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BLOOMSBURG, PA., FRIDAY, AUGUST 5, 1887.

THE COLUMBIAN, VOL. XXI NO 31
COLUMBIA DEMOCRAT, VOL. LI, NO 20

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By H. RIDER HAGGARD.

And now you wish, in order to gratify an unlawful passion for a shadder of blood—you wish to throw me over, to trample upon my holiest feelings, and to rob me of the prize which I have won. No, Eva, I will not release you."

"Surely, surely, Mr. Plowden," said Eva, faintly, for she was a gentle creature, and the man's violence overwhelmed her, "you will not force me into a marriage which I tell you is repugnant to me! I appeal to your generosity to release me. You can never oblige me to marry you when I tell you that I do not love you, and that my whole heart is given to another man."

Mr. Plowden saw that his violence was doing its work, and determined to follow it up. He raised his voice till it was almost a shout.

"Yes," he said, "I will; I will not submit to such wickedness. Love! that will come. I am quite willing to take my chance of it. No, I tell you fairly that I will not let you off; and if you try to avoid fulfilling your engagement to me I will do more; I will proclaim you all over the country as a jilt; I will bring an action for breach of promise of marriage against you—perhaps you did not know that men can do that as well as women—and cover your name with disgrace! Look, I have your written promise of marriage," and he produced her letter.

Eva turned to her sister.

"Florence," she said, "cannot you say a word to help me? I am overwhelmed."

"I wish I could, Eva, dear," answered her sister, kindly, "but how can I? What Mr. Plowden says is just and right. You are engaged to him, and are in honor bound to marry him. Oh, Eva, do not bring trouble and disgrace upon us all by your obstinacy! You owe something to your name as well as to yourself, and something to me too. I am sure that Mr. Plowden will be willing to forget all about this if you will undertake never to allude to it again."

"Oh, yes, certainly, Miss Florence. I am not revengeful; I only want my rights."

Eva looked faintly from one to the other, her head sunk, and great black rings painted themselves beneath her eyes. The lily was broken at last.

"You are very cruel," she said, slowly; "but I suppose it must be as you wish. Pray God I may die first, that is all!" and she put her hands to her head and stumbled from the room, leaving the two conspirators facing each other.

"Come, we got over that capitally," said Mr. Plowden, rubbing his hands. "There is nothing like taking the high hand with a woman. Ladies must sometimes be taught that a gentleman has rights as well as themselves."

Florence turned on him with bitter scorn.

"Gentlemen! Mr. Plowden, why is the word so often on your lips? Surely, after the part you have just played, you do not presume to rank yourself among gentlemen! Listen! it suits my purpose that you should marry Eva; and you shall marry her; but I will not stoop to play the hypocrite with a man like you. You talk of yourself as a gentleman, and do not scruple to force an innocent girl into a wicked marriage, and to crush her spirit with your cunning cruelty. A gentleman, forsooth!—a satyr, a devil in disguise!"

"I am only asserting my rights," he said, furiously; "and whatever I have done, you have done more."

"Do not try your violence on me, Mr. Plowden; it will not do. I am not made of the same stuff as your victim. Lower your voice or leave the house and do not enter it again."

Mr. Plowden's heavy under jaw fell a little; he was terribly afraid of Florence.

"Now," she said, "listen! I do not choose that you should labor under any mistake. I hold your hand in this business, though to have to do with you in any way is in itself a defilement," and she wiped her delicate fingers on a pocket handkerchief as she said the word, "because I have an end of my own to gain. Not a vulgar end like yours, but a revenge, which shall be almost divine or diabolical, call it which you will, in its completeness. Perhaps it is a madness, perhaps it is an inspiration, perhaps it is a fate. Whatever it is, it animates me body and soul, and I will gratify it, though to do so I have to use a tool like you. I wished to explain this to you. I wished, too, to make it clear to you that I consider you contemptible. I have done both, and I have now the pleasure to wish you good morning."

Mr. Plowden left the house white with fury, and cursing in a manner remarkable in a clergyman.

"If she wasn't so handsome, hang me if I would not throw the whole thing up!" he said.

Needless to say, he did nothing of the sort; he only kept out of Florence's way.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE VIRGIN MARTYR.

Dorothy, in her note to Ernest that he received by the mail previous to the one that brought the letters which at a single blow laid the hope and promise of his life in the dust, had, it may be remembered, stated her intention of going to see Eva in order to plead Ernest's cause; but, what with one thing and another, her visit was considerably delayed. Twice she was on the point of going, and twice something occurred to prevent her. The fact of the matter was, the errand was distasteful, and she was in no hurry to execute it. She loved Ernest herself, and, however deep that love might be trampled down, however fast it might be chained in the dungeons of her secret thoughts, it was still there, a living thing, an immortal thing. She could tread it down and chain it; she could not kill it. Its shade would rise and walk in the upper chambers of her heart, and wring its hands and cry to her, telling what it suffered in those subterranean places, whispering how bitterly it envied the bright and happy life which moved in the free air and had usurped the love it claimed. It was hard to ignore those pleadings, to disregard those cries for pity, and to say there was no hope, that it must always be chained, till time ate away the chains. It was harder still to have to be one of the actual ministers to the suffering. Still she meant to go. Her duty to Ernest was not to be forsaken because it was a painful duty.

On two or three occasions she met Eva, but got no opportunity of speaking to her. Either her sister Florence was with her or she was obliged to return immediately. The fact was that, after the scene described in the last chapter, Eva was subjected to the closest espionage. At home Florence watched her as a cat watches a mouse; abroad Mr. Plowden seemed to be constantly hovering on her flank, or, if he was not there, then she became aware of the presence of the ancient and contemplative mariner who traded in Dutch cheeses. Mr. Plowden feared lest she should run away, and so cheat him of his prize; Florence, lest she should confide in Dorothy, or possibly Mr. Cardus, and supported by them find the courage to assert herself and defraud her of her revenge. So they watched her every movement.

At last Dorothy made up her mind to wait no longer for opportunities, but to go and see Eva at her home. She knew nothing of the Plowden imbroglio, but it did strike her as curious that no one had said anything about Ernest. He had written—it was scarcely likely the letter had miscarried. How was it that Eva had not said anything on the subject? Little did Dorothy guess that, even as these thoughts were passing through her mind, a great vessel was steaming out of Southampton docks, bearing those epistles of final renunciation which Ernest, very little to his satisfaction, received in due course.

Full of these reflections, Dorothy found herself one lovely spring afternoon knocking at the door of the Cottage. Eva was at home, and she was at once ushered into her presence. She was sitting on a low chair—the same on which Ernest always pictured her with that confounded Skye terrier she was so fond of kissing—an open book upon her knee, and looking out at the little garden and the sea beyond. She looked pale and thin, Dorothy thought.

On her visitor's entrance, Eva rose and kissed her.

"I am so glad to see you," she said, "I was feeling so lonely."

"Lonely," answered Dorothy, in her straightforward way; "why, I have been trying to find you alone for the last fortnight, and have never succeeded."

Eva colored. "One may be lonely with ever so many people round one."

Then for a minute or so they talked about the weather; so persistently did they discuss it, indeed, that the womanly instinct of each told her that the other was fencing.

After all, it was Eva who broke the ice first.

"Have you heard from Ernest lately?" she said, nervously.

"Yes; I got a note by last mail."

"Oh," said Eva, clasping her hands involuntarily, "what did he say?"

"Nothing much. But I got a letter by the mail before that, in which he said a good deal. Among other things he said he had written to you. Did you get the letter?"

Eva colored to her eyes. "Yes," she answered.

Dorothy rose, and seated herself again on a footstool by Eva's feet, and wondered at the trouble in her eyes. How could she be troubled when she had heard from Ernest—"like that?"

"What did you answer him, dear?"

Eva covered her face with her hands.

"Do not talk about it," she said; "it is too dreadful to me!"

"What can you mean! He tells me you are engaged to him."

"Yes—that is, no. I was half engaged. Now I am engaged to Mr. Plowden."

Dorothy gave a gasp of horrified astonishment.

"Engaged to that man when you were engaged to Ernest! You must be joking."

"Oh, Dorothy, I am not joking; I wish to heaven I were. I am engaged to him. I am to marry him in less than a month. Oh, pity me, I am wretched."

"You mean to tell me," said Dorothy, rising, "that you are engaged to Mr. Plowden when you love Ernest?"

"Yes, oh yes; I cannot help"——

At that moment the door opened, and Florence entered, attended by Mr. Plowden.

Her keen eyes saw at once that something was wrong, and her intelligence told her what it was. After her bold fashion, she determined to take the bull by the horns. Unless something were done, with Dorothy at her back, Eva might prove obdurate after all.

Advancing, she shook Dorothy cordially by the hand.

"I see from your face," she said, "that you have just heard the good news. Mr. Plowden is so shy that he would not consent to announce it before, but here he is to receive your congratulations."

Mr. Plowden took the cue, and advanced effusively on Dorothy with outstretched hand. "Yes, Miss Jones, I am sure you will congratulate me; and I ought to be congratulated; I am the luckiest"——

Here he broke off. It really was very awkward. His hand remained limply hanging in the air before Dorothy, but not the slightest sign did that dignified little lady show of taking it. On the contrary, she drew herself up to her full height—which was not very tall—and fixing her steady blue eyes on the clergyman's shifty orbs deliberately placed her right hand behind her back.

"I do not shake hands with people who play such tricks," she said quietly.

Mr. Plowden's hands fell to his side, and he stepped back. He did not expect such courage in anything so small. Florence, however, sailed in to the rescue.

"Really, Dorothy, we do not quite understand."

"Oh, yes, I think you do, Florence, or if you do not, then I will explain. Eva here was engaged to marry Ernest Kershaw. Eva here has just with her own lips told me that she still loves Ernest, but that she is obliged to marry—that man," and she pointed with her little forefinger at Plowden, who recoiled another step. "Is not that true, Eva?"

Eva bowed her head by way of answer. She still sat in the low chair, with her hands over her face.

"Really, Dorothy, I fail to see what right you have to interfere in this matter," said Florence.

"I have the right of common justice, Florence—the right a friend has to protect the absent. Oh, are you not ashamed of such a wicked plot to wrong an absent man? Is there no way (addressing Mr. Plowden) in which I can appeal to your feelings, to induce you to free this wretched girl you have entrapped?"

"I only ask my own," said Mr. Plowden, sulkily.

"For shame! for shame! and you a minister of God's word! And you too, Florence! Oh, now I can read your heart, and see the bad thoughts looking from your eyes!"

Florence for a moment was abashed, and turned her face aside.

"And you, Eva, how can you become a party to such a shameful thing? You, a good girl, to sell yourself away from dear Ernest to such a man as that;" and again she pointed contemptuously at Mr. Plowden.

"Oh, don't, Dorothy, don't; it is my duty. You don't understand."

"Oh, yes, Eva, I do understand. I understand that it is your duty to drown yourself before you do such a thing. I am a woman as well as you, and, though I am not beautiful, I have a heart and a conscience, and I understand only too well."

"You will be lost if you drown yourself—I mean it is very wicked," said Mr. Plowden to Eva, suddenly assuming his clerical character as most likely to be effective. The suggestion alarmed him. He had bargained for a live Eva.

"Yes, Mr. Plowden," went on Dorothy, "you are right; it would be wicked, but not so wicked as to marry you. God gave us women our lives, but he put a spirit in our hearts which tells us that we should rather throw them away than suffer ourselves to be degraded. Oh, Eva, tell me that you will not do this shameful thing—no, do not whisper to her, Florence."

"Dorothy, Dorothy," said Eva, rising and wringing her hands, "it is all useless. Do not break my heart with your cruel words. I must marry him. I have fallen into the power of people who do not know what mercy is."

"Thank you," said Florence.

Mr. Plowden scowled darkly.

"Then I have done," and Dorothy walked toward the door. Before she reached it she paused and turned. "One word, and I will trouble you no more. What do you all expect will come of this wicked marriage?"

There was no answer. Then Dorothy went.

But her efforts did not stop there. She made her way straight to Mr. Cardus' office.

"Oh, Reginald!" she exclaimed, "I have such dreadful news for you. There, let me cry a little first and I will tell you."

And she did, telling him the whole story from beginning to end.

It was entirely new to him, and he listened with some astonishment, and with a feeling of something like indignation against Ernest. He had intended that young gentleman to fall in love with Dorothy, and behold, he had fallen in love with Eva. Alas! for the perversity of youth.

"Well," he said, when she had done, "and what do you wish me to do? It seems that you have to do with a heartless, scheming woman, a clerical cad, and a beautiful fool. One might deal with the schemer and the fool, but no power on earth can soften the cad. At least, that is my experience. Besides, I think the whole thing is much better left alone. I should be very sorry to see Ernest married to a woman so worthless as Eva must be. She is handsome, it is true, and that is about all she is, as far as I can see. Don't distress yourself, my dear; he will get over it, and after he has had his fling out there, and lived down that duel business, he will come home, and if he is wise, I know where he will look for consolation."

Dorothy tossed her head and colored.

"It is not a question of consolation," she said; "it is a question of Ernest's happiness in life."

"Don't alarm yourself, Dorothy; people's happiness is not so easily affected. He will forget all about her in a year."

"I think that men always talk of each other like that, Reginald," said Dorothy, resting her head upon her hands and looking straight at the old gentleman. "Each of you likes to think that he has a monopoly of feeling, and that the rest of his kind are as shallow as a milk pan. And yet it was only last night that you were talking to me about my mother. You told me, you remember, that life had been a worthless thing to you since she was torn from you, which no success had been able to render pleasant. You said more; you said you hoped that the end was not far off, that you had suffered enough and waited enough, and that, though you had not seen her face for five and twenty years, you loved her as wildly as you did the day when she first promised to become your wife."

Mr. Cardus had risen, and was looking through the glass door at the blooming orchids. Dorothy got up, and, following him, laid her hand upon his shoulder.

"Reginald," she said, "think. Ernest is about to be robbed of his wife under circumstances curiously like those by which you were robbed of yours. Unless it is prevented, what you have suffered all your life that he will suffer also. Remember you are of the same blood, and, allowing for the differences between your ages, of very much the same temperament, too. Think how different life would have been to you if any one had staved off your disaster, and then I am sure you will do all you can to stave off his."

"Life would have been non-existent for you," he answered, "for you would never have been born."

"Ah, well," she said, with a little sigh, "I am sure I should have got on very well without. I could have spared myself."

Mr. Cardus was a keen man, and could see as far into the human heart as most.

"Girl," he said, contracting his white eyebrows and suddenly turning round upon her, "you love Ernest yourself. I have often suspected it; now I am sure you do."

Dorothy flinched.

"Yes," she answered, "I do love him; what then?"

"And yet you are advocating my interference to secure his marriage with another woman, a worthless creature who does not know her own mind. You cannot really care about him."

"Care about him!" And she turned her sweet blue eyes upward. "I love him with all my heart and soul and strength. I have always loved him; I always shall love him. I love him so well that I can do my duty to him, Reginald. It is my duty to strain every nerve to prevent this marriage. I had rather that my heart should ache than Ernest's. I implore you to help me!"

"Dorothy, it has always been my dearest wish that you should marry Ernest. I told him so just before that unhappy duel. I love you both. All the fibers of my heart that are left alive have wound themselves around you. Jeremy I could never care for. Indeed, I fear that I used sometimes to treat the boy harshly. He reminds me of his father; and do you know, my dear, I sometimes think that on that point I am not quite sane? But because you have asked me to do it, and because you have quoted your dear mother—may peace be with her!—I will do what I can. This girl, Eva, is of age, and I will write and offer her a home. She need fear no persecution here."

"You are kind and good, Reginald, and I thank you."

"The letter shall go by to-night's post."

The letter was written. It offered Eva a home and protection.

In due course an answer, signed by Eva herself, came back. It thanked him for his kindness, and regretted that circumstances and "her sense of duty" prevented her from accepting the offer.

Then Dorothy felt that she had done all that in her lay, and gave the matter up.

It was about this time that Florence drew another picture. It represented Eva as Andromeda gazing hopelessly in the dim light of a ghastly dawn out across a glassy sea; and far away in the oily depths there was a ripple, and beneath the ripple a form traveling toward the chained maiden. The form had a human head and cold, gray eyes, and its features were those of Mr. Plowden.

And so, day by day, Destiny throned in space shot her flaming shuttle from darkness into darkness, and the time passed on, as the time must pass, till the inevitable end of all things is attained.

* * * * * *

Eva existed and suffered, and that was all she did. She scarcely ate or drank or slept. But still she lived; she was not brave enough to die, and the chains were riveted too tight round her tender wrists to let her flee away. Poor Nineteenth century Andromeda! No Perseus shall come to save you.

The sun rose and set in his appointed course, the flowers bloomed and died, children were born, and the allotted portion of mankind passed onward to its rest; but no godlike Perseus came flying out of the golden east.

Once more the sun rose. The dragon heaved his head above the quiet waters, and she was lost. By her own act, of her own folly and weakness, she was undone. Behold her! the wedding is over. The echoes of the loud mockery of the bells have scarcely died upon the noonday air, and in her chamber, the chamber of her free and happy maidenhood, the virgin martyr stands alone.

It is done. There lie the sickly scented flowers, there too the bride's white robe. It is done. Oh, that life were done too, that she might once press her lips to his and die!

* * * * * *

The door opens, and Florence stands before her, pale, triumphant and awe inspiring.

"I must congratulate you, my dear Eva. You went through the ceremony very well, only you looked like a statue."

"Florence, why do you come to mock me?"

"Mock you, Eva, mock you! I come to wish you joy as Mr. Plowden's wife. I hope that you will be happy."

"Happy! I shall never be happy. I detest him!"

"You detest him, and you marry him; there must be some mistake."

"There is no mistake. Oh, Ernest, my darling!"

Florence smiled.

"If Ernest is your darling, why did you not marry Ernest?"

"How could I marry him when you forced me into this?"

"Forced you! A free woman of full age cannot be forced. You married Mr. Plowden of your own will. You might have married Ernest Kershaw if you chose. He is in many ways a more desirable match than Mr. Plowden, but you did not choose."

"Florence, what do you mean? You always said it was impossible. Oh, is this all some cruel plot of yours?"

"Impossible! there is nothing impossible to those who have courage. Yes," and she turned upon her sister fiercely, "it was a plot, and you shall know it, you poor, weak fool! I loved Ernest Kershaw, and you robbed me of him, although you promised to leave him alone, and so I have revenged myself upon you. I despise you, I tell you; you are quite contemptible, and yet he could prefer you to me. Well, he has got his reward. You have deserted him when he was absent and in trouble, and you have outraged his love and your own. You have fallen very low indeed, Eva, and you will fall lower yet. I know you well. You will sink till at last you even lose the sense of your own humiliation. Don't you wonder what Ernest must think of you now? There is Mr. Plowden calling you—come, it is time for you to be going."

Eva listened aghast, and then sunk up against the wall, sobbing despairingly.

CHAPTER XXX.

WAR.

Ernest and Jeremy were seated together on the veranda of the same house at Pretoria where they had been living before they went on the elephant hunt, and which they had now purchased. Ernest had been in the garden watering a cucumber plant he was trying to develop from a very sickly seedling. Even if he only stopped a month in a place he would start a little garden; it was a habit of his. Presently he came back to the veranda, where Jeremy was as usual watching the battle of the red and black ants, which, after several years' encounter, was not yet finally decided.

"Curse that cucumber plant!" said Ernest, emphatically, "it won't grow. I tell you what it is, Jeremy, I am sick of this place; I vote we go away."

"For goodness sake, Ernest, let us have a little rest. You do rattle one about so in those confounded post carts," replied Jeremy, yawning.

"I mean, go away from south Africa altogether."

"Oh," said Jeremy, dragging his great frame into an upright position, "the deuce you do! And where do you want to go to—England?"

"England! no, I have had enough of England. South America, I think. But perhaps you want to go home. It is not fair to keep dragging you all over the world."

"My dear fellow, I like it, I assure you. I have no wish to return to Mr. Cardus' stool. For goodness' sake don't suggest such a thing; I should be wretched."

"Yes, but you ought to be doing something with your life. It is all very well for me, who am a poor devil of a wolf and stray, to go on with this sort of existence, but I don't see why you should; you should be making your way in the world."

"Wait a bit, my hearty," said Jeremy, with his slow smile; "I am going to read you a statement of our financial affairs which I drew up last night. Considering that we have been doing nothing all this time except enjoying ourselves, and that all our investments have been made out of income, which no doubt your respected uncle fancies we have dissipated, I do not think the total is bad," and Jeremy read:

"Landed property in Natal and the Transvaal, estimated value	£2,500
This house	940
Stock—wagons, etc., say	300
Race horses	—
I have left that blank."	
"Put them at £800," said Ernest, after thinking. "You know I won £500 with Lady Mary on the Cape Town plate last week."	
Jeremy went on:	
"Race horses and winnings	£1,300
Sundries—cash, balance, etc.	180
Total	£5,220

Now of this we have actually saved and invested about £2,500, the rest we have made or it has accumulated. Now, I ask you, where could we have done better than that as things go? So don't talk to me about wasting my time."

"Bravo, Jeremy! My uncle was right; after all, you ought to have been a lawyer; you are first class at figures. I congratulate you on your management of the estates."

"My system is simple," answered Jeremy. "Whenever there is any money to spare I buy something with it, then you are not likely to spend it. Then, when I have things enough—wagons, oxen, horses, what not—I sell them and buy some land; that can't run away. If you only do that sort of thing long enough you will grow rich at last."

"Sweetly simple, certainly. Well, £5,000 will go a long way toward stocking a farm or something in South America, or wherever we make up our minds to go, and then I don't think that we need draw on my uncle any more. It is hardly fair to drain him so. Old Alston will come with us, I think, and will put in another £5,000. He told me some time ago that he was getting tired of south Africa, with its Boers and blacks, in his old age, and had a fancy to make a start in some other place. I will write to him to-night. What hotel is he staying at in Maritzburg? the Royal, isn't it? And then I vote we clear in the spring."

"Right you are, my hearty."

At that moment their conversation was interrupted by the arrival of a Kaffer messenger with a telegram addressed to Ernest. He opened it and read it. "Hullo," he said, "here is something better than Mexico; listen:

"'Alston, Peter Maritzburg, to Kershaw, Pretoria: High commissioner has declared war against Cetawayo. Local cavalry urgently required for service in Zululand. Have offered to raise small corps of about seventy mounted men. Offer has been accepted. Will you accept post of second in command?—you would hold the queen's commission. If so, set about picking suitable recruits; terms, 10 shillings a day, all found. Am coming up to Pretoria by this post cart. Ask Jones if he will accept sergeant major-ship.'"

"Hurrah!" sung out Ernest, with flashing eyes. "Here is some real service at last. Of course you will accept."

"Of course," said Jeremy quietly; "but don't indulge in rejoicings yet; this is going to be a big business, unless I am mistaken."

Ernest and Jeremy did not let the grass grow under their feet. They guessed that there would soon be a great deal of recruiting for various corps, and so set to work at once to secure the best men. The stamp of man they aimed at getting was the colonial born Englishman, both because such men have more self respect, independence of character and "gumption" than the ordinary drifting sediment from the fields and seaports, and also because they were practically ready made soldiers. They could ride as well as they could walk, they were splendid rifle shots, and they had, too, from childhood been trained in the art of traveling without baggage, and very rapidly. Ernest did not find much difficulty in the task. Mr. Alston was well known, and had seen a great deal of service as a young man in the Basutu wars, and stories were still told of his nerve and pluck. He was known, too, to be a wary man, not rash or over confident, but of a determined mind; and, what is more, to possess a perfect knowledge of Zulu warfare and tactics. This went a long way with intending recruits, for the first thing a would be colonial volunteer inquires into is the character of his officers. He will not trust his life to men in whom he puts no reliance. He is willing to lose it in the way of duty, but he has a great objection to having it blundered away. Indeed, in many south African volunteer corps it is a fundamental principle that the officers should be elected by the men themselves. Once elected, however, they cannot be deposed except by competent authority.

Ernest, too, was by this time well known in the Transvaal, and universally believed in. Mr. Alston could not have chosen a better lieutenant. He was known to have pluck and dash, and to be ready witted in emergency; but it was not that only which made him acceptable to the individuals whose continued existence would very possibly depend upon his courage and discretion. Indeed, it would be difficult to say what it was; but there are some men who are by nature born leaders of their fellows, and who inspire confidence magnetically. Ernest had this great gift. At first sight he was much like any other young man, rather careless looking than otherwise in appearance, giving the observer the impression that he was thinking of something else; but old hands at native warfare, looking into his dark eyes, saw something there which told them that this young fellow, boy as he was, comparatively speaking, would not show himself wanting in the moment of emergency, either in courage or discretion. Jeremy's nomination, too, as sergeant major, a very important post in such a corps, was popular enough. People had not forgotten his victory over the Boer giant, and besides, a sergeant major with such a physique would have been a credit to any corps.

All these things helped to make recruiting an easy task, and when Alston and his son Roger, weary and bruised, stepped out of the Natal post cart four days later, it was to be met by Ernest and Jeremy with the intelligence that his telegram had been received, the appointments accepted, and thirty-five men provisionally enrolled, subject to his approval.

"My word, young gentlemen," he said, highly pleased; "you are lieutenants worth having."

CHAPTER XXXI.

MR. ALSTON'S VIEWS.

The next month was a busy one for Alston's Horse. It was drill, drill, drill, morning, noon and night. But the results soon became apparent. In three weeks from the day they got their horses, there was not a smarter, quicker corps in South Africa, and Mr. Alston and Ernest were highly complimented on the soldier like appearance of the men, and the rapidity and exactitude with which they executed all the ordinary cavalry maneuvers.

They were to march from Pretoria on the 10th of January, and expected to overtake Col. Glynn's column, with which was the general, about the 18th, by which time Mr. Alston calculated the real advance upon Zululand would begin.

On the 8th the good people of Pretoria gave the corps a farewell banquet, for most of its members were Pretoria men; and colonists are never behindhand when there is an excuse for conviviality and good fellowship.

Of course, after the banquet, Mr.—or, as he was now called, Capt.—Alston's health was drunk. But Alston was a man of few words, and had a horror of speech making. He contented himself with a few brief sentences of acknowledgment, and sat down. Then somebody proposed the health of the other commissioned and non-commissioned officers, and to this Ernest rose to respond, making a very good speech in reply. He rapidly sketched the state of political affairs of which the Zulu war was the outcome, and, without expressing any opinion on the justice or wisdom of that war, of which, to speak the truth, he had grave doubts, he went on to show, in a few well chosen, weighty words, how vital were the interests involved in its successful conclusion, now that it once had been undertaken. Finally, he concluded thus:

"I am well aware, gentlemen, that with many of those who are your guests here tonight, and my own comrades, this state of affairs and the conviction of the extreme urgency of the occasion has been the cause of their enlistment. It is impossible for me to look down these tables and see so many in our rough and ready uniform whom I have known in other walks of life as farmers, storekeepers, government clerks and what not, without realizing most clearly the extreme necessity that can have brought these peaceable citizens together on such an errand as we are bent on. Certainly it is not the ten shillings a day or the mere excitement of savage warfare that has done this" (cries of "No!"), "because most of them can well afford to despise the money, and many more have seen enough of native war and know well what few rewards and plenty of hard work fall to the lot of colonial volunteers. Then, what is it? I will venture a reply. It is that sense of patriotism which is a part and parcel of the English mind"—cheers—"and which from generation to generation has been the root of England's greatness, and, so long as the British blood remains untainted, will, from unborn generation to generation, be the mainspring of the greatness that is yet to be of those wider Englands, of which I hope this continent will become not the least." Loud cheers.

"That, gentlemen and men of Alston's Horse, is the bond which unites us together; it is the sense of a common duty to perform, of a common danger to combat, of a common patriotism to vindicate. And for that reason, because of the patriotism and duty, I feel sure that when the end of the campaign comes, whatever that end may be, no one, be he imperial officer or newspaper correspondent or Zulu foe, will be able to say that Alston's Horse shirked its work, or was mutinous, or proved a broken reed, piercing the side of those who leaned upon it." (Cheers.) "I feel sure, too, that though there may be a record of brave deeds such as become brave men, there will be none of a comrade deserted in the time of need or of failure in the moment of emergency, however terrible that emergency may be." (Cheers.) "Ay, my brethren in arms," and here Ernest's eyes