

BULLET MARKS.

A WIMBLEDON STORY.

(Concluded from our list.)

"Well, she had promised Gerald that he should not suffer the disgrace of the lash; and had, during the hour I thought she was fooling with the doctor, managed to get hold of his bottle of prussic acid, and had rushed out with half of it for him and half for herself; and her appearance had so thoroughly surprised every one that she had reached the triangles, almost raised it to his lips, when the doctor, recognising his own blue bottle, struck her hand a violent blow, and dashed it on to the ground, besides disabling her from getting her own share.

"And how did the affair end? was the general of the division satisfied?"

I don't think he would have been with that evidence alone, and so we went about to hunt for more. I begged that, as we had found so much, Gerald might be permitted to accompany a party of search, under a guard, to find the missing tiger.

We went there, Meggie insisted on joining us. All the officers off duty went, and about half the men.

Gerald then pointed out the spot where he had stood, and where he shot the tiger, and recrossing, till there could not have been anything as large as a half-crown that could be hidden.

Meggie and I were riding in front of the line, when Meggie exclaimed.

"What a horrible smell comes from that copse."

"Don't smell anything, Meg."

'Yuo've lived here so long, that you've no sense of smell left.'

Of course as Meggie was with us, Blinkers was there too. Blinkers advanced to the copse—paused—and rushed underneath the grass, barking as if infuriated.

"There's something in there, Wille."

Some of the others coming up, we pushed our way into the depths, guided by the frantic bark of Blinkers, and, after being much scratched and torn, found ourselves in the centre of a trampled circle of jungle grass, with the half-devoured remains of a large tiger.

The doctor was sent for, and the wound discovered; the beast had evidently been lamed, the bullet breaking the fore-leg. It was also evident that, wounded as it was, it had lingered on till it was mere skin and bone, and had died only within the last few days. Assisted by some natives, the good-natured doctor commenced the horrible task of searching for the bullet, and, after half an hour's labour, the most disgusting he had ever undergone, it was found flattened against the large bone of the hind-leg, and handed to me.

Never shall I forget the pleasure I felt when I saw on the rescued bullet, the No. 5, with a dot as fresh and clear as if it had just come from the pressing machine.

Great was the rejoicing that night in the camp of the 40th. Blue fires were burnt, the band came and serenaded Meggie. The whole of the officers, including the old colonel, came as to a levee: but still I felt there was one thing more to be found out. How did the No. 2 bullet get into the saddle?

"At length I inquired whether any of the officers missed any of their arms. Curiously enough the only missing arm was a gun belonging to the wounded captain. I asked, did he remember the size. He did. It was just a shade smaller than the bore of the regimental carbines. You could get a govern-

ment bullet down by a good deal of hammering.

I now propounded my theory, that the bullet No. 2, had been fired from the captain's missing rifle, for the point of the bullet was marked with wings, and considerably flattened. There was nothing in the flesh, and nothing in the saddle to produce these marks, and they must therefore have been made before firing.

I then proposed that a full search should be made with dogs, for at least two miles round, from where the shot was fired, to see if any traces could be found of either the man or the gun.

We made the most careful search; presently I came to a stone on the road itself, marked in a most peculiar manner.

"What's the cause of these marks?" said I to the farrier of the troop, who had volunteered to help, and who said he never felt more grateful to any one in all his life, than he did to me for squeezing his wrist so hard that day.

"What's the cause? It's been used as a hammer for something—a nail in a shoe."

"Nail-heads are square."

"True for you—these are round."

"Do you think a ramrod would make these marks?"

"It just would. Somebody's been driving down a hard bullet with it."

"So I think. Now take this stone and throw it straight over that gap into the middle of the copse, and I'll mark where it seems to fall."

He threw it, and marking the spot we found our way into the gungle; and there, within a few yards of the stone; under the long leaves, we found what we sought—the remains of a native, stripped entirely of flesh and skin except on the hands and feet, and and with a great gaping wound in the skull; and in the inside, which the ants had perfectly cleaned out, was a large piece of the breech of the burst gun that he had by his side.

We took home the skull, and the burst rifle, and the cartridge cases, together with some remnants of clothing; and we there found out the intended murderer to have been one of the syces, or grooms of the captain, that he had horsewhipped a month before for ill-using a horse of which he had charge.

Of course there was a new trial ordered; and, as the evidence was unquestionable, Gerald was discharged.

"Did he leave the regiment?"

"Not a bit—Why should he? The men worshipped him, and the officer who was wounded was invalidated; and he and his comrades managed matters among them so well, that at the first parade of the regiment, in Calcutta, some six months afterwards, the old colonel presented to the men a new officer, Captain Ashton, adding, 'If he makes half as good an officer as he did a soldier there will not be a better in Her Majesty's service.'"

"And your sister Margret?"

"Oh, I've just sent a little case, lined with velvet, and something inside engraved 'William Gerald Ashton, from his affectionate uncle.'"

"Now, lads, there's the 'out lights,' so we'll turn in quietly, and make bull's eyes at every shot to-morrow."

FRAXINUS.

Gen. Grant has requested to be relieved from attendance at Cabinet meetings, except when military matters are under discussion, as he does not think it proper for a military officer to take part in political discussions.

GUNS AND GUNPOWDER.

There can be little doubt, after the experiments which have lately taken place at Shoeburyness, that the American system of firing enormously heavy shot at a comparatively low velocity is a failure, when it has to contend against the English plan of lighter shot fired at greater velocity. The huge American shot has not yet succeeded in inflicting any serious damage on the target against which it was tried, and, in all cases, has left the inner skin of armour intact. If it were true that such heavy metal would have the effect claimed for it of "racking" and partially stripping the armour from the side of an enemy's ship, there would be some argument in favor of the system, as the armour once torn off, one of these enormous shot would have no difficulty in penetrating the remainder, and opening such a chasm in the ship's side as would defy all attempts to plug. But as yet even the "racking" seems to be an utter failure, and the gun is simply useless for the purpose of destroying an enemy. The English system, on the contrary, has proved itself almost irresistible, and while an American ship armed after American fashion would be occupied in uselessly hammering at armour to it wholly impenetrable, the English gun with its penetrating shell would spread havoc and confusion upon the decks of the helpless American. We may, therefore, congratulate ourselves on the possession of as formidable weapons as are possessed by any nation, and as far as sheer obstruction is concerned, of as well defended ships as can well be constructed.

For all this, it seems much to be regretted that the War Office seems still indisposed to render effective the vast number of old and now useless 68-pounders with which our forts, and many of our ships, are at present encumbered. The application of Major Palliser's plan would at once convert these guns into most effective weapons, and at a comparatively small cost. Doubtless new guns would be better than these converted ones; but for small craft a light gun is a great desideratum, and for such vessels these converted guns would be even better suitable than heavier new ones. The liveliness of the recoil seems to be the great objection to these guns entertained by Sir John Pakington; but surely among our many scientific artillerymen, a compressor can be devised capable of remedying this defect. This over-liveliness is spoken of as if it were wholly beyond control by any mechanical means,—as an irremediable defect inherent in a light gun. Just the very contrary is the fact. If nothing else could be done, a light gun can be rendered a heavy one at any time, either by addition to the gun itself, or to its carriage. Again, the gun can be made to raise a series of heavy weights, increasing in amount, as it recoils, or friction compressors may be adopted, though, it is to be hoped, of a somewhat more scientific construction than those hitherto in use. In short, of all the defects which a gun can possess, there is none more easily remedied than that of over-liveliness. To trust to pure lumbering weight of metal to check recoil, is to insist upon retaining the very greatest obstacle to rapid firing, and to persist in a remedy which is infinitely worse than the disease. Guns cannot, within certain limits, on which strength depends, be made too light. The checking of the recoil is a matter of consideration, which should in no way be dependent on the weight and unwieldiness of the gun. While loading, the gun cannot be too light and handy. It is only after firing that