

crystallized themselves into a motive for a story, and, without delay, I set myself to work upon it. My boy was about six weeks old when the manuscript was finished; and one evening, as we sat before a comfortable fire in our sitting-room, with the curtains drawn and the soft lamp lighted, and the baby sleeping soundly in the adjoining chamber, I read the story to my wife.

When I had finished, my wife arose, and threw herself into my arms. "I was never so proud of you," she said, her glad eyes sparkling, "as I am at this moment. That is a wonderful story! It is, indeed! I am sure it is just as good as 'His Wife's Deceased Sister.'"

As she spoke these words, a sudden and chilling sensation crept over us both. All her warmth and fervour, and the proud and happy glow engendered within me by this praise and appreciation from one I loved, vanished in an instant. We stepped apart, and gazed upon each other with pallid faces. In the same moment the terrible truth had flashed upon us both:

This story was as good as "His Wife's Deceased Sister!"

We stood silent. The exceptional lot of Barbel's super-pointed pins seemed to pierce our very souls. A dreadful vision rose before me of an impending fall and crash, in which our domestic happiness should vanish, and our prospects for our boy be wrecked just as we had begun to build them up.

My wife approached me, and took my hand in hers, which was as cold as ice. "Be strong and firm!" she said. "A great danger threatens us, but you must brace yourself against it. Be strong and firm!"

I pressed her hand, and we said no more that night.

The next day I took the manuscript I had just written, and carefully folded it in stout wrapping paper. Then I went to a neighbouring grocery store, and bought a small strong tin box, originally intended for biscuit, with a cover that fitted tightly. In this I placed my manuscript; and then I took the box to a tinsmith, and had the top fastened on with hard solder. When I went home I ascended into the garret, and brought down to my study a ship's cash box, which had once belonged to one of my family who was a sea-captain. This box was very heavy, and firmly bound with iron, and was secured by two massive locks. Calling my wife, I told her of the contents of the tin case, which I then placed in the box; and having shut down the heavy lid, I doubly locked it.

"This key," said I, putting it in my pocket, "I shall throw into the river when I go out this afternoon."

My wife watched me eagerly, with a pallid and firm-set countenance, but upon which I could see the faint glimmer of returning happiness.

"Wouldn't it be well," she said, "to secure it still further by sealing-wax and pieces of tape?"

"No," said I, "I do not believe that any one will attempt to tamper with our prosperity. And now my dear," I continued in an impressive voice, "no one but you and, in the course of time, our son shall know that this manuscript exists. When I am dead, those who survive me may, if they see fit, cause this box to be split open, and the story published. The reputation it may give my name cannot harm me then."

FROM the *Fortnightly Review* for January we quote portions of a very interesting and timely paper entitled "Fire-Discipline," by Mr. Archibald Forbes. It is valuable as calling attention to the defects of the modern system of military training, which inculcates the principle of "cover at all risks."

FIRE-DISCIPLINE.

The compound which I have taken as the title for this paper is the German expression for that conduct of the soldier under the stress of actual battle which is expected from him as the crowning result of assiduous moral and professional training. It is fire-discipline that is the grand test of true soldierhood, not dapper marching on the parade, not smartness in picking up dressing, not ramrod-like setting up, polished buttons, and spotless accoutrements. These all have their value, not, however, as results, but as contributories; they are among the means that help to the all-important end, that when the bullets are humming and the shells are crashing the soldier shall be a composed, alert, disciplined unit of a mighty whole whose purpose is victory. The soldier of the great Frederick's era was a machine. Moltke's man is trained with this distinction between his predecessor and himself, that he shall be a machine endowed with, and expected to exercise, the faculty of intelligence. But his intelligence must help toward, not interfere with, that discipline which must be to him a second nature.

My own belief, founded on some experience of divers nationalities in war time, is that most men are naturally cowards. I have the fullest belief in the force of the colonel's retort on his major. "Colonel," said the major, in a hot fire, "you are afraid; I see you tremble!" "Yes, sir," replied the colonel, "and if you were as afraid as I am you would run away!" I have the firmest conviction that in cold blood the mass of us would prefer the air quiet rather than whistling with bullets. Most men are like the colonel of the dialogue—they display bravery because in the presence of their comrades and of the danger they are too great cowards to evince poltroonery. Thus the average man made a capital soldier in the old shoulder-to-shoulder days. British yokels, British jail-birds, German handicraftsmen, German bawlers, French peasants, and French artisans, were all pretty much alike made creditable "cannon-fodder." They would all march into fire and thole its sting, each man's right and left comrade re-acting on him and his rear file supporting at once and blocking him. In the fire the national idiosyncrasies developed themselves. The "funk" zone, so to speak, had been traversed, and the Briton marched on steadfastly, the German advanced with slower step, the Russian stood still doggedly, and the Frenchman spurted into a run with a yell. When the blood began to flow and the struck men went down, the passion of the battle became the all-absorbing question. And so, whether by greater or less steadfastness, or greater or less dash, the battle was won or lost. Till the culminating point, no man was ever thrown wholly upon his own individuality, or ever lost the consciousness of public opinion as represented by his comrades.

"Shoulder to shoulder" is dead, and its influences have died with it, but in the new days of the "swarm attack" human nature remains unchanged. The soldier of to-day has to wrestle with or respond to his own individuality; public opinion is separated from him by an interval of several paces. He is tried by a much higher test than in the old close-formation days. And I know, because I have seen, that he often fails in the higher morale which his wider scope of individuality exacts of him if he is to be efficient. Herein lies the weak point of the new method of fighting. Cover is enforced, and while physical contact is lost, the moral touch is impaired. The officer gives the forward signal, but the consequences of not obeying it do not come home with so swift vividness to the reluctant individual man. He is behind cover, having obeyed the imperative instructions of his drill master. How dear is that cover! he thinks, and what a fiendish air torture that is into which he must uprear himself! So he lies still, at least awhile, and his own particular wave goes on and leaves him behind. He may join the next, or he may still lie. It is a great temptation; human nature is weak, and life is sweet.

The German military authorities understand their people, and they know the process which men undergo in being inured to war. Therefore it is that they do not enforce resort to "cover" with so much solicitude as I have noticed our officers do. They know that in every company there are men who will "lie" if allowed too great independence of individual action; and "cover at all risks" impairs every link in the chain of supervision. Again, they know that it is good for soldiers to die a little occasionally. The dead, of course, are "out of it;" but then death encourages the solid truth. It may be written down as an axiom that fire-discipline unaccompanied

with casualties is weak. I remember standing with a German general before Metz watching a skirmish. The German battalion engaged happened to consist chiefly of young soldiers, and they were not very steady. The old general shrugged his shoulders and observed, "Dey vant to be a little shot; dey vill do better next time." All young soldiers want to be a "little shot;" and it is only by exposing them somewhat, instead of coddling them for ever behind cover, as if cover, not victory, were the aim of the day's work, that this experience can befall them. All soldiers are the better of being "blooded;" they never attain purposeful coolness till they have acquired a personal familiarity with blood and death.

Our catastrophe at Isandlwana was due partly to the error of employing loose formation against great masses of bold men, whom a biting fire would deter no whit from advancing; but, in the end, from the scared inability to redeem this error by a rapid, purposeful resort to close formation in square or squares. Once the loose fringe of men dodging for cover was impinged on, all was over save the massacre. The test of fire-discipline failed whenever the strain on it became severe. The men had worked up to their skirmishing lessons to the best of their ability; when masterful men brushed aside the result of those lessons, there was no moral stamina to fall back upon, no consuetude of resource to be as a second nature. A resolute square formed round an ammunition waggon might have made a defence that would have lasted at least until Lord Chelmsford came back from his straggling excursion; but no man who saw how the dead lay on that ghastly field could persuade himself into the belief that there had been any attempt at a rally. The only fragment of good that came out of the Isandlwana catastrophe was the resolution, in any and every subsequent encounter, to show the Zulus a solid front; and the retrospect of Isandlwana infused a melancholy into the success of Ulundi, where the most furious onslaughts recoiled from the firm face of the British square.

The Majuba Hill affair was simply a worse copy of Isandlwana. There was no methodised fire-discipline. It has been urged as the lesson of Majuba Hill that the British soldier should have more careful instruction in marksmanship. Probably enough, that would do him good—it could not do him harm; but it was not because he was a bad marksman that Majuba Hill was so discreditable a reverse. It was because he is so much a creature of cover and of dodging that he went all abroad when he saw a real live enemy standing up in front of him at point-blank range. It may be contended that there were fire-seasoned soldiers who participated in this unfortunate business. Yes; but these, with no stronger morale to begin with, because of their early training in assiduous "cover" tactics, had suffered in what morale they might have possessed because of previous reverses. One regiment was represented on that hill-top which had not participated in those reverses, and was indeed fresh from successes in Afghanistan. But Afghan fighting is but a poor school in which to acquire prompt, serene self-command when, in old Havelock's phrase, the colour of the enemy's moustaches is visible. It was only once, or at most twice, when the Afghan did not play the dodging game. He does not care to look his enemy full in the face, and he tries all he can to prevent his enemy from having the opportunity to look him in the face. Fire-discipline of an alert yet sustained character was not to be learned among the rocks and stones of Afghanistan. When the adventurous Boer breasted the crest of the Majuba he and the British soldier confronted each other at close quarters. It was no time for long range shooting, it was simply the time for fire-discipline of the readiest practical order to make its effect felt. I imagine Briton and Boer staring one at the other in a perturbed moment of mutual disquietude. Who should the sooner pull himself together and take action on returning presence of mind? The Boer had the better nerve; to use the American expression, he was quicker on the draw. And then, for lack of fire-discipline, for want of training to be cool, and to keep their heads within close view of a hostile muzzle, the British went to pieces in uncontrollable scares, and the sad issue was swift to be consummated.

The influence of the "get to cover" tactics have made itself apparent, if we care to read between the lines, in numberless pettier instances during our recent little wars. The indiscriminate bolt of a picket may seem a small thing, and it will happen now and then in all armies, but when it occurs frequently it is the surest evidence of a feeble morale. It has happened too often of late in British armies, and I trace its prevalence, which I do not regard as too strong a word, to the lack of fire-discipline brought about by the "cover at any price" training.

Tel-el-Kebir furnishes an incidental illustration of our shortcoming in fire-discipline, which, as I contend, has its main cause in the effects of too stringent urgency to cover. Wolseley showed that discernment which is one of his most valuable characteristics, in refraining from submitting his soldiers to the strain of a "swarm attack" up to the Egyptian position in fair daylight; and in choosing instead, as a minor risk, a night advance, spite of all its contingencies of hazard, with the hoped-for culmination of a surprise at daybreak. The issue proved his wisdom; and an episode of that issue, set forth with soldierly frankness by Sir Edward Hamley, must have given him a thrill of relief that he had conserved the spirit of his troops for the final dash, without exposing them to a previous ordeal of fire. That dash, made while yet the gloom of the dying night lay on the sand, General Hamley tells us, was 150 yards long, and it cost the brigade that carried it out 200 casualties ere the Egyptian entrenchment was crowned. It was done with the first impulse; no check was let stop the onward impetus of the *élan*; fire-discipline was not called into exercise at all. The whole of the first line pressed on into the interior of the enemy's position. The second line followed, but Hamley, with a wise prescience, "stopped the parts of it that were nearest to him as they came up, wishing to keep a support in hand which would be more readily available than such as the brigade in rear could supply." It was well he did this thing; but for his doing of it, the shadow of a far other issue to Tel-el-Kebir lies athwart the following quotation: "The light was increasing every moment; our own men had begun to shoot immediately after entering the entrenched position, and aim could now be taken. The fight was at its hottest, and how it might end was still doubtful, for many of our advanced troops had recoiled even to the edge of the entrenchment" (beyond which they had penetrated 200 or 300 yards into the interior); "but there I was able to stop them, and reinforcing them with the small body I had kept in hand (who had remained, I think, in the ditch) I sent in all together, and henceforth they maintained their ground." They recoiled, and they recoiled by reason of their weakness in fire-discipline. It is a fair query—How severe was the strain? As regards its duration, but a few moments' fighting sufficed to bring about the recoil; that is made clear by the circumstance that the supporting brigade, following close as it did, was yet not up in time to redress the dangerous situation. In regard to its severity, General Hamley permits himself to use language of the most vivid character. "A hotter fire it is impossible to imagine." The brigade was "enclosed in a triangle of fire." "The enemy's breech-loaders were good, his ammunition abundant, and the air was a hurricane of bullets, through which shells from the valley tore their way." "The whole area was swept by a storm of bullets." Stronger words could not have been used by an enthusiastic war correspondent gushing his level best about his first skirmish; General Hamley's expressions are fuller-volumed than those used by the compilers of the German staff chronicle in describing that Titanic paroxysm, the climax of Gravelotte. What stupendous damage, then, did this hottest of all hot fires, this hurricane of bullets effect? The casualties of the whole division reached a total of 258 killed and wounded. Of these "nearly 200," General Hamley distinctly states, occurred exclusively in the first brigade in the rush up to the entrenchment. If we assume that the second brigade had no losses at all, and that the whole balance of casualties occurred to the first brigade when in "the triangle of fire," the fall of some sixty men out of 2,800 was hardly a loss to justify the "recoil even to the edge of the entrenchment" of troops possessed even of a moderate amount of fire-discipline. General Hamley explains that but for the darkness and the too high aim of the enemy, "the losses would have been tremendous." In other words, if an actual loss of two per cent., and the turmoil of the hottest fire imaginable, yet fortunately aimed over their heads, caused the troops "to recoil even to the edge of the entrenchment," the "tremendous losses" that a better-aimed fire would have produced, it seems pretty evident, would have caused them to "recoil" so much farther that Tel-el-Kebir would