

THE LAST MAN OF THE SQUARE.

Only one man in the square is standing, and that is Gordon, still drumming with his foot and still playing, as if a host of living men were near him, able to obey his summons, "Up an' waur them a', Willie." There is something so sublime about him, so much of courage and of grandeur in that lonely living creature standing high above his crowd of dead, that the foe is kept from giving him the final thrust of spear; and something in that screaming of the pipes which makes them, lusting as they are for still more blood, withdraw for many paces, so that they may watch him.

Gordon feels a dimness in his eyes, and is conscious of a faintness and a pain to which as yet he has been a stranger. His hands, too, are of that deep colour which comes to men in war from one thing only. He pauses and looks at his doublet. Then he sees that the scarlet is stained by a liquid which is trickling with a curious pumping motion from a spot above his heart. No need to tell him now that all is over, and that very soon he must succumb, and be as those are who are lying silently about him. A spear has struck him in the breast, and the very life blood is streaming from him.

The pipes hang loosely in his nerveless hands, and the silence of the field is broken only by the flapping of the wings of the encircling vultures. In that expressive lull the savage who stepped out as spokesman before the fight began, and who is yet un-injured, comes forward for the second time to parley. Gordon hears what he has to say. He is told that his great bravery has been equal to the courage of even their renowned and warlike tribe, that by his own hand their chief has met his death, and that if he will come and live amongst them in their leader's stead his life will be spared. They make him understand that his valour has impressed them so much that they are wishful that he should dwell and rule amongst them in the place of their late head. He waves the spokesman off, answering nothing, and refusing to hear him further, and awaits the final onrush. But the enemy are hesitating, wondering what he will do, knowing now that he has got his death wound.

He still retains his pipes and clasps them closely to him, and silently he stands, the last of the rearguard, heedless of his gaping wound, seeing not and heeding not the dusky horde that gaze upon him spellbound

in their savage admiration. Here are soldiers lying dead about them who in fight have shown themselves the equals of their own most seasoned warriors. Of those who have fought the fight of men but one is left, and he is as a wounded beast at bay.

For awhile they stare, and he in silence looks at them, for he is wondering what his last pibroch shall be. He sees the cloud of vultures near him, and in the distance sights their carrion reinforcements. Then he calls to mind the tune to which the Highlanders were mustered for the field of Waterloo. Its appalling significance occurs to him, and he lifts the mouthpiece and puts it, for the last time between his parched lips. There is a sort of sob as the pipes are filled; the player's fingers tremble for a moment on the doubtful keys, and wild and tuneless notes come from the instrument. But the wildness passes gradually away as the notes settle into "Come to me, and I will give you flesh."

Mechanically, as in a dream, Gordon turns and throws his left foot forward; his right follows, and to the strains of the pibroch, he is marching round the silent square that he has rallied. At last, still fronting the foe, he totters in his march. His wound has conquered, and he knows that he is overcome and cannot make another circuit. Already his dauntless spirit is departing, and he is coming to his meeting with the last great enemy of all. True to the traditions of his fathers and the honor of his corps he meets his end face to the enemy, defiant to the very last. He draws himself up to his full height, and the effort causes the blood to rain upon the sodden tartan of the pipes. He takes a long, deep breath, and for the last time plays the music of that awful song, drumming with his foot in union with its wailing.

It is all over. Claspng the pipes to his reeking doublet, he pauses for just an instant more. Then, as his grandsire of the Greys had shouted it at Waterloo, he cries: "Scotland for ever!" and falls prone upon his face, the battle-pipes beneath him.

A lady taking tea at a small company, being very fond of hot rolls, was asked to have another. "Really I cannot," she modestly replied. "I don't know how many I've eaten already." "I do!" unexpectedly exclaimed a juvenile upstart, whose mother allowed him a seat at the table. "You've eaten eight, I've been countin'."