

HIS GRACE

I was walking up the Strand, on my way to Piccadilly, one Thursday afternoon a few months ago, when the incident I am about to relate occurred. To tell the truth, I was going to meet Miss Hollibone, the head of the haberdashery at Feltham and Smith's; and I was just in the middle of a calculation as to how long it would be before she and I could be married and settle in a shop of our own, when a white-haired gentleman with a pleasant face ran into my arms.

"I beg your pardon!" he said. And then he started back. "Why, bless my soul!" he cried. "What an extraordinary thing!"

He stood staring at me in such evident amazement that my curiosity was aroused.

"What is an extraordinary thing?" I asked.

"The likeness," he said. "Would you mind telling me your name?"

"Sampson Banks," I replied; "though—"

"At last!" he murmured. "And your father's name was—"

I assumed the freezing stare which I found answered very well when customers brought goods back.

"I am not in the habit of discussing my late father with strangers in the street," I said.

"Nevertheless," said he, "I think you will find it to your advantage this time. But you are right; the street is no place to discuss an affair like this. Come up to my chambers."

He walked on, and led the way to a big block of buildings in Chancery Lane, which seemed to consist mostly of dust and stone stairs; and though I kept my eyes open for possible tricks, the elderly gent's manner had so impressed me that I followed him into a little, nicely furnished room on the third floor.

"Now," he said, seating himself at a desk, "we can talk comfortably. What was it you said your father's name was?"

"George Banks," said I; "but—"

He held up a fat white hand.

"And your mother's name—before she was married, I mean?"

"Amelia Tomkins," I replied.

He drew out a little bundle of blue, legal-looking documents from the drawer of his desk.

"Both your—ah—parents, I take it, are no longer living?" he said.

"That is so," I replied.

"And did they never tell you who you really were?"

"There wasn't any need," said I. "I knew."

"Worthy people," he said. "How well they carried out their trust! Now, look here, Mr. Banks, the story I am about to tell you is a very extraordinary one, but, at the same time, it is strictly true. Those good people were not your parents at all, and since they did not inform you as to your real identity, it becomes my pleasant duty to do so. As a matter of fact, you are—the Duke of Broadlands!"

I felt every vestige of breath ooze out of my body. Had anyone struck me in the face, I could not have been more astounded.

He saw I was speechless and went on:

"The story is a somewhat long one in detail, but put briefly it comes to this: The fifth Duke of Broadlands was supposed to have died a bachelor, and when he died the estate passed to his nephew, as a matter of course. But by a series of circumstances, which I will not go into, it came to my knowledge that the fifth duke had been secretly married, and that a son had been born to him. His wife—your mother—however, was in a humble walk of life, and when she died he took a dislike to you—his son—and had you placed with some excellent people by the name of Sampson. They never knew the real facts of the case, and they were well paid to keep silence as to what they did know; and the old duke died without ever even seeing his son, or in any way attempting to do him justice. You, my dear sir, were that son."

"But," I stammered, "how do you know all this?"

"I got my first suspicion from the likeness you bear to the old duke. It is simply remarkable. And, my dear sir—I mean, your Grace—I make bold to say that, with my help, within three months you will find yourself in enjoyment of your rightful position in life."

And then he went into the matter of heirs male of the body, heirs-at-law, and a whole lot of other legal rignaroles, which I could scarcely follow, backing up every statement he made with blue documents and parchments as long as my arm, and covered with wheresoever and whereases.

I did not attempt to follow much of this. The principal thing that concerned me was that he seemed convinced that what he called my claim was pretty well sure to be established before long. Of course, I left the matter entirely in his hands, and just as I was leaving he warned

me solemnly to keep the whole matter to myself.

I passed my word, and after arranging a future appointment I left the office like a man dazed.

II.

To think that I, who had started life as a cash-boy, should be a real live duke—it seemed I must be dreaming! The highest title in the land, three castles, a great house in Piccadilly—all this was mine! Well, at any rate, I must try and keep my head, and bear in mind what Mr. Maxtead—for that was the elderly gentleman's name—had said about keeping the thing dark. So ran my thoughts as I walked towards Charing Cross, and then—the first thing I did was to give the whole thing away. I had forgotten all about Miss Hollibone, and as I now came face to face with her I could see she was in a red-hot temper.

"A nice time you've kept me waiting!" she said.

That sort of greeting was certainly not so respectful as I now had a right to expect.

"I have been detained," I said loftily, "by some business of the highest importance."

"Fiddlesticks!" she said. "Highest importance, indeed! The only business that could detain you would be in the shop, and I saw you leave there two hours ago. Business of the highest importance! Who with, I should like to know?"

She needed crushing—I could see that.

"I have been engaged with my solicitor," I said coldly.

"Now, look here, Sampson Banks," she said softly, "you're not talking to a girl fresh from the Board-school. If you've met Sarah Maitland, or any of the other girls, say so; but don't try to make a fool of me with any of your high-faluting nonsense, because—louder—"I won't stand it!"

She took a good deal of crushing, but I was determined to do it.

"Madam," I said, "perhaps when you learn I have just discovered myself to be a duke you will moderate your tone somewhat."

She took a step back, and looked at me as if she were suddenly frightened. The murder was out now. I had broken my word, and so I told her the whole story.

When I had finished, she burst out laughing. Then I let my temper get the better of me, and I said some bitter things.

"I should have thought," I finished up, "that a person of your class would have been proud to be the acquaintance of the rightful owner of one of England's proudest and most ancient titles."

"Person, indeed!" she snapped. "Acquaintance! I suppose, then, that since you've dreamed this absurd tale I'm not good enough for you—eh?"

"Circumstances have changed," said I. "You must remember that I owe something to my family."

She looked me straight in the eye for a moment, and then she swung round.

"Good-afternoon, your Grace!" she said over her shoulder, and disappeared into the traffic.

In order to keep my word to Mr. Maxtead, I stuck to Feltham and Smith's as long as I could; but Agatha Hollibone made herself as unpleasant as she could. She spread the tale all over the shop. Every time I turned round I caught someone laughing at me, and that made me bad-tempered.

A bad temper is the worst thing a shopwalker can have, and very soon that brought me into personal conflict with Mr. Feltham. Of course, I, a scion of one of Britain's proudest families, could not stand being bullied by a mere lineudraper, and the long and short of it was that I found myself out in the street, with the last month's money I should ever get from Feltham and Smith's in my pocket.

To tell the truth I was rather glad. I could now give my undivided attention to prosecuting my claim personally. The three months mentioned by Mr. Maxtead were nearly up. I had received several very promising letters from him, and so, after all, I had only anticipated events a little.

The next morning I went up to Mr. Maxtead's Chancery Lane chambers to tell him what had happened. There was a clerk there, and he asked me to be good enough to step into a little waiting-room which gave on to the private office.

"Mr. Maxtead has not yet arrived, your Grace," he said; "but I know he will see you immediately he comes."

There were several other men in the waiting-room, and I must say I never saw such a dignified-looking lot of clients in my life. From time to time others were ushered in, and we stared at each other like bitter enemies, and coughed after the manner of Englishmen who have not been introduced to each other.

We waited for a very long hour, but still no Maxtead arrived; and at last one of the cads who were waiting lighted a Turkish cigarette.

Now, if there is anything I abhor with my whole heart, it is the unspeakable odor of a Turkish cigarette.

"Fah," I said, "put that beastly thing out!"

The man who had lit it looked me up and down.

"I presume," he said, "you are addressing me? May I ask who the dickens you are, that you adopt such a tone?"

"When you learn who I am," I said, with heat, "you will be sorry you did not treat me with more respect. I am the Duke of Broadlands!"

"Eh?"

It seemed that every man in that room had spoken at once.

The man with the Turkish cigarette laughed nervously.

"Don't talk such ridiculous nonsense!" he said. "I am the Duke of Broadlands!"

"Excuse me!" broke in another. "I am the Duke—"

"Not at all! It is I who am the—"

In thirty seconds it was well established that every man in the room imagined himself to be the Duke of Broadlands, and it became pretty plain that the whole thing was an elaborate swindle.

Maxtead had had the best part of £300 out of me for what he called law costs, and the thought that I had been done made me feel that faint I could have dropped where I stood. But I had not been victimized to nearly the same extent as most of the others, and there was some comfort in that.

Of course, we immediately broke into the private office, and equally, of course, we found it bare and empty. There was nothing to be done but to call in the police, tell our stories, and then go home and curse ourselves for a set of gullible idiots.

I have obtained another situation, but as a mere assistant this time; Feltham and Smith's reference was too lukewarm to get me a place as shopwalker. But somehow the story has got round, and I am only waiting till I can get enough money together to pay my passage before I shall get away to one of the colonies where, perhaps, people will have more consideration for my feelings than to call me "Your Grace" fifty times a day.—London Answers.

AFRICA'S CAVE DWELLERS.

Caverns Whose Origin is Shrouded in Mystery.

Major Powell-Cotton of the British service has been taking flash light pictures of the interior of one of the great inhabited caves on the slopes of Mount Elgon, a large mountain near the northwest coast of Victoria Nyanza, in central Africa.

The best of his views shows a number of reed huts that have been scattered irregularly over the wide floor, their tops extending to within about three feet of the black wall above them. Wicker baskets and other utensils of the household are sprinkled here and there, and large masses of rock, harder than most of the stone that was dug away to make the subterranean home, jut out into the big room, filling it with corners and recesses.

His visit was to the east side of the mountain. All sides of it have now been visited, and the west, south and east slopes are found to be dotted with these inhabited caves, some of which have been dug at an elevation of 7,500 feet.

Perhaps no other mountain has a similar title to distinction. Its top, even under the tropical sun nearly reaches the snow line, and its green sides are indented with deep pockets—the homes of many hundreds of human beings.

Powell-Cotton says there is no doubt that the whole inside surface of these caves was hewn by the hand of man, but the present owners are quite incapable of having executed so stupendous a task. They have no tradition as to who the makers were. The explorer thinks a systematic examination of a considerable number of the caves might throw an interesting light on their original inhabitants. Some of the visitors to Mount Elgon believe that

THEY ARE NATURAL CAVES.

They say they found no evidence that the caverns could possibly be the work of man.

They also report that years ago the natives lived on the plain in ordinary villages, using the caves at times as places of refuge from their enemies, until they finally made them their permanent abode.

The more scientific explorers, on the other hand, say there is no mistake about the caves being of artificial origin. Joseph Thomson, who discovered them, said that they were cut out of compact volcanic agglomerate, and he believed that they were mines in some past age.

The works were evidently too vast to be achieved by the simple savages who now inhabit them, and he wondered what superior race could formerly have occupied that region. Sir Harry Johnson also says that there is no possibility that the caves could have been artificial.

These two explorers, as well as Powell-Cotton, speak of the interior of the caves as being very irregular, as the harder part of the rock has been left jutting out in most inconvenient corners, while the softer stone was cut away.

Powell-Cotton made an entirely new discovery, north of Mount Elgon, of a tribe living on the tops of two mountains in two story houses. No huts of the kind have hitherto been reported among the barbarous tribes of Africa.

It is possible that they conceived the idea of the two story house to provide more room in their habitations, for as they live on the tops of mountains they cannot give much

ROUND ABOUT THE WAR

LEAVES FROM THE DIARY OF A BRITISH OFFICER.

Efficiency of the Japanese a Lesson to the British Soldier.

A British officer sends home a number of highly interesting notes from the theatre of war in the Far East, which throw some very useful sidelights on the general situation.

I have covered most of the ground, he says, from Japan to Port Arthur, and have listened to the opinions and narratives of men of many nationalities and shades of sentiment. I might summarize a good many by quoting the dictum of a German acquaintance as he gazed on the British and Japanese flags flying in the harbor at Chemulpo. "Behold," he said, "the banners of the Rising and the Setting Sun. Soon we shall have cried 'Le Roi est Mort! Vive le Roi!'"

He did not intend to be unpleasant although it may have been inspired by a little of that apprehensive bitterness which seems to have seized all Germans out here in presence of the triumphs and irresistible efficiency of Japan; but it undoubtedly marks the humble place in the general estimation to which Great Britain has been relegated by the nerveless policy of our foreign office in the Far East.

It would really seem as though every one were waiting for our shoes. When I was at Wei-Hai-Wei a short time ago there was a strong suspicion that the British government, desperately anxious to get rid of the place, over the acquisition of which there was such a fanfare a little while ago, were actually going to allow Germany to add it to her possessions in Shantung. At all events, when I was there

A GERMAN CRUISER

was in the place, and her officers, as usual, were entertained and shown over everything they cared to examine. When they were leaving after their few days' stay they were asked if they were going to repeat the visit. "No," replied the German commander; "we shall not pay a visit next time. When we come again it will be to take it over from you."

The British government have already put up "House to Let" at Wei-Hai-Wei, and it is one of the first holdings belonging to the poor old "Setting Sun" which the Germans will endeavor to acquire. It would immensely strengthen their position at Kaio-chau, and their hold over the province of Shantung. In German hands it would become the Gibraltar of the Gulf of Pechili. I got into Port Arthur and out again before the war commenced. I was able to examine the town, barracks and dock yard. There were some splendid palatial buildings in the former, including a magnificent cathedral, all of which I hear have been more or less destroyed by Togo. The barracks also were quite the best I had ever seen, possessing dining-rooms entirely separate from the sleeping quarters. The only dock for repairing purposes could not possibly have accommodated anything larger than a second-class cruiser. Thousands of men were at work everywhere, but I was warned that if I approached the fortifications I should at once be arrested as a spy. The Russian soldiers I saw were a fine looking lot of men, but intensely animal, and in appearance mentally deficient.

However that may be, they have learned to use their guns on the seaward batteries. The British naval attaché at Tokio, who has now returned home, was with Togo on his flagship during all the first attacks on Port Arthur. He had a good deal to tell on the subject, and explained for the first time how it was that Togo took

SUCH CARE OF HIS SHIPS,

and did not, as some seemed to think he might have done, send them in and attack the Russians much closer on several occasions when their vessels came out.

The British naval witness, however, says the fire of the Russian sea batteries and from Golden Hill was so wonderfully accurate that even at six or seven miles distance the Russian shell was bursting all around about the Japanese ships when they approached to that range. None—excepting the mined vessels—was ever badly damaged or required to be sent to Sasebo; but that Admiral Togo exercised a wise discretion in the management of his offensive tactics off Port Arthur we can well understand after the British attaché's report.

A good deal of minor damages have been sustained, but with Togo's fleet are several dockyard ships, which have been doing splendid service, ranging alongside any damaged vessel and carrying out all repairs in a thoroughly effective style. And besides these the Japanese have arranged extra facilities on some of the islands since they obtained undisputed supremacy at sea.

The more one sees of the Japanese afloat and ashore, one cannot help longing that Great Britain were able

space to their dwellings without encroaching upon their tilled lands. Almost under the equator, they succeed in raising crops on the very summits of high mountains.

to boast of similar all-round efficiency, not to say determination; for it is this pre-eminent quality in the nation, and the government standing behind the fighting men, which helps to render the latter so formidable. I learned from a Japanese friend the story of the first attack on Port Arthur, a story in very truth of a government which knew its own mind acted accordingly with circumspection and resolution.

As soon as ever the die was cast the Japanese fleet left Sasebo, while the Japanese consul at Chefoo went into Port Arthur to bring off his countrymen, and, together with his servant, a naval officer in disguise, to have

A FINAL LOOK AROUND.

When they left, the Russian fleet had taken up its fatal position in the roadstead outside. They steamed in the direction of Chefoo, but instead of making that place stood eastward and met the Japanese fleet under Admiral Togo at sea, when they at once described the formation and position of the Russian squadron, and a few hours later it was caught and scattered by the Japanese destroyers.

As a soldier I have, naturally, been more struck by the Japanese military movements which I have been able to witness. I was in Chemulpo at the time of the destruction of the Variag and the Korietz, and witnessed the really wonderful disembarkation and departure of a Japanese division for the front. As soon as the Japanese transports arrived on that fateful evening the long sea front assumed a quiet, sustained activity which betokened the absence of any necessity for improvisation. Even landing-stages projecting into the shallow waters of the bay made their appearance as if by magic, to which the sampans brought their endless loads of men, horses and guns. These streamed away into the town to pre-ordained billets with an uncanny precision which suggested that somebody, somewhere was turning a handle and working the whole business by machinery.

What one particularly noticed was that with it all there was no shouting of orders or galloping about of fussy staff officers, as there would have been in any other army. The Japanese officer seems to have learned a strange, silent method of leadership, whose marked feature is an absolute confidence in himself.

Nothing before or since has ever impressed me so much as that night in Chemulpo. The Japanese division was in tawn, there was no doubt of it; but not even a bugle broke the comparative quiet of the place. I explored the streets to see what had become of

THESE UNUSUAL SOLDIERS.

I found them in the shadows of verandahs, within the shelter of gardens and compounds, resting or cooking their food by little fires that were flickering in numberless different directions. They seemed to have no use for orderlies or staff officers, for everything seemed to be ready, prepared and complete. Of if any passed to and fro they seemed as noiseless as the very shadows in which they moved.

I watched the soldiers cook their suppers, eat them, and go to sleep all in the same stillness, and I did not quit this fascinating scene until an early hour of the morning, when a new wonder encountered me in the departure of this silent host. I passed where a whole battalion had bivouacked. It was quite dark. The wind of the morning was blowing cold, but not a streak of dawn had appeared. There was not a sign of any one awaking them, but suddenly there was a stirring among the dark masses of recumbent figures, and in a moment or two every section moved to its piled arms, unplied them, formed fours, and, without a word, the whole battalion moved off in the same weird silence, like ghosts, into the darkness and the unknown; whether none could guess, and no one ventured into the black waste of snow-covered country beyond to discover. We learned since that most went north, some by the awful Korean country over hill, and bog, and drear interminable mud wastes to Ping-Yang, and some by transport again to Chinampo. But it was a lesson to a British soldier in a scale of efficiency which had never entered into his purview before. There was a sense of omnipotent and masterful simplicity about it all, and as these soldiers came and went with their strange precision and working with an unerring and remorseless certainty never previously attained in the history of war. One could not doubt that such men went forth conquering and to conquer.

BERLIN FUNERAL PILE.

When Frau Clara Hahn, the wife of a prominent Berlin gentleman, from whom she was separated, committed suicide, she left instructions in her will that everything she possessed should be burned on a funeral pile. The police carried out these orders to the letter, burning no fewer than eleven chests filled with dresses, some packages of linen, ten boxes containing hats, three dozen veils, and hundreds of love-letters.

"And do you think," he asked, "that men progress after death?" "Well," she replied, "if they don't, it would almost seem useless for some of them to die."