



THE BOMBARDMENT OF ALEXANDRIA.—A KRUPP FIELD-GUN ON THE RAMPARTS.

HOPE DEFERRED.

BY NED. P. MAH.

Someone has remarked that, had reporting at that day reached the proficiency it has since attained we should have found one other beatitude added to those in the sermon on the Mount, viz:

"Blessed are they who never expect, for they shall never be disappointed."

Man is a sanguine creature: a being in whom it is almost impossible to destroy hope, of which some glimmer will usually survive under the utmost persecution of adverse destiny until his very latest breath. And if, in any case, hope does not survive, then a mill-stone and the sea would be the kindest fate.

But what volumes might be compiled—what heartrending volumes—of instances of hope de-

ferred; of men who, having toiled up the ladder slowly and painfully, step by step, have reached the topmost round; have put out their hand to grasp the prize, and are looking forward to a future of happy rest and well-earned ease, only to find their efforts shattered at one fell swoop; and then, with youth no longer theirs, with nerves unstrung and energies impaired, have to begin anew. In America, where three or four fortunes are often made in a lifetime, such things lose, by very frequency, their tragic force.

Yet in a man's battles with fate there is at least something tangible and practical: the foe with which he grapples is a reality. But what shall we say of women's hopes deferred, illusions dispelled, idols shattered? There are, of course, tales which are only too true of man's infidelity and treachery, where the victim has refused to believe his guilt, until hope deferred has worn out the frail frame and fed like a vampire on the

blood of the faithful heart. How many, too, are the histories of alienated affection, where the wife will hope against hope to win back the love which she will not ever believe she has entirely lost. And who shall tell that woman's unwearying patience who listens, night after night, for the husband's step through the long evening hours! Although, perhaps, experienced wives are too prone to nurse delays into grievances and to make capital out of them.

For, it is only fair to say, that every woman who raises an outcry about her husband's tardiness in coming home—always provided, of course, that the first bliss and novelty of married life is over—is just as apt to make a grievance of having to endure his society on a bank holiday, or when he is confined to the house by some slight indisposition; as extracts from her letters to female friends would abundantly testify. "To-morrow," Angelina will write, "is

a bank holiday, and that husband of mine will be home all day. Both he and I consider these holidays a nuisance. He, because it is a day lost. I, because I have to endure his society and amuse him. What a nuisance a man is round the house in the daytime anyway. Doesn't your experience say so?" Or, another line, "Edwin is at home to-day with a bilious headache; a most uninteresting invalid."

But women's hopes are too often founded on dreamy, visionary, unstable phantoms. How many Marianas seclude themselves in a moated grange of unrequited love, morbidly nursing their despair instead of womanfully striving to conquer a weakness and rule an undisciplined heart! How many pine for a romantic ideal, a Prince Charming, an angel of light, a being not fit for this work-a-day world—and reject with scorn, until it is too late, their chance of happiness!