

A DYING PROMISE

OR, THE MISSING
WILL

CHAPTER XIII.

The 25th September, 1857, is a day that Englishmen will not forget. For eighty-eight days the heroic little English garrison of Lucknow had defended their position against a leaguer of overwhelming numbers, having arms, provisions, a strong position in their native land, and all the resources of military training and skill; they had maintained their frail, unfortified, unsheltered position with a courage and constancy rarely equaled, though perhaps surpassed by the heroic defence of Cawnpore; and even that of Arah.

Cawnpore was more heroic, because conducted under still more desperate and, as it proved, fatal, conditions, behind even frailer intrenchments than those of Lucknow. For at Cawnpore the women had no roof but the sky, under incessant fire, and no couch but the bare earth; the garrison were only upheld by the noble hope of saving Lucknow by their prolonged resistance.

Stimulated, paradoxically as it may appear, equally by hope and despair—hope of being relieved by a force they knew to be in the neighborhood, despair of meeting more mercy at the hands of their enemies, should they yield, than the tragedy of Seetapore led them to expect; for an ominous silence was the sole intimation they had ever had of the fate of Cawnpore; the defenders of Lucknow rose on the 25th, to go through one more day of terrible, tragic monotony, and saw the sun once more turn westward over their wearied force diminished now by one-third, while the awful iron tempest still crashed mercilessly upon their riddled and half-ruined buildings, and filled every open spot with dust.

Night and day those devoted men had fought and toiled in their unsheltered intrenchments, scorched by its tropical rains; they buried their daily tale of dead, they nursed their sick and wounded, they did all the offices of daily life under an incessant fire of musketry, shot and shell, varied by stink-pots and carcasses, and only slackening a while from time to time to be renewed with fiercer rigor. The sick, crowded on the lowest floor of the hospital, were not secure from the occasional round shots; the only really safe places were damp, dark cellars, in which some of the ladies and children were crowded day and night among rats and mice, and where children rapidly sickened and died, and other children were born. All the long, hot day, officers and men, more or less weakened by fever and dysentery, and covered with boils, fought, rushing from battery to battery, because they were too few to man all at once; and at night the exhausted combatants, officers and men without distinction, save that officers worked the hardest, toiled at burying the untended and famished beasts, the carcasses of which bred pestilence. They could not furnish fatigue parties strong enough to repair breaches and make countermines; they had to grind their own corn by hand; they had not strength to bury their uncoffined dead deep enough to quench the foulness of decomposition; the native followers and servants had deserted; ladies, unaccustomed to stir a finger in that enervating climate, had to perform the most menial offices at the most trying season, on bad and scanty food, and in crowded, unwholesome dens; all to the never-ceasing thunder of cannon and rattle of musketry. It was then that Englishwomen, seeing their husbands slain and their helpless children sickened and die before them, sharing the men's hardships, tending the sick, and braving the tempest of death, showed that they too came of heroic strain and knew how to endure.

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the wasted garrison manning those battered defences was their excessive weariness, for, except at Arah and Cawnpore, never did fighting men have to toil like these foreigners, the meanest of whom had hitherto been accustomed to be tended like princes by the subject race now besieging them.

The sun still lay bright upon the gilded domes and graceful minarets springing from the rich foliage of the beautiful city, when the monotony of the stern siege music was broken by continuous firing from the direction of Cawnpore; it grew ever nearer and louder, till the hearts of the brave and weary garrison were thrilled to their depths by the actual sight of English soldiers heaving their way through the streets. Those who saw broke into a cheer that was taken up and echoed from end to end of the intrenchment, till the very sick joined in it, and some even mustered strength to crawl forth to see the blessed, long-expected sight. Welcome indeed was that sight, but terrible, for the enemy's fire enfilading the narrow street was very heavy, and the English fell at every step. Now the battle was at its fiercest, the relieving force had been fighting all the long day, and had to cut their way step by step in ever-diminishing numbers through the besiegers, who they could not

dislodge.

Amongst the European infantry was Philip Randal, hardly to be recognized as the smart, manly smiling young officer of Jessie's daguerrotype; his face was blackened by smoke and stained with his own blood, his sword ran with that of the enemy, his right hand was red and his sleeve soaked with it, his breath came in short gasps, a burning thirst consumed him, his limbs trembled, and a red mist swam before his failing eyes; with his parched lips compressed and his teeth clenched, his one hope was that he might not fall till he reached the Residency, if indeed it might be reached after so terrible a struggle. He had the good fortune to serve under that brave and beautiful soul, who, "in gratitude for and in admiration of the brilliant deeds of arms achieved by General Havelock, cheerfully waived his rank in favor of that officer"—tendering his military services to Brigadier-General Havelock as a volunteer, though officially appointed to the command of both Havelock and the expedition. Philip felt that it was indeed an honor to serve under two such rare and chivalrous soldiers, in an operation so fraught with peril and honor.

Outram's force never forgot Cawnpore, that word so over-weighed with agony and infamy, with heroism and cruelty, with pity and horror. They had not, like Havelock's Highlanders, been maddened by the sight of the tragic Beebeeburh, ankle deep in the blood of Christian women and children, and the yet more tragic well, over the ghastly contents of which they had cried aloud; but the whole relieving force, as they heaved their way through the living wall of dark-faced, white-dressed foes under the concentrated fire of the street, trusted that they were saving the Lucknow garrison from the fate of Cawnpore.

Philip carried Jessie's daguerrotype, taken at the same time as his own and the cause of as much laughter, in his breast pocket; early in the day a musket ball struck and shattered the outer half of the case, staring the likeness out of all recognition and saving his life; later on he received a flesh-wound in the leg and a ball grazed his forehead; else he was unharmed, though nearly exhausted. Suddenly, in the midst of all the fury and agony, a sweet vision of Jessie, safe in green and peaceful England, flashed before him, and he heard her voice above the thunder of the guns, the shouts, the moans, the awful tumult. Was she praying for him? Poor child, he thought, she would soon have no brother to pray for, though her picture had saved his life once that day.

The sun sank and the swift-coming darkness fell over the city, its domes and minarets, its dark groves and terraced roofs, over the placid waters of the Goomtee winding through the rich corn plain; over the battered but unconquered Residency; and then through all the tumult of the battle, rose the triumphant skirl of bag-pipes and a cheer, a deep-chested English cheer, low, hoarse, continuous, thunderous as the long incessant roar of the ground swell on a ragged coast, and like that, growing and deepening in volume and majesty. Many a dying ear heard it and was content, a company of wan and wasted women and children emerging from their damp vaults to snatch one breath of air in the slackening of fire after sunset, and wondering among themselves when would the relieving force come, heard it with an incredulous, delirious joy, soon changed to certainty by the irruption of the Highland soldiers among them, and the snatching up of the children by their heroic deliverers, to be kissed and cried over in their noble joy at having saved them from the fate of Cawnpore; it rolled along the ranks, and heartened up those still struggling without it struck terror to the souls of the dusky foe, and brought new life and energy to the exhausted garrison, who took it up and prolonged the grand note till it hushed every other sound. In the rapid falling of his pulses, Philip heard it and rejoiced, knowing that his life, the life so sweet and precious to his youth, was not given in vain; he, too, uttered one exultant cheer with his last strength, something crashed on his head, he fell, and the battle raged over and away from his prostrate body.

Lucknow was relieved at last, with the loss of over a quarter of the relieving force; and though after the first wil and rapturous emotion of the relieved garrison had subsided, the relief was found to be but a reinforcement, food and quarters for which could with difficulty be provided, the sequel that the deed was worth the terrible cost.

How long Philip lay among the slain he did not know; he was probably protected from further injury by falling into one of the trenches cut across the road to impede the progress of the troops; when he regained consciousness he found himself a prisoner, deprived of his sword

but furnished with the water for which he craved with delirious agony; food was given him and he slept a long sleep, and on waking found himself not much worse for his wounds, which were not deep, though their copious bleeding had helped to exhaust him. As for the crack on the head from a clubbed musket, that had left only a surface tenderness and a certain mental dulness behind; and as he looked round the dark chamber in which he lay on a purdah, a sort of thin mattress, he knew that the honor of death on the battle-field had been denied him, and that he was probably destined to insult and ignominy, and the horrors of death by torture. The cold drops stood on his brow; on searching his clothes he found that no weapon, not even a pen-knife, had been left him. His money was gone, but the ruby fastened into a portion of his dress had not been discovered; Jessie's shattered picture still remained.

The poor lad rose and fell on his knees, echoing the prayer which he afterward found written upon a wall in Cawnpore—"Have mercy upon us, and deliver us not into the hands of our enemies"—a prayer so pitiful in the light of after-events. Many Englishmen and women in that awful year turned in extremity to the sure and certain refuge of souls, and turned not in vain. Frail women bore witness during the siege of Lucknow to the strength procured from that unailing source; brave men grew braver. Philip had often stood at handcrips with Death; he had volunteered in many a desperate deed before Sebastopol; he had earned, though never won, the Victoria Cross, but he was too imaginative to go under fire without a full sense of peril such as had made him tremble and turn pale on his first experience at the Alma; and now, with the memory of Cawnpore, Shahjehanpore, and other places of horror fresh in his mind, his joints seemed loosened and his bones melted like wax within him. Yet women and children had borne worse. Outside his dark prison-house the infernal siege-symphony, with the addition of a terrible explosion, crashed on; he heard the sound of elephants drawing guns. Jessie alone would mourn him; he could not fulfil the trust her dying father had laid on him. He had taken care to make a will leaving his small fortune to her. Perhaps after all, she would be better without him; she was so young she would easily form fresh ties, and they had already been separated so long. All was at an end; the strong beautiful life, the perils and chances he loved so well; nameless as he was, he must sink nameless and unnamed from the sight of living men, from darkness he must pass to darkness, like a spark seen a moment in a night sky and then forever quenched, like the white spray cresting a wave and dissipated in the waters, like a moonbeam shot through a breaking cloud and engulfed in the night. How different was the going of Harry Lawrence but three months since; how different would it be with Havelock and Outram if they fell, as, for all he knew, they might already have done, each leaving the memory of a noble life and stainless name. Thus Philip lamented his youth.

Soon he was led before commanding officers and questioned, though on most points the rebels knew far more than he. Insults and threats of torture were sometimes his portion; twice or thrice he was returned to his prison and left in that awful suspense, which was not the least among the trials Englishmen endured during the rebellion. His prison was changed, he was transported aimlessly from place to place, led out to execution and covered with muskets, which after all were not fired, or fired in the air. Often he felt that the bitterness of death was past, but again and again the agony was prolonged, and he expected no mercy in the end. His first acquaintance with the Indian people was made at an unfortunate time; in all those dark, fierce, turbaned faces round him, he saw only fends of cruelty, heathen fanatics bound by devilish rites to all iniquity. As tragedy after tragedy had reached his tingling ears, his horror of those alien Asiatics had grown, till he said things of them and the treatment due to them which shocked Jessie, then, and himself, in after-years. He did not reflect that the revolt was, after all, but a military and partial outbreak; he had seen nothing of the intelligence, the culture, the graceful manners of these interesting and picturesque peoples; had heard nothing of the magnificent fidelity and noble generosity of which many of them gave proof during the Mutiny. He did not remember that even the worst deeds of cruelty wrought upon conquerors of an alien race, a hated religion, and a different civilization, were equalled by what the "most polished people" in Christendom did to their own countrymen and fellow-Christians in the French Revolution; nor did he know how dreadful some of the English reprisals had been.

One day he found himself unbound in an abandoned house on the outskirts of the city, by the river, guarded slightly and carelessly. Presently he discerned from his window a great tumult; natives, both sepoy and civilians, rushing headlong in wildest panic amid the thunder of a furious cannonade and crash of the explosion of an English mine beneath a large building held by the rebels; and taking advantage of the tumult and confusion and flight of his guards, effected his escape through unlocked doors. He caught

up a tulwar among the arms the soldiers had thrown away in their panic and made for the river, unheeded in the general flight. Seeing a boat, he sprang into it, pushed off and floated down stream, for he had no oars. He saw the English flag waving still above the battered Residency, which was as fiercely bombarded as ever, though the besiegers had been beaten back from the immediate vicinity of the position. He fet himself borne farther and farther from them, until the caprice of the current sent him ashore some miles away from the city, beneath a grove of mangoes, into the shade and shelter of which he was glad to crawl.

The half-closed wound had burst open again during his flight, he had been unable to bind it properly; every moment he grew fainter with loss of blood beneath the scorching sun, until he sank at last, unconscious, just within the grove.

When he returned to consciousness dark, turbaned faces were bending over him, restoratives were given him, his wound was bound up, he was lifted gently into a palanquin well sheltered from the sun, and borne away, he knew not whither.

Some time after darkness had fallen, they reached a small town; the bearers set down the palanquin before an arched door which opened to admit them, and Philip presently found himself in a courtyard surrounded by buildings; outside of which was a verandah lighted by lamps from within and partially illumined by the slant rays of the moon from without.

A Hindoo lady dressed in bright silks, with gold anklets and bangles, came out to welcome and receive a tall and dignified man in the prime of life, whom Philip recognized as having bound up his wound; men servants salaamed, there was much talking in an unknown tongue, and many and strange ceremonies confusing to Philip. The tall Hindoo having entered the house, soon came back with ashes taken from the altar upon his brow; and turning to Philip, bowed himself to him, touched his feet in token of respect, and bid him welcome in the name of God to the house of Gossamjee Bhoose.

Philip, wondering and half dazed, could only speak some words of thanks as he was taken from the litter and led into the house, through which the sound of a female voice, softly singing, was heard. He was conducted to a room containing a low bedstead of strange fashion, and furnished with all that was necessary for air and coolness. Ruksbai Ghose, Gossamjee's wife, then appeared with some pleasant drink, and bid him welcome in words of which he could only distinguish a few.

Dishes of curiously cooked food were then brought, with warm water, a native dress, including a turban, in which Philip arrayed himself with a sort of dreamy incredulity. Having washed, dressed, and eaten, he lay down upon his charpoy much refreshed and half fearful lest a clap of hands should be heard and this strange Arabian Nights vision should vanish. Instead of which, his kind host entered, surveyed him with benevolent satisfaction, saw to his bandages, and bid him rest, saying that he would come and talk to him on the morrow—which he did, bringing a native doctor, who examined and dressed the wound and departed.

"All that you now require, sir," Gossamjee said, "is a few days perfect rest and freedom from anxiety. The doctor thinks your wound will then be quite healed."

"Why are you so kind to me, a stranger and foreigner fighting against your fellow-countrymen?" Philip asked of this veritable Good Samaritan, when he had told him his name and military rank, and briefly narrated his adventures of the last few days.

Gossamjee Bhoose sat on a cushion on the ground, with his arms clasped round his knees, before Philip, who was sitting on the bedstead. He observed that it was a duty to succor the unfortunate and to exercise hospitality, and further that he loved the Feringhees. The English Rah, he said, was just and merciful, and beneath it merchants, like himself, could carry on their trades in peace without molestation. He trusted before long to see this outbreak subdued, and the English rule restored; for the natives had suffered much from anarchy in some places, and despotism in others. Sir Henry Lawrence was a just man, and a lover of the native races; his name was mentioned by many at the lighting of lamps, his death was a calamity to all who had known the beneficence of his sway; for his sake, all English were welcome to whatever aid Gossamjee Bhoose could give them. Outram was a good man, he had charged his people to "spare the holy places." The Mohammedan rule was very different, as the people of Oude found to their cost. It must not be known that Gossamjee had an English officer in his house, Beelampore, the name of the town in which he lived, was groaning under the oppression of a fanatical and intolerant mouvie, who had defiled the temple with the abomination of cow's flesh. Gossamjee had taken the liberty of destroying Randal Sahib's dress, in which he had found a valuable jewel; he begged that his highness would wear his turban when at the window, or on the house-top; and conform, so far as his religion permitted him, to Hindoo customs, in some of which he at once instructed him. He then left him, sending his son, Chunia, a lad of sixteen, who taught him the mysteries of the luxurious hubble-bubble and several useful Hindostanee phrases.

(To be Continued.)

THE MODERN BATTLESHIP

HOW IT COMPARES WITH THE OLD THREE-DECKER.

What Nelson Would Have Thought of a "London" or "Bulwark."

We wonder what Nelson would have said if he could have looked a century ahead and read in the daily paper a sentence such as this: "After the receipt of the intimation that the Russian warships Varyag and Korietz left the harbor and engaged the Japanese Fleet at from six to eight miles' distance," a piece of information which we read to-day without the least surprise.

In Nelson's time a gun would fire a 68lb. ball with any hope of hitting an enemy's ship a mile away was a thing to be wondered at, and indeed, such monster weapons were rarely used. The standard weapon carried by the largest ship of the line was a thirty-two pounder, and to make it effective the opposing ships preferred to get within pistol-range of each other before discharging their broadsides.

And yet, when Nelson was still alive and with his greatest honors unwon, it was seriously thought that the battleship of the period had touched finality in naval construction. "The size of our ships," wrote a great authority in 1800, "seems now to have nearly reached its maximum; for Nature herself in some measure

FIXES ITS LIMITS.

Timber, the growth of Nature, cannot be made to grow larger, and the very element in which our ships are to navigate has only certain depths that cannot be increased."

And then the writer proceeds to throw up his hands in amazement at a "ship of most extraordinary size which the French have lately built—with a keel 172 feet long and a tonnage of 2,850—an unwieldy monster pronounced to be entirely unfit for service and which hath never been out of harbor."

But what a baby this leviathan would look to-day by the side of a London or Bulwark of much more than twice the length and four times the tonnage, which can force its way against wind and waves at a speed of well over twenty miles an hour. Still, a first-rate ship of a century ago was a very fine vessel and, for the time, a splendid fighting machine well worth spending a minute or two in picturing. Although called a "three-decker" she had, in fact, five decks, of which three carried her hundred or more guns.

Along the whole length of her main deck on each side was a row of seventeen thirty-two pounders; the middle-deck beneath carried seventeen of these guns on each side together with two 8 in. guns, pointing

THEIR GRIM MUZZLES

like their fellows above and below, through as many ports; and on the lower deck were twenty-eight thirty-two pounders and four 8 in. guns; while still deeper in the ship was the magazine, containing about thirty-five tons of gunpowder.

Thus we have a stately battleship showing over a hundred vicious teeth to the enemy, and sure to give an excellent account of herself. Each of her ninety-six smaller guns fired a 32 lb. ball propelled by a charge of 14 lb. of powder, and a broadside would pour something like three-quarters of a ton of metal into the enemy's sides.

A battleship of to-day, like the London, carries only forty-six guns; but a single one of them can discharge in two shots as great a weight of metal as an entire broadside of Nelson's biggest ship. The 12 in. gun, of which each battleship carries four, dispatches a projectile weighing 850 lb. by means of a charge of 207 lb. of cordite. The shell has an extreme range of over twenty miles, and will go clean through 3 feet of iron at the distance of a mile. The 6 inch gun hurls a shell of 100 lb. weight, and the 9.2 in. one of 380 lb.; while of the forty-six guns, four of them will pour forth in a couple of minutes three times the weight of metal one of Nelson's ships could discharge from all her hundred guns.

BIRDS DO THE CAKE WALK.

In the Leeward Islands there are large numbers of a particular branch of the albatross family; these birds habitually perform, with great solemnity and regularity, a kind of cake walk. Two birds step up to one another, and the first bows profoundly to the second; then the second takes up the bowing, and after that they bow alternately. They circle round each other, still bowing; this is kept up for a minute or so, and after that comes a little fencing with the bills, but all in perfect good temper. The second bird stands still at the conclusion of this sparring, while the first stands on tip-toe, puffs out its breast, raises its bill as high in the air as it can, and utters a groan that sounds like the "moo" of a cow. While the sound lasts, the second bird snaps its bill rhythmically. Sometimes the first will pick up a twig and offer it to the other, but the second refuses the offering, and, in turn, does the same thing. After this, the game begins again with the variation that the roles are reversed. The albatross is a most polite bird, and it has often been demonstrated that if a human being bows to it, the salutation is returned unflinchingly by the bird.