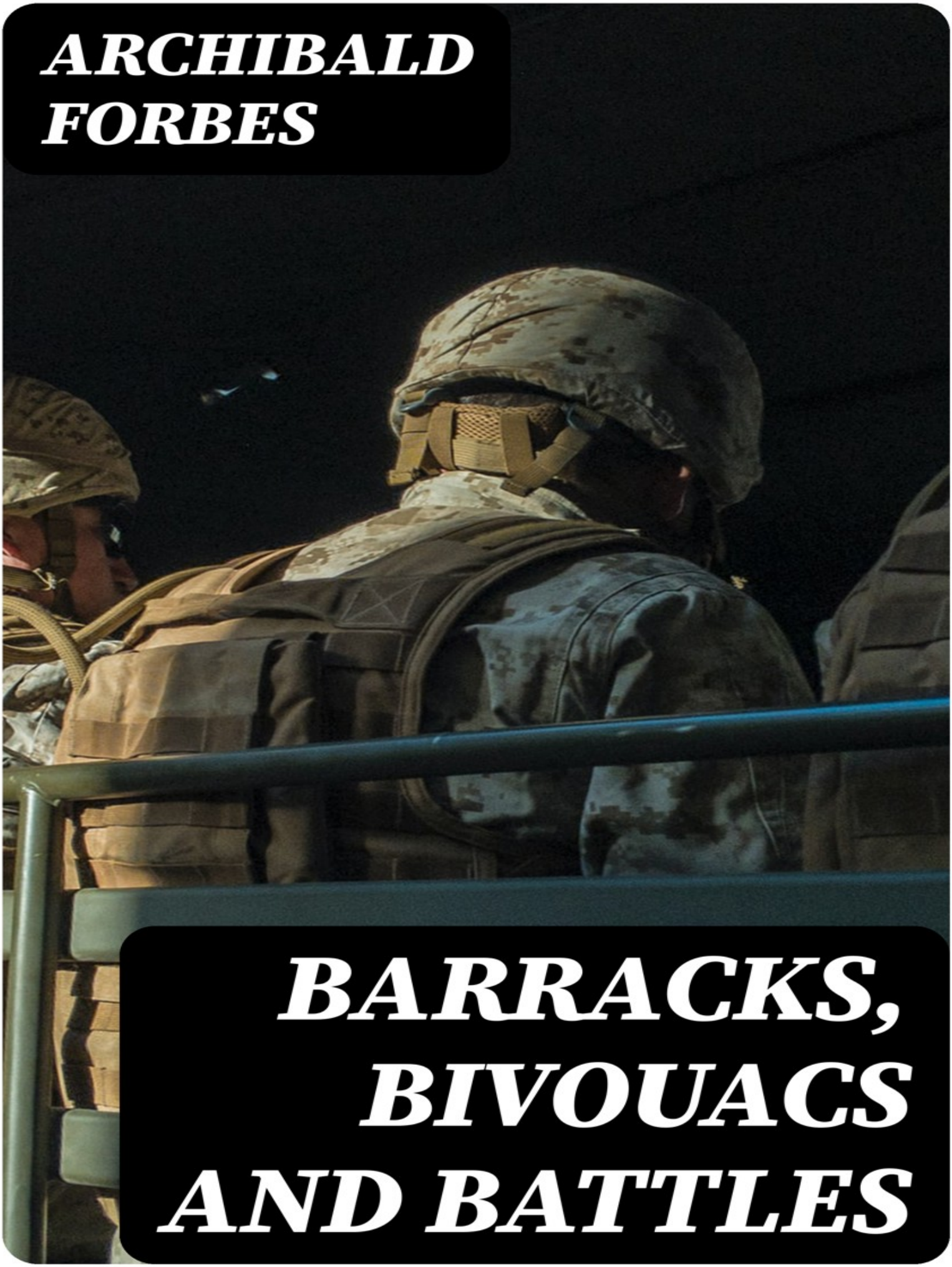
ARCHIBALD FORBES



BARRACKS, BIVOUACS AND BATTLES

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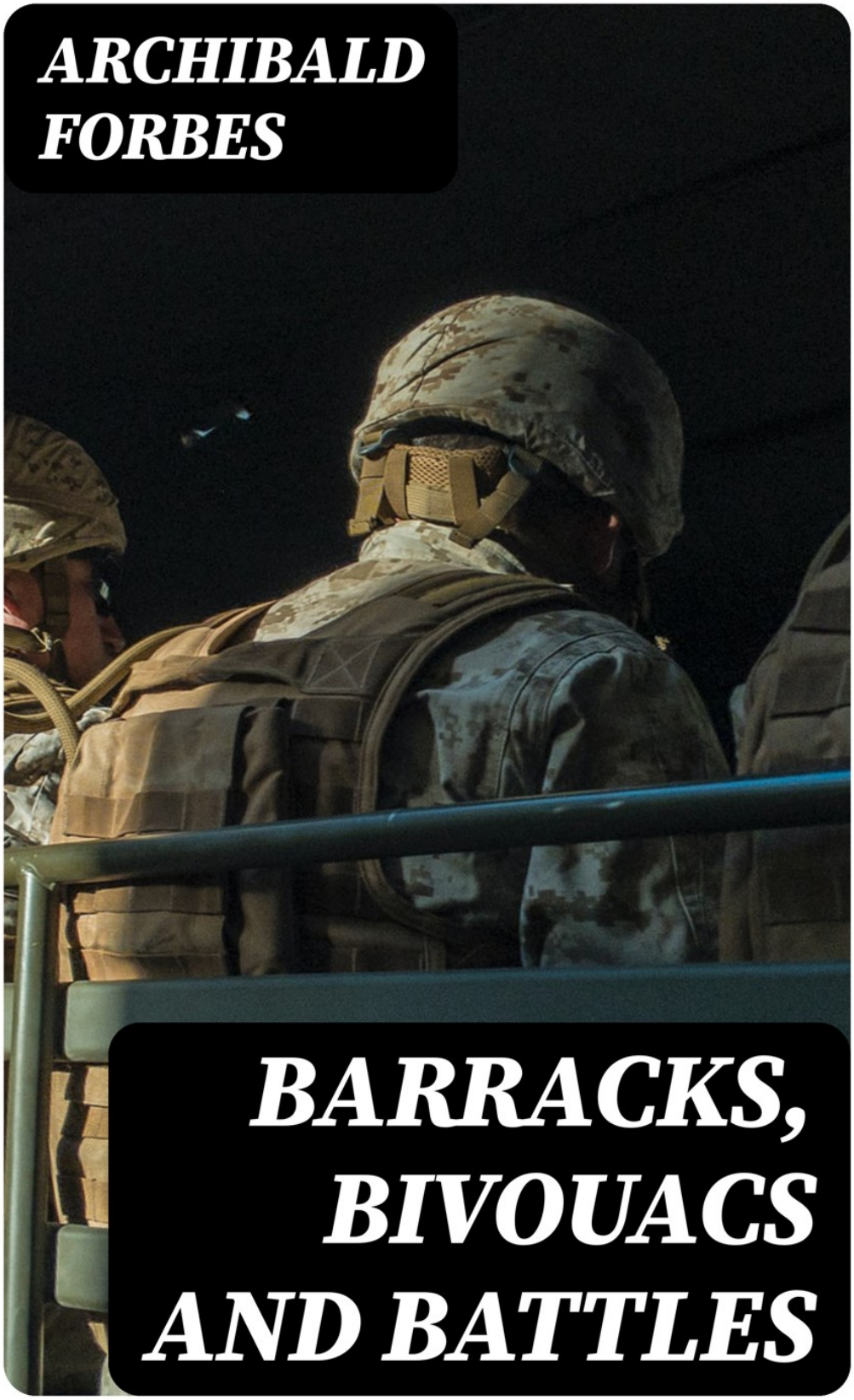

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Archibald Forbes

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Table of Contents

HOW “THE CRAYTURE” GOT ON THE STRENGTH

Table of Contents

Mick Sullivan was a private soldier in G troop, 30th Light Dragoons, of some six years’ service. Since the day old Sergeant Denny Lee ’listed him in Charles Street, just outside the Cheshire Cheese, close by where the Council door of the India Office now is, Mick had never been anything else than a private soldier, and never hoped or needed hope to be anything else if he served out his full twenty-four years, for he could neither read nor write, and his regimental defaulter sheet was much fuller of “marks” than the most lavish barrack-room pudding is of raisins. Nevertheless the Queen had a very good bargain in honest Mick, although that was scarcely the opinion of the adjutant, who was a “jumped-up” youngster, and had not been in the Crimea with the regiment. The grizzled captain of G troop, who was a non-purchase man, and had been soldiering for well on to twenty years, understood and appreciated Mick better. Captain Coleman knew that he had come limping up out of that crazy gallop along “the valley of death” with a sword red from hilt to point, a lance-thrust through the calf of his leg, and a wounded comrade on his back. He had heard Mick’s gay laugh and cheery jest during that dreary time in the hollow inland from Varna, when cholera was decimating the troop, and the hearts of brave men were in their boots. He remembered how Mick was the life and soul of the gaunt sorry squad inside the flimsy tent on the bleak slope of Kadikoi during that terrible Crimean winter, when

men were turning their toes up to the daisies by sections, and when the living crawled about half frozen, half sodden. Mick's old chestnut mare (G 11) was the only horse of the troop that survived the winter, kept alive by her owner's patient and unremitting care: if it was true, as fellows swore who found her cruelly rough—she was known by the name of the "Dislocator," given to her by a much-chafed recruit, whose anatomy her trot had wholly disorganised—if it was true that in that hard winter she had frozen quite hard, and had never since come properly thawed, it was to Mick's credit that she was still saving the country the price of a remount. There was no smarter man or cleaner soldier in all the corps than the harum-scarum Tipperary man; he had a brogue that you could cut with a knife; and there was nothing he would not do for whisky but shirk his turn of duty and hear his regiment belittled without promptly engaging in single combat with the disparager of the "Ould Strawboots."

Mick did a good deal of punishment drill at varying intervals, and his hair was occasionally abnormally short as a result of that species of infliction known as "seven days' cells." He had seldom any other crime than "absent without leave," and he had never been tried by court-martial, although more than once he had had a very narrow squeak, especially once when he was brought into barracks by a picket after a three days' absence, with a newspaper round his shoulders instead of stable jacket and shirt. No doubt he had drunk those articles of attire, but the plea that they had been stolen saved him from the charge of making away with "regimental necessaries," which is a court-martial offence.

The 30th Light, just home from the Crimea, were quartered at York; and Mick, after two or three escapades which were the pardonable result of his popularity as one of the heroes of the Light Cavalry charge, had settled down into unwonted steadiness. He went out alone every evening, and at length his chum took him to task for his unsociality, and threatened to “cut the loaf.”

“Arrah now,” was Mick’s indignant reply, “it’s a silly spalpeen ye are to go for to think such a thing. Sure if it hadn’t been a great saycret intirely, ye’d have known all about it long ago. I’ve been coortin’, ye divil! Sure an’ she’s the purtiest crayture that iver ye clapt yer two eyes upon, aye, an’ a prudent girl too. So that’s the saycret, chum; an’ now come on up to the canteen, an’ bedad we’ll drink luck an’ joy to the wooin’!”

Over their pot of beer Mick told his comrade the simple story of his love. His sweetheart, it seemed, was the daughter of a small shopkeeper in the outskirts of the city, and, as Mick was most emphatic in claiming, a young woman of quite exemplary character. Thus far, then, everything was satisfactory; but the obvious rock ahead was the all but certainty that Mick would be refused leave to marry. He had not exactly the character entitling him to such a privilege, and the troop already had its full complement of married people. But if the commanding officer should say him nay, then “Sure,” Mick doughtily protested, “I’ll marry the darlint widout lave; in spite of the colonel, an’ the gineral, and the commander-in-chief himself, bedad!”

Next morning Mick formed up to the adjutant and asked permission to see the colonel. The adjutant, after the manner of his kind, tried to extract from him for what purpose the request was made, but Mick was old soldier enough to know how far an adjutant's ill word carries, and resolutely declined to divulge his intent. After the commanding officer had disposed of what are called at the police-courts the "charges of the night," Mick was marched into the presence by the regimental sergeant-major; and as he stood there at rigid attention, the nature of his business was demanded in the curt hard tone which the colonel with a proper sense of the fitness of things uses when addressing the private soldier.

"Plase yer honour, sor, I want to get—to get married," blurted Mick, for the moment in some confusion now that the crisis had come.

"And, plase yer honour, Mr. Sullivan," retorted the chief with sour pleasantry, "I'll see you d—d first!"

"Och, sor, an' how can ye be so cruel at all, at all?" pleaded Mick, who had recovered from his confusion, and thought a touch of the blarney might come in useful.

"Why, what the deuce do you want with a wife?" asked the colonel angrily.

"Sure, sor, an' pwhat does any man want wid a wife?"

The regimental sergeant-major grinned behind his hand, the adjutant burst into a splutter of laughter at the back of the colonel's chair, and that stern officer himself found his gravity severely strained. But he was firm in his refusal to grant the indulgence, and Mick went forth from the presence in a very doleful frame of mind.

At “watch-setting” the same night Mr. Sullivan was reported absent, nor did he come into barracks in the course of the night. The regimental sergeant-major was a very old bird, and straightway communicated to the adjutant his ideas as to the nature of Mick’s little game. Then the pair concerted a scheme whereby they might baulk him at the very moment when his cup of bliss should be at his lips. At nine in the morning about a dozen corporals and as many files of men paraded outside the orderly-room door. To each of the likeliest religious edifices licensed for the celebration of marriages a corporal and a file were told off, with instructions to watch outside, and intercept Sullivan if he should appear in the capacity of a bridegroom. Clever as was the device, it came very near failing. The picket charged with the duty of watching an obscure suburban chapel, regarding it as extremely improbable that such a place would be selected, betook themselves to the taproom of an adjacent public-house, where they chanced on some good company, and had soon all but forgotten the duty to which they had been detailed. It was, however, suddenly recalled to them. A native who dropped in for a pint of half-and-half, casually observed that “a sojer were bein’ spliced across the road.” The moment was a critical one, but the corporal rose to the occasion. Hastily leading out his men, he stationed them at the door, while he himself entered, and stealing up to the marriage party unobserved, clapped his hand on Sullivan’s shoulder just as the latter was fumbling for the ring. The bride shrieked, the priest talked about sacrilege, and the bride’s mother made a gallant assault on the corporal with her

umbrella; but the non-commissioned officer was firm, and Mick, whose sense of discipline was very strong, merely remarked, “Be jabers, corporal, an’ in another minute ye would have been too late!”

He was summarily marched off into barracks, looking rather rueful at being thus torn from the very horns of the altar. Next morning he paid another visit to the orderly-room, this time as a prisoner, when the commanding officer, radiant at the seeming success of the plot to baulk Mr. Sullivan’s matrimonial intentions, let him off with fourteen days’ pack drill. Having done that punishment, he was again free to go out of barracks, but only in the evening, so that he could not get married unless by special license, a luxury to which a private dragoon’s pay does not run. Nevertheless he cherished his design, and presently the old adage, “Where there’s a will there’s a way,” had yet another confirmation.

One fine morning the regiment rode out in “watering order.” About a mile outside the town, poor Mick was suddenly taken very ill. So serious appeared his condition that the troop sergeant-major directed him to ride straight back into barracks, giving him strict orders to go to hospital the moment he arrived. Presently, Mick’s horse, indeed, cantered through the barrack gate, but there was no rider on its back. The sentry gave the alarm, and the guard, imagining Mick to have been thrown, made a search for him along the road outside; but they did not find him, for the reason that at the time he was being thus searched for he was being married. The ceremony was this time accomplished without interruption; but the hymeneal

festivities were rudely broken in upon by a picket from the barracks, who tore the bridegroom ruthlessly from the arms of the bride, and escorted him to durance in the guard-room.

Mick had seven days' cells for this escapade, and when he next saw his bride, he had not a hair on his head a quarter of an inch long, the provost-sergeant's shears having gone very close to the scalp. He had a wife, it was true; but matrimonial felicity seemed a far-off dream. Mick had married without leave, and there was no place in barracks for his little wife. Indeed, in further punishment of Mick, her name was "put upon the gate," which means that the sentry was charged to prohibit her entrance. Mick could get no leave; so he could enjoy the society of his spouse only between evening stables and watch-setting; and on the whole he might just as well have been single—indeed better, if the wife's welfare be taken into consideration. Only neither husband nor wife was of this opinion, and hoped cheerily for better things.

But worse, not better, was to befall the pair. That cruellest of all blows which can befall the couple married without leave, suddenly struck them; the regiment was ordered on foreign service. It was to march to the south of England, give over its horses at Canterbury, Christchurch, and elsewhere, and then embark at Southampton for India.

Next to a campaign, the brightest joy in the life of the cavalry soldier is going on "the line of march," from one home station to another. For him it is a glorious interlude to the dull restrained monotony of his barrack-room life, and the weary routine of mounted and dismounted drill. "Boots

and saddles” sounds early on the line of march. The troopers from their scattered billets concentrate in front of the principal hotel of the town where the detachment quarters for the night, and form up in the street or the market-place, while as yet the shutters are fast on the front of the earliest-opening shop. The officers emerge from the hotel, mount, and inspect the parade; the order “Threes right!” is given, and the day’s march has begun. The morning sun flashes on the sword-scabbards and accoutrements, as the quiet street echoes to the clink of the horse-hoofs on the cobblestones. Presently the town is left behind, and the detachment is out into the country. There had been a shower as the sun rose—the “pride of the morning” the soldiers call the sprinkle—just sufficient to lay the dust, and evoke from every growing thing its sweetest scent. The fresh crisp morning air is laden with perfume; the wild rose, the jessamine, the eglantine, and the “morning glory” entwine themselves about the gnarled thorn of the hedgerows, and send their tangled feelers straggling up the ivy-clad trunks of the great elms and oaks, through whose foliage the sunbeams are shooting. From the valley rises a feathery haze broken into gossamer-like patches of diverse hues; and here and there the blue smoke of some early-lit cottage fire ascends in a languid straightness through the still atmosphere. The hind yoking his plough in the adjacent field chants a rude ditty, while his driver is blowing his first cloud, the scent of which comes sluggishly drifting across the road with that peculiarly fresh odour only belonging to tobacco-smoke in the early morning. As the rise is crowned, a fair and fertile expanse of country lies stretched out below

—shaggy woods and cornfields, and red-roofed homesteads, and long reaches of still water, and the square tower of the venerable church showing over the foliage that overhangs the hamlet and the graveyard. Then the command “Trot!” is passed along from the front, and away go the troopers bumping merrily, their accoutrements jingling and clanking, their horses feeling the bit lightly, tossing their heads, arching their necks, and stepping out gallantly, in token that they too take delight in being on the road. Three miles of a steady trot; then a five minutes’ halt to tighten girths and “look round” equipments; then up into the saddle again. The word comes back along the files, “Singers to the front!” whereupon every fellow who has, or thinks he has, a voice, presses forward till the two front ranks are some six abreast across the road. Now the premier vocalist—self-constituted or acclaimed—strikes up a solo whose principal attribute is unlimited chorus; and so to the lusty strain the detachment marches through the next village, bringing all the natives to their doors, and attracting much attention and commendation, especially from the fair sex. The day’s march half over, there is a longer halt; and the kindly officers send on a corporal to the little wayside beerhouse just ahead, whence he speedily returns, accompanied by the landlord, stepping carefully between a couple of pailsful of foaming beer. Each man receives his pint, the officers’ “treat”; and then, all hands in the highest spirits, the journey is resumed; trot and walk alternate, the men riding “at ease,” until the verge is reached of the town in which the detachment is to be billeted for the night. Then “Attention!” is called, swords are drawn, the files close up,

and the little array marches right gallantly through the streets to the principal hotel. Here the “billeting sergeant,” who is always a day’s march ahead, distributes the billets, each for a couple of troopers, and chums are allowed to share the same billet. A willing urchin shows the way to the Wheatsheaf, whose hearty landlord forthwith comes out with a frank welcome, and a brown jug in hand. Horses cleaned and bedded down, accoutrements freed from the soil of the road, dinner—and a right good dinner—is served, the troopers sitting down to table with their host and hostess. The worthy Boniface and his genial spouse have none of your cockney contempt for the soldier, but consider him not only their equal, but a welcome guest; and the soldier, if he is worth his salt, does his best to conduct himself so as not to tarnish the credit of his cloth.

Than Mick Sullivan no soldier of the gay 30th Light Dragoons was wont to enjoy himself more on the line of march. But now the honest Irishman was silent and depressed. He was a married man. That of itself did not sadden him; he did not repent his act, rash as it had been. But he had married without leave, and his little wife was entitled to no privileges—she was not “on the strength.” Mick had prayed her to remain at home with her father, for he could not afford her travelling expenses, and even if he could, he knew, and he had to tell her, that they must part at the port of embarkation. But “the Crayture,” as Mick called her, was resolute to go thus far. Poll Tudor and Bess Bowles, accredited spouses, “married women on the strength,” took train at Government expense, and knew their berths on the troopship were assured. But for “the

Crayture” there was no railway warrant, far less any berth aboard. March for march, with weary feet and swelling heart, the poor little woman made with the detachment, tramping the long miles between York and Southampton. Mostly the kind souls where Mick was billeted gave her bite and sup and her bed; now and then the hayloft was her portion. Ah me! in the old days such woful journeys were often made; I believe that nowadays the canteen fund helps on their way soldiers’ wives married without leave.

The troopship, with her steam up, was lying alongside the jetty in Southampton Dock, and troop by troop as they quitted the train, the men of the 30th Light were being marched aboard. Mick had bidden “the Crayture” farewell, and had drowned his grief in drink; as they marched toward the jetty, his chum reproached him on account of his unsoldierly condition.

“Arrah now,” wailed Mick piteously, “sure, an’ if it wor yersilf lavin’ the darlint av a young wife behind ye, glad an’ fain ye would be to take a dhrap to deaden yer sorrow. Whin I sed good-bye to the Crayture this mornin’ I thought she’d have died outright wid the sobs from the heart av her. Och, chum, the purty, beautiful crayture that I love so, an’ that loves me, an’ me lavin’ her to the hard wurrld! Be gorra, an’ there she stands!”

Sure enough, standing there in the crowd, weeping as if she would break her heart, was Mick’s poor little wife.

“Hould me carabine, chum, just for a moment, till I be givin’ her just wan last kiss!” pleaded the poor fellow, and with a sudden spring he was out of the ranks unobserved, and hidden in the crowd that opened to receive him. His

chum tramped on, but he reached the main-deck of the troopship still carrying two carbines, for as yet Mick had not re-appeared.

The comrade's anxious eyes searched the crowded jetty in vain. But they scanned a scene of singular pathos. The grizzled old quarter-master was wiping his shaggy eyelashes furtively as he turned away from the children he was leaving behind. There were poor wretches of wives who had been married without leave, as "the Crayture" had been—some with babes in their arms, weeping hopelessly as they thought of the thousands of miles that were to part them from the men of their hearts. And there were weeping women there also who had not even the sorrowful consolation of being entitled to call themselves wives; and boys were cheering, and the band was playing "The Girl I left behind me," and non-commissioned officers were swearing, and some half-drunk recruit-soldiers were singing a dirty ditty, and heart-strings were being torn, and the work of embarkation was steadily and relentlessly progressing.

The embarkation completed, the shore-goers having been cleared out of the ship and the gangway drawn, there was a muster on deck, and the roll of each troop was called. In G troop one man was missing, and that man was Mick Sullivan. The muster had barely broken off, when a wild shout from the jetty was heard. There stood Mick very limp and staggery, "the Crayture" clinging convulsively round his neck, and he hailing the ship over her shoulder. Behind the forlorn couple was a sympathising crowd of females sobbing in unmelodious concert, with here and there a wilder screech of woe from the throat of some tender-hearted

country-woman of Mr. Sullivan. After some delay, Mick was brought on to the upper deck of the trooper, where he stood before the lieutenant of his troop in an attitude meant to represent the rigidity of military attention, contrasting vividly with his tear-stained face, his inability to refrain from a frequent hiccough, and an obvious difficulty in overcoming the propensity of his knee-joints to serve their owner treacherously.

“Well, Sullivan,” said the young officer, with an affectation of sternness which under the circumstances was most praiseworthy, “what do you mean by this conduct?”

“Plase, sor, an’ beg yer parrdon, sor, but I didn’t mane only to fall out just for wan last worrd. It wasn’t the dhrink at all, at all, sor; it’s the grief that kilt me intirely. Ah, sure, sor,” added Mick insinuatingly, “it’s yersilf, yer honour, that is lavin’, maybe, a purty crayture wapin’ for yer handsome face!”

The touch of nature made the officer kind. “Get out of sight at once, you rascal,” said he, turning away to hide rather a sad smile, “and take care the colonel don’t set eyes on you, else you’ll find yourself in irons in double-quick time.”

“Thank ye, sor; it’s a good heart ye have,” said Mick over his shoulder, as his chum hustled him toward the hatchway. “The Crayture” was on the pier-head waving her poor little dud of a white handkerchief, as the troopship, gathering way, steamed down Southampton Water, and the strains of “The Girl I left behind me” came back fainter and more faint on the light wind.

Bangalore, up country in the Madras Presidency, was the allotted station of the 30th Light. The regiment had barely settled down in the upland cantonment, when tidings came south of the mutiny of Bengal native troops on the parade-ground of Berhampore. Every mail brought news from the north more and more disquieting, and in the third week of May the devilry of Meerut was recounted in the gasping terseness of a telegram. The regiment hoped in vain for a summons to Bengal, but there was no other cavalry corps in all the Madras Presidency, and the authorities could not know but that the Madras native army might at any moment flame out into mutiny. In the early days of June a sergeant's party of the 30th Light was sent down from Bangalore to Madras to perform some exceptional orderly duty, and to this party belonged Mick Sullivan and his chum. A week later Sir Patrick Grant, the Madras Commander-in-Chief, was summoned by telegraph to Calcutta, to assume the direction of military operations in Bengal, consequent on poor General Anson's sudden death. The *Fire Queen* anchored in the roads with Havelock aboard, fresh from his successes in Persia, and it was arranged that the two old soldiers should hurry up to Calcutta without an hour's delay. Grant wanted a soldier-clerk to write for him on the voyage, and a soldier-servant warranted proof against sea-sickness to look after his chargers aboard ship. There was no time for ceremony, and Mick's chum, who was a well-educated man, was laid hold of as the amanuensis, while Mick himself was shipped as the general's temporary groom. The services of the pair ceased when Calcutta was reached, and they were attached to the Fort William garrison, pending the

opportunity to ship them back to Madras. But the two men, burning for active service, determined to make a bold effort to escape relegation to the dull inactivity of Bangalore. Watching their chance, they addressed their petition to Sir Patrick, as he sat in the verandah of his quarters in the fort "Quite irregular," exclaimed the veteran Highlander, "but I like your spirit, men! Let me see; I'll arrange matters with your regiment. You want to be in the thick of it at once, eh? Well, you must turn infantrymen; the Ross-shire Buffs are out at Chinsurah, and will have the route to-morrow. You can reach them in a few hours, and I'll give you a *chit* to Colonel Hamilton which will make it all right for you. One of you is a Highlander born, and as for you, Sullivan, if you talk Erse to the fellows of the 78th, they won't know it from Argyllshire Gaelic."

Three hours later the comrades had ceased for the time to be Light Dragoons, and were acting members of the Grenadier Company of the Ross-shire Buffs. Hart, the regimental sergeant-major, had presented them to Colonel Hamilton, who duly honoured Sir Patrick's *chit*, and had sent them over to the orderly-room tent, where they found the adjutant, that gallant soldier now alas! dead, whom later his country knew as Sir Herbert Macpherson, V.C.

"What is your name, my man?" asked Macpherson of Sullivan.

"Michael Donald Mactavish Sullivan, sor," responded Mick, with a face as solemn as a mute's at a funeral.

"What countryman are you?"

"An Argyllshire Tipperary man, sor," replied Mick, without the twinkle of an eyelash.

“How came you by your two middle names? They are surely not common in Tipperary?”

“Och, yer honour, I was christened by thim two afther me grandmother, an’ she was, I belave, a pure-bred Scotchman. It is in dutiful mimory of her, rest her sowl, that I want for to jine the Ross-shire Buffs.”

“Well,” replied Mr. Macpherson imperturbably, “your dutiful aspiration shall be gratified.”

The chum answered the formal questions regarding himself, and then the regimental sergeant-major was directed to take the pair to the quarter-master sergeant, to receive the clothing and accoutrements of infantrymen.

Quarter-master Sergeant Tulloch, “Muckle Tulloch,” as he was called in the regiment because of his abnormal bulk, was, although a Scot, a man of humour; and it occurred to him that the new Irish Ross-shire Buff might furnish some amusement. Highland regiments do not wear the kilt on Indian service; indeed the tartans are not brought out from home. But there happened by some odd chance to be a Highland uniform among the quarter-master’s stores; and this Tulloch solemnly made over to Mick Sullivan, instructing him to attire himself in it at once, that its fit might be ascertained. The store had been temporarily established in the unoccupied house of a wealthy native, and Sullivan went into one of the empty rooms to don the unaccustomed garments. Tulloch and the sergeant-major, as well as Mick’s chum, stood listening to Mick fervently d—ing the “quare blankets,” as he struggled with the difficulties presented by kilt and plaid. At length it seemed as if he had accomplished the task somehow, and he was heard to stride to the farther

end of the long bare apartment. The partly-open door revealed Mr. Sullivan, drawn up to his full height in front of a large panel-mirror. He certainly presented an extraordinary aspect. For one thing, the kilt, which had been made for a short man, was very much too short for Mick, and a yard or two of naked leg protruded from below it. Then he had fastened on the sporran behind instead of in front, and it hung down in the former region like a horse's tail. The plaid was put on something in the fashion of a comforter, and his lower extremities were encased in his long cavalry Wellington boots, from the heels of which the spurs stuck out fiercely. He had struck an attitude, and was soliloquising —

"Be the holy, Michael Donald Mactavish Sullivan, an' it's yersilf is the purty spictacle intirely! Troth, an' it would puzzle that dacent woman your mother to idintify the fruit of her womb in this disguise. Sure an' it's a beautiful dress, an' the hoighth av free vintilation! Supposin' I was sittin' down on an ant-hill? Och, musha, an' pwhat would Tipperary think if she wor to see me this day? Faix," he went on, after a long scrutinising gaze, "it's mesilf is doubtful whether I'm pwhat ye would call dacent; but the divil a ha'p'orth care I," with a sudden burst of reassurance, "sure, if I'm ondacent, that's the Quane's look-out, may the hivins be her bed!"

At this the listeners could not refrain from a burst of laughter, which brought Mick's soliloquy to an abrupt conclusion. He became a little angry when he found he had been sold, and was not to have the kilt after all his trouble; but presently found consolation in the ant-hill view of the subject, and accepted his woollen doublet and dungaree

trousers with a bland condescension. Next day the 78th began to move up country to the Allahabad concentration, and a few weeks later Havelock led out into the country of bloodthirsty mutiny that scant devoted vanguard of the British force which was to reconquer India.

Spite of cruel heat, sunstrokes, cholera, and the exhaustion of long marches, the little column pressed on blithely, for the stimulus of hope was in the hearts of the men. But that hope was killed just when its fulfilment was all but accomplished. To the soldiers, spent with the fighting of the day, as they lay within but one short march of Cawnpore, came in the dead of night the woful tidings of the massacre of the company of women and children, the forlorn remnant of the Cawnpore garrison whom the Nana Sahib had spared from the butchery of the Slaughter Ghaut. Next morning Havelock's little army camped on the Cawnpore *maidan*, and Mick and his chum, accompanied by big Jock Gibson, one of the 78th pipers, with his pipes under his arm, set out in a search for the scene of the tragedy. Directed by whispering and terrified natives, they reached the Bibi Ghur, the bungalow in which the women and children had been confined, and in which they had been slain. With burning eyes and set faces, the men looked in on the ghastly and the woful tokens of the devilry that had been enacted inside those four low walls—the puddles of blood, the scraps of clothing, the broken ornaments, the leaves of bibles, the children's shoes—ah, what need to catalogue the pitiful relics! Then they followed the blood-trail to the brink of the awful well, filled and heaped with the hacked and battered dead. Sullivan lifted up his voice and

wept aloud. His comrade, of dourer nature, gazed on the spectacle with swelling throat. Big Jock Gibson sank down on the ground, sobbing as he had never done since the day his mother said him farewell, and gave him her Gaelic blessing in the market-place of Tain. As he sobbed, his fingers were fumbling mechanically for the mouthpiece of his pipes. Presently he slipped it absently into his mouth. As the wind whistles through the bare boughs of the trees in winter, so came, in fitful soughs, the first wayward notes from out weeping Jock's drone and chanter. At length he mastered the physical signs of his woe, or rather, it might have been, he transferred his emotion from his heart into his pipes; and as the other two left him, he was sitting there, over the great grave, pouring forth a wild shrill dirge—a pibroch and a coronach in one.

An hour later, to a group of comrades gathered in a little tope in front of the tents, Mick Sullivan was trying, in broken words, to tell of what he had seen. He was abruptly interrupted by Jock Gibson, who strode into the midst of the circle, his face white and drawn, his pipes silent now, carried under his arm.

"Comrades," began Jock, in a strange far-away voice, "I hae seen a sicht that has curdlet my bluid. The soles o' my brogues are wat wi' the gore o' women an' bairns; I saw whaur their corpses lay whummled ane abune anither, strippit and gashed, till the well was fu' ow'r its lip. Men, I can speak nae mair o' that awesome sicht; but I hae broucht awa' a token that I fand—see!"

And Jock pulled from out his breast a long heavy tress of golden hair cut clean through, as if with a slash of a sharp

sword that had missed the head. As he held it out, it hung limp and straight in a sunbeam that fell upon it through the leaves of the mango-trees. The rough soldiers bared their heads in the presence of it.

Old Hamish Macnab, the Kintail man, the patriarch of the regiment, stepped forward—

“Gie me that, Jock Gibson!”

Jock handed Macnab the token from the place of the slaughter.

“Stan’ roun’ me, men!” commanded Macnab.

The Highlanders closed about him silently, impressed by the solemnity of his tone.

Then Macnab bade them to join hands round him. When they had done so, he lifted up his voice, and spoke with measured solemnity, his eyes blazing and the blood all in his old worn face—

“By the mithers that bore ye, by yer young sisters and brithers at hame in the clachan an’ the glen, by yer ain wives an’ weans some o’ ye, swear by this token that henceforth ye show nae ruth to the race that has done this accursed deed of bluid!”

Sternly, from deep down in every throat, came the hoarse answer, “We swear!” Then Macnab parted out the tress into as many locks as there were men in the circle, distributing to each a lock. He coiled up the lock he had kept for himself, and opening his doublet, placed it on his heart. His comrades silently imitated him.

All the world knows the marvellous story of Havelock’s relief of Lucknow; against what odds the little column he commanded so gallantly fought its way from Cawnpore over

the intervening forty miles; with what heroism and what losses it battled its way through the intricacies and obstacles of the native city; till at length, Havelock and Outram riding at its head, it marched along the street of death till the Bailey-guard gate of the Residency was reached, and greetings and cheers reached the war-worn relievers from the far-spent garrison which had all but abandoned hope of relief. Before the advance from Cawnpore began, Mick Sullivan and his chum, remaining still nominally attached to the Highland regiment, had joined the little force of irregular cavalry which Havelock had gathered from the infantrymen who could ride, while he waited at Cawnpore for reinforcements. As scouts, on reconnaissance duty, in pursuits and in sheer hard fighting, this little cohort of mounted men had its full share of adventure and danger, and the Light Dragoon comrades had great delight in being once again back in the saddle.

When the main column had pressed on into the Residency, the wounded of the fighting in the suburbs and native town had been left behind in the Motee Mahal along with the rearguard. On the morning after the entrance, a detachment of volunteers sallied out to escort into the Residency the doolies in which the wounded still lay inadequately cared for. The return journey from the first was much molested by hostile fire, many of the native bearers bolting, and leaving the doolies to be carried by the escorting Europeans. The guide became bewildered, and the head of the procession of doolies deviated from the proper route into a square which proved a perfect death-trap, and has passed into history as “Doolie Square.” The handful of

escorting soldiers, of whom Mick's comrade was one, fought desperately to protect the poor wounded lying helpless in the doolies; but the rebels drove them back by sheer weight, and massacred a large proportion of the hapless inmates. Too late to save these, the fire of the escort cleared the square, and fortunately no more doolies entered the fatal *cul-de-sac*. Suddenly the little party holding their ground there became aware of a great commotion in the street, just outside the archway which formed the entrance to the square. Pistol-shots were heard, and loud shouts in Hindustanee mingled with something that sounded like a British oath. A sally was at once made. Darting out of the square through the archway, the sallying party fought their way through the swarm of Sepoys outside to where a single European swaying a cavalry sabre, his back against the wall, and covering a wounded boy-officer who lay at his feet, was keeping at bay, now with a dexterous parry, anon with a swift sweeping cut, and again with a lightning thrust, the throng of howling miscreants who pressed around him. The foremost man of the sallying party, cutting down a Pandy who turned on him, sprang to the side of the man with the dripping sabre in his hand.

"Look if the lad's alive," were the first words of Mick Sullivan, for he was the man with the sabre.

Mick's chum, for he it was who had headed the rescuers, stooped down, and found the young officer alive and conscious. He told Mick so.

"Thin hould me up, acushla, for it's kilt intirely I am," and poor Mick threw his arm over his chum's shoulder, and the gallant fellow's head fell on his breast.

The Pandies were massing again, so the little party, carrying Mick and the officer, struggled back again into their feeble refuge inside the square. The youngster was seen to first, and then Dr. Home proceeded to investigate Mick's condition.

"Och an' sure, docthor jewel, ye may save yersilf the trouble. I'm kilt all over—as full of wownds as Donnybrook is of drunk men at noightfall. I've got me discharge from the sarvice, an' that widout a pinsion. There's niver a praiste in an odd corner av the mansion, is there, chum?"

The chum told him the place was not a likely one for priests.

"I'd fain have confissed before I die, an' had a word wid a praiste, but sure they can't expict a man on active sarvice to go out av the wurrld as reg'lar as if he were turnin' his toes up in his bed. Chum," continued the poor fellow, his voice becoming weaker as the blood trickled from him into a hollow of the earthen floor, "chum, dear, give us a hould av yer hand. Ye mind that poor young crayture av a wife of mine I left wapin' fur me on the quay av Southampton. There's some goold and jools in the dimmickin' bag in me belt, an' if ye could send them to her, ye would be doin' yer old chum a kindness."

The chum promised in a word—his heart was too full for more. Mick lay back silent for a little, gasping in his growing exhaustion. But suddenly he raised himself again on his elbow, and in a heightened voice continued—

"An', chum, if ever ye see the 30th Light again, tell them, will ye, that Mick Sullivan died wid a sword in his hand"—he had never quitted the grip of the bloody sabre—"an' wid

spurs on his heels. I take ye all to witness, men, that I die a dhragoon, an’ not a swaddy! Divil a word have I to say against the Ross-shire Buffs, chaps—divil a word; but I’m a dhragoon to the last dhrap av me blood! Ah me!”—here honest Mick’s voice broke for the first time—“ah me! niver more will I back horse or wield sword!”

And then he fell back, panting for breath, and it seemed as if he had spoken his last words. But the mind of the dying man was on a train of thought that would still have expression. Again he raised himself into a sitting posture, and loud and clear, as if on the parade-ground, there rang out from his lips the consecutive words of command—

“Carry swords!”

“Return swords!”

“Prepare to dismount!”

“Dismount!”

A torrent of blood gushed from his mouth, and he fell forward dead. Mick Sullivan had dismounted for ever.

* * * * *

When the great mutiny was finally stamped out, Mick Sullivan’s chum got himself sent back to the 30th Light, down in the Madras Presidency. He delivered his poor comrade’s dying message to the regiment, and told the tale of his heroic death; and how Outram had publicly announced that, had he survived, he would have recommended Mick for the Victoria Cross. From colonel to band-boy, the 30th Light was deeply moved by the recital. The regiment subscribed to a man to place a memorial-stone over Mick’s grave in the cemetery inside the Lucknow Residency, where he had been laid among the heroes of the siege. The quarter-master took temporary charge of the