P was a military ball, the farowell ball of the officers of the ahir Buffs, previous to their start-ing for the Soudan. The room was, of course, splemaily decorated; the scarlet uniforms contrasted bravely with the less showy eiths and mustins.

shire Bufis were deservedly popular with men and women alike.

Still in this brightly lighted bullmom there orcept somehow a vague, mysterlous feeling of depression, for it was the farewell' so ever a nesty word to say. Not that the men seemed at all put out by the prospect before them. Not at all. The order to preserve for service in Egypt had been greeted with uproarious cheers and many jokes. Young subalterus indulged forthwith in visious of companies and medals and Victoria crosses. Grim old sergeauts grew suddenly pleasant and safable; the recruits cleaned and recleaned their rifles till the long barrols glittered like expents, and every bayonet in the regiment was ground as sharp as a zacor. Many tales of past and many promises of future prowess went the rounds of the mess-rooms and cantens. No; the ——whire Buffs were clearly enchanted at the prospect.

But under the gayety of the scene there ran an undefined but unmistakable current of something very much akin to anxiety. Here the eyes of a sister followed the form of an only brother round the room—other girls' brothers had but little charm for her tonight! This was the "facewell" ball of her brother. Farewell! Penage—who could say? And a tiny lace handkerchief was hastily daubed over the top of the nose, a little to either side, and the fair face tried plackily to smile once more. There in the corner sat an old while-haired ady. Her dancing days had long since passed by—except for the "Sir Roger," which she could not help remembering that it gould have been been could not help remembering that the swas here to-night because her son had brought her and it was his "farewell" ball. And to night of all ingible encould not help remembering that in Sit down the substillation of those farce black creatures whose fanaticism made them welcome death, and whose one ides of doing "God-service" was to put an infide to death. And unknown almost to hersell, as elient prayer escaped her that Heaven would especially guard and protect her boy—the others did not matter

ity, as became the lord and master of a new possession. The New Possession sat down, as she was lold to. Two chairs had unaction that the low possession as the was lold to. Two chairs had unaction the glare of the Chinese lanterns. Billy wrapped her cloak round the white shoulders, a duty that occupied him for nearly five minutes. "What jolly time we've had, dear, haven's we? even if it is to be our last aven. I together—for a month or two," he added, quickly.
"Yes, I—I have enjoyed it immensely," and the smaller hand sought the protection of the larger. "Only

I—"

"Ob, don't be down over it, Vi. I
told you not to, you know, in my
letter. It's silly. I shall simply go
away for a time and some back a fullblown captain. Everybody dose. And

What a rogue Billy could look when

"Ah, but, dear old boy, men nover know what women feel! With you it will be diffrent; you will always have something to do—camp li'e, the excitement and all that. I must sit at home waiting—reading the papers—and thinking."

"I won't firt, honor bright," interrupted Billy, very carnestly. And if ever a man has said these words sincerely, Billy did at that time.

"N—no. I'm not afraid of that. I might forgive even that—if you told me all about it. All, mind. Ah, but, Will, dear, men do sometimes forget, don't they "a'd be monthe will have wearly." "Never!" said Billy, emphatically.

on's they?"
"Nert" said Billy, emphatically,
"And the months will leas wearily
by, and I shall dream—and dream—
and I know those dreams will be nightcares. A twelve months' nightmare—think of it I — with nothing but
diotic garden parties and tos fights
and things, where I shall have to appear gay to all the nincompeops who
come bothering me with their silly
compliments—"
Billy wiscoled measily.

compliments—"
Billy wriggled uneasily.
"Huh! I don't quite see why you have to appear gay, you know."
"Well. I can't go moping, can I?
Oh, don't—you are crushing my flow-

Borry," said the unrepentant Wil-

"Borry," said the unrepentant Wil-liam.
She continued in a different voice:
"And then—suppose any-thing happened out there?"
"Why, what can happen, you little goose?"

"Oh, n—nothing. But if it did! Oh, I tell you, Will, I believe I should die." The coft voice was very plead-ing now "Remember, Will, your

die. "Remember, Will, joning now." Remember, Will, joning first duty is to take care of yourself and to come back. For my sake.

ing now "Remember, Will, your first duty is to take care of yourself and to come back. For my sake. Your duty."

"Rather. Of course I will. Oh, do't—don't cry, Vi. It makes me feel such a — brute. Come. After all it's only a short separation, and every fellow in the regiment is separating from some one or another—every blessed one."

The handkerchief dropped from the eyes it had been vainly pretending to cover. There was a pause. Billy might have called it an "interval for refreshment." But the bire eyes would not behave themselves as if they belonged to a soldier's bride. They refused to dry.

"Yes?"

They refused to dry.

"Will."

"Yes?"

"At any rate, Will, you — you'll write every day, won't you?"

"On, come now! How can I? The Soudan postal arrangements are not yet controlled by St. Martin's-le-Grand, you know. You mustn't expect miracles, though we shall improve that before we've finished. But look here! There's nothing to prevent you from dropping me a line overy day, just to tell me how you are getting on, even if I do get them in babbes of twenty-fave or so."

For Billy was hadly in love—and lovers, as everybody knows, are full of brilliant ideas.

The strains of the last waltz came humming through the trees.

They knew it well. The wailing music brought home to each the words of the old song—

If in your heart a corner lies That has no place for me, You do not love me as I deem Our love must ever be.

Is there a single joy or pain That I may never know?

Take back your love—li is in vain! Bid me good-bye, and go!

And somehow—somehow—it sound-ad strange to Vi.

And somehow—somehow—it sounded strange to Vi.
"Come, let's dance it," suggested

"Oome, let's dance it," suggested Billy.

They rose. Billy looked down on the uplifted face. It was as pale as the face of a dead maiden.

"Why—?" And he took the tween his hands, and an obtrusive Chimese lantern very thought fully went out.

"Will, tell me—tell me once more—before we go in," and her voice was nothing but a whisper; "tell me—once more—"

nothing but a whisper; "tell meones more—"
The rest of the sentence was stifled
—by one, or the other, or both. But
Billy based it.

"Vi, darling! Vi, darling! I will
remember to-night as loug as I live.
Never, never will I forget this tearful
little face, dear one! It will stay
before my eyes, never fear, little lady,
until I come back to you again, and
will keep me from all harm, wherever
I am. My own, own Vi!

So they entered the ball-room, and
all traces of tears had vanished from
her face; but the fair neck was bent,
as though it refused to bear the weight
of so much beauty. And they denoed
the last waltz together, but the flowere had gone from her bresst. Nothing
looks so bad in r ball-room as crushed
flowers.

Four months later the little British force in the Soudan was forming a square, for the enemy was about to charge. On every side surbased forms were gesticulating and howling out their war cries. "Allah i! "Allah i! Allah i! "Mahdi, Mahdi!" The gibbering Maxims in the corners of the square kept pounding away merity, spitting out death lite the makes they were, whenever the blacks showed signs of coming too near; and at veery volley dusly forms leaped into the air, and, with a last yall, fell headlong and poured their life shood into the thirsty sand, while their souls fed withly away to "Paradise." In the middle of the square rode the old eclonel, watching every sign and every Four months later the little British

movement, glving his orders clearly and quietly—orders which were obeyed as quietly as they were given. And so the handful of Her Hejsety's troops moved slowly across the desert—forward to the group of palms in the distance, where alone they could hope for rost after the burning day and for fresh water not rendered stale and topid by the sun's rays.

Two days ago Billy had received a letter from England which contained some shriveled flowers. What the lotter said is not my business or ours; but the yoor brown dead

some shriveled flowers What the lotter said is not my business or yours; but the poor brown dead things were most undoubtedly violets. It was Sunday in England. Out here it didn't matter—in fact, the work it was. All eroupt Billy, and he carefully ticked off each day on a calendar he atways carried with him in close proximity to the rather socied photograph of a woman—a woman with a beautiful face, but men said it was the face of a first.

And as no man is master of his own houghts and the mind will wander of its own sweet will into the remotest corners of the earth seven when deadly danger is at hand, so Billy found himself peacefully thinking not so much of the battle that was going on as of Miss Cheriton. He did not feel the glaving sun that chut down upon them—only to be mercilessly reflected up from the shining sand. He did not remember that he held his sword drawn in his hand, that his revolver lay fully charged in his belt. The square, the Dervirbes, the upright old colonel, all seemed to him like dream people. It was only a dream, this African business. He himself was in a quiet country church in England, twoeling by her side. The congrega-African husiness. He himself was in a quiet country church in England, kneeling by her side. The congregation were all kneeling, and her head was bent very low. He peeped surreptitiously into her face—surely, surely that was not a tear that tried to escape the custody of the long lashes? He heard the clear voice of the clergyman—dear old Bennett it

isshes? He heard the clear voice of the disrgyman—dear old Bennett it was—in the Litany:

"From lightning and tempest, from plague, pestilence and famine, from bottle and murder, and from endden death, good Lord, deliver us."

And earnestly, breakingly, she responded, "Good Lord, deliver us."
Mechanically, Billy felt in his pocket. The calendar was there—and the photograph.

the photograph.

"Halt! Face about! Prepare to repel charge!"
At once the little square mad, ready. Billy was back in the Soudan.
Now, on every side, as far as the eye could reach came on the Arabs, dancing, shricking, howling. This was their one great endeavor to wipe out the accursed infidels. To every man that fell the Mahdi-great is his name!—had promised elernat Paradize. Allah himself had assured them of victory. What, then, mattered desth when the reward would be great and eternat?
On they same. The Maxims spoke out and a lace appeared through the rushing horde. On they came to devour the little force that was daring to stand up for the White Queen against the divine will of the Mahdi. Tens dropped. Hundreds fell. The rush continued, and now the bright, maddened eyes were clearly visible to the little British band.
"Fire!"
On all four sides the riftee rang out.

"Fire!" On all four sides the rifles rang out. For a moment a dead silence enused. Then on once more charge the fanaties, trampling down their dying, trampling on their dead, straight on to victory or to Paradise!

to victory or to Paradise!
Another volley as forty paces and
the black forms seemed to have vanished from off the free of the earth in
a cloud of smoke. Then whas was
left of them appeared right up to the
beyonet points, currisin, yalling; free
forms rushed up behind them. Now,
weary, sun-stricten soldiers, look to it
—look well to it—in the name of
Queen and country!
Bayonets, sword, snear—searlet

Queen and country!

Bayonets, sword, spear—scarlet, white, black—all seemed blended together in one fearful hurly-burly. The square stood firm; the fanatise pored themselvee upon the hedge of bayonets. In no time Billy's revolver and emptied; once it brought to earth a huge Arab whose sword was whirling over a wounded private's head. The square stood firm—Soudanese negroes and whites, side by side, in the name of Her Mord Gracious Misiasty tha and whites, side by side, in the name of Her Most Gracious Majesty the

and whites, side by side, in the name of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen.

Suddenly one of the Maxims became jummed. Before it was again in order the savages had awalmed round the weakened corner, speared the gunners, and cut their way into the spot; the rear rank of the mean faced about; for a short time it was a touch-and-go. A spear whitsed past to be short of the mean faced about; for a short time it was to the spot; the rear rank of the mean faced about; for a short time it was to the spot; the spot white spot is the spot with the seals. Billy's head; a brother officer behind him fall, pierced through the mean's billy s sword came down in a slanting direction upon the head of a bearded, muscular Arab, who was quite inside the square. A thrill of exultation and nauses as the man dropped, the gash fixing his festures in the appearance of a ghastly grin. Gradually, slowly, the little square rallied. The Arabe were out down and beaten beat; beyones points formed ones more around the srippled gun.

But in the rush and confusion and smoke a small party of British strongs had been forced outside the square.

"Back—back into the square, for your lives i' he ordered. The passage was clear, except for wounded Araba, and with a rulet the men turned. The bayonets opened. Buly, last of all was on the point of entering axfoly. At this moment he heard, above all the din, the cry of a voles he know. He turned. Some forty paces away a somrade, a mesemate, was surrounded by a dozun of the enemy. Billy saw him fighting, outting and thrust img on overy side, then fall. "Buff, to the rescue.' he shricked, and again gailoped back. Two tropers managed to accompany him. Shash, cut, thrust once more and Bully reached his friend's side.

tutust once more and Bully reached his friend's side.

"Hold up. Ross, old boy! Wby, what's the matter? You're all right now. What's up?
Ross tried to answer, but a fearful gash across hie eyes and the unnatural twist of one leg told his story protty plantle.

gabh across his oyes and the unnatural twist of one leg told his story pretty planily.

"Nover mind, poor old Jimmy!" and Billy tred to get under his dying friend, in order to earry him back into the square. The square was still hard pressed, but the worst was over new. A body of Arab horserien, decimated by the rifle fire, were on the point of retreating when they eaught sight of two hated white men well outside the safeshelter of the square, one wounded, the other trying to lift, him—an easy proy. With "Mahdi! Mahdi!" they galloped toward them
Ross saw their approach over Billy's shoulder.

"Look out, old man," he murmur-

snoulder,
"Look out, old man," he murmured. "Get back—leave me. I'm done
—no good. Get back—there's—just
—time."

Poor Billy looked up. The horse Foor Billy looked up. The horse-ment were sixty yards away or more-he might escape them if no unlucky sphere got home on him. Then in a moment he was back in England, VI at his side. They were at a ball together, the lights, the decorations were there, the band was playing faintly but distinctly, "Bid Me Good-hea."

faintly but distinctly, "Bid Me Goodbye."

"I'll come back, darling, never fear," he whispered.
"Go; there's just time, Fortescue. Run—for your life. God blees you—leave me—quick!"
These words brought Billy back to the battle. He looked down on his dying friend, who was clearly at his last breath. He looked on the wild horsemen coming on at a gallop. He thought of a lonely loving girl waiting for him at home, of his plighted troth, of his bride. And the world acenda lovely place, and he felt so young and strong—and Violet—his own, own Vi-

alovely piace, and ne ren a young and strong—and Vicolet—his own, own Vi—
"Saveyourself—there's—just—time
—good-bya."
It is no discredit to Billy to say that there was a second's pause before he threw waxe his useless revolver and gripped his sword more tightly and said through his olenshed teeth: "No, old caps! I'll stay!"
A rescue was soon effected from the square, but not before Billy was lying with his face upward to the African sum, a spear through his langs and each beat of his brave heart increasing the erimson stain upon the sand.
They brought him into the square and did what they could. But he only spoke once more, and the poor dying whisper was heard only by one or two-who bent over him.
"Toll her—I did mean to come—but poor—old Jimmy—was down. Tell her—"
The last words were whispered to some one who was also near him, who was standing over him and holding the hot, outly head upon her knees, though only Billy saw her.
"I—I'm—coming decreat, I'm—coming—to you—Vi. Don't cry, darling—I'm—com—lag—home."

Miss Oheriton, the "desperate diet." the hells of the country, is still eit." the hells of the country, is still eit." the hells of the country, is still eit." the hells of the country, is still eit."

darling—I'm—som—ing—home."

Miss Oheriton, the "desperate sirt," the belle of the country, is still unmarried. Into her golden hair have crept threads of silver; the fair face has lost a little of its smooth radiance. She seldom goes anywhere. People wonder "how on earth she spends her time." They forget to sak the poor around her, the sick, the desparing, those whose husbands are far away; widows whose husbands are far away; widows whose husbands are wen happy, her eyes are as bright and blue as ever, except perhaps—who knows?—when the opens a treasure box and takes from it a soiled photograph of herself and an old calendar, both dyed in places a dull red-brown.—The Sketch.

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