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ALICE CRESSINGHAM.

A CHAPTER FROM "NED FORTESQUE"; OR,
ROUGHING IT THROUGH LIFE;

BY E. W. FORREST, ESQ., LATE H. M. INDIAN ARMY.

Zilnappoor was one of the best stations in Rajahpootanna, it had been previously the head quarters of a native contingent but for some reason the Nawab had given it up and the Bombay Government, knowing the salubrity of the climate, at once seized upon it as a station for European troops. It was most beautifully situated; fountains, tanks, aquaducts, temples, and gardens. the usual surroundings to the whereabouts of a native Prince, were still to be seen at every turn. A commodious well built barrack had been erected, and a number of bungalows had been put up of various sizes for the officers and petty staff in the beautiful gardens adjoining the old palace; in one of those dwellings, a small and compact one, nearest to the barracks, but screened from view by creeping plants and the out spreading branches of some magnificent gold Mohur trees, sat, or rather reclined in a luxurious easy chair, a young man apparently about six and twenty, remarkably good looking with an open and intelligent countenance, a fair complexion with eyes of the deepest blue, and rich brown wavy hair; the golden chevrons on the sleeves of a scarlet jacket which had been thrown carelessly over the back of a lounge, denoted his rank that of Quarter-master Sergeant, for such was the position held by Herbet Grey in his Regiment. He was puffing away a few clouds of fragrant tobacco through the velvet snake-ed handsome glass silver-mounted hooka, when he was disturbed by some one entering the veranda. "Who is there," enquired Herbert, half rising as the tall handsome figure of Walter Cressingham in the uniform of a color-sergeant advanced through the open door way. "Oh, is that you Walter, come in old fellow, how are you, what's the news? I see you have the order book: Do we march on Friday, or is it postponed until Monday, as I anticipated?"

"Neither the one nor the other," replied

Cressingham, throwing himself at full length on the lounge before alluded to. "Neither, but something, I fancy, will suit you much better," said he, glancing around the comfortably furnished apartment. "The order for marching has been countermanded; a new Regiment has arrived from Europe, and they are to take the place of the one we were to relieve at Dessa, and we are to remain here for the next two years; and if all be true that I have heard, before that period arrives you will receive your commission as Lieut. and Quarter-master."

"Well, by Jove, that is news indeed; for to tell the truth I do not care to leave here at present, it is a pleasant station and I have snug quarters, and if I only had some little divinity in petticoates to aid me in whiling away the leisure hours and to keep the servants in order, I should be quite contented to wait for the promotion you were talking about; but one might as well expect a Major Generalship as a wife in this part of the world, for I do not believe there is an available female within five hundred miles of the station;—beautiful country is it not?"

"And if there were," rejoined his companion, without apparently noticing the fling at the country, "and if there were, nothing under the rank of a commission would have the least chance; but, however, be that as it may, I must be off to my company and promulgate the orders;" rising as he spoke to depart.

"Wait a little, my dear fellow, I must go and speak to the Quarter-master about unpacking the stores, and if you will take a glass of brandy, Pannee, while I am dressing, I will walk up to the Barrack with you."

Herbert was not long at his toilet, and then taking a little of the *eau-de-vie*, for which the good news was a sufficient excuse, the two friends passed out together.

The following afternoon as Herbert Grey was returning from his stores, he was accosted by an orderly with, "Sir, Sergeant Cressingham says he would feel obliged if you would go over to his room after evening parade, he wishes to see you particularly."

"Very good Green, tell him I will call and see him; is there any thing the matter?"

"Not that I am aware of, but he received

a letter from Europe this morning, and he appears out of spirits ever since," observed the soldier, saluting as he moved off.

According to promise Herbert paid his friend a visit during the evening. On entering he found Walter seated at a small table covered with writing materials, an open letter lay before him, and from the numerous pieces of torn paper lying around him on the floor, it was evident that he had been trying to frame a suitable answer without success. After the usual salutations, Walter proceeded to give his reasons for sending for him.

"Herbert," said he, "I have requested your presence for advice and assistance on a subject of the utmost importance. I do not remember that I ever mentioned to you any portion of my early history: to be brief, my father was a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy and was killed several years ago in an engagement with some Pirates off one of the West India Islands; at his death he left a widow and two children to be provided for out of the small income of his rank allowed by Government. I was then about fifteen and my sister ten years of age. After the loss of my father my mother and sister went to reside in a small cottage on the sea coast in the South of England, but I was kept at school near London. My aunt, my mother's sister, a widow lady with a small annuity, kindly paid for my education; there I remained until I was eighteen, when my aunt died; I then had to leave school, and as I was unfit for any trade and having no interest to procure a profession or an appointment abroad, I entered the service and joined this Regiment. The rest you know. This morning I received the announcement of my mother's death. This from long illness and other causes I have been led to expect for some time past; but the unhappy position my poor sister is left in, is to me a cause of great anxiety and uneasiness—how I am to relieve her from her present embarrassment and care for her future welfare, is that for which I have sought your friendly council and assistance—read her letter, it will explain matters better than I can."

Herbert took the letter in silence and moving to an open window read as follows: