



RUINS OF OLD FORT AT ST. JOHN'S, P.Q.

finally charged him before the Colonel with 'at-tempting to enter Sebastopol without leave.' The chief burst out laughing when he heard the charge, and exclaimed, 'Why, confound it, that's what we've all been doing ever since we came here.'

"And what did Mr. Flinn say?" enquired Lockwood.

"Oh, he was heard discoursing to his comrades the whole afternoon on the subject, saying, 'It's without lave, mind you, makes the difference.' He is evidently firmly imbued that, 'If they'd only per-mission he and a few of his pals would be inside Sebastopol in no time.'

"I know the sort," said the Hussar; "there's no end to the fellow's jaw, but he'll fight as long as he'll jaw, and ask for no better diversion." But you're wrong about the siege; you fellows that half live in the trenches can't see it, but to men like myself who only have a look round occasionally, it's palpable how close we're creeping in. It can't be long now, at all events, before you have a shy at the town."

Lockwood was right in his prognostication, but what he did not dream of was that the desperate assault, when delivered, should result in failure, and that in less than three hours both French and English would have been driven back, and nothing left them but to bury their dead,—nearly three months more destined to elapse before the famous siege was brought to an end.

However, the dinner came to an end, the bill was paid, and horses and ponies called for, and then swinging themselves into the saddle the majority of the party rode off in the bright moonlight across the plateau, to their respective lines. Before reaching their own camp, Byng and Hugh Fleming had bid good night to their companions. Hugh's servant rose from a seat outside his mas-ter's tent as they approached, and as he took the pony from him, said:

"The mail's in from England, sir. I've put your letters in your tent."

"Good night," said Byng, as he also dismounted, and strode away to his own dwelling, envying Hugh the letter he knew he would surely find awaiting him, and feeling utterly indifferent towards his own correspondence. Yet he was fond of his own people too, but he had no need to feel anxious about them; and like most men in those days, hardly realized the uneasiness and nervous solici-tude of the women at home—mothers and sisters filled with considerably more anxiety for sons and brothers than they deserved.

There were three letters on the table, the super-scriptions of two of which were quite familiar to him; but the third was in an unknown hand, and that unmistakeably a feminine one. Tom gazed at it curiously, with an indistinct idea that he had seen the hand before, although he could not recog-nize it. He opened it, and then sat down on his bed to read it by the light of his solitary candle.

"Dear Captain Byng," it ran, "We are dread-fully concerned to see by the papers that you are dangerously wounded. It is terrible to think that those we have known and" [here the word "loved" had been palpably erased] "and liked should be in such constant peril. You can't think how I feel for poor Nellie Lynden—it must be so awful for her to think that her lover is in the midst of all these dreadful scenes. I am sure she must shud-der every time she opens a paper for fear of coming across Hugh Fleming's name in it." ("Hum!" muttered Byng savagely. "Considering the pleas-ant things she said about Hugh and the rest of us, I suppose she's disappointed to find we're in the thick of it at last.")

"I am staying with her now, and she bears up beautifully. And now, dear Captain Byng, you must find time to write me a line about yourself. I only know what the papers tell me, and that is that you are dangerously hurt, and that's quite bad enough news for your friends and relations, for all those who really care for you. We shall all be so very anxious to hear how you are going

on. I shall never believe that you are in a fair way to recovery till I get a line from yourself. Let it be ever such a scrap, I shall feel miserable, that is, mamma and I will feel miserable, until we learn from your own hand that you are getting well again. With much love and sympathy from us both, and hoping to hear from you soon, believe me, dear Captain Byng,

"Ever sincerely yours, FRANCES SMERDON."

There is a slang phrase in the present day that so exactly describes the effect that letter had on Tom Byng, that I cannot refrain from using it. It made him "sit up." The letter fell from his hand as he finished it, and he started bolt-upright from his crouching attitude, and wondered what it all meant. Surely a girl could hardly write a letter like that to a man she disliked. It was very odd, and after thinking it over for some minutes Tom felt so utterly bewildered at this unexpected epistle that he felt it necessary to fill a pipe and smoke and muse over it.

He read the letter over three or four times, and finally came to the conclusion that the ways of women were past all understanding, and that he must see if he could pump Hugh Fleming on the subject a bit to-morrow. Poor Tom, if he had been making a match three miles across country, the chances are he'd have contrived to get seven pounds the best of it; then was he likely to throw away a point of odds on the race course, nor trump his partner's thirteenth at the whist table, but when it came to the opposite sex he was but wax in their hands. One of those men who, though not particularly impressionable, find it so difficult to say "no" to a woman's request. Fran-ces Smerdon has nobody to blame but herself for the present state of affairs between them. Despite his quixotic resolutions she could have made him speak on; she had listed before he sailed, and she knew it.

(To be Continued.)