

YOUNG SOLDIERS IN ACTION.

BY GENERAL VISCOUNT WOLSELEY.

There is often much confusion in the use of the expressions "veteran" and "young soldier." The former is very commonly used as a synonym for an old man, and the latter to convey the idea of the imperfectly trained recruit, not yet strong enough to bear the fatigues of war. This is a misuse of those two military terms.

The veteran is a soldier of from, possibly, twenty-five to about thirty years of age, inured to all the hardships and dangers of war, but still in the fullest vigor of manhood. When military men say they prefer the young soldier, they mean the fully developed young man of from twenty-one to, say, twenty-six years of age, who although with little or no war experience, is perfectly trained and disciplined.

The word veteran, as it is commonly used, brings before the mind pictures of hoary old fellows fighting to the death in defence of a standard, or of some wounded comrade surrounded by crowds of ferocious enemies. The principal figure in those charming battle pictures of Horace Vernet is generally a warrior with a bronzed face and a grizzled head. The portly white moustache of the chasseur a cheval represented in the act of passing his sword through the body of a somewhat theatrically equipped Kabyle is meant to indicate that he is a veteran.

The apparent intention is, to convey the idea that he is one to whom such a mode of procedure has been a matter of every day life during a long period of military service. Had I been the painter, my experience of war would have caused me to represent this fiery sabreur as a very young man.

Miss Thompson,—now Lady Butler,—is one of the very few artists who have ventured to give a very youthful appearance to the foremost figures in her battle pictures. In her exciting picture of "Quatre Bras," the group forming the corner of the infantry square in the nearest foreground, is composed of beardless youths.

In their faces she has skillfully recorded the fact that the men who in that action drove back the old cavalry of the empire, were very young soldiers. The veterans who then charged home with reckless devotion to that greatest and most wicked of men, whom they idolized, were repulsed by striplings. They are shown in the picture with a dazed look of astonishment on their faces as they cheer, more from excitement, than any well-understood feeling of triumph.

The officer well accustomed to the sharp "ping" of the passing bullets, and to the wild clash of the near bursting shrapnel shell, watches with keen interest the conduct of those about him who listen for the first time to this death concert. Its effect upon the uninitiated varies with the character of the man.

It is more the buzzing of the mosquito and the tension of nerves, occasioned by the anticipation of expected attack, than his actual bite itself, that hinders sleep. So in battle, it is more the wild whiz of the bullet as it tears by you with lightning speed, always apparently close to your very ear, that startles and terrifies more than the sight of men falling dead or wounded around you.

I have come to this conclusion from watching the unmoved calmness of the deaf man when under fire. The swift, near-flying bullet is unheeded because unheard; it imparts no inclination to "bob" or "duck" to avoid its blow, because its proximity is unknown. The awe of sudden death, the dread of horrible wounds, only reach the deaf man's understanding through the eye, while those not so afflicted receive the impression through the sense of hearing as well as of sight.

The first time under fire is a memorable event in every young soldier's life. Some long for it as a new experience, all are curious to ascertain how it will affect them.

A young comrade once described to me very fully what his feelings were in his first action.

The day had been one of rather feeble skirmishes, while the enemy kept falling back before us to a strong position he had prepared behind a broad, unfordable river, before which we halted towards evening.

The first man killed near my young friend gave him a little shock; it was a nasty sight, but did not strike him as much more horrible than the noise made by the butcher's pole-axe the first time he had seen a bullock slaughtered for food. This surprised him beyond measure, for he thought he had a very tender heart; he did not appreciate, however, the force of the excitement which fighting for the first time with his life in his hand arouses even in the man who does not know what nerves are.

To-morrow it would be the turn of another regiment to be in front, and the operations might be ended without having an opportunity of testing his nerve. He felt that nothing could make him run away, but could it be possible that he was by nature a coward?

Soon after the force had halted for the night the opportunity he longed for presented itself, and he sneaked away from his comrades unobserved to avail himself of it. As soon as the carts carrying the bridge equipment came up, the engineer began to construct rafts for use next morning. The enemy soon found this out, and opened a

"Never mind, sir, don't be afraid, you'll soon become accustomed to it."

The young officer, furious, pointed to the passing bullocks, and I am afraid used strong language to little purpose. He rejoined the bivouac abashed, possibly a wiser but certainly a more irritable man than he had quitted it. For days he brooded over the horrible thought that any private soldier should conceive he feared anybody or anything. Nor was it until about a fortnight afterwards when he took part in two storming parties in one day, that he again felt quite satisfied with himself, or could forgive the old soldier, whose kindly meant words made him wince as if tortured by the thumb-screw.

When, shortly afterwards, as I sat beside him I saw his natural strength and his youth fight as it were with death for his wounded body, he told me that of all the earthly delights he could imagine, all seemed tame in comparison with the ecstasy of charging at the head of a storming party.

One of the very pluckiest private soldiers I ever knew, was my young servant in the Crimea. The day before Sebastopol fell, he came to my bedside in the hospital, where I was at the time, to ask leave to rejoin his battalion. He had heard it was to be one of the two to lead the assault, and he said he could never in after life look any soldier in the face if he stayed in the rear. My heart went out to him as I told him to do as he wished.

responsibility of the simple sentinel. Peace be to his ashes. If such heroes,—the nobility of nature,—have some splendid heaven of their own, he will there hold high rank, for no braver private soldier ever wore the queen's uniform.

To illustrate the conduct of young men in action, I venture to pursue for a little longer the events which occurred after Andrews' fall.

On that day every sort and condition of soldier fought as though he had been born an English gentleman. All knew well for what they were fighting; that within Lucknow a handful of gallant comrades, hard pressed for food, and by crowds of relentless enemies, were struggling with might and main to protect the lives of the many British families besieged there.

Sir Colin Campbell intended the companies that had stormed the "Mess House" to remain there for further orders. But the men were firmly impressed with the idea that this arrangement was made to favor a battalion of Highlanders that followed us. It was believed he desired his own countrymen to have the honor of actually opening our communication with the garrison inside.

The jealousy of Highland regiments was great whenever old Colin Campbell himself commanded, but at Lucknow the young soldiers who took the "Mess House" were determined, come what may, that no Highlanders should that day get in front of them. Hence much of the haste, and of the determined energy,—brooking no delay and bearing down all obstacles,—that was displayed by our leading companies as, refusing to stop, they pushed forward, resolved to be the first to join hands with their besieged comrades.

A rush was made for the great gate of the palace that seemed to separate us from our object.

Horror of horrors! it was built up with a great brick wall, and from the loopholes the enemy greeted us with a volley of musketry.

What was to be done? To get over a wall fifteen to eighteen feet high was impossible. We had no ladders, nor had we any powder bags to blow it down. To remain in front of the gate was to be shot from within. Fortunately there was no ditch, so we could reach the loopholes.

Who were to hold them? The sepoys inside or the British soldiers outside? We decided the question in our own favor, but many fell before that decision was given effect to.

A rattling fire was kept up through the loopholes to clear the gateway inside while our men worked like demons to break a hole through the wall. The captain in command went forward to search for an entrance he had been told of, but soon returned having found it also built up. Every loophole double manned, and a heavy fire kept up through them, whilst crowbar and pickaxe were plied by the strongest to widen the hole already made through the wall.

My friend said that what first attracted his notice as he hurried up, were the soles of his young subaltern's boots as he struggled through the hole head foremost. "That," said he, "was the most daring act I have ever seen man do."

The enemy swarmed inside, and it has always been inexplicable to me, how it was this young soldier did not have his head cut off the moment he pushed it inside that wall.

The hole was soon wide enough for others to follow, and so the palace and its spacious courtyards were quickly cleared of the enemy, a certain number of whom escaped by swimming the river under heavy fire. It was not long before we joined hands with our besieged comrades who made a sortie to meet us. Whilst a desultory fighting was maintained round the position, the memorable meeting between the two generals, Lord Clyde and Sir Henry Havelock, took place in the count-yard of the palace that was taken as I have endeavored to describe.—*Youth's Companion*.



THROUGH THE BREACH.

brisk fire upon the spot. There my young friend went to test the fibre of his nerve, and to realize the sensation of being shot at.

He rejoined his comrades after a short absence, furious with himself and with the soldiers he had found there. This was the cause. He had established himself in the zone of the enemy's fire, and was so absorbed in his own sensations whilst he thus, as it were, felt his own pulse that he failed to notice some rocket tubes which the artillery brought into position close to where he stood. His mind was engrossed with stories he had heard and read of what men feel under similar circumstances, when he was suddenly roused from his self-examination in a very undignified fashion.

Whiz! bang! went a rocket rushing from its tube with all that horrible spluttering, fizzing, hissing noise which is one of its special and peculiar terrors. Its long, screeching roar spread panic amongst a large number of wagon bullocks standing close by, who with heads down and tails up charged straight down for where my friend stood.

He was just able to escape by rushing behind some waggons where there happened to be a guard, mostly composed of old soldiers. One of these bronzed and decorated warriors seeing a stripling bolt in amongst them, and ignorant of the cause, said in a comforting, fatherly tone.

Two years afterwards, we were again hard at work in the field, fighting our way into Lucknow against great odds. Whenever there was any difficult or dangerous duty to be performed, young Andrews,—his name deserves to be recorded,—was always the first to spring forward. The example he set of daring courage was invaluable in a company composed of very young soldiers. In all trying moments, he was close behind his captain.

In the final assault that opened out communication with our besieged garrison, he was very severely wounded. Anxious to show the way to some men coming up with tools to break into the palace, he ran into a street swept by canister and by musketry fire.

He was at once shot down, and whilst in the arms of an officer who was taking him under cover, a second bullet, fired from a neighboring loophole, went through poor Andrews' body.

He lived for many years, always in more or less pain from this last wound, which never healed completely, and which eventually killed him. He was a Cockney, with the most amiable disposition.

His was a lion's heart, and he possessed in a curious degree all the fighting instincts of the bull-dog. He was many times offered promotion, but, like many I have known, he preferred the freedom and irre-