

engaged. Forward all!" So thinks Colonel Soussloff, little expecting, what becomes fitly clear a little later, that these guns are but signals of alarm, that the infantry supports are not even on the march yet, and what he is actually doing is rushing headlong, with ninety six men, against fifteen hundred! Not till many weary hours are past, not till the hardest fight has been fought which the peaks of the Caucasus have looked down upon, will the promised succor arrive; and when it does come, it will come to late for many of us. Forward all!

Meanwhile the Circassians, encumbered with their booty, are slowly retiring toward the mountains, confident in their safety from pursuit. And now, as the sun peers above the horizon, the outermost spurs of the Caucasus rise before them, stark and grim against the lustrous sky; while upon the great plain behind, as far as the eye can reach, there is no living thing in sight. But, as the proverb says, "the Circassian's ear hears grass sprout and wool grow;" and the hindmost of the marauders can already distinguish a dull rumble far in the rear, not to be confounded with the trampling of their own horse hoofs. Louder and nearer comes the sound, and at length, in the far distance, rises a dark spot, with an ominous glitter of bright sparks running through it, shooting towards them swift and unswerving. One of the rearward Circassians spurs his horse up a little mould to the right, and from thence reconnoitres the approaching enemy.

"They are but a handful!" he shouts scornfully, shaking his hand as if flinging away a pinch of dust. "No *soina* (squadron) of Cossacks, and no support in sight!"

"Good," growls a stalwart khan, laughing grimly, as he loosens his sabre in its sheath. "If it please Allah, these dogs shall get their due. Face about, my children, and let us swallow up unbelievers!"

And, spreading out into a far extending line, the whole fifteen hundred sweep down at once upon the handful of pursuers;

At a glance Colonel Soussloff takes in the whole situation. No supports coming; no chance of escape with these spent horses, the enemy upon us, fifteen to one—there is nothing left but to die hard and dearly. Quick as lightning the Cossacks dismount, range their horses in a circle, with the bridles knotted together, and, leveling their pieces over this living rampart, stand grimly at bay.

"Fire!" roars the colonel, as the charging line comes rolling upon them like a wave, and the whole volley rings out like one shot.

When the smoke clears away, many a stalwart man lies rolling on the earth outside that circle of fire; but the trap has fairly closed at last. All around the ring is a sea of fierce faces, and horses' heads, and gleaming sabres, and leveled carbines. And now the battle begins in earnest—fifteen against one. All the air is filled with hot, sulphury smoke, and the roll of musketry from either side is like one continued peal of thunder; while patter, patter, come the bullets, thick as hail, hissing through the grass, or plunging with a dull thud into the body of horse or man. Ever and anon, as the stifling cloud lifts itself for a moment, the doomed man within the ring see the face of some comrade suddenly stiffen in death or writhe with mortal agony as he falls helplessly to the earth. Load and fire, load and fire, regularly as if on parade. Outside the

circle are fierce yells and cries, groans of pain, shouts of triumph; within, neither shout nor groan, but the dead, grim, silence of men who know how to die. The living wall begins to yield, as horses after horse falls dead; but the devoted band pile the slain men upon beasts, and over the corpses of their comrades, as if from behind a parapet. Load and fire, load and fire again! How long has this lasted? Five minutes? an hour? days? There is no count of time in such work as this. And how long can it last? Already nine of the Cossacks lie dead; twenty more are severely wounded and have torn their shirts to staunch the blood that flows from them. Ammunition is beginning to run short. But the colonel, with his own hand, empties the pouches of the dead, distributes their cartridges to the survivors, and the battle begins anew.

And now the Circassians, furious at being withstood so long, come close up to the impenetrable circle, and aim beneath the horses' bodies at the exposed limbs of the defender; but their glittering accoutrements make them a fair mark for the Cossacks, who mow them down again and again as they come on. At a little distance, the whole face of the prairie around the fatal circle is like a great flower-garden, with the gay dresses of the slaughtered enemy; while within the ring the earth is black with fallen Cossacks. At this close range every shot tells; and the three Russian officers, as the leading agents of this desperate resistance are specially marked for destruction. Colonel Soussloff, firing his last pistol shot among his swarming assailants, hears a sharp cry beside him, and turns just in time to catch in his arms young Fediouskin, whose bright face is white and shrunken with pain.

"Are you hurt, my boy?" asked the stout colonel, tenderly.

"My thigh's broken," answered the subaltern, biting his lips to keep down a rising groan.

"For God's sake, then," whispers the colonel, "catch hold of something—cling to my shoulder, if you like; but don't fall, whatever you do! If the men see you go down, they'll lose heart at once. It all depends upon us officers now!"

"Never fear!" replied the gallant boy, writhing his blue lips into a smile; "I'll keep my feet as long as I'm wanted."

And, clutching the name of his horse; he remains up right; while the colonel, flinging his now useless pistols at the advancing enemy, draws his sword for the hand-to-hand struggle.

But all this while, what is doing at Kourinski? The infantry supports were ready long ago, but the column has unluckily taken the wrong direction at starting, and is still pursuing it, when the uproar of the battle breaking like a thunderstorm upon the dead stillness of early morning, shows where the real work lies. In an instant the order is given to wheel to the left, and Grenadiers hasten at their utmost speed toward the scene of action, guided by the din of sixteen hundred carbines all firing at once.

But, hasten as they may, the chances are sorely against their arriving in time; for the besieged handful is already at its last grasp. The Circassians, frantic at the long resistance and the fearful slaughter which it has wrought, have flung themselves pell mell upon the impregnable circle, as if to overwhelm it by sheer weight of numbers. All round the ring it is one welter of slashing sabres and pounding gunstocks, blood spurt-

ing on every side like the jet of a syringe, and death coming blindly no one knows how. Cossacks throttle Circassians, Circassians fasten their teeth upon Cossacks; even the wounded and dying grapple on the ground, and are found, after the battle is over dead in each other's gripe. Colonel Soussloff, with one foot on the body of his horse, hews right and left, like a woodman felling timber; Sergeant Fioulkoff, beside him, cuts off at one blow the hand and arm of a Circassian, as one would slice cucumber; Major Kampkoff, having broken his sword, snatches up a carbine, and pounds away with the butt end, as if thrashing corn. But on comes the enemy, like waves of the sea. Man on man fall the Cossacks, fighting to the last. A moment more, and the Circassians are within the circle; and then—

Suddenly there comes a light upon the colonel's grim face, never seen there before or after. He waves his hand toward the west, and his voice rises above all the infernal din—"Courage, lads! here is help coming at last!"

It is even so. Far in the distance appear a troop of horsemen at full gallop—the Cossacks who were left behind on the road hastening to join in the fray. At the same moment a distant cheer is heard in the opposite direction, and the sun flashing upon a long row of points—the bayonets of Mouldell's infantry, coming swiftly to the rescue. Then rises on high a shout of triumph from the baffled enemy. Nearer and nearer come the horsemen; plainier and plainier appears the dark column of infantry. The Circassians fire one last volley, and, abandoning their booty, vanish among the hills like a flight of vultures.

And now, the great work being done, wounded and unwounded alike sink exhausted among the bodies of the dead; and the gallant Fediouskin, who has remained erect for nearly an hour with his thigh broken, gives way at last. Mouldell's Grenadiers make trestles of the Circassian lances, and bear back the wounded to Kourinski. Five of them died on the following morning, many a few days later; but all who survive are marked for reward. The three officers are promoted, and a substantial largess is distributed among the men. Colonel Soussloff himself receives the Cross of St. George, (the highest of Russian military decorations,) and survives many years to express his wonder at the admiration lavished upon "such a simple thing as that which he had done."

The *Army and Navy Gazette* says: A good story was going the round of the camp at Cannock Chase the other day, with reference to the Dumfries Militia, or the Scottish Borderers, as they delight to call themselves. During last Friday's march out some of the regiments were an unusually long time in cooking their dinners. This did not fail to attract the notice of the chief, who spoke to the officer in command of the engineers, whose cooks were preparing dinner on a new system. The chief then roared up to Mr. Moriarty, the quartermaster of the Borderers, and observing that there was no sign of cooking going on, inquired why it was that so great a delay had taken place. "I ken they have had their dinner, sir," replied the quartermaster. "Had it," exclaimed the general, "why, what do you mean? There are the engineers close by, who have not had theirs yet. How is it you have been so quick over it?" "Weel, sir," replied the Scotchman, dryly, "do you see our men don't cook on scientific principles."