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A Siege Baby.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "BOOTLE'S BABY," ETC., ETC.

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"Is anything the matter, Charlie ?" she asked at last. He looked up with a start. "Oh ! No, my darling; what made you ask ?" "Nothing, only that you have been so long without saying thing," she answered.

"Oh ! No, my darling : what made you ask ?" "Nothing, only that you have been so long without saying anything," she answered. "I'm tired, that's all," he said. But he said it with an effort, which did not escape a pair of glittering black eyes which were watching his every movement and expression. "What have you been doing to-day !" "I ady Marjory came over just after you went this morn-ing-and brought the baby. Such a dear little thing, and takes notice already, Charlie. Yes, it does indeed, for it opened its eyes and fairly laughed at me." "You don't say so," he said, with a very fair show of inter-est. "And how is Lady Marjory ?" "Oh ! wonderfully well. And, Charlie, she declares that there is no such blessing in India as to have a baby-it gives one such an occupation. I"-with a blush and a downward look.-" shall be every glad when September comes." "And I," said he heartily. "And I is awfully good of them." "That's awfully good of them." "Yes, isn't it ? And poor Maud says it is so hard not to have the baby there. You know I told them I should send a portrait home as soon as possible, but Maud says what's the good of a piece of glass, with a sort of ghost on it that won't 'walk' un-less you look at it ideways." She paused, expecting he would laugh at the little joke, but Maud says it he matter," she declared and a strave as a judge. "Charlie, I'm sure something's the matter," she declared positively. "He is a up quickly and answered promptly enough,

positively. He looked up quickly and answered promptly enough, "Nothing, my dearest, you are very fanciful to-night. I am tired and hungry, that is all. Don't mind me at all, but tell

me the home news." Nothing the matter! Perhaps not—and yet an hour later he asked her to play a game of draughts with him, and then. keeping his eyes fixed upon the closed door, he took her hand and said in a very low voice, "Eva, can you hear some news

THE FARMER'S ADVOCATE.

"Your darling loves you," she said, very softly, "and God will do all the rest." / That was the secret of her pluck-"God will do all the rest!"

II. They were heavy and anxious days which followed the arrival at Muttrapore of the news of the outbreak at Meerut. And they were days of silence-silence so carefully observed that men conveyed meaning by looks, and made the center of the deserted barrack-square their place for discussing the times when discussion was absolutely necessary ; that the wives kept away from each other's houses lest they should betray their anxiety and fear; that morning rides and evening band were the only entertainments which kept up a semblance that all was well. II.

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lence." It thinned the ranks of that devoted band—taking a strong man here, a brave nurse there, or a little child unable to fight against these sudden hardships and privations—until they stood no longer shoulder to shoulder, no nor yet even within touch of one another, and yet they fought on, on until "stormed at by shot and shell," they could hold their shattered and blazing defences no longer and found themselves with no course open to them save to make a dash for the open and try to reach the rest of their comrades at the station ten miles in the direc-tion of Meerut.

tion of Meerut. Up to this point Mordaunt's courage had not forsaken him, nor yet his hopes. His wife had borne the horrors, terrors, and privations of a close slege better than might reasonably have been expected, all things being considered; but when it came to an attempt to get ten miles across such a country through the very heart of the rebel army—why he just sat down and hid his face in his hands and wished to God that he had died before over heart. ever he

r he was born. Still, even such a wish as that did not help him—or her-Still, even such a wish as that did not help him—or her—in the least; there was no other course for them to take, the attempt had to be made and they must make it with the rest. But on 1 how the man dreaded it, dreaded it, it would be hard to say—and it was in vain that his wife roused all her scanty stock of failing courage, and bade him cheer up and hope for the heat

the best. "Don't worry so, Charlie," she said, a few hours before the start was made. "I think it will be all right, I think we shall get there. After all, it's only ten miles; and after all, what is ten miles? A mere nothing –I've walked twenty many a

"But not now," he said in a tone of anguish ; "and never in an Indian jungle

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"Don't mind me, Charlie, you go on with the others," she

"Don't mind me, Charlie, you go on with the others," she begged faintly. But Mordaunt had managed to bring a flask of brandy with him, the last of a precious store which had done good service during the long siege. He put a little to her lips and beckneed to Majid to bring his hammock, and then they went on once more, contriving somehow to get slowly on, though it was exhausting and very weary work stumbling through the long grass and jungle four or five feet in height, soaked through to the skin by the heavy dews, taking each step in fear of the enemy and a yet greater dread of snakes and other vermin of the jungle; and by some means, perhaps because of the black darkness of the night, perhaps because of the delay in getting the lady into the hammock, they missed the track taken by their party and found themselves – a little group of three - in the very midst of what was to the Europeans an unknown country swarming with rebels, one and all anxious for the life's-blood of any Ferringhee who might happen to fall in their way.

blood of any Ferringhee who might happen to fall in their way. They could not get into any village before daybreak, which found them close to a grove of mango trees having a hollow in its midst. Here they hid themselves and rested all the day, only coming out at nightfall to push on once more. "We are not far from a village," Majid said, as they pre-pared the hammock for the lady. "I think we shall reach it without much trouble, Sahib." But alas! before they had gone a quarter of a mile, Mor-daunt slipped and fell, wrenching and bruising his knee badly. "Can you get on at all !" asked his wife anxiously, "be-cause I am not the least tired, Charlie, I can walk quite easily. I can, I assure you." "Do you think you can ! Then keep tight hold of Majid by the hand, for a fall might be a very serious matter for you," he answered, " and I will hobble after you as well as I can with a stick."

the nand, for a fair might be a very schools matter for you, he answered, " and I will hobble after you as well as I can with a stick." So they started once more. With swift sure footsteps Majid passed on, telling her in whispers where to tread and what parts te avoid, while Mordaunt struggled painfully after them, each step on the uneven ground giving his knee a fresh wrench which made him quivar with agony. Once or twice she insisted on stopping to ask how his knee was, if it was very painful and so on, but Mordaunt always resolutely and dauntlessly waved her on, never admitting that he was suffering much, and beg-ging her not to utter a word more than was absolutely neces-sary; so they went on until they came within sight of the village towards which Majid was pressing. "Will the Mem-Sahib look over yonder? That is the vil-loge!" he said to her in a whisper. With a look of joy she turned back to tell the news to her husband—but her husband was not within sight. They went back, but he was not to be found; they went to right and left, she utterly heedless of her weariness and prostration and re-membering only that her husband was disabled and alone. "Call !" she said to her guide. So Majid called, as had been agreed between them before starting, with the note of a bird; but there was no reply—no reply save the ordinary voices of an Indian jungle after night-fall.

fall. Mrs. Mordaunt caught hold of the Bengalee's hand, her eyes staring pitcously and her teeth chattering with fear. "What has happened to him ?" she wailed. "Will the Mem-Sahib keep still ?" the man entreated. "I

cannot hear." I But he could hear nothing, not even though she braced herself to absolute silence, because there was nothing to hear, "Majid, he is dead," she whispered. But the Bengalee shook his head. "The Mem-Sahib must not think of that until we know more. Listen; if she gets to the village, Majid will put her into safe keeping and come back to find the Sahib."

to and the Santo." "Must I stop there *alone?*" she asked, her natural fear gaining the uppermost hand for a moment. "Cannot I go with

gaining the uppermost hand for a moment. "Cannot I go with you ?" "Better not. I may have to go back a mile or more. But the Mem-Sahib will be quite safe, for I know the village well." So she consented to go back in the direction they had first taken, and in time they reached the village, where Majid was evidently known and very welcome. The villagers were one and all very kind to her, making her lie down and have her feet bathed, giving her native bread and rice, with milk to drink. And here Majid left her that he might go back and search for Mordaunt, whom he believed had slipped or stumbled in the long rank grass of the jungle and to be lying helpless and probably insensible. But not a trace of him was to be found ; and, not a little crestfallen, the Bengalee turned back and carried the bad news to the Mem-Sahib, who, poor soul, was awaiting him in the direst suspense, and in agonies of fright lest she should be mur-dered by one or other of the dusky beauties who thronged round her as if she were a fat lady in a show at an English fair. "The Sahib is not dead, or I should have found him," Majid assured her. "The Mem-Sahib must keep up heart, and when night comes we must make for Budwra, where perhaps we shall find him." "Where is Budwra, Majid ?" she asked.

shall find him.

"News!" with a startled air, yet in a whisper, just as he

"News!" with a startled air, yet in a whisper, just as he had spoken. "Yees, in silence and without a sound?" "I think I can," she said confidently. He held her hand yet tighter within his. "Call up the heart of your ancestors," he said with a sad smile, then leant forward and whispered in her ear, "It is come at last—they have risen at Meerut." Mrs. Mordaunt half rose from her chair, then remembered herself and sat down again; she looked up into her husband's face with eyes full of fright and put her disengaged trembling hand into his. "Risen," she repeated. "Oh! Charlie, what will it mean for us?"

"Risen," sne repeated. On to channel, wish I had died before "My darling, I cannot say, only—I wish I had died before I brought you out here, I wish I had died first." "Oh t no-mo-I don't. I daresay we shall be safe enough. As Lady Marjory says, it's not as if we were in a Native regi-ment. We might be uneasy then," reassuringly. "Did she say that 1" Mrs. Mordaunt nodded in reply. "When 1" he asked. "This morning."

Mrs. Mordaunt nodded in Feply. "When?" he asked. "This morning." "What aloud?" anxiously. "Oh ! yes. I couldn't get her to stop. She paraded about the room and laughed the whole idea of a rising to scorn-said she should believe it when it had come and not before. 'It's common sense,' she cried, 'that such a thing couldn't be. Why should anybody want to mutiny, or at least to massacre us? If-but it's absurd, 'she said ; 'what man on earth could want to harm two poor inoffensive little women like you and me? It's absurd on the very face of it." "Little fool !" said Mordaunt, contemptuously. There was a slight noise at the door and instantly their hands parted, and moved back to the position for playing the game in which they were supposed to be interested. "Your move," said Mordaunt. So she moved a piece-at random, and her husband followed her; and so they played on in silence until the servant who had brought in coffee left them alone again. "I wish you were at home, Eva," he burst out in a whisper of agony. "So do I-with you," she whispered back.

of agony. "So do I—with you," she whispered back. "With or without me—if only you were safe. If only I could get you away into peace and safety. It will come to us before long, and even if you are safe. I am afraid for the effects of excitement upon you just now. Oh! if I could only take you borne."

home." She shook her head sadly. "No use, Charlie, in wishing it. I am here, and must stop here. I am not the least afraid, though your news startled me for a moment. Besides, a good deal may happen before September, you know, all this trouble may be smoothed over and done away with long before then." "Yes, that is true—that is true. What a pluck my darling heat!"

has!

an Indian jungle." "Perhaps it won't be all jungle. Charlie," she suggested. "No-"," he was going to say "Perhaps some of it will be swamp," but he broke the words off just in time. "If I could only carry you all the way there, my darling." he cried. "We'll see what you can do if I get very tired, Charlie," she said gently, with which he was compelled for the time to be content.

said gently, with which he was compended to the time second ent. About an hour after this, while he with all his comrades were watching anxiously for the thick darkness which would permit their flight from behind their defences, he felt a light touch upon his arm, and turning quickly, saw the dark face and gleaming eyes of his bearer, by name Majid. "What is it?" he asked, his thoughts flying to his wife at once. "Is anything wrong ? Does the Mem-Sahib wish for me ?" "No, Sahib," the man answered ; "the Mem-Sahib is sleep-ing macefully—but I wanted a word with you, Sahib."

ing peacefully—but I wanted a word with you, Sahib. "Well ?"

"Well ?" "I have been arranging a way of resting the Mem-Sahib, if she grows very tired," he explained, and then displayed a light hammock secured at the ends by stout ropes, one of which he passed over his shoulders, handing the other to his master. "If I take one rope and you the other, Sahib, it will make it much easier for the Mem-Sahib." "But—"exclaimed Mordaunt in astonishment, "do you prefer to go with us ?" "Yes, Sahib, I am going to see my lady into safe hands," said the man quietly.

"But — 'exclaimed Moriaum in asconsinnent, 'do you prefer to go with us ?" "Yes, Sahib, I am going to see my lady into safe hands," said the man quietly. A flash of memory came back to Mordaunt's mind of the times—many of them—that he had chaffed his young wife for her extreme politeness to the principal servants of the establish-ment. And then he remembed how once Majid had cut his arm rather badly, and that she had insisted on his going to the doctor and had inquired kindly after the hurt each day until it was healed and well; now he realized the value of her kind-ness. "Thank you, Majid," he said gratefully and with a rush of feeling which, manlike, he was most careful to hide. And about an hour and a half later a forlorn and well-nigh hopeless band filed out of the sheltered defences, and creeping between two rebel pickets, got without accident or alarm into the open country. "Never thought I should live to turn tail in this way," growled one soldier to another as they passed out. But the man to whom he spoke did not reply, only folded his arms closer about the little tired child which lay sleeping upon his breast; if he had spoken he probably would not have called the better part of valor "turning tail." Of necessity their progress was very slow and wearisome— they had no horses, or even so much as a "tat" among them, all the animals being stolen or dead long ago. Bravely the women-folk bore up, several plodding steadily on in silence, nerved up to fulfil the task they had set for themselves—that of saving the dear wee tots they carried in their arms—while the older children struggled on beside them, each carrying a basket or bag of such provisions as they had to bring. But before they had covered half a mile poor Mrs. Mor-daunt's strength gave out and she was fain to admit that she could go no further.

night comes we must make for Budwra, where pernaps we shall find him." "Where is Budwra, Majid ?" she asked. "Another village about three miles from here and off the main road," he told her. "Perhaps one of my people hasfound the Sahib and has taken him on there." "I wish it was night," said she, with a tired sigh, and set herself to watch for the fading of the day. However, anxiety and fatigue notwithstanding, after a few minutes Mrs. Mordaunt fell asleep and slept with the sound and heavy slumber of one thoroughly worn out, fanned by a young native girl to whom Majid gave a handful of pice for performing the office. Majid too cast himself down and slept soundly ; and so the two lay there neither moving nor stirring until nearly sundown, when the old women of the house, who had been gossiping at her door about the pretty Feringhee Mem-Sahib, suddenly rushed in and shook Majid into a sense of understanding without ceremony or hesitation. "Up, quick, quick !" she cried. "They are coming ! Get the Mem-Sahib into that tope of mango trees. Quick, quick ! there is not a moment to lose ! Save yourselves!" It was but the work of a moment for Majid to drag the terri-fied Englishwoman into the grove of mango trees indicated by the old woman, happily succeeding without being seen ; and there they hid themselves, cowering down and crouching low upon the ground amongst the rank gräss and undergrowth, listening to the fiendish yells and shouts of the Sepoys, who were searching the little village for the Feringhee lady whom they heard had escaped in that direction. But the dusk drew on, the last light of day faded away quickly—as it does in the East—and the Sepoys were obliged to give up the chase. Majid began to think of beginning the journey to Budwra, so bade Mrs. Mordaunt remain in the tope of mango trees while he went back to the village for food and milk. "But you won't leave me, Majid ?" she implored piteously;

"But you won't leave me, Majid ?" she implored piteously ;

milk. "But you won't leave me, Majid ?" she implored piteously; "you'll come back ?" "Majid will never leave the Mem-Sahib until he leaves her in safety," he said solemnly—he always addressed her thus. So a very weary half-hour went by, during which she suf-fered a very martyrdom of suspense and dread. For she was wearing a dress which had once been of white cambric and which even now, although it had been torn and stained and soiled by the adventures of the previous night and the hard-ships of nearly a week of the siege, showed very conspicuously against the dark background of the mango trees. As well as she could she hid herself among the grass, holding her skirts and breath with equal care, starting and shrinking at every sound, fancying that the rustling of the leaves, the creaking of which one hears in a grove of trees after dusk, were the ap-proaching footsteps of her murderers. And then, poor soul, when at length Majid returned, she mistook him altogether, and hiding her face upon her knees as she crouched there, gave herself up for lost and made a feeble effort to say her prayers. [TO BE CONTINUED.]

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