the droski in an opposite direction, and Ellinor sank back despairing on her seat, as she was conveyed at a galloping pace back to the gloomy house overlooking the Bleichen Fleet. The deadly and sickening surmises of what these cold-hearted people thought, of what the world might say, think, or suspect, seemed now to take a tangible form, and the soul of the girl seemed to die within her.

It was so fated, however, that the secret of her adventures was never to be made known to the world of Mrs. Grundy—by the lips of Sir Redmond Sleath, at least.

While this daring and extraordinary conspiracy against the freedom and peace of Ellinor was in progress in that obscure and gloomy house, among the damp and miasmatic districts of the Fleethen, her sister Mary and Mrs. Deroubigne were still in the pretty villa at Altona.

The former was now in deep mourning—so deep that it was almost the same as the weeds of a widow, for she felt herself a widow in heart, indeed; and by the double loss she had endured the girl thought that Fate was very cruel to her.

She had received a pleasant, a delightfully-soothing letter from old Dr. Wodrow, condoling with her on the sad news from Cabul, all ignorant as he was yet of the escape of his son amid the new calamity in that fatal city—fatal to Britons, at least.

‘Any place in which we are perfectly happy is a place we glorify and transform,’ says a writer: and in the joy of her engagement to Leslie Colville, notwithstanding the perils he had to face, Mary had glorified their pretty abode by the Elbe at Altona.

That was all ended and over, and now the place had become to her one of double

gloom, and associated with a double sorrow.

‘Ah, Madame Deroubigne,’ said the young Baron Rolandsburg, ‘your charming villa has now not unnaturally become to you a place of calamitous associations—most unhomely,’ he added. ‘*Ja-ja!* it is always so after misfortunes come.’

And now as Altona had become so repugnant—a place of such horror to both Mary Wellwood and Mrs. Deroubigne, the time was fast approaching when they were to take their departure for London.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PLOT THICKENS.

FINDING that his visits were fast making Ellinor seriously ill, Sir Redmond, at the request of Herr Wyburg, did not intrude upon her for a day or two, yet he called and left a sham message concerning his continued inquiries for Mrs. Derou-bigne.

‘Where *are* the friends of the Fraulein?’ asked Herr Wyburg, twisting his coarse, red moustache; ‘in England?’

‘No, I rather think not,’ replied Sir Redmond.

‘Where, then?’

‘They were in Altona last, I believe,’ said the other, unguardedly.

‘Altona! In Altona! *Ach Gott!* Then *she* is the Fraulein for information concerning whom, alive or dead, such rewards were offered by placards in the Bourse and in the *Hamburger Nachrichten.*’

‘Nonsense,’ said Sleath, discovering that the admission was a mistake.

‘It is *no* nonsense,’ exclaimed Wyburg, trying to remember the amount of the reward offered, his cupidity at once excited by the consideration whether or not it was worth his while to betray his employer.

After the latter departed, he remembered the cunning and avaricious gleam that came into the watery grey eyes of the German, and a suspicion of his fidelity began to assume tangible shapes in the tainted mind of Sleath.

The chances that after all his trouble, care, cunning, and expense she might be delivered from his snares, taken from his power, an exposé made, and doubtless an appeal to the police of the city, to the British consul and the four burgomasters, before his intrigue had been successfully developed and Ellinor's voice silenced, filled him with exasperation; and cursing his own imprudent admission to Herr Wyburg, into whose hands he had thus put himself, he drank so deeply at his hotel that night that, between his passion for Ellinor, and fierce suspicion of his German tools, his mind became inflamed to a dangerous degree, and he resolved that before the church bells tolled midnight he would visit the persecuted girl, for the purpose of making assurance doubly sure with her and his two paid creatures.

‘Yes,’ he hiccupped, with an oath, as he was taken in a droski across the Adolphs-

brucke and the Nuerwall, 'I'll end it all, or know the reason why! I have played the whining fool too long. Am I to pass my days in slaving to study her whims?—to overcome her prudery and sham scruples? Am I a fool or a boy? Of what or of whom am I afraid? I will now listen only to the dictates of my own mind.'

He muttered much more to the same purpose aloud, and, quitting the droski at the corner of the Grosse Bleichen, thrust a double-mark into the driver's hand, and, without thinking of change, proceeded on foot to the house of Herr Wyburg.

A mass with three pointed gables, and each storey overhanging the other on beams of timber, rose before him. All was dark in and around it when he approached the door, and, tipsy though he was, he could hear—he thought—the

beating of his heart, and for a moment—but a moment only—an emotion of timidity, even of shame, came over him.

‘Pshaw!’ he exclaimed, with a malediction, and rang the bell.

After some delay and parleying, he was admitted by the drowsy Lenchen, who surveyed him with more annoyance than respect in her visage; but he strode past her without a word, and ascended to Herr Wyburg’s sitting-room.

He found that worthy attired in his grotesque *Reiter-Diener* costume, with his steeple-crowned hat and toledo on the table beside him. He was asleep in an easy-chair, and, after being at a funeral, had drank and smoked himself into a state of partial insensibility.

‘I wish to see the Fraulein,’ said Sleath to Frau Wyburg, who glanced at him inquiringly.

‘She must be asleep,’ was the answer.

‘I must see and speak with her.’

‘Ah, you have found her friends, then?’ said Frau Wyburg, with one of her detestable leers.

Sleath made no reply, but, snatching a candle from the table, proceeded at once towards the apartment of Ellinor, with a strange pallor in his face, his bloodshot eyes aflame, and his steps unsteady.

He hesitated a moment, and then turned the handle of the door. It was locked on the inside, and refused to yield.

He might naturally have expected this; but it served to surprise and exasperate him, for at that moment he was in the mood to fight with his own shadow.

‘Ellinor, rouse yourself—I have news for you—news at last!’ he exclaimed, and knocked on the door-panels more noisily than respectfully.

But there was no response from within.

He applied his ear to the keyhole; there was not a sound to be heard, and, as he had been given to understand that young girls generally slept lightly, it was impossible he could fail to waken her.

He knocked more loudly again, but failed to elicit the slightest response. Then he heard the mocking laugh of Frau Wyburg, who was listening at the foot of the staircase, and, believing that already he was being deluded, a gust of fury seized him, and applying his foot to the door, and as it was old and worm-eaten, he dashed it open with ease, and entered the darkened room.

It was empty, and no cry of alarm or consternation followed his furious irruption into it. The upheld candle showed him in a moment that its occupant was no longer there. Ellinor was gone!

Her bed had been unslept in; her hat

and the jacket she had got on board the *Flying Foam* were lying on it.

Where was she? Where hidden away?

That double villain Wyburg had deceived him after all, was Sir Redmond's instant thought, and, impressed by the rewards offered in the *Hamburger Nachrichten* and elsewhere, had 'sold' him and given her up to Mrs. Deroubigne.

Though infuriated with rage and disappointment he became sober in a moment, and turned to confront Wyburg and his wife; and, to do them justice, their astonishment, incredulity, and alarm had not the least appearance of being simulated, but were genuine.

She was concealed from him perhaps in some other apartment.

Frau Wyburg emphatically denied that she was.

'Silence, hag!' exclaimed Sir Redmond; 'had you lived three centuries ago, you

would have been burned before the Rathhaus as a witch !'

Her black eyes gleamed dangerously at this injurious remark, and on Sir Redmond turning away to prosecute a search elsewhere in defiance of the palpable evidence that the door had been locked on the inside, and that the key was still in the lock, Herr Wyburg, who was mad with consternation and drinking, roughly barred his way.

On the second finger of his right hand Sir Redmond wore a cluster of diamonds ; so prominent and sharp were they that they cut through his tightly-fitting kid glove. These brilliants, as he dealt Wyburg a facer, laid his cheek completely open and nearly tore his left eye out, thus a terrible and most unseemly brawl ensued.

Wyburg was a man of enormous strength, and for whom the enervated baronet was

no match in any way. Maddened by pain, the sight of his own blood flowing freely, by absinthe and *eau-de-vie*, inspirited by revenge and greed together, he resolved to make Sleath a victim now, and, though suffering from what the French call the *folie paralytique* which the two compounds referred to produce, he was simply savage, yet methodical, in his proceedings.

Rushing upon Sleath like an infuriated bull, he closed with him, and hurling him down the staircase flung him in a heap, bleeding and senseless, at the bottom.

When he recovered, Sleath found himself, secured in an attic of Wyburg's house, a prisoner, bound securely with ropes, stiff, sore, and bruised, his face and shirt front all plastered with blood.

Mr. John Gaiters, all the subsequent day, and indeed the day after, was sorely perplexed by the non-appearance of his master at the Hotel Russie, especially as

the yacht of Mr. Dewsnap was now ready for sea.

Frau Wyburg assured him that they had seen nothing of Sir Redmond for several days, and as the young lady had gone he had most probably accompanied her; and with this perplexing intelligence the valet was compelled to content himself.

This story or suggestion seemed to receive a certain corroboration when Gaiters, who was well-nigh at his wit's end, on pursuing his inquiries at Herr Burger's bank in the Gras Keller, where Sir Redmond had letters of credit, found that a cheque, duly signed by him, had been presented there on the preceding day and cashed for a pretty large sum.

Meanwhile, unable to communicate with the external world, Sir Redmond remained, bound hand and foot, a wretched prisoner in the power of the Wyburgs, one of whose first measures was the extortion of the

cheque in question as the price of his freedom; but, though the money was duly paid, they still kept him in their hands, being somewhat doubtful whether to release or destroy him.

He knew not whether they had actually betrayed him and given over Ellinor to her sister and chaperone, Mrs. Deroubigne, and in some respects he cared not now. In his innate selfishness of heart, he cursed her bitterly as being in one sense the cause of his present predicament, and he longed with a savage energy to be free that he might turn his back on Hamburg for ever.

He strove with all his strength and energy to burst his bonds, while the veins in his forehead swelled and the perspiration poured over it, but strove in vain, while Herr Wyburg, with his hideous visage tied up in a blood-stained cloth, sat mockingly in his chair, smoking his meer-

schaum, and sipping absinthe from time to time out of a green cup-shaped German glass.

The care with which the cheque had been executed and cashed induced Herr Wyburg and his spouse to extort at all risks another, for their greed and cupidity were thoroughly awakened now, and they had the miserable man completely in their power; and the circumstance that the funerals of one or two opulent burgers—one of them actually that of a senator of the city—were taking place, in which the Herr with his battered visage could take no part, and consequently pocket no fees, made him the more resolved on extortion; and, if the worst came to the worst, there were the waters of the Fleethen below the windows of the house.

‘You’ll never see that girl again unless you sign this other little cheque,’ said Frau Wyburg, with grim decision.

‘I don’t care a doit about the girl; keep her,’ replied Sleath through his clenched teeth. ‘For God-sake,’ he added, imploringly, ‘give me something to drink; I am perishing of thirst.’

‘Well, perish, then, if you won’t sign this paper—it is stamped and ready; but, till you sign it or die, the water remains in this flagon,’ replied Wyburg, placing a tall German beer-jug full of sparkling water in tantalising proximity to the wretched man’s lips, and then putting it on the table, while madame looked on approvingly, her black eyes gleaming, her pale face radiant with malice and greed, her jaw looking more square, and her tiger mouth more tigerish than ever.

Somehow the words of Wyburg seemed to introduce a practical and reasonable, if intensely obnoxious, element into what seemed the phantasmal horror of a prolonged nightmare to Sir Redmond Sleath.

‘What is the sum?’ he asked, huskily.

‘Three hundred pounds English money.’

He groaned with rage at this renewed extortion; but, if money is precious, life is more precious still, and these Wyburgs he knew to be wretches without an atom of scruple, so he signed the cheque, which the Herr, who knew his autograph perfectly well, folded and handed to his better-half with a smile of grim satisfaction.

‘Unbind me now,’ said Sleath, faintly.

‘Not if I know it, yet awhile,’ replied the ruffian, who, though he acted so methodically, was half mad with revenge for his gashed visage, and the imbibing of absinthe and Danish corn-brandy.

‘What are you about to do with me?’ asked Sleath, imploringly, and with mortal fear in his face and accents.

Wyburg made no reply, but proceeded with great deliberation to bore two holes

in the wainscot of the attic, and, passing through them the ends of the ropes which bound his prisoner, told him that they were being secured by the Frau to a little cask of powder on the other side of the partition, and inserted in which there was a loaded and cocked revolver, and that the instant he moved or attempted pursuit or flight the tension of the ropes would cause an explosion that would blow him and the house to pieces !

Herr Wyburg had made that which to him was a small fortune out of Sir Redmond, and dared not face any inquiry in case of that individual escaping and appealing to law ; he was far in arrear with his house rent ; he had sold his furniture twice over to different Jews in the Scharsteinweg, and now resolved to quit Hamburg for purer air ; and, inspired by malice and revenge, he and his wife took their immediate departure, leaving the wretched

Sleath minus watch, purse, and rings, and, as we have described, face to face with a miserable death, if he attempted to escape !

CHAPTER XIII.

WITH ROBERTS' COLUMN.

'WELCOME back from the other world, Bob Wodrow!' exclaimed Toby Chace. 'The stable-call won't be new to you, though a good meal and a deep drink may be, I have no doubt. So we are to have a shy at these Afghan beggars again!' and while grooming his horse he began to sing the stable-call in verse, while rubbing down his charger after hissing away through his teeth in the most orthodox fashion,

‘Come, come to your stable as quick as you’re able,
Come, come to your stable, my jolly dragoon ;
See your horse groomed well, and give him some hay,
With corn and water for night and for day ;
Then come to your stable as fast as you’re able,
Then come to your stable, my jolly dragoon.’

So sang to Wodrow that jovial English trooper, Toby Chace, light of heart, if unsteady of purpose, while bustling about his horse—Chace, who, in his more palmy days, had more than one hunter of his own in stall; who had once handsome rooms in Piccadilly, a snug corner in his club, and was never without an invitation for cub-hunting in the shires, or to pot the deer in the Highlands; the heir to an old English baronetcy, and yet, in his fallen estate, was wont to designate himself ‘jolly as a sandboy, whatever the devil kind of boy that is!’

Left behind his regiment sick, Toby Chace was now, like Robert Wodrow,

attached *pro tem.* to a squadron of the 9th Lancers ordered to the front.

‘So we march to-morrow to clear off the score we owe these fellows at Cabul,’ said he.

‘In that business, then, I have lost the best friend man ever had,’ said Wodrow, sighing; ‘Captain Colville.’

‘A right good sort; we’ll drink his health—his memory, I mean. I wonder if Fred Roberts will let us sack the town?’

‘I think not, Toby—but why?’

‘It would be rare fun prying into the harems, or having them escaladed by reprobates in regimentals.’

Toby’s naturally elastic spirits rose at the prospect of more fighting, for his disposition was always to make the best of everything, and it served him in good stead now.

Ignorant of all that was transpiring to

those most dear to him far away in Europe, Colville was still a prisoner in the hands of Mahmoud Shah.

The cruel and barbarous murder of the young and gallant Hector Maclain, after he had been so many weeks the prisoner and guest of Ayoub Khan, proved that our Afghan enemies could be true or false to their salt, exactly as suited their caprice or cruelty; thus, though Leslie Colville was in precisely the same position in the Cabul fort, it by no means followed that his life might not be taken in any moment of fear or hatred.

Life in India has often been described as one long and listless yawn, born of weariness, heat, and indolence; but it was certainly not so at this crisis on the borders of Afghanistan, which, to the average British mind, is considered a part of India.

An army was now detailed to punish the

infatuated fanatics who had destroyed our Embassy, but, though infatuated, they were also

‘Souls made of fire and children of the sun,
With whom revenge is virtue!’

So we now resolved to take a leaf out of their own book, and have our revenge in turn.

Once more our troops would have to toil along the stony and boulder-strewn banks of the gloomy Khyber, up and down the awful chasms of the Lundi Khana Kotal, by the mountain clefts and deep defiles of Khoord Cabul, with every prospect of being harassed, perhaps decimated, by thousands of hardy hillmen—the Khyberrees, Afreedees, Shinwarris, Mohmonds, Mongols, and Ghilzies.

The gallant and active Sir Donald Stewart again seized Candahar; Massey occupied the Shutargardan Pass; Baker

took Kushi, and Roberts—whose name is second to none in glory—was soon ready to begin that campaign which all hoped would end in the conquest of the blood-stained Cabul.

The Viceroy of India made the greatest efforts to grapple with the new difficulty, and hurry forward the army that was to uphold the power of the fickle Ameer as our nominal ally—for nominal indeed he was—and there was every prospect of his being slain by his insurgent troops, led by Mahmoud Shah and other sirdirs, unless he took to flight, or put himself at their head against us as intruders and unbelievers.

‘This devil of an Ameer,’ remarked old Colonel Spatterdash, ‘is true to the words of Swift—“The two maxims of every great man are always to keep his countenance, and never to keep his word.”’

Three columns were to advance simul-

taneously, and open communication between Cabul and Peshawur, but we shall confine ourselves briefly to that under Sir Frederick Roberts, which consisted of three batteries of Artillery, a squadron of H.M. 9th Lancers, some Bengal and Punjaub Cavalry, the Gordon and Albany Highlanders, the 67th Regiment, 3rd Sikhs, 23rd Pioneers, and Spatterdash's Punjaubees—making a total of barely eight thousand men.

Scarlet, blue, and gold, had for the time been discarded by the cavalry, and, like most of the infantry, they wore *karkee*, or mud-coloured costumes—uniforms they could scarcely be called—with the inevitable tropical helmet, and *putties* or linen leg bandages. The Scottish infantry, however, retained their tartans, wearing respectively the green Gordon and red Royal Stuart; but the Lancers laid aside their scarlet and white bannerettes.

The 19th of September saw our advanced parties reconnoitering close to Kushi, within thirty-five miles of Cabul, where twelve strong battalions with many guns were reported to be in garrison; and on that night the Duke of Albany's Highlanders were suddenly fired into, when all was supposed to be quiet in the vicinity, and a group of officers were chatting and smoking round a wood fire, which was instantly scattered and extinguished that the enemy might have nothing to aim by.

The Highland pickets stood to their arms, and by a few half-random volleys swept away the assailants, who proved to be Ghazis or religious fanatics, armed with juzails, or long matchlock guns, with a forked rest, which enables the marksman to take a steady aim. They are formidable weapons in mountainous districts, and, though their range exceeded that of old

'brown Bess,' it is far inferior to that of the rifles now in use.

Three days after, the Mongols attacked a convoy of provisions, borne on mules, in a solitary pass, and killed about twenty-three of the escort, chiefly by knives, and resistance proved useless, as the mountain band was so numerous that they next attempted to storm a tower at the summit of the Sirkai Kotal, or Red Pass, so named from the peculiar colour of the narrow path which led to it, but were repulsed and finally driven off by two companies of the Albany Highlanders. But skirmishes such as these were now of daily occurrence.

A few days after saw General Baker, C.B. and V.C., with the brigade of cavalry at Kushi (or 'the Village of Delights'), in a very barren district, whence, however, could be seen the lovely Logur Valley—fresh, green, and fertile; and then he

pushed his patrols and reconnaissances along the Cabul Road towards Zargun Shahr.

The advanced camp at Kushi received some very unexpected guests on the 23rd of September, when, at the head of twenty-five splendidly clad and accoutred horsemen — including old Daud Shah — the Ameer Yakoub Khan rode in and surrendered himself!

‘I have no longer any power left,’ said he; ‘I have been dethroned by my own mutinous troops; but Inshallah! it is the will of God!’

‘What his true reason for this startling step may have been, we never knew,’ wrote an officer, ‘certainly *not* the one he gave, for no Afghan ever told the truth intentionally.’

Handsome tents were given to him and his suite, and a guard of honour, furnished by the Gordon Highlanders, was accorded

him. Next day General Roberts and his staff rode in amid the cheers of the troops, and every face brightened, as all knew that the stern work of vengeance was soon to begin, and the pitiful slaughter of the gallant Cavagnari and his companions would be atoned for.

Stolidly proud or stupidly unimpassionable, the Ameer did not condescend to leave his tent, but lounged on a silken divan in the doorway of it, with a lorgnette in his hands, and evinced no excitement till he heard the pipes of the Gordon Highlanders, and saw the kilted sentinels around him.

‘He is a man of about six or seven and thirty,’ says Major Mitford, of the 14th Bengal Lancers, in his narrative, ‘with a light almond complexion and a very long, hooked nose, the lower part of the face hidden by a black beard and a moustache, the eyes having a dazed expression like

those of a freshly caught seal. This is said to have been caused by the five years' confinement in a dark cell to which his father, Shere Ali, subjected him, for conspiring against him.'

By order of the Viceroy, Sir Frederick Roberts issued a manifesto to the Afghan people to the effect that the British troops were advancing on the capital to avenge the treachery of its armed inhabitants, but that all who were peaceful would be unmolested; and non-combatants, women, and children were advised to leave Cabul and betake themselves to places of safety.

After some necessary interviews or consultations with the dethroned and fugitive Ameer, General Roberts concentrated his whole force at Kushi prior to attacking the city or any force it might send into the field against him.

Meanwhile the so-called guard of honour furnished by the Gordon Highlanders kept

a close watch over Yakoub Khan, as all in camp mistrusted him, and believed that he only made a pretence of giving himself up, and had in reality come to spy our numbers and weak points.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BATTLE OF CHARASIAH.

THAT something was on the *tapis*, and something like preparation, and very like consternation too, existed in and about Cabul, became evident to Leslie Colville, who suspected, though he was ignorant of the truth, that it was caused by the advance of a British army.

From the square keep of Mahmoud Shah's fort he could see mounted scouts and regular cavalry patrols hourly scouring the road, while crowds of Ghilzies and other hillmen, with banners waving and

arms glittering, hovered on the mountain sides ; caravans of camels laden with stores from Ghuznee, Bamian, Parwan, and elsewhere in the rear passed daily into the gates of Cabul, and more than one train of cannon too.

All this he saw, but made no comment, and he asked no questions ; he was only glad and thankful to heaven when night fell or day dawned, that another twelve hours of durance were passed, and that he was still in the land of the living, or not, perhaps, sold as a slave to the Beloochees or Usbeg Tartars, till one morning, about an hour or more before dawn, Mahmoud roused him from the charpoy on which he slept, and curtly told him that he must come forth.

Leslie Colville's heart beat painfully, and his thoughts flashed home to Mary Wellwood. Was death—such a murderous death as that by which Maclain died

—about to be meted out to him after all?

He was without arms—helpless; nor would arms have availed him much in that tower, garrisoned as it was by the fanatical cut-throats of Mahmoud Shah, whom he followed into the court, where two horses saddled and ready for the road were standing.

‘Mount,’ said Mahmoud; ‘mount and come with me, while the morning is yet dark—we have not a moment to lose.’

They quitted the tower by its western gate, and took together at a hard gallop the road that led, as Colville knew by past experience, along the left bank of the Cabul river, and, leaving all the scattered forts, walled gardens, and orchards behind, runs by Khoord Cabul and the Suffaidh Sang towards the Shutargardan Pass; and now for the first time genuine hope began to dawn in his heart.

‘Hark!’ cried Mahmoud; ‘what sound is that?’

‘A British trumpet call,’ replied Colville.

‘Yes—and look!’ said his guide, whom Colville now perceived was clad completely in spotless white, the costume of a Ghazi, assumed by those Moslem fanatics who devote themselves to death in battle for their Faith, and to achieving the death of all unbelievers.

Day was breaking now, and already the snow-clad peaks of some of those hills which are above eleven thousand feet in height, tipped with rosy dawn as with fire, stood sharply up against the deep blue sky, and, after a ten miles’ ride from the vicinity of the city, Mahmoud Shah drew his reins, and again said, ‘Look!’

Then Colville could see the gleam of arms in the distance, and as the gleam was steady he knew it was a sign of troops advancing.

‘Your people are there,’ said Mahmoud ; ‘join them, but keep out of my way for the future, and tempt me no more ; for never again, had we eaten a peck of salt together, will I spare the life of an unbeliever ; I have sworn it by the ninety-nine holy attributes and the Black Stone of Mecca ! Go—and go with God, though Eblis is more powerful yonder. There are the unbelievers who say the blessed Koran is a lie, and who seek to turn us aside from the gods our fathers worshipped, and of whom it was written on that Night of Power, when the word came down from Heaven, they shall taste the fires of hell, which like molten metal will devour their entrails !’

His dark eyes flashed as he spoke, and he ground his set teeth in the fury of his fanaticism.

‘Allah Shookr !’ he exclaimed, and, without waiting for a single word of thanks

from Colville, wheeled his horse sharply round, and galloped away towards the distant city at full speed; and a picturesque figure he looked, in his snowy camise and loose mantle, his long, white loonghee floating in the morning breeze, his juzail slung across his back, and the head of his tall, tasselled lance gleaming in the sunshine.

Colville devoutly hoped they would never meet again; yet he had not seen quite the last of Mahmoud Shah.

He now rode joyfully on towards the two parties of British cavalry which were then in sight, and who were—though he knew it not—about to inaugurate those operations which brought on the battle of Charasiah—or ‘The Four Water Mills,’ a spot about twelve British miles from Cabul.

The troops of Roberts had encamped there for the night, after passing through

the picturesque defile called the Sung-i-Navishta. All the vicinity had been scoured by our cavalry patrols, and, little aware that they were on the eve of a bloody engagement, the soldiers, weary with a long day's march, had turned in early.

Daybreak on this eventful day saw two cavalry patrols pushing along the roads that lead from Charasiah to Cabul. Captain Neville, of the 14th Bengal Lancers, with twenty men of that corps, took that one which, after crossing the Chardeh Valley, enters the south-western suburbs of the city, while the southern road, leading through the Sung-i-Navishta, was taken by Captain Apperley, with twenty of the 9th Lancers, and Robert Wodrow, as he had so recently trod the ways there on foot, now rode with him as a guide.

At nine a.m., a puff of smoke came suddenly from the loopholed-wall of a

village, and Wodrow's horse fell under him, killed by a musket ball. Apperley reported that he had occupied another village, and was now hard pressed by the enemy, on which a field-officer and twenty more Lancers came on to his succour, while some native infantry went at the double in the direction of Captain Neville's party.

Robert Wodrow was in the act of getting his carbine unstrapped from his dead horse when a mounted man suddenly came upon him clad in a sorely frayed and tattered blue patrol jacket, and wearing on his head a scarlet Afghan loonghee, and great was his astonishment and noisy and genuine his joy on discovering that this solitary and unarmed rider was Leslie Colville, whom he had long since numbered with the slain among the ashes of the Residency.

They shook hands again and again

warmly. Each had a hundred questions to ask the other, but both had little information to give, as Colville had been mewed up in Mahmoud's fort since the day of the massacre, and no tidings from home in any way or of any kind had reached Robert Wodrow.

'And now, without a moment's delay, I must report myself at headquarters,' said Colville.

'The General and staff are as yet some miles in the rear, sir,' replied Wodrow, recalled by the remark to their relative positions, 'and I shall guide you. By the carbine and musketry fire in front our two cavalry patrols seem to be catching it, and I must somehow get another horse. We have plenty of time. The infantry have yet some miles to come!'

Wodrow seemed now alternately in very sad or in the wildest spirits. With Colville's presence, his voice and kindly

face, the young fellow's thoughts and memories went keenly and vividly back to the past time at Birkwoodbrae, to the manse of Kirkton-Mailler, and all the old associations of Ellinor Wellwood and his home.

Then, indeed, he forgot for a time that he was only a corporal of Hussars, as Colville did that he was an officer of the Guards, and they chummed like old friends together.

'Share with me the contents of my haversack and flask, Captain Colville,' said Robert Wodrow, as they sat for a few minutes by the banks of a wayside runnel. 'We are going into action again—that is pretty evident. "Few, few shall part where many meet"—you know what the poet says; and I care little if it be my chance to fall—after all—after all I have undergone.'

'Don't say so, Wodrow,' said Colville,

in a tone of reprehension. ‘Why the deuce are you so low in spirit now?’

‘I should not be, now that I have met you again, Captain Colville,’ replied Wodrow, as he received back his flask and took a long pull at it; ‘but I feel—I feel—I don’t know how to-day. It is not fear, but as if something was about to happen to me; and a song—a song that she—Ellinor—used to sing seems to haunt my memory now.’

‘What song? “The Birks of Invermay”?’

‘No—another, and at this moment her very voice seems in my ears,’ he said, in broken accent.

‘And this song of Ellinor’s——’

‘Ran thus,’ said Wodrow, and, with a low voice and a certain humidity in his eyes, he actually sang a now forgotten song—

‘Thy way along life’s bright path lies,
 Where flowers spring up before thee,
 And faithful hearts and loving eyes
 Assemble to adore thee.
 The great and wise bend at thy shrine,
 The fair and young pursue thee,
 Fame’s chaplets round thy temples twine,
 And pleasure smiles to woo thee.

‘Yet, ’mid each blessing time can bring,
 Thy breast is still repining ;
 ’Tis cold as Ammon’s icy spring,
 O’er which no sun is shining ;
 And friendship’s presence has no charm—
 And beauty’s smiles are blighted,
 Nor joy, nor fame the heart can warm,
 That early love has slighted.’

‘And *blighted* has mine been, as you know, Captain Colville,’ he added, more sadly than bitterly.

‘Come, Wodrow, don’t pose as a “blighted being,” any way,’ said the other, who saw with pain the emotion of his comrade, and feared it sprang from one not unfrequently met with on service, the presenti-

ment of coming death. 'Here comes a Hussar on the spur from the front.'

'Toby Chace!' exclaimed Wodrow, as that individual came powdering along the road, but reined up sharply for a moment or so. 'Whither so fast?'

'I am sent back to report that the enemy in great force are advancing from the direction of the city, and occupying the defile and range of hills between this and Cabul, completely barring our advance. The Ghilzies are all mustering, and the road to Zahidabad, where the fifth division has encamped, is threatened.'

'That is the road by which General Macpherson is advancing with a great convoy of stores and ammunition.'

'Yes—so no doubt we shall have to carry the heights before evening.'

Toby Chace now recognised that Colville was an officer, though in somewhat dilapidated garments, and saluted him, colour-

ing deeply, almost painfully, as he did so.

‘My comrade, Toby Chace, Captain Colville,’ said Wodrow; ‘he is like myself, a reduced gentleman, and will die, I hope, a baronet.’

‘I am not in a hurry about that,’ said Toby, and, as Colville bowed to him, he saluted again, and proffered his brandy-flask, a silver hunting one, on which a coat of arms was engraved—a relic of better days at Melton and elsewhere. ‘I have only a ration biscuit to offer you, sir,’ said Toby, laughing; ‘but once into Cabul, we shall have luxuries galore—*cotelettes de mouton à l’Ameer*—mutton chops and green chillis. And now to deliver my report!’ he added, and, putting spurs to his horse, rode off in the direction of Kushi, while Colville and Robert Wodrow followed him as fast as they could. There was no time to be lost now, as the events of the

day were rapidly developing themselves.

Colville reported himself to General Baker (whose brigade was coming on), and joined that officer's staff, on procuring arms, while Wodrow bade him farewell, and joined the squadron of Lancers to which he was attached.

Captain Apperley's command of the latter he had now dismounted, and posted in a shallow ditch that surrounded a square mud fort, in which he placed the chargers. A range of steep hills rose in front of this improvised post, and through them lay the Sung-i-Navishta Pass—which means the 'Place of the Written Stone,' from an ancient Persian inscription carved on a mass of rock in the centre of the defile, stating that the road then had been made in the reign of Shah Jehan, who was crowned at Agra in 1628.

Hills, steep, barren, and stony, were on the left of this post, and there were grey

garden walls, from which the Afghans were firing briskly, but as most of their balls went into the air, it was evident that they were ignorant of how to sight the rifles they were handling.

A small party of the 12th Bengal Cavalry dismounted, held a walled garden on the right of this post, and kept up a rattling carbine fire on the enemy, who took cover among ground so rough and broken that no cavalry in the saddle could act against them.

To succour these advanced parties, whose posts were now enveloped in whirls of eddy smoke, streaked by incessant jets or flashes of fire, the Royal Artillery guns came on under Major Parry, with a wing of the Gordon Highlanders under Major Stewart White, with some of the 23rd Pioneers and two squadrons of the 5th Punjaub Cavalry, all sent by General Baker, who assigned to this mixed but

slender force the severe task of carrying these garrisoned heights.

Old Spatterdash as he went to the front had just time to wring Colville's hand and congratulate him, but in doing so reeled a little in his saddle. In fact, at that early hour he was still groggy from his potations over night, and said, in a feathery voice,

'S'cuse me, Colville, but that infernal bullet I got at Lucknow is troubling me as usual.'

A few minutes more saw Spatterdash lying on his back, shot through the head, and a riderless horse galloping rearward with loose reins, while very heavy firing on the left announced that Baker was pushing on towards the hills, and all along their green slopes could be seen the white smoke of cannon and rifles eddying and rolling before the soft morning breeze.

As Major White pushed on with his

somewhat mixed command, Colville could see the rocky heights on both flanks of the Sung-i-Navishta Pass manned by dark masses of the enemy, all ranked under numerous standards that streamed in the breeze, red, blue, green, white, and yellow, the colours of the different mountain tribes, or of the fortified villages from which they came.

There, too, were the sombre battalions of the Ameer's revolted infantry, clad in brown tunics faced with scarlet; and, most conspicuous of all, were a horde of Ghazis, furious and inflamed fanatics, in purest white, led by several chiefs, but most notably by Mahmoud Shah.

Parry's battery now opened fire on the crowds that covered the nearest hill, and, while yells of defiance mingled with the din of the guns and musketry, four Afghan rifled mountain guns in the Pass replied, making very good practice against

us indeed, and waking the echoes of the rocks that overhang the Logur river.

‘Let the guns continue to advance, and pound the nearest hill where these fellows with the standards are,’ said Major White, adding proudly and confidently, ‘With my Highlanders alone I shall sweep the enemy from those hills on our right.’

Parry then advanced his guns to within fifteen hundred yards, and again opened fire. His cavalry escort was commanded by Major Mitford, who says, ‘We had thus leisure to watch the advance of the 92nd, which was a splendid sight. The dark green kilts went up the steep rocky hillside at a fine rate, though one would occasionally drop, and roll several feet down the slope, showing that the rattling fire kept up by the enemy was not all display. Both sides took advantage of every atom of cover, but still the gallant kilts pressed on and up, and it was altogether

as pretty a piece of light infantry drill as could be seen.'

Meanwhile Parry's guns were sending shell after shell with beautiful precision to the crest of the hill he was ordered 'to pound.' They exploded with dreadful effect whenever and wherever the enemy could be seen preparing to charge. The Ghazis and Ghilzies lay over each other in heaps, torn, mangled, and disembowelled, and the white robes of the former were seen to be splashed and stained with blood; but still the living yelled and brandished their swords and standards, and by four p.m., Parry's guns had completely silenced the four that had been thundering in the echoing pass.

And now it was that the gallant commander of 'the Gay Gordons,' who were still advancing, won his Victoria Cross, as he stormed the crowded hills in person. 'Advancing with two companies of his

regiment,' says the *London Gazette*, 'he came upon a body of the enemy, strongly posted, and outnumbering his force by eighteen to one. His men being much exhausted, and immediate action necessary, Major White took a rifle, and going on by himself, shot the leader of the enemy.'

The fall of this personage, who was deemed invulnerable, so intimidated the enemy that they fled down the mountain side, while the Highlanders crowned its crest with a ringing cheer, and then, plunging with their bayonets into the dark defile of the Sung-i-Navishta, they captured the four mountain guns, the horses of which lay disembowelled, dead, or dying in the limber traces. So swift was the rush of the Gordon Highlanders that they had only nine casualties at this point.

With the Albany Highlanders in the van, General Baker pushed along the road towards Chardeh, the 5th Ghoorkas, 5th

Punjaubees, and 23rd Pioneers following them, till the whole were opposed on strong and precipitous ground by four thousand Afghans ranged under six large and brightly-coloured standards.

Upward and onward went our troops under a withering rifle fire, the echoes of which reverberated a hundredfold among the hills, as they were tossed back from peak to peak. For two hours the fight went on, our troops loading and firing with great coolness and deliberation; and then was seen the fearful triumph of the breachloading weapon of precision when properly sighted, for each successive row of swarthy men, as they crowned the ridges of rock, was mown down by a deadly fire, as wheat goes prone to the earth before the scythe of the mower, till after a time it seemed that scarcely a man stood up alive after the delivery of these thundering tempests of lead.

The deadly Gatling guns (the pepper castors, as the soldiers named them) proved of little use, owing to the acute angle of elevation; but at last the heights were taken in rear by a flank movement of the Gordon Highlanders, who, with colours flying and all their pipes playing, came storming up the steep slopes, and, crowning the summits, swept the enemy away, or all that remained of them.

By four o'clock the Afghans were everywhere in full flight to Cabul, with the loss of many colours, twenty pieces of cannon, and a host of killed and wounded.

Strong pickets were posted for the night, as the Ghilzies and Mahmoud Shah's Ghazis were hovering about. The troops bivouacked, as the tents and baggage were all packed for the advance to Cabul on the morrow.

During all the events of this most exciting day, by the difference of their

rank and duties, Colville had, of course, seen nothing of Robert Wodrow, and feared that his presentiment had been fulfilled, till he heard from one of the staff what the general had recorded in the last paragraph of his despatch—a paragraph that excited utter bewilderment, and joy too, in the hearts of some that were far away, and had heard nothing of the absent one since the terrible catastrophe in the Cabul river:—

‘Corporal Robert Wodrow, of the 10th Hussars (doing duty with the squadron of H.M. 9th Lancers), having carried a message for me, on the spur, through a most disastrous fire, after two aides-de-camp and an orderly officer had fallen wounded successively in attempting this perilous duty, I have the honour to recommend him for a commission in the infantry, and also for the Victoria Cross.’

After they had read this, his old parents, as they looked from the manse windows of Kirkton-Mailler, knew why their kindly parish folk lit that huge bonfire which they then saw blazing on the summit of Craigmhor.

With hearts that were very full the kindly old couple stood hand clasped in hand, as when he had first won her girlish love among the 'siller' Birks of Invermay, and, though they were very silent now, their souls were filled with prayer and prayerful thoughts.

CHAPTER XV.

ENOUGH DONE FOR HONOUR.

THE morning of the day after the battle of Charasiah saw the cavalry all in their saddles for an early movement. The dead had not been buried as yet,

And their executors, the knavish crows,
Flew o'er them, impatient for their hour,

when about five o'clock, in a cold and bitter wind, Colville was sent with instructions for the Lancers and Bengal cavalry to move off.

They did so at a rapid pace, and enter-

ing a narrow part of the Sung-i-Navishta pass, pursued a winding and stony road where the deep Logur stream flows between rocks and slabs of granite, and there seized a number of guns and brought them into camp.

Though Cabul had been abandoned by the insurrectionary troops, whom the results of Charasiah had stricken with terror, a considerable body of fresh Afghan forces, who had returned from Kohistan, had formed an entrenched position on a high hill which overlooks the Bala Hissar, and to dislodge them was necessary before entering the city; so, with eight squadrons of horse, General Massy swept round it northward to watch the roads that led to Bamian and Kohistan, while General Baker made a direct attack in front.

During the events of the day Leslie Colville had been conscious of a blow on his left shoulder, received in a skirmish,

and believed it to be inflicted by some soldier in swinging his musket about. But it proved to be a juzail ball, almost spent, and lodged in the flesh, out of which it was cut by Robert Wodrow, who bathed and dressed the wound for him.

The enemy failed to meet Massy and fled in the night, abandoning their camp and twelve pieces of cannon; and under Massy and Colonel Gough the cavalry went in pursuit, through that difficult ground which lies in the vicinity of Cabul, and is encumbered by isolated forts like that of Mahmoud Shah, and loopholed garden and orchard walls, all affording sure cover for skirmishers.

To keep as far as possible from these the cavalry rode by the way of the Siah Sung, or Black Rock. As they proceeded, on their left rose the grand and picturesque masses of the Bala Hissar, towers joined by curtains rising above each other

in succession, round, square, and octagon, all crenelated, and glowing in the red radiance of the morning sun, where not sunk in shadow. Loftily these masses rose above even the smoke of the great city, the background of all being the ridgy crest of the Tukt-i-Shah, or Emperor's seat, and the great rocks of Asmai, on which hordes of the enemy were gathered.

The heights there are precipitous, a thousand feet above the valley of Cabul, and there the dark figures of the Afghans, with their arms glittering in the sunshine, could be seen, clustering thick as a swarm of bees against the grey granite of the cliffs, up the eastern flank of which our infantry, with the Highlanders as usual in the van, were now creeping with some light mountain guns.

When the shells of the latter began to explode among the Afghans they raised yells of derision, waved their standards,

and danced like madmen; and, heavy though the cannonade, they manifested no design of abandoning the heights of Asmai.

Leaving two squadrons of the 12th and 14th Bengal Regiments to watch their movements, General Baker led the rest of the cavalry brigade into the plain of Chardeh—where a clear and beautiful stream flows—and then the horses were watered, while the din of cannon and musketry showed that the attack and defence of Asmai were proceeding.

Baker now rode on to watch a camp that had been formed at a village round Deh Muzang, *en route* to which his native guides abandoned him, but were overtaken and shot on the spot. The whole district was now encumbered by half-dispersed hordes of the enemy, which, as the cavalry overtook them, resisted more or less, and after the sun set the duty became full of

peril in unknown ground. Thus, when darkness fell, many of the dragoons went astray; some fell into ambuscades, and several were killed or wounded before the villages in the Plain of Chardeb, where they were to bivouac for the night, were reached.

Among the latter who suffered was Wodrow's reckless and light-hearted comrade, Toby Chace, whom, when Leslie Colville came up with Baker's staff, he found dying of a dreadful tulwar wound, inflicted in combat against great odds after his horse had been shot under him.

This was just outside the village named Killa Kazi, which was surrounded by a very high loop-holed wall, within which the native cavalry had dismounted for the night, each trooper lying beside his horse.

Toby's wound had been given by one dreadful slash, and extended from the chest to the thighs, laying the body so

completely open, that water as he drank it from Robert Wodrow's wooden bottle, actually trickled from his viscera, yet he was wonderfully composed, and by his own medical skill Wodrow, who supported Toby's head, knew that it was all over with him.

'Ah, Bob, I'll be gone in a brace of shakes,' said he, speaking slowly at long intervals, and while his teeth chattered with agony and the dew of death glittered on his forehead in the bright moonlight; 'the folks in England, who live at home at ease, know nothing of this sort of thing, thank God! Take my silver flask, Bob, and keep it—keep it in memory of poor Toby Chace. It is all I have now worth offering you. A girl gave it to me in—in happier times at Ascot, one whose shoes I was not worthy to tie—but she married another fellow anyhow.'

After this his voice died away, his senses

seemed to wander, and whispering, with a sudden tenderness of manner, 'Mother, kiss me,' he turned his face to the right and ceased to live.

After a time Robert Wodrow, carefully and tenderly as a brother would have done, rolled the dead hussar in a horse-rug and buried him under one of the tall poplar-trees that shade the village wall, and there he was left in his lonely grave, when next morning the cavalry rode off for a reconnoissance.

So narrow were the paths they had to pursue that they proceeded in single files till they struck on the great road to Ghuznee and swept along it at a gallop, finding at every pace of the way abandoned tents, baggage, cooking utensils, and dying Cabul ponies—the abandoned spoil of the Kohistanies, Ghilzies, Logaris, and others who had come to fight the British, but had lost heart and fled.

Four days afterwards Leslie Colville found himself entering Cabul, when Sir Frederick Roberts rode into it publicly, accompanied by the son of the Ameer, for Yakoub Khan, imbrued as his hands were with the blood of the Embassy, and inculpated with the actors in its destruction, was too cunning to accompany the British forces, at the head of whom rode the squadron of the 9th Royal Lancers.

Possession of Cabul was now taken in the name of Queen Victoria. The royal standard was hoisted on the Bala Hissar; our Horse Artillery guns thundered forth a salute, and three ringing British cheers rang along the ranks for the Empress of India.

The punishment of the perpetrators of the outrage at the Residency, the terrible explosion at the Bala Hissar, and the fighting that ensued at the Shutargardan Pass and the Sirkai Kotal, lie somewhat

apart from our narrative; but we cannot omit that which ensued at the Khoord Cabul and other defiles.

On the 7th of the month after the capital was taken, Macpherson's Flying Column marched down the savage valley, clearing it of straggling bands of the enemy, from the tomb of Baba Issah to the banks of the Cabul river, but not without a sharp fight at the former place, where Mahmoud Shah and a band of select and most desperate Ghazis had taken post and resisted to the last, courting that death in battle to which they had vowed and devoted themselves.

'Everyone who said "Lord, Lord!" two hundred years ago was deemed a Christian,' says Charles Reade; 'but there are no earnest men now.'

However, Mahmoud Shah and his Ghilzies, like the Mahdi and his followers in Egypt, were terribly in earnest about

their work of religion and slaughter.

Shouting 'Allah! Allah! Allah!' they resisted with juzail and tulwar, shield, pistol, and charah, till they were all shot down, and lay over each other piled in one great heap, all clad in white, but gashed and bloody, and among the last who fell was Mahmoud Shah, who was last seen, with his back to the holy tomb of Baba Issah, standing across the dead body of his favourite white Arab, with eight of the 5th Ghoorkas dead at his feet, an empty horse-pistol in his left hand, a blood-dripping tulwar in his right, and six bayonet wounds in his body,

'The least a death to nature!'

By this time there had been hanged in Cabul more than sixty Afghans for complicity in the slaughter of the Embassy.

The European troops were now quartered in the barracks of Yakoub Khan's

late army in the adjacent cantonments at Sherpore, and soon after an amnesty was granted to all who had fought against us, while a proclamation was issued by Sir Frederick Roberts to the effect that, in consequence of the abdication of the Ameer, 'and of the outrage at the British embassy, the British government were now compelled to occupy Cabul and other parts of Afghanistan, and he invited the Afghan authorities, chiefs, and sirdirs to assist him to enforce order in the districts under their control, and to consult with him conjointly. The population of the occupied districts would—it was added—be treated with justice and benevolence; their religion and customs would be respected, and loyalty and good service to the British crown would be suitably rewarded. On the other hand, all offenders against the new administration would be severely punished.'

‘We have restored order in Cabul, and punished all the guilty,’ wrote Leslie Colville to Mary. ‘I have resigned my appointment on the staff, deeming that I have *done enough for honour*, darling; and now I am coming home!’

And now we must return to Ellinor and her fate, while Colville is speeding homeward as quickly as steam could carry him over land and sea.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FATE OF ELLINOR.

WE left Ellinor smarting keenly under the memory of how Lord Dunkeld and the two ladies of his family ignored all recognition of her presence in the Jungferensteig, and the despairing mood of mind in which she was brought back by Gaiters and the Frau Wyburg to the gloomy house by the Bleichen Fleet.

The expression of her face at that time seemed to tell simply of one who endured life till death might come.

‘Escape from this—oh, how to escape!’

she wailed, as she wrung her slender hands in bitter helplessness.

Her windows were always fastened beyond her power of opening them, and the water of the Fleet was fully twenty feet below them, so escape in that direction was not to be thought of.

The evening of the fourth day of her intolerable captivity was drawing to a close when Ellinor made a discovery by the merest chance.

That which appeared to be the back of the antique wardrobe in her room proved in reality to be a door, though partially concealed by garments hung on pegs screwed into it.

A door! Whither did it lead? To ask Lenchen would at once excite suspicion, and perhaps deprive her of the power of utilising it if possible. This discovery excited her alarm more than hope or curiosity, for though she was able as yet

to secure her chamber-door on the inside at night—or was permitted to do so—her privacy might, she naturally thought, be violated at any time by this new and unexpected avenue, which she resolved to explore.

The door-handle yielded to her touch; it fell backward, and she found a comfortable, but narrow, old oak stair, the steps of which were mouldy, damp, and worm-eaten. It descended at an angle, within the thickness of the solid wall, some forty steps or so, and ended in an opening that was without any door, and immediately overhung the canal. Rusty hinges in the jambs showed that a door had once closed this entrance to the house, but it had probably fallen to pieces and never been replaced.

In short, it was simply one of the many back entrances from the water, of which the mercantile community in many parts

of Hamburg still avail themselves, and showed that at one time, and before that of its declension, the house of Herr Wyburg had been the residence of some wealthy trader, whose boats had been rowed or pulled up to his private door from the Brandenburger Hafen and under the Scharstein Bridge.

Here was a source of escape suddenly found, and of which she might avail herself; but the only boats she had ever seen pass that way were those of the Vierlander vegetable dealers, and how was she to make known to these people her peril and her wishes?

Frau Wyburg had said to her more than once, 'When in tribulation there is nothing like keeping your mind easy and trusting in the unexpected.'

And now the unexpected had come.

Dusk was closing—almost darkness—as she stood there looking at the gloomy and

turbid water of the Fleet, across which lights from the house windows were already casting dim and tremulous lines of radiance, while she felt her heart beating wildly as prayer and agony mingled in her soul together; but the former was responded to, for even while she stood there she saw a boat approaching, pulled along by four seamen, and containing about a dozen soldiers, to whom she called aloud for succour. They responded by banter, and were about to push past on their way when a cry of despair escaped her, and then she heard the voice of one who seemed to be in authority issue an order.

The boat was steered in close to the entrance, and she sprang on board to find herself among a party of Uhlans, who were all armed with their carbines, and were under the command of him who had just spoken—the fair-haired young Baron

Rolandsburg—and were a patrol of the picket from the Dammthor Barracks in pursuit of two conscript deserters.

Overcome by the intensity of her agitation, Ellinor was about to sink down in a kind of heap, as it were, when his arm went round her in support.

‘My God!’ he exclaimed; ‘my God, it is the Fraulein Ellinor!’

He gave a wild, inquiring glance at the house from which she had come, but its sombre mass gave him no information; he then took her death-cold hands in his caressingly, and looked entreatingly—encouragingly—into her drawn and tragic face.

To him a great pity and horror, with much of blank wonder, were emphasised by its haggard expression, and her dazed, sunken eyes, as she clung to him, and he felt he had no time then—as military duty sternly required him to proceed—to in-

quire into the what, the wherefore, and the how she came to be there!

He felt only sorrow and intense dismay, he knew not of what, but was only certain that she had escaped death, or that something else very dreadful must have occurred.

He felt thankful, however, that he had saved her in this sudden and unexpected manner from some of the 'perils of nineteenth century civilisation,' as the author of 'Altiora Peto' calls them.

By his order, the boat's head was put round, and pulled away for the nearest landing-place—the Pulverthbrugge, from whence he could have her conveyed at once to Altona.

When again he saw her on the following day in the pretty drawing-room of the villa, with her head resting on Mary's shoulder and Mary's arm round her, and

Mrs. Deroubigne hovering near, though colourless as a lily, she was scarcely like the same ghastly and hunted creature he had rescued in the boat, from whom he had so much to learn, and whose adventures had been so perilous.

She looked so pretty—so beautiful indeed—in her simple cotton morning dress, with its delicate crisp puffs and frillings, with her gentle eyes and pure, perfect face, that the young baron sighed to think she was not, and never might be, his!

And yet she owed him, by the chance of fate, a mighty debt of gratitude.

Her story was barely concluded when, with something that sounded very naughty on his lips in his anger, he put his sword under his arm and departed to look after that *schelm* Sleath and the Wyburgs too.

‘Poor foolish Ellinor,’ thought he, as he galloped his horse towards the Rathhaus Strasse, ‘if she could not love, she always

had a look of passionless affection for me —warm friendship shall I call it? Yet her bright face was somewhat delusive, for she would never love, nor flirt, nor even chatter nonsense with me.'

Ellinor knew not exactly the names of those who had been in league with Sleath against her, nor could she describe the exact locality of the house in which they had detained her, but the baron knew where he had found her, and with the police and some of the Uhlans who had been with him on the preceding night, proceeded by boat up the Bleichen Fleet; but, just as they were about to penetrate by the open back entrance, a loud explosion was heard high over head, and a quantity of bricks, tiles, and old timber came tumbling down to splash in the canal.

'Der Teufel! what is this!' exclaimed the baron, 'are we at the siege of Paris again?'

But, though the house was closely examined, the mingled tragedy and catastrophe which Herr Wyburg's revengeful scheme had brought about was never quite explained.

Mr. John Gaiters heard betimes of a dead and mangled body, answering to the description of his master, being discovered in the half-blown-up house; and found himself without a place and also without a character.

He applied a cambric handkerchief—one of Sir Redmond's—to his eyes, and then anathematised them. He then took possession of his late master's portmanteaux at the 'Hotel Russie,' lit a cigarette, and went leisurely on board the London steamer at the Hafenbasin, and Hamburg knew him no more.

The public prints had made all interested therein, aware that Leslie Colville and another, described variously as Taimar of

the Guide Corps, and Corporal Wodrow of the 10th Hussars, had escaped the massacre and were safe.

Colville safe and living still! What an awful burden was now doubly lifted from the heart of Mary—a heart too full for words.

It was natural for her to have hope at her years; but the tidings of the slaughter at the Residency seemed to crush all hope for ever.

A telegram first came from Colville, and ere long there was actually a letter from Robert Wodrow.

‘Forgive me, beloved Ellinor, as I have forgiven and forgotten a portion of our past,’ he wrote, gently and humbly. ‘Because that fellow Sleath was a rascal, you do not mean to go through life “a maiden all forlorn.” And so you still stick to me alone, in spite of what people may say—a poor corporal of Hussars as yet. When I

think of you sought after, admired, and doubtless loved by dozens of fellows, better a thousand degrees than luckless Bob Wodrow; I can but trust to your heart holding the memory of me against them all—for a memory it may be, Ellinor, as I am not out of this perilous Afghanistan yet—and a year ago I never thought to be *here*.

“The poison is yet in my brain, love,
The thorn in my flesh, for you know
'Twas only a year ago, love,
'Twas only a year ago.”’

And Ellinor wept as she read the words his hands had traced.

A few more references to history.

A clasp for Charasiah was ordered to be worn with the war medal, but ere he saw Ellinor, Robert Wodrow had yet to win the bronze star awarded to all who shared in Roberts's famous march to Candahar.

‘After all the peril faced and glory won,

are we to give up Candahar—after *all?* was the ever-recurring question among the soldiers of our army, as they marched back to India, and felt that, though Roberts had restored our prestige, all the honour gained in battle would be lost if we failed to retain Candahar.

Through the gates of that city have all the great conquerors of India come—Alexander and Timor, Genghis Khan and Nadir Shah; it bars the approach to India from the north and west, and the power that holds it—as one day Russia will—commands both Cabul and Herat.

The facilities for attacking India from it are innumerable, and, as Sir Edward Hamley has it, ‘I believe the concurrent testimony of all Indians is that there is no territory on which it would be more perilous to give our enemy the chance of winning a battle than our Indian Empire.’

General Roberts, in a minute to the

Government, 29th May, 1880, urged 'that our grasp on Candahar should never be loosened,' and that its military retention was of vital importance to us in all wars connected with the Afghans or Russians in Central Asia. Lord Napier of Magdala, Sir George Lawrence, Sir Henry Rawlinson, and all other high authorities on Indian military affairs, have spoken or written in the same tone on this all-important subject; yet, in defiance of their opinions, Candahar was handed over to the Ameer, and since then the Russian eagle has laid its talons on Merv!

CHAPTER XVII.

AMONG THE BIRKS OF INVERMAY.

‘HOME at last!’ exclaimed Leslie Colville, aloud but to himself in the excess of his joy, as his train from Dover went clanking in to crowded and busy Charing-Cross Station. ‘Home at last! How jolly it is to see the English faces, the familiar sights and hear the familiar sounds again—and to be once more in mufti!’

‘*Globe — Graphic — Lustrated News — Punch!*’ He listened to the calls of the newsboys as if they sang sweet music; and for days past he had thought of,

whistled, and hummed the burden of an old Scottish song he had heard his nurse sing long ago—

‘Hame, hame, hame, oh, fain wad I be;
Hame, hame, hame, in my ain countrie!’

And the desire had become a realization—
a fact.

‘And now to meet my darling!’ he thought, as he plunged into a well-horsed hansom, and, leaving his luggage to follow, was driven at a tearing pace towards Grosvenor Square, for which the residence at Altona had been gladly quitted by Mrs. Deroubigne and her two charges.

‘Journeys of a few hundred miles are no longer described in these days of ours,’ says Charles Reade; nor those of thousands at the rate we travel, so we have not detailed the journey of Colville.

At last it was ended, and he was with
her.

Mary's pulses were leaping with excitement when they met, and she felt herself in his tender and prolonged embrace, though it all seemed a delicious and delirious dream, from which she might waken and again weep for him as dead, or as still expecting him.

It was well-nigh a year since they had parted, a year of many startling events, months since a line had been exchanged between them ; and who could blame them if, for a little time, they forgot all the world, and everything else, but each other ?

‘ How strange to think that this is the last walk we shall have together as lovers,’ said Mary, in a soft, cooing tone, as they loitered by the Serpentine one evening.

‘ Yes, when next we promenade thus it will be as sober married folks,’ said Colville, with his brightest smile.

‘ Dear—dear Leslie !’

‘Our courtship days have been chequered certainly, but the end is a happy one.’

‘Happy we have been from the moment we had perfect faith in each other, with one dreadful interval,’ said Mary, with a little sob in her throat, as she thought of the first tidings from Cabul; ‘could I but see my pet Ellinor even half so happy!’

‘Her days for fullest happiness will come in time—and, dearest Mary, if all these lawyer fellows, Horning and Tailzie, tell me is true, I shall put a coronet on your golden hair, and you shall be my Lady Colville of Ochiltree,’ said he, laughingly.

‘Oh, to go home again!’ said Mary, who was thinking more of Birkwoodbrae than a peerage and a house in Tyburnia. ‘I was always a great knitter at odd times, Leslie, and half the old people at Kirkton-Mailer benefited thereby. I was born among my old people, and long so much—amid

my own great happiness—to see them once again. It seems ages since I came away.’

‘And see them you shall in a little time now, darling, for there we shall spend our honeymoon.’

And then that season, so important in human life and human love, was spent as Colville had promised, and to Mary supreme was the delight of wandering over all the old familiar places again and again with *him*—the trout-pool where they had first met and he had lifted her off the stone; the Linn; the Holyhill; the Miller’s Acre; under the old gate with the legend on its lintel, and where again she could train her flowers, and feed her chickens that looked like balls of golden fluff, while the ‘siller birks’—the Birks of Invermay—cast their shadows over her again.

She was back again in her old groove as if she had never left it—to train her

roses and clematis, to sow mignonette and sweet-scented stocks, and plant white lilies for Ellinor to paint from ; and, with Jack by her side, with a solid silver collar (though one with spikes would better have suited his pugnacious propensities), to wander when dewy evening was falling, when the sheep were nibbling the grass briskly and monotonously ; and a gleam came from the old ingle-lum of the kitchen, where Elspat was rolling out barley-meal cakes, and where everything spoke of home—now more than ever home !

‘ You see, Leslie darling,’ said she, ‘ I feel for this place—we feel, Ellinor and I—as no one else ever could, having always, during the lifetime of papa and ever after, looked upon it as our own.’

‘ And your own it is, pet Mary.’

‘ And no other place, however grand or beautiful, could be like a home to us.’

The luxuries with which Colville could

surround her—luxuries too great for a mansion so small then—her carriage-horses, her pair of ponies, her white Arab pad (all stabled as yet at the ‘Dunkeld Arms’), her set of sables, her jewellery, and Parisian toilettes, her retinue of servants were the topics of ‘the countryside,’ and were duly descanted on by Mademoiselle Rosette Patchouli for the edification of her ladies; and the Honourable Blanche Gabrielle, with her elevated eyebrows, foreign tricks of manner, and incipient little French moustache, thought with anger of all she had lost.

The pompous old lord, with his facial angle *à la* Louis XIV., and his cold-blooded yet perfectly aristocratic lady, would gladly have shed the light of their countenances over Birkwoodbrae, but there Mary’s Christianity ended; and she would have nothing of them, despite all good old Dr. Wodrow could urge.

Robert was returning an officer, with a well-earned cluster of medals on his breast, and he was coming straight to Kirktown-Mailler and to her. So Ellinor often seated herself on a mossy bank, and, leaning her head of rich brown hair against the white stem of a silver birch, would give herself up to memory, and many a happy and repentant thought; while tears fell from her eyes—she was so happy!

A little time ago it would have been torture for Ellinor to look upon scenes so associated with Robert Wodrow, the lover she had wronged and lost and mourned for; and it was painful still to do so, though her heart throbbed with hope and joy, as he was returning to her with the rank and position he had predicted to his mother.

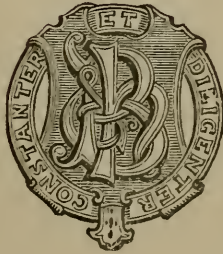
So Robert Wodrow will win the one woman of his heart! Hand and hand they will go forward together into that

new existence—that new world of tame, married life, as it is deemed ; but to them, a world of trust and love it will be ; while explanations and memories of the sweet and bitter and perilous past will come in due course with the current of their own happy and mutual thoughts.

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