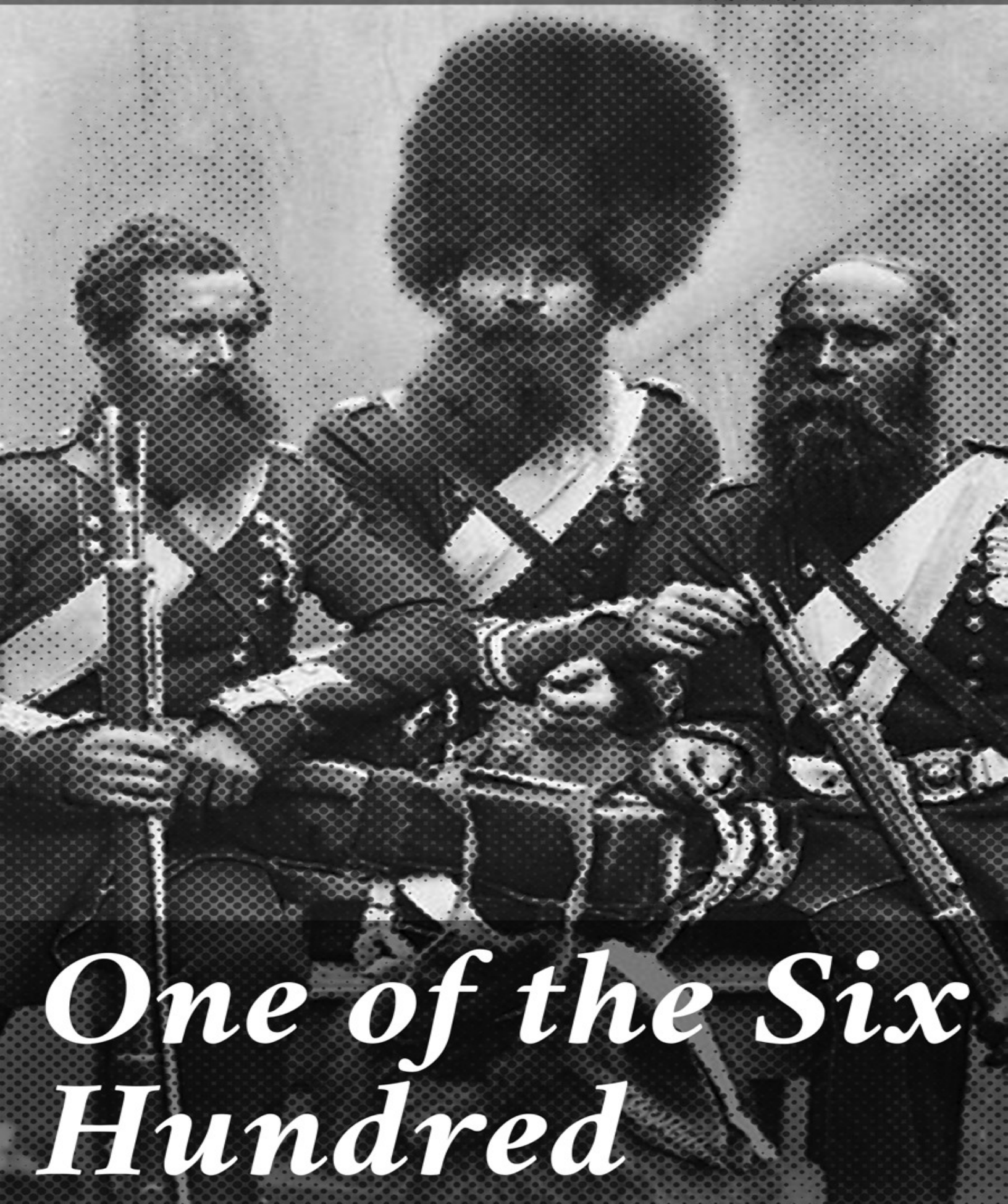
James Grant



One of the Six Hundred

James Grant

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A Novel

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CHAPTER I.

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

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

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

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

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

"Hah! this is what most concerns *me*," I exclaimed, as I read the foregoing, and then handed the order-book, a squat

vellum-bound quarto, to the orderly-serjeant who was in waiting.

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

"The East, of course."

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

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

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

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

With all due deference to this fair writer, I beg to hope that such a candid spirit may exist; and that, without violating the delicacy of this somewhat (externally)

fastidious age on the one hand, and without prudish or hypocritical reserve on the other, I, Mr. Newton Norcliff, will relate the plain, unvarnished story of a cavalry subaltern's life during the stirring events of the last ten years.

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

I despatched a note of thanks to the colonel, handed over my cattle to the care of my friend Jack Studhome, the adjutant, and had a hasty interview with Saunders M'Goldrick, our Scots paymaster—not that I wish the reader to infer that he was my chief factor and reliance (heaven help those in a dragoon regiment who find him so!).

Glad to escape, even for the brief period of a month, from the monotony of routine parades, the stable duty, the barrack life, and useless hurly-burly of Maidstone—to be free from all bother, mess, band, and ball committees, courts-martial, and courts of inquiry; from having to remember when this parade took place, and when that particular drill, and all that sort of thing—glad, I say, to escape from being saluted by soldiers and sentinels at every turn and corner, and to be once again lord of my own proper person, I relinquished my gay lancer trappings, and resumed the less pretending mufti of the civilian—a suit of warm and strong heather-mixture tweed—and about nine o'clock P.M. found myself, with some light travelling baggage, my gun-case, railway rugs, &c. (in care of Willie

Pitblado, who was attired in very orthodox livery—boots, belt, and cockade), awaiting the up train for London, at the Maidstone station, and enjoying a last friendly chat and a cigar with Studhome, as we promenaded to and fro on the platform, and talked of the different work that would soon be cut out for us, too probably, about the time my short leave expired.

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

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

The air was clear, and amid the blue ether the stars sparkled brightly. Snow, white and glistening, covered all the roofs of the houses and the line of the railway, and the Medway shone coldly, like polished silver, under the seven arches of its bridge, in the light of the rising moon; and now,

with a shrill, vicious whistle, and many a rapidly iterated grunt and clank, came the iron horse that was to bear me on my way, as it tore into the station, with its mane of smoke, and its red bull's-eyes that shed two steady flakes of light along the snow-covered line of rails.

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

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

Swiftly went the first-class express. The fifty-six miles were soon done, and in an hour I was amid the vast world, the human wilderness of London, even while worthy Jack Studhome's merry smile and hearty good-bye seemed to

linger before me. How glorious it is to travel thus, with all the speed and luxury that money in these our days can command!

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

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

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

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

On, on went the train!

Lights, crimson and green, flashed at times out of the darkness. Here and there the tall poplars of the midland counties stood up, like spectres in the moonlight, above the snow-clad meadows. Hollowly we rumbled through the subterranean blackness of a tunnel; out in the snow and moonlight again, amid other scenes and places. Anon, a

hasty shout from some pointsman would make me start when just on the eve of dropping asleep; or it might be a sudden stoppage amid the lurid glare of furnaces, forges, and coalpits, where, night and day, by spells and gangs the ceaseless work went on. Then it was the shrill whistling and clanking of the train, the bustle, running to and fro of men with lanterns, the banging of doors, tramping, and voices, with the clink of hammers upon the iron wheels, as their soundness was tested, which announced that we were at Peterborough, at York, or Darlington.

But every station, whether we tarried or rushed past it, seemed wonderfully alike. There were always repetitions of the same glazed advertisements in gilt frames; the same huge purple mangold-wurzel, with its tuft of green leaves; the same man in the hat and surtout, with the alpaca umbrella, under the ceaseless shower of rain; Lea and Perrin's sauce-bottles; somebody else's patent shirt; the florid posters of *Punch*, the *Illustrated News*, and the *London Journal*; and the same parti-coloured volumes of railway literature.

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

Grey dawn of the coming day saw us traversing the fertile Merse, with glimpses of the gloomy German sea, tumbling its whitened waves upon bleak promontories of rock, such as Dunbar, Fastcastle, and the bare, black headland of St. Abb. Then, as I neared home, and saw the

sun brightening on the snow-covered summits of Dirlton and Traprainlaw, many an old and long-forgotten idea, and many a sad and affectionate thought of the past years, came back to memory, in the dreary hour of the early winter morning.

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

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

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

At that moment I would not have exchanged my cornetcy for the kingdom of Scotland. These alluring trappings were the last things I thought of and looked on ere my eyes were closed by slumber, and the grey dawn of the next eventful day saw them still lying unpacked on the floor, when my poor mother, pale, anxious, unslept, and with her sad eyes full of tears, and her heart wrung with sorrow, stole softly

into my room, to look for the last time upon her sleeping boy, and her mournful and earnest face was the first sight that met my waking eyes, when roused by a tear that dropped upon my cheek.

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

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

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

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

Indeed, I had just been on the point of forming that elsewhere; but now, having no immediate attraction beside me, I began to wonder whether Cora had grown up a

beauty; how tall she was, whether she was engaged, and so forth; whether she still remembered with pleasure the young playmate who had left her sorely dissolved in tears, half lover and wholly friend.

As we progressed northward, and crossed the Firth of Forth, the snow almost entirely disappeared, save on the lofty summits of the Ochil mountains, whose slopes looked green and pleasant in the meridian sun; and my friend Studhome, had he been with me, might have been much surprised in finding the atmosphere warmer north of Stirling Bridge than we found it at Maidstone—so variable is our climate.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"What regiment, my friend?" I inquired.

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

"The weather seems open and fine here."

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

In five minutes more we were *en route*, sweeping along the little lonely branch line, that through grassy glens, where the half-frozen runnels oozed or gurgled among withered reeds and bracken bushes, led us into the heart of Fife—"the kingdom," as the Scots call it; not that it ever was so in any time of antiquity, but because the peninsular county contains within its compact and industrious self every means and requisite for the support of its inhabitants, independent of the produce of the whole external world—at least, such is their boast.

I was drawing nearer and nearer home; and now my heart beat high and happily. Every local feature and casual sound, the little thatched cottages, with rusty, antique risps on their doors,[*] and the clatter of the wooden looms within, were familiar to me. We swept past the quaint town, and the tall, gaunt castle of Clackmannan, where its aged chatelaine—the last of the old Bruce line—*knighted* Robert Burns, with the sword of the victor of Bannockburn, saying, dryly, that she "had a better right to do it than *some*

people," and ere long I saw the spires that overshadow the graves of Robert I. and many a Scottish monarch, as we glided past Dunfermline, old and grey, with its glorious ruined palace, where Malcolm drank the blood-red wine, and where Charles I. was born, and its steep, quaint streets covering the brow of a sloping ridge that ends abruptly in the wooded glen of Pittencrief.

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

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

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

A few miles beyond the old city I quitted the train, and leaving him to follow with my baggage in a dog-cart, I struck across the fields by a near path that I remembered well, and which I knew would bring me straight to Calderwood Glen,

the residence of my uncle, Sir Nigel—save Cora, almost the last relation I had now on earth.

CHAPTER II.

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Pure as the silver wreath of snow
That lies on yonder wintry hill,
Are all the thoughts that peaceful flow,
And with pure joy my bosom fill.
Soft as the sweet spring's morning breath,
Or summer's zephyr, forth they roam;
Until my bosom grows more kind,
And dreams of thee and all at home.

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

Fires glowed redly through the little square windows of the wayside cottages, and from their massive stone chimneys the smoke ascended into the thin air in heavy volumes, that told of warmth, of comfort, and industry within. Ere long I could see the woods, all bare and leafless, that covered the slopes of Calderwood Glen, and the vanes of the old house shining in the light of the setting sun, which streamed along the green slope of the western Lomond.

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

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

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

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

In that timeworn fane, Row, the Covenanter, had preached, and the great archbishop, too—Sharpe, the recreant, or the martyr (which you will), who died on Magus

Muir; and, that the marvellous may not be wanting, there is a legend which tells us that, in the year before the Covenanters invaded England, and stormed Newcastle, thereby seriously injuring the London coal market, there used to issue from the empty loft where, in old Catholic times, the organ stood, the sound of such an instrument in full play, together with the voices of the choristers singing a grand old Gregorian chant. These sounds were only heard in the night, or at other times when Calderwood kirk was empty, for the moment any one entered they ceased, and all became still—still as the dead Calderwoods of the Glen and of Piteadie, stretched in effigy, each upon his pedestal of stone, in St. Margaret's aisle; but this marvel was universally believed to portend the ultimate return of prelacy.

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

Treading deep among the last year's crisp and withered leaves, I proceeded down the sombre and winding avenue, with a heart that beat quicker as I drew near a man, whose figure I remembered instantly, for he was my early friend, my second father, my maternal uncle, good old Sir Nigel Calderwood. Occupied with a weeder, which he always carried, and with which the ends of all his walking-sticks were furnished, he was intent on up-rooting some obnoxious weed; thus I could approach him unobserved. He seemed as

stout and hale as when I saw him last. The grey hair, that was wont to escape under his well-worn wide-awake, was thinner and more silvery, perhaps; but the old hat had its usual row of flies and fishhooks, and his face was as ruddy as ever, and spoke of high health and spirits. He stooped a little more, certainly; but his figure was still sturdy, and clad, as usual, in a rough suit of grey tweed, with his stout legs encased in long brown leather leggings, that had seen much service in their time among the turnips and heather in the shooting season, and in the trouting streams that traverse the fertile Howe of Fife.

An old, half-blind, and wheezing otter terrier crept close to his heels as I came up. With a polite bow the worthy baronet surveyed, but failed to recognise me, and waited, with a glance of inquiry, until I should speak; for, sooth to say, in the tall, rather well-knit figure, bronzed face, and heavy moustaches I exhibited, he could scarcely be expected to recognise the slender and beardless lad, whose heart was so heavy when he was conveyed away from his mother's arms, to push his way in the world as a cornet of cavalry some six years before.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Yes."

"And how is he?"

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

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

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

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

"Indeed, uncle?"

"Yes," he continued, laughing heartily.

"How?"

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

"In what manner?"

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

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

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

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

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

"Strange! Lord Chillingham left us a week ago in haste to attend a meeting of the Cabinet; but his women folks have been rusticating here for nearly three months. Charming person the countess—charming, indeed; but the daughter is quite a Diana. You have met her before—she told us so, and I have made up my mind—ah, you know for what, you rogue—eh?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Ah, indeed—indeed; where?"

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

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

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

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

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

"No; he is Lieutenant De Warr Berkeley."

"Berkeley!" I repeated, with some disgust, and with an emotion of such inconceivable annoyance that I could scarcely conceal it; for decidedly he was the last man of

ours whom I should have liked to find domesticated at Calderwood Glen.

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

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

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

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

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

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

My uncle leaned on his stick, and sighed.

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

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

"The estates are entailed," said he, pursuing this line of thought; "they were among the first that were so, when the Scottish parliament passed the Entail Act in 1685; and though they go, as you know, to a remote collateral branch, the baronetcy ends with myself. Cora shall be well and

handsomely left; for she shall have the Pitgavel property, which, with its coal and iron mines, yields two thousand per annum clear. And you, my boy, Newton, shall find that, tide what may, you are not forgotten."

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

"Much, Newton?"

"Yes, my dear sir."

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

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

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

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

"My poor Nigel!—my bonnie Archie!"

The baronet was a handsome man, above six feet in height, and, though he stooped a little now, had been erect as a pike. He possessed fine aquiline features, a ruddy and healthy complexion; clear, and bright dark grey eyes; a well-shaped, though not very small, mouth; and a Scottish chin, of a curve that evinced perseverance and decision. His hair was nearly white, but there was plenty of it; his hands, though browned by exposure and seldom gloved—for the gun, the rod, the riding-whip, and the curling stone were

ever in them by turns—were well shaped, and showed by their form and nails that he was a gentleman of good blood and breeding. His plain costume I have described, and he was without ornament, save a silver dog-whistle at his button-hole, and a large gold signet-ring, which belonged to his grandfather, Sir Alexander Calderwood, who commanded a frigate under Admiral Hawke, in the fleet which, in 1748, fought and vanquished the Spanish galleons between Tortuga and the Havannah.

A sturdy old Fifeshire laird, proud of a long line of warlike Scottish ancestors, uncrossed by any taint of foreign blood, he was fond of boasting that neither Dane nor Norman—the Englishman's strange vaunt and pride—could be found among them; but that he came of a race, which—as our Highlanders forcibly phrase it—had sprung from the soil, and were indigenous to it.

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

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