

glanced round his body, and come out at the back. The queerest casualty I've ever seen since I've been at work in the trenches. The best of the joke is that Flinn's extremely disgusted because I haven't returned him wounded. It's not a bit that he wants to shirk duty, but he wants to know what's the use of being shot through the body if yez don't get the credit of it."

"Fall in the covering party!" interrupted the hoarse voice of the sergeant from outside the tent.

"Time's up!" said Byng. "Here, Stephens," he cried to his servant, "quick, give me my revolver! It's a pity to be asked to an evening party and not to be able to take part in the fun. Now Hugh, come along!"

A few minutes more and they were wending their way to the brigade ground where the various trench guards formed up, and were formally handed over to the colonel destined to command them.

"Who commands the —th?" exclaimed the officer in question, as he got off his horse.

"I do, sir," replied Byng, touching his cap.

"You and your fellows are for the advance to-night, and are not likely to have a dull time of it, I promise you," said the Colonel, cheerily. "The Sappers report that those rifle pits in front of our attack are getting too troublesome to be borne with any longer; we must have them to night."

"You will find us all ready, sir," replied Byng, "as soon as you give the word to go."

The Colonel gave him a good-natured nod. His own officers always said of Colonel Croker that you could be always sure when you were about to see sharp fighting. The Colonel's manner was so deuced pleasant.

There was a delay of some ten minutes or so before they moved off, waiting for the waning light to die as near away as might be; and then under the cover of the semi-darkness the several guards moved rapidly away to their allotted positions.

Having gained the advanced parapet, Byng collected his men, and spread them in lines along the most convenient part of the parapet.

"We'll just wait another half-hour," said the Colonel, "that all may be comfortably settled in both attacks, and then the sooner we have those pits the better. Your men know they'll be wanted in earnest in a few minutes?"

"Yes, sir."

"And not a shot, mind, till we've got them. We'll carry them with the bayonet. Now wait for the word."

It was a still night, and the stars twinkled brightly, although the moon was not yet up. Pulses throbbed and hearts beat quick as the little band awaited the signal, keen and anxious as greyhound in the leash. The big guns boomed at short intervals, and there was the usual spattering rifle fire going on in the French trenches, on the extreme left. Byng and his followers stood with pricked ears, and almost breathless from excitement, waiting the word to go.

Suddenly through the night air rang out the long expected command, "—th, Forward, charge!"

In an instant, before the bugle could sound the repetition of the order, Byng and his brother officers had bounded over the parapet, followed by their men, and with a loud hurrah, dashed across the open, straight for the coveted pits. So sudden and so unexpected was their rush that the enemy had only time to discharge a few hurried shots at their assailants. A minute or two more and Byng, Fleming, and their followers had tumbled pell mell into the little group of rifle pits it was their object to obtain and were engaged in a fierce hand-to-hand conflict with their tenants. A confused hurly-burly, in which oaths, bayonet thrusts, the cracking of revolvers, and an occasional death shriek were strangely blended. It did not last long.

The dash of numbers, and perhaps a slight superiority of the English, speedily told on the side of the English, and the discomfited enemy was soon seen flying back.

"Well," said Byng, complacently, as he and Fleming met at the conclusion of their little victory, "that was a very pretty scrimmage while it lasted. Well done, my lads, but don't think you won't be served with notice to quit before the night's out. This'll be a comfort to Flinn next time he is called to take a turn on the Worrzonoff. I hope he's not

managed to get shot through again this time."

"I'm none the worse, sorr, thank you," growled a voice from the background, "which is more than I can say for one or two of them as got in my way, but it'll take a bit more than this before the Worrzonoff's pleasant for sthrolling."

"Now, Jackson, what about the casualties? Our losses are only slight, are they?" said Byng, as the Colour-Sergeant from the left hand company came up to make his report.

"Not very heavy, sir, as far as I can see," replied the Sergeant, "but we've lost Captain Grogan."

"Grogan! Good —! Killed?" said Hugh.

"Yes, sir," replied the Sergeant. "A shell burst just as we cleared the parapet, and a bit of it struck the Captain and killed him before he had led us a dozen yards."

"Poor fellow," muttered Byng, "that leaves you senior subaltern now, Fleming. Go and take command of the other company. We're expected to hold this position till morning, remember, and by — I mean to do it."

Hugh moved off in obedience to orders, and at this juncture Colonel Croker made his appearance.

"Well done —th," he exclaimed, cheerily. "Now Captain Byng, you've got in and you must keep in. I've got heavy reinforcements drawn up in the fourth parallel, and shall lead them on as soon as you're attacked. Attacked you're sure to be in an hour or two, only they haven't got the range as yet." And the Colonel glanced significantly at the shells flying over their heads and bursting in all directions.

"The Sappers are coming up directly to reverse the parapet and connect the pits, and the noise of their parties will still more madden the Russe."

The Colonel walked quietly back to the fourth parallel, and for the next half-hour the shot and shell flew furiously over their heads, though like the buzzing of an irritated wasp's nest, it did but little harm. On the contrary, it served to mask the noise of the now actively engaged working party.

Then came a lull, an ominous lull, it occurred to Hugh Fleming, as he strained his eyes through the dim starlight, seeking for any sign of the approaching enemy. He had not very long to wait. Soon he could discern a dark mass creeping along the edge of the ravine, whose object evidently was to get round his left flank before attacking it. Similarly, although Fleming was not aware of it, did Byng discover a small column of the enemy attempting to steal round his right flank. Byng had very little doubt that Hugh was equally menaced on the left.

Directing his men to use their rifles, as he expected, he was immediately answered from the left. Finding themselves discovered, the Russians raised their battle slogan, only to be answered by the defiant hurrahs of the English. Then ensued some twenty minutes of as stubborn fighting as it is possible to witness. True to his promise the Colonel had been prompt with his reinforcements, or else the —th must have been swept out of the position they had won. Twice were the Russians hurled back, from their desperate assault, but their gallant leader succeeded in rallying them for even a third attempt.

But the steel had been taken out of them, and they came on in a very half-hearted way to what they had done on the two previous occasions. Though victorious, the —th had been pretty roughly handled, in this last struggle, and not only were many of them stretched lifeless in the trench, but the stretchers had a time in conveying the wounded to the rear. Among them were two of Hugh's brother subalterns, one of whom was carried off with a smashed arm, and the other a bullet through his thigh, which, when attended to, proved to disqualify him for military service for ever. The Colonel reinforced Byng's party to the extent the position would hold. Once more he impressed upon him that he must hold the position *côte que côte*, and that he might thoroughly depend upon reinforcements led by himself, to come to his assistance the minute he was seen to be attacked.

"Till the moon rises," said the chief, "you'll have a ticklish time of it, but as soon as it's light enough, the batteries will make it rather hot for the Russians, should they venture to cross that open ground." There was little need to tell the trench sentries to keep watch that night. Little more than an hour elapsed before the enemy once

more sallied forth from their lines, and made another most determined attack. If the conflict was not so long as the previous one, it was quite as obstinate, and in the course of it, Colonel Croker, while personally leading the reinforcements, fell literally riddled with bullets, while another subaltern of the hard beset —th, was carried away very badly wounded. Twice more at short intervals did the Russians again return to the attack, and in the last of these a bullet stretched Tom Byng, to all appearance, lifeless on the ground, and the struggle ended; one of the few remaining sergeants reported to Hugh Fleming that two-thirds of the men were down, and that he, Mr. Fleming, was the sole officer left of the half-dozen of the regiment that had marched down from camp.

Black with powder, with clothes torn to ribbons, and eyes bloodshot with the thirst to slay, they were a fierce and savage looking band, upon whom the moon now looked down. It was not likely, Fleming thought now, that any further attack would be made upon them, but for all that he knew he had to keep vigilant watch until relieved. He was in sole charge of the shattered remnant of the —th. Poor Tom Byng; he never thought of his falling. And then he thought savagely of Miss Smerdon's sarcastic speech.

"The bill," he muttered angrily, "the bill ought to satisfy her. Five down out of six is pretty stiff. And we have not quite done with it yet. They will never be able to say that the —th is not a fighting regiment after this. They must put some account of such a scrimmage as this in the papers." And here suddenly through the trench ran a whisper of, "here they come again."

In his anxiety to ascertain what was doing, Hugh Fleming sprang upon the slight parapet, an act which was immediately greeted by a report of two or three rifles, the bullets of which sang past unpleasantly close to his ears. He jumped back again into the trench, but not before he had convinced himself that so far the alarm was baseless. Some few Russian sharpshooters had crept along the edge of the ravine with a view of harassing the occupants of their late position, but there were apparently no supports behind them.

The moon died gradually away before the first streaks of dawn, and no sooner was the light sufficient than the batteries on both sides engaged in a savage snarl over the disputed bone of last night. The Russians knew well that every hour their lost position remained in the hands of their assailants so much the more difficult would it be to recover. It was clear it could only be retaken by daylight at a great sacrifice. They must wait for the next night, and in the meantime, as Mr. Finn said, "They were showing a deal of nasty temper."

It was weary work after the prolonged excitement of the night, waiting through the early morning hours for the reliefs to come down; but they came at last, and sadly Hugh Fleming commenced to lead his worn and shattered band back to camp. It was impossible to regain the right attack without exposing the party to a certain amount of fire from the enemy's guns, and the Russians were not the men to overlook their opportunity. However, Fleming was fortunate enough to accomplish this without further casualties and finally reached camp, where he found the remainder of the regiment anxiously awaiting their coming, and full of pride at the way they had taken and held the Quarries.

On the right, our gallant Allies had undergone similar experiences, but the splendid rush with which they had taken the Mamelon just before sunset, recalling the dash of a pack of hounds into cover, had not been sustained. Carried away by their impetuosity the victorious French chased their beaten foes to the very glacis of the Malakoff, but here they encountered the Russian reserves and were in their turn not only hunted back to the Mamelon, but through it, and so lost the work they had so gallantly won. General Bosquet, who was in charge of the attack, was, however, not quite the man to put up with such a failure as this. He hurled two brigades at once against the recaptured Mamelon, and after a brief but sanguinary struggle the French regained possession of the Lunette, though, take it all in all, at a fearful sacrifice of life.

(To be continued.)