

have despised it, she would never, never, never—and then this inconsistent young lady would burst into a flood of tears, and only wish she could write a long letter to him.

"If he had only given me some excuse before he left," she moaned, "but I suppose even if he was seriously wounded it would be an awful thing for me to write to him. As for Nell, I could box her ears, I could, for gushing to me about her love when she knows I'm so unhappy."

Now this was exactly what Miss Lynden did not know. Her own love affair had probably prevented her noticing her friend's weakness, though women seldom succeed in keeping each other in the dark

She could not understand it—Frances seemed to have changed completely. She was witty and sarcastic about things generally; she laughed at Nell about her "spoonishness"; told her she could not hope to keep her soldier wrapped in cotton wool when shot and shells were flying about; and that she needn't be afraid, it was a peaceful regiment, and all would be over before they got there. Angry though they made her, Nell felt that there was a hardness and bitterness in Frances's letters that had no genuine ring in it; and then, much to her amazement, Miss Smerdon's letters suddenly completely altered in tone, and her enquiries after the —th became both courteous and pressing.

coat. Barley was plentiful, and they no longer stood shivering at their picket pegs, with their quarters turned to the cold blasts of the Steppes. Enterprising settlers erected stores on the way to the front, and sweet champagne, dubious brandy, and all descriptions of tinned delicacies became no longer scarce, and were to be had on comparatively reasonable terms.

A few days after the taking of the Quarries a group of officers might have been seen lounging on the Woronzoff-road just at the point where three or four tracks—it would have been absurd to describe them as anything more—branched off the main road in various directions across the plateau,



"The paper dropped from her hand."—(See next page.)

on such points. Men as a rule are slow to recognise a leaning in their favour. It might be that, but, whether from policy or a mistaken estimate of his chances, Tom Byng sailed for the East without uttering a word to Frances Smerdon that could be construed into anything more than admiration. But what did puzzle Miss Lynden much was the change that had come over her friend. It was the one and that Frances should not sympathise and rejoice with her in the flood-tide of her first love grieved the girl sorely. She so craved for a woman's sympathy in her passionate dream—for someone to talk with of her hopes, of her fears,—and women had too many of those latter to battle with, in love born in such troublous times.

As we know, whether the man she loves is in danger, or whether he is merely passing a lively winter in a pleasant place, makes a good deal of difference in the expression of a woman's sentiments under Miss Smerdon's peculiar circumstances.

The camp was rich in "shaves" that bright spring weather. Men seemed to have shaken off the torpidity of the winter, both mentally and bodily, and, wondrous were the rumours of what the French were doing, and we were going to do, and even what the Russians might be expected to do. Men began to move about amongst the lines, and the half-starved garrows of ponies, that had passed the winter in painfully toiling with such luxuries as their masters could lay hold of between Balaklava and the front, waxed fat in the ribs and sleek in the

sufficiently confusing, except to the initiated. Take the one to the right for instance, and an hour or two's easy riding would bring you amongst the famous caves of Inkermann, and eventuate in your certainly getting inside Sebastopol before morning, as a prisoner. The laughing knot of officers were of all branches of the service, but there were a good many of the —th among them. A fresh regiment had arrived at Balaklava that morning and was to march up to the front that afternoon.

Now the regiment in question was what is termed a sister corps of the —th, which being interpreted means that the two corps had been quartered together, or as the soldiers term it "lain together" in several places, and that the officers and men had cordially fraternised and knew each other well.