

'Wax! I said I'd have no wax in the house again,' retorted the farmer. 'The last time we had one of these affairs, Mr John, I happened to stand under some of them waxes, getting as close to the wall as I could for fear of being upset by the couples that were whirling round the room, and when I came to comb my hair the next morning, may I never stir from this kitchen if it wasn't all glued together with the droppings of wax.'

'Never mind the droppings, master,' cried Molly, 'the rooms 'll look beautiful.'

'It had need to,' rejoined the farmer.—'There's Anne up there now, on her hands and knees, a chalking the floor! When they set on at me that I must dress myself in my Sunday-going clothes, I answered 'em that I should stop in the kitchen out of the row, and smoke my pipe in the chimney-corner.'

'Not a bit of it,' quoth John; 'you must dance away with the best of us. Good day, sir. I must be off.' And in an hour's time John Ledbitter was driving Saucy Sir back to Higham, with the Layton and Wierford letters for the Higham evening mails.

A merry scene it was that night at Farmer Sterling's. It was the custom at Layton and in the adjoining parishes, for the wealthy farmers to hold an annual entertainment, which were distinguished, one and all, by great profusion of dainties, a hearty welcome, and thorough enjoyment. Dancing was always kept up till daylight—winter time, remember—then came breakfast, and then the guests went home. At farmer Sterling's this party had been omitted for the last two years, in consequence of Mrs Sterling's precarious state of health, but now, as she was somewhat better, it was renewed again.

The ball commenced with a country dance always the first at these meetings, the Vicar of Layton opening it with Miss Sterling. He had just been presented to the living—a very poor one, by the way—and as yet knew but few of his parishioners personally, was a young man, and enjoyed the dancing as much as anybody. Next to them stood young Mr Grame and Selina Cleeve, by far the handsomest couple in the room. Mrs Sterling sat in an arm-chair by the fire, looking pale and delicate, and by her side sat the new vicar's mother, who had come to Layton to keep house for him. The farmer, as he had threatened, was in the kitchen, smoking his pipe, a knot of elderly friends round him, doing the like, and discussing the state of the markets, but as they were all in full dress, the farmer included (blue frock-coats, drab breeches and gaiters, and crimson neckties), their presence in the ball-room might with certainty be looked for by-and-by.

It was nine o'clock when John Ledbitter entered. Some of the young farmers nudged each other. 'He's come to take the shine out of Grame,' they whispered. He did take the shine out of him; for though young Grame could boast of his good looks and fine figure, he was not half so popular as John Ledbitter. He made his way at once to Mrs Sterling and spoke with her a little while. He had a pleasant voice and the accent and address of a gentleman. Mrs Cooper, the clergyman's mother, looked after him as he moved away to take his place in the dance. She inquired who he was.

'Mr John Ledbitter,' said Annie Sterling. 'I thought dear me, what an extraordinary likeness,' uttered the Reverend Mr Cooper, following John with all his eyes—'how like that gentleman is to the man that drives the mail-cart. I was noticing the man this morning as he drove into Layton, he appeared to manage his horse so skillfully.'

'John Ledbitter is the driver of the mailcart, interposed Mr Walter Grame, drawing himself up.

'I must explain it to you,' said Mrs Sterling, noting the perplexed look of the clergyman.

'Old Mr Ledbitter, John's father, was an auctioneer and land agent in Higham. He had the best business connexion in all the country, but his large family kept his profits down, for he reared them expensively and never laid by. So that when he died they had to shift for them, selves. John, this one, who was the third son, had been brought up an agriculturalist, and obtained a post as overlooker and manager to the estate of a gentleman who was then abroad. However, the owner was embarrassed, the property got sold, and John lost his situation. This was—how long ago, Anne?'

'About four months, mother.'

'Yes; and he had held it about three years. Well, poor John could get into nothing; one promised him something, and another promised him something, but no place seemed to drop in. One day he had come over to see Sir Geoffrey Adams on business for his two brothers in Higham, who are the auctioneers now, and was standing by the post-office here, when the driver of the mail-cart fell down in a fit, just as he was about to start, and died. There was nobody to drive the cart back to Higham; the afternoon was flying on, and the chances were that the Layton and Wierford letters would lose the post. So John Ledbitter said he would drive it, and he did so, and got the bags to Higham in time.'

'He drove to and fro the next day, and for several days,' interposed Mr Walter Grame, who had appeared anxious to speak, 'nobody

turning up, at the pinch, to whom we chose to entrust the bags. So my father, in a joke, told Ledbitter he had better keep the place, and by Jupiter! if he didn't nail it. The chaffing's not over in Higham yet. Ledbitter can't walk through the streets but he gets in for it. And serve him right. The fellow can expect nothing else if he chooses to degrade himself to the level of a mail-cart driver.'

'It is not the pay he does it for, which is trifling, but he argues that idleness is the root of mischief, and this daily occupation keeps him out of both,' said Anne Sterling, looking at Mr Walter Grame. 'He has only taken it as a temporary thing, while seeking for something better.'

'Ledbitter's one in a thousand,' exclaimed the bluff voice of Farmer Blount, a keen-looking young man, who had just come up from the card-room, 'and there ain't one in a thousand that would have had the moral courage to defy pride and put his shoulder to the wheel as he has done. Ain't it more to his credit to take up with this honest employment, and live on the pay while he's waiting for a place to drop from the clouds, than to skulk idle about Higham, and sponge upon his brothers? You dandy town bucks may turn up your noses at him for it, Master Grame, but he has showed himself a downright sensible man. What do you think, sir?' added the speaker, abruptly addressing the clergyman.

'It certainly appears to me that this young Mr Ledbitter, is to be commended,' was the reply. 'I see no reflection that can be cast upon him for driving the mail-cart while he waits for something more suitable to his sphere of life.' And Annie Sterling's cheeks colored with pleasure as she heard the words. She knew the worth of John Ledbitter: perhaps too well.

'He'll get on fast,' cried Farmer Blount; these steady minded chaps are safe to rise in the world. In twenty years' time from this if John Ledbitter has not won himself a home and twenty thousand pound it'll surprise me.'

'I am glad to hear this opinion from you Mr Blount, for I think you are capable of judging,' observed Mrs Sterling. 'People tell me there is an attachment between John Ledbitter and my niece, so that we—if it is to come to anything—should naturally be interested in his getting on.'

'I hope that is quite a mistaken idea, ma'ma, and I think it is,' fired Mr Walter Grame.—'You would never suffer Miss Cleeve to throw herself away on him! There are others—'

Mrs Sterling made a movement for silence, for the quadrille was over, and the two parties in question were approaching Selina seated herself by her aunt, and the clergyman entered into conversation with Mr Ledbitter. Presently the music struck up again.

'It is my turn now, Selina,' whispered Walter Grame.

She shook her head in an unconcerned manner, as she toyed with a spray of heliotrope.—'I am engaged to Mr Ledbitter.'

'That is too bad,' retorted Walter Grame, resentfully. 'You danced with him the last dance.'

'And have promised him for this. How unreasonable you are, Mr Walter I have danced with you—let me think—three times already.' Mr Ledbitter turned from the vicar, and without speaking, took Selina's hand and placed it within his arm. But after they moved away, he leaned down to whisper to her. There was evidently perfect confidence between them.

'I think it is so—that they are attached,' remarked Mrs Cooper, who was watching them. 'I hope their prospects will—Oh, goodness! my best black silk gown!'

'It will not hurt, it is only white wine negus, Anne, get a cloth. Call Molly,' reiterated Mrs Sterling, for Mr Walter Grame's refreshment glass and its contents had fallen from his hand on to Mrs Cooper's dress as it lay on the floor. Anne said nothing then or afterwards, but her impression was that it was thrown down and in passion. The glass lay in shivers.

(To be continued.)

From the Crimean Expedition. By Baron Bazancourt.

FRENCH CHARGE AT INKERMAN.

When the English saw their allies coming on with that impetuosity which is peculiar to the French, they raised a shout of joy, and checked the combat for a moment, to wave their blood-stained weapons in the air. The wounded half raised themselves, and cried Hurrah! The French troops replied by repeated shouts of *Vive l'Empereur!* and then the battalions charged with fury. They seemed a mass of steel propelled by invisible power. Already they have made two large openings in the ranks of the enemy; the dead are heaped one upon another, and the Russians retire. The soldiers trample upon corpses hidden in the brushwood, and suffocate the dying whom they see not.—But the enemy, though shaken for a moment by the human hurricane, closed their ranks; the chiefs roused their soldiers, and were the first to throw themselves with unexampled courage upon our bayonets. Then the combat raged with redoubled fury. Our two battalions, overpowered by numbers, were in turn thrown back by the ever increasing throng; but they retired step by step, fighting like lions.

The brave Colonel De Camas fell struck by a ball in the breast; for he had placed himself in the melee, giving to all an example of intrepid courage and bold hardiwood. Twice required a footing on the very spot where lay the dead body of the Colonel, surrounded by his dead soldiers, as he had been encircled, a few minutes before, by his living followers. For a moment the mist is lifted, allowing the eye to survey the scene of combat, then sinks again like a heavy veil let fall by the hand of God in order to conceal those sorrowful scenes of death and carnage.

Lord Raglan, on beholding the critical state of affairs, is reported by the baron to have considered that all was lost. As the Russian masses advanced right and left, he seems to have abandoned himself to despair. We quote the baron:—Lord Raglan shook his head, and with his usual calmness drily remarked, I believe that we are . . . in a bad predicament.—Not so, my lord, replied General Canrobert, let us hope for the best.

CHARGE OF THE ZOUAVES.

The fog had disappeared, and the combatants could see each other. The dead lay in heaps. It was on the redoubt, which, as we have already mentioned, was built on the side of the plateau, facing the Tchernaya, that the ever-increasing masses spent their fury. The regiment of Guards fought hand to hand, inside and around that open outwork. The Russians gained possession of it, and were in turn repulsed by the desperate efforts of those admirable soldiers, who fell one after the other without giving ground. At one time, the enemy completely surrounded the residue of that fine regiment, and the roar of joy which was uttered by their troops resounded like a sepulchral echo. The Zouaves, the Foot-Chasseurs, and the Algerine sharpshooters awaited only the signal. General Bosquet rode along their ranks reminding them of their former glory and prowess. Come on, my valiant Zouaves! come on, my brave Chasseurs! he cried:—show yourselves sons of fire, he said in Arabic to the Algerines. A mighty shout responded to the call, and mounted above the roar of the battle. All dashed forward, taking advantage of the inequalities of the ground, sometimes sheltering themselves behind the brushwood in order to load their guns, sometimes dashing on along the uneven ground. To see these Africans, you would say that a troop of wild animals had broken loose: the balls of the Russians cannot find them: they disappear, they come on again, they lie down, they arise, but they never cease fighting. They are panthers leaping among the bushes! cried General Bosquet, as he looked at them with admiration.—'This was a strange kind of warfare, resembling the true African combat, with its dark mysteries, its surprises, and its ambushes; sometimes they are separated and scattered; at other times, by a marvellous unison of thought, they close their ranks, and rush headlong upon the amazed Russians. If the defence of the plateau of Inkerman, where so much blood was wasted was heroic and indefatigable, the attack was no less bold, energetic, and resolute. The Russian officers brought back their men twenty times to the charge, and formed anew their decimated battalions; supported as they were by fresh troops, who advanced with frenzied cries, and were answered by fierce shouts from the columns crowded upon the side of the hill or in the winding gorges of the pass.

We shall terminate our notice of Baron Bazancourt's work by extracting his description of the crowning event of the siege, the capture of the Malakoff. The baron glances lightly over the repulse of the English at the Redan, and dismisses in about a dozen lines the part we took in the capture of Sebastopol.

ATTACK ON AND CAPTURE OF THE MALAKOFF.

The watches of the Generals commanding the several divisions have been regulated by that of the Commander-in-chief; and when the hands point to noon, the three columns will rush forward together at the command of their officers. The heroic pen of Homer were required to picture worthily that solemn moment of expectation, which made every eye sparkle, and every heart throb with impatience. The generals are standing upon the breastworks, calm and attentive, their eyes fixed upon their watches. Every officer stands sword in hand. The soldiers, crouching in the trenches, with their bayonets advanced, wait only for the signal. Even the thundering reports of the artillery seem overmastered by this awful silence.—The batteries have already abruptly changed their aim, in order to leave the ground destined for the attack, and concentrate their power upon the reserves of the enemy. It is twelve o'clock. The generals spring forward, waving their plumed hats: living signals, they leap upon the parapets, the first to show themselves, entirely unprotected above the breastworks, and shout 'Soldiers! Forward! *Vive l'Empereur!*' That cry a thousand times repeated, thrills upon every lip. It is the signal of assault. Officers and soldiers are blended in one superb and simultaneous rush. It seems as if the earth had suddenly opened, to throw upon those dismantled ramparts this host of combatants. At the same moment, General Bosquet's pennon is planted on the outer embankment of the trenches, to indicate to all the hon-

ourable post which the general has chosen, and to serve as rallying point for the officers coming to him for orders. Drums and trumpets sound the charge; the warlike music spreads far and wide, and wakes its martial echo in every soldier's breast. The scene and the moment are full of grand and stern excitement and present as solemn of superb a spectacle as ever was gazed upon by man. The 1st Brigade of M'Mahon's Division has but twenty-five or thirty yards to traverse. At the command of their general, who himself leads the way, the troops dash forward with a wild hurrah; one portion upon the salient of the Malakoff, the other upon the left face of that bastion, at the point where that face joins the great curtain which was to be attacked by La Motte-Rouge's Division. The Zouaves and the Foot-Chasseurs throw themselves upon Gervais' Battery, of which they obtain immediate possession. In a few seconds, all the troops have reached the outer portion of the Malakoff. The precipitous sides of the embankments present a formidable obstacle; but the soldiers leap into the ditches, cling to the irregularities of the surface, and without waiting until the engineers shall have made them a pathway, or have filled up some portions of the ditch, they appear on the summits of the parapets, and boldly plant the flag of France upon the hostile bastion.—The interior of the work is furnished with stockaded traverses, which the Russians have multiplied illimitably, to afford protection against the fire of our artillery. Surprised by the impetuosity of our attack, they have hardly time to issue from these places of shelter, and rally for defence. The reserves have been withdrawn and assembled in the rear as on the preceding days. Some Russian officers, sword in hand, have sprung foremost upon the parapets.—They summon their soldiers, urging them forward by voice and gesture. Only a few yards separate these intrepid officers from our soldiers who rush in on all sides. Every instant death reduces the gallant band and they are seen to fall and disappear one by one beneath the bullets which strike them, from muskets whose muzzles almost touch their persons, without a single one of them having abandoned his post. Besiegers and besieged are in a moment intermingled in a fearful melee, where the bayonet lacking room in this struggle hand to hand, can longer make a passage. They fight with stones and with musket-butts;—the arms broken in the rapid charge are replaced by pickaxes, by pieces of rammers, and by fragments of wood torn from the stockades. Our battalions have succeeded in penetrating on all sides into the interior of the fortress; the Russians cannot resist this living rampart, bristling with bayonets, but abandon the work to fall back upon the reserves, which already appear on every hand.—The Algerian riflemen have rushed upon the only issue which has been kept open for this work, which is fortunately closed at the gorge; and aided by the sappers,—who heap upon this passage gabions and fascines, they boldly take position there.

THE MINISTRY OF WOMAN.—Not equal to man in rude strength of bone and muscle—not equal in steady grasp of the intellect—but in fitness of fact—in the capacity of quiet endurance, and uncomplaining suffering, how superior! She has not, she cannot write a poem like Milton, but she can live out, as Lady Franklin did, an epic of nobler elevation than any painted picture of imagination. She cannot paint such as manly genius can do, but she can, all unobserved by the great world, paint upon her soul the immortal virtues of faith and piety, and have a purer madonna than Raphael ever painted, impressed upon her heart.—Which is greater? The one who expresses what others have done, or the one who does it himself?

HABIT A TYRANT.—Habit is a strange thing. It is the adoption of, and the continuation of certain kinds of actions, until they become easy and natural to us. But the power of habit is more strange. It often counteracts the most sincere determinations. It constrains many to break the most sincere vows. With herculean energy, it contends with resolutions of the mightiest minds, and never will it relinquish its tenacious grasp while there is the least hope of victory. It sways our lives, moulds our characters, establishes our reputations, controls our feelings, and determines our destinies. See, then, what depends upon the habits you contract. How prudent should we be in choosing at first a course of action. Young man, your future destiny depends upon the habits you prefer now.

HE DRINKS. How ominously that sentence falls! How we pause in conversation, and ejaculate—'It's a pity! How his mother hopes that he will not when he grows older; and his sisters persuade themselves that it is only a few wild oats that he is sowing, and fell sad and gloomy when they think of it—Young men, just commencing life, buoyant with hope don't drink. You are freighted with a precious cargo. The hopes of your old parents, of your sisters, of your wife, of your children—all are laid down upon. In you the aged live over again their.

'You look as though you were beside your self,' as the wag said to a fop who happened to be standing by a jack-ass.