

The fair was held in a huge field to the right of the road ; and when the Cadet Company turned into it, "at the double," but still maintaining their serried ranks, it presented an animated spectacle. The principal space between the booths was crowded with sight-seers, and the booths themselves offered the most varied attractions : "The only Living Mermaid from the South Seas," "The Greatest Professors in the Art of Pugilism now extant," "The Genuine and Original Learned Pig," and a whole tribe of North American Indians in paint and feathers, at that moment in the act of celebrating their national tomahawk dance. For an instant business and pleasure were alike suspended at the sight of our youthful warriors ; and then "thwack, thwack" went the Ubique belts, and the denizens of the fair became aware, to their cost, that vengeance had come upon them.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE SIEGE AND THE SACK.

IT is but right to state that the majority of the besieged persons were fully conscious that they had provoked attack. Outrages and reprisals had, it is true, for many years passed as naturally as compliments in other places, between the Charlton Fair folks and the tenants of the Military Academy, but these had been intermitted for a considerable time, and the treatment the two young cadets received on the previous evening at the hands of these roystering roughs had been very savage and severe, even if it had been provoked. It was only by a gallant charge of their natural and hereditary enemies, the police, that their young lives had been preserved, while their limbs, as we know, had not been so fortunate.

The unarmed mob in the main thoroughfare broke and fled at the first charge ; under waggons and tent-ropes they scuttled to left and right, the boldest making for the hedges where the stakes grew, and the wiliest lying flat on their faces behind the pictures that fronted the caravans. The cry was not indeed "Sauve qui peut !" for it was, "Here are them scaly cadets !" but the effect was precisely the same as what takes place in military surprises upon a larger scale ; only it was more difficult to save oneself by running on account of the youthful agility of the assailants, who laid about them also with a vigour beyond their years. It was no child's play on either side, for whenever a belt-plate came in contact with a man's skull it cut a hole in it ; while, on the other hand, not a few of the "roughs" frequenting the fair were armed with bludgeons, while the big sticks employed in the "Aunt Sally" game of those days (for that lady is of ancient lineage) and the