

noiseless as possible; but the Colonel's dressing-room opened into the drawing-room, his bedroom opened into that, and all the doors and windows were open to court the air.

'Who's there?' said the Colonel from his pillow.

'Tis O'Reilly, sir. I ask your pardon, sir; but I heard that the mistress was not well. She'll be apt to want the reclining-chair, sir; and 'twas damaged in the unpacking. I got the screws last night, but I was busy soldiering till too late; so I come in this morning, for Smith's no good at a job of the kind at all. He's a butcher to his trade.'

'Mrs. Jones is much obliged to you for thinking of it, O'Reilly.'

'Tis an honor to oblige her, sir. I done it sound and secure. 'Tis as safe as a rock; but I'd like to nail a bit of canvas on from the porch to the other side of the hut, for shelter, in case she'd be sitting out to taste the air and see the troops go by. 'Twill not take me five minutes, if the hammering wouldn't be too much for the mistress. 'Tis a hot day for certain, till the guns bring the rain down.'

'Put it up if you've time.'

'I will, sir. I left your sword and gloves on the kitchen-table, sir; and I told Smith to water the rose before the sun's on to it.'

With which O'Reilly adjusted the cushions of the invalid-chair, and having nailed up the bit of canvas outside, so as to form an impromptu veranda, he ran back to his quarters to put himself into marching order for the Field Day.

The Field Day broke into smiles of sunshine too early to be lasting. By breakfast-time the rain came down without waiting for the guns; but those most concerned took the changes of weather cheerfully, as soldiers should. Rain damages uniforms, but it lays dust; and the dust of the Sandy Slopes was dust indeed!

After a pelting shower the sun broke forth again, and from that time on the weather was 'Queen's weather,' and Asholt was at its best. The sandy Camp lay girdled by a zone of the verdure of early summer, which passed by miles of distance, through exquisite gradations of many blues, to meet the soft threatenings of the changeable sky. Those lowering and yet tender rain-clouds which hover over the British Isles, guardian spirits of that scantily recognized blessing—a temperate climate; Naiads of the waters over the earth, whose caprices betwixt storm and sunshine fling such beauty upon a landscape as has no parallel except in the common simile of a fair face quivering between tears and smiles.

Smiles were in the ascendant as the regiments began to leave their parade-grounds, and the surface of the Camp (usually quiet, even to dullness) sparkled with movement. Along every principal road the color and glitter of marching troops rippled like streams, and as the band of one regiment died away another broke upon the excited ear.

At the outlets of the Camp eager crowds waited patiently in the dusty hedges to greet favorite regiments, or watch for personal friends amongst the troops; and on the

ways to the Sandy Slopes every kind of vehicle, from a dray to a donkey-cart, and every variety of pedestrian, from an energetic tourist carrying a field-glass to a more admirable energetic mother carrying a baby, disputed the highway with cavalry in brazen breastplates, and horse artillery whose gallant show was drowned in its own dust.

Eady Jane's visitors had expressed themselves an anxious not to miss anything, and troops were still pouring out of the Camp when the Master of the House brought his skittish horses to where a 'block' had just occurred at the turn to the Sandy Slopes.

What the shins and toes of the visitors endured whilst that lot of troops of all arms disengaged itself and streamed away in gay and glittering lines, could only have been concealed by the supreme powers of endurance latent in the weaker sex; for with the sight of every fresh regiment Leonard changed his plans for his own future career, and with every change he forgot a fresh promise to keep quiet, and took by storm that corner of the carriage which for the moment offered the best point of view.

Suddenly, through the noise and dust, and above the dying away of conflicting bands into the distance, there came another sound—a sound unlike any other—the skirling of the pipes; and Lady Jane sprang up and put her arms about her son, and bade him watch for the Highlanders, and if Cousin Alan looked up as he went past to cry 'Hurrah for Bonny Scotland!'

For this sound and the sight—the bagpipes and the Highlanders—a sandy-faced Scotch lad on the tramp to Southampton had waited for an hour past, frowning and freckling his face in the sun, and exasperating a naturally dour temper by reflecting on the probable pride and heartlessness of folk who wore such soft complexions and pretty clothes as the ladies and the little boy in the carriage on the other side of the road.

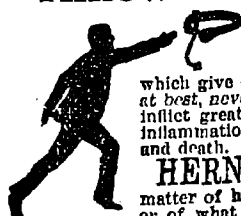
But when the skirling of the pipes cleft the air his cold eyes softened as he caught sight of Leonard's face, and the echo that he made to Leonard's cheer was caught up by the good-humored crowd, who gave the Scotch regiment a willing ovation as it swung proudly by. After which the carriage moved on, and for a time Leonard sat very still. He was thinking of Cousin Alan and his comrades; of the tossing plumes that shaded their fierce eyes; of the swing of kilt and sporran with their unfettered limbs of the rhythmic tread of their white feet and the fluttering ribbons on the bagpipes; and of Alan's handsome face looking out of his most becoming bravery.

The result of his meditations Leonard announced with his usual lucidity—

'I am Scotch, not Irish though O'Reilly is the nicest man I ever knew. But I must tell him that I really cannot grow up to an Owld Soldier, because I mean to be a young Highland officer, and look at ladies with an eye like this—and carry my sword so!'

(To be continued.)

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