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HOW MASONRY SAVED MY LIFE.

I BECAME a Mason before I obtained my majority in Her Majesty's regiment of foot. I joined a celebrated Lodge in the metropolis, and although at first I took but a languid interest in the business, I soon became interested, and endeavored to make myself familiar with the teachings of the Order. My regiment was at this time stationed at Chatham, but I always contrived to run to town to attend Lodge, and I usually found the Masonic banquets much more enjoyable than the mess dinners. I had taken two or three degrees in the Order, and was looking forward in due time, to fill some honorable office in the Lodge, when war broke out between England and Russia. We had been expecting hostilities, and immediately upon the publication of the Queen's proclamation my regiment received orders to hold itself in readiness for active service. I had at once to give up all my dreams of Masonic advancement, and prepare myself for the stern duties of the field. My readers will doubtless remember the stirring incidents of the period of which I am writing, and I need not dwell upon the details connected with our departure for the Crimea. We were among the first troops to embark, and with our luggage, we were crowded into one of those uncomfortable troop ships of the *Urgent* type, which were the best means of transport our Admiralty then possessed. The magnificent *Jumna* and *Serapis*, with their sister consorts, were not then in existence. Some of the regiments were embarked on hired transports, and others were accommodated on board the line-of-battle ships, which formed a portion of the fleet which was to attack the forts at Sebastopol. The voyage was an unpleasant one, but we did not mind that. Our fellows were delighted at the thought of active service in the field, and no one dreamed of the hardships and sufferings which we were fated to endure. Our landing at Eupatoria, and the victory of the Alma, are facts of history too well known to need any reference here. We were in the hottest of the fire at the Alma, and our men behaved splendidly. We had many raw recruits in our ranks, but they bore themselves on this memorable day like seasoned soldiers, and gallantly upheld the traditional fame of the gallant old regiment. Some of us were sanguine enough to believe that this victory had decided the fate of the Russians, but we soon discovered that our task was only beginning. When the trenches were opened, we were among the troops ordered to the front, and from first to last we got more than our share of the fighting. We should not, however, have minded that if we had been properly cared for. We were a fortnight without tents, and when we got them, they were a poor defence against the weather; mere rags in fact, which admitted every breath of wind. I, and two or three of the officers messed and slept together in a very small tent, to the right of our position, and we soon found that the mess was a mere fiction. Hard bread and salt junk, with green coffee, were indeed served to us, but we had no comforts, and our private stores, upon which we had based our hopes, were safe on board our ship at Palaciava harbor, and we had no chance of getting them. Often have I, after spending a night on the damp ground, with no other shelter than our flimsy tent and a blanket, rising to breakfast off biscuits and cold water. The men of course were no better off than ourselves, and as winter approached, a great many of them were obliged to cut up their knapsacks into leggings to defend their limbs from the wet and mud of the trenches. What awful nights