

advantage of your opportunities, and bless you, etc." And here Byng extended his hands after the manner of the conventional stage father.

The evening of the ball arrived. It really had aroused great enthusiasm. Romantic young ladies declared it put them in mind of the Duchess of Richmond's famous ball at Brussels the night before Waterloo, looked up "Childe Harold," and quoted—

"There was mounting in hot haste."

But these were the exception. Generally the younger portion of the community looked forward to a capital dance, and the elder to a capital supper. Miss Smerdon and Nellie were of course there under the charge of Mrs. Montague, and Miss Smerdon was most thoroughly mistress of the situation. Not only had Mrs. Montague a large

all the same. I'll admit that in a vulgar sense, you are discounting your laurels before you've won them, but you will have your opportunity before long, and English women have no doubt about English soldiers winning the bays when the chance comes."

"Very prettily put, Miss Lynden, but you may do any amount of hard fighting without distinguishing yourself."

"You're a little selfish, Mr. Fleming," said the young lady, smiling. "As the individual, yes; as a regiment, no; and you soldiers are very proud of the corps to which you belong, are you not?"

"Yes, there are two things a man seldom loses his sympathy for, his old school, and his old regiment. While he's in it, it's the one regiment."

"Yes, I've seen enough of your military men to know that."

with only herself to depend upon. Indeed Frances Smerdon was the only intimate friend of her own sex she had ever made; and there was one side of Frances' character she was incapable of understanding, and that was the imaginative side of her disposition. People of this very sanguine temperament can never control themselves, nor even in old age utterly abandon the habit. They build their castles in the air on the largest scale and upon the slenderest foundations, and constantly as these Chateaux d'Espagne come tumbling about their ears they are neither discouraged nor disconcerted.

"Well, Miss Lynden," said Fleming, as, their valse finished, he took his charge back to her chaperon, "I hope your prophecy may prove true—that we shall have the opportunity of winning our laurels before the year's out, and also that in-



"He whirled her off to the spiriting strains of 'The Sturm March.'"

acquaintance, but Frances was well known and popular with the officers of the —th. The two girls were speedily in great request, and it was not long before Miss Smerdon brought up Hugh Fleming to be introduced to her friend.

"Capital ball, Miss Lynden," said Fleming, as he led her away to join the dancers, "but Manchester strikes me as having gone mad. The whole thing seems so utterly unreal. I can't help feeling that I am the shallowest of imposters."

"I don't understand you," said the girl. "What I mean is this," said Fleming, "Manchester is feting us, dining us, giving us this ball, all just as if we'd done something. Not only we haven't, not only we never may, but we may never even have the chance. I always feel that I am dining out under false pretences."

"Very proper of you to say so, but you're wrong

"One of our weaknesses," laughed Fleming, as he put his arm round her waist, and whirled her off to the spiriting strains of the "Sturm March."

Nell Lynden was looking extremely well that evening. If not a pretty girl, she was, at all events, a decidedly attractive one, as with dark chestnut hair, bright hazel eyes, good teeth, and a neat figure, she could not well help being

She was not accomplished, but there were some two or three things that Nell could do to perfection. Her waltzing was the poetry of motion. She had not much voice, but to hear her warble an old English ballad in those low contralto tones of hers would stir most men's pulses. She was a very self-reliant girl, partly by nature, but still more so by her bringing up. She had never met with ill-treatment or unkindness, but for all that she had always regarded herself as a friendless little Arab,

dividually I shall be quick enough to snatch at mine when the chance comes."

"You've got one grand quality for a soldier, Mr. Fleming," replied the girl, laughing,—"dogged pertinacity. You would never have won that walking match if you hadn't. It would be hard to convince you that you were beaten, about anything."

"I don't like giving in," replied Hugh.

"Neither do I," returned the girl. "We are both what our friends, Mr. Fleming, call obstinate."

That the war should be the ruling topic of conversation was inevitable. A considerable part of the English people still found it difficult to believe that we really were at war—destined to remain in that belief, too, for some months to come. The men of that time knew from their fathers how England had rung with the news of victories, when the century was young, and fully expected news