

## THE LAST PAGES OF AN OFFICER'S DIARY.

*(Published by Fleming H. Revell Co., New York).*

OCTOBER 4TH.—A fine morning, luckily, as it promises to be a busy day. After breakfast must go and see Dr. Tintern at half-past ten, as I appointed. Hope he will not keep me long. Then to the City to see my broker about the investing of that two thousand, and then back in a cab, as hard as I can come, to Tattersall's, to have a bid for the two horses I liked so much yesterday afternoon. What a capital place Tattersall's is for an afternoon lounge! The first one will be on about twelve. At four in the afternoon I have to see about that new gun, it was to be ready then; and at eight I am due for dinner at the Rag with Joe Puntton, and that horrid dance in Grosvenor place afterwards.

4 p.m.—A regular facer.

Is it any use keeping a diary longer? After doing it for twenty years may as well finish it out. What a fool I was to go and see Tintern! Why could I not let matters alone? If I have lost twenty odd pounds of flesh, many a man would have given his eyes to do the same. It began in June, and here we are in October, and I can't say I feel bad. Tire perhaps a bit easier than I did. However, it is just like my luck. I never thought for a moment there was anything serious the matter, till Tintern asked me if I had any near relatives—after my telling him I was a widower without children—and when I said, "Not a soul," I half began from his face to guess. But a month! If he had said a couple of years it would have been different. What can a fellow do in a month? Fact is that I fancied I had taken it rather well. Wished him good-day, and paid him his two guineas for his first visit, as if he had recommended me to have a tooth out. Yes, I really believe I should not have taken it so well if he had simply told me I must go for the winter to the South of France, and give up this season's hunting! But a month more only to live! Well, I am glad I took it so well before Tintern. It was not really till I got into a hansom, and was asked "Where to?" that I began to realize it. I was going, of course, to have said "Bank," but what is the use of investing money for a month? Then I thought of Tattersall's, but no man in his senses would buy a hunter for a

month. If only I had never gone near a doctor, I should have gone down to Market Harborough as usual, and gone off, I suppose, on a sudden without any warning. I wish with all my heart I had been left in the dark about it. Never mind, John H——, you have taken a good many awkward fences, and you will have to take this, the last, like a man. The only question is, what is to be done to prepare? First, I must make a will. To whom am I to leave my money? Second, I must make the best use of my month as regards the future. I cannot say that I fear death. At least I thought not. That time in Afghanistan, when I was so nearly put out jumping over that wall, and had to defend myself with an unloaded revolver and a broken sword, I cannot say I flunked. Or, again, when that tiger so nearly got me—but meeting death in a certain time, by yourself—well, it is unsettling.

I may as well go and dine with Joe to-night, but I will not go to the dance. It is not so much death as what comes after death. That is the point. I suppose the proper thing to do would be to buy a Bible? And now they don't cost much. A month, in one sense, is a longish time. I mean, if one had made a bad book over the Derby, and had a month to hedge in, one could do a good deal; but somehow this is different. Fact is, it is not so easy to hedge in this race though there is a month. The race is all but over, only the last fence just coming in sight, and then the winning-post. I will not write any more.

10 p.m.—Dinner was a failure! As soon as ever I got into the club I saw a vast change had occurred; a gulf had come between me and the rest. Old General Johnstone was full about spending the winter at Rome; what did that matter to me? Sharpley was off to India directly; would I promise to write occasionally? Why, before he lands in Bombay I shall land in ——. Yes, where? That is the point. Why had I not bought that bay mare at Tattersall's? It is enough to drive a fellow mad. Upon my word, if it was not that fellows would come bothering one with their sympathy, I would put a notice up in the club. Cookson was bothering me about spending Christmas again with him this year in Paris. I did not want to tell him a lie; but one can't well explain matters, and if I

say, "Yes; if I am alive," there will be a kind of feeling that I was scored off, so to speak. Think I shall go away, but where? Joe wanted to know why I did not have a second opinion; tried, of course, to make out that Tintern had made a mistake. Fact is, I am not in such a hurry about a second opinion. There is just a chance Tintern is wrong but suppose the second man confirms what he says, then my last chance of escape is knocked from under me. Everybody has to die; what do they do when they are told they are dying? Joe said, "Must say you take it well;" but in reality I do not. Of course, I will die game; but how to make the best of my few weeks, that is the question. I am now fifty-two, hence I have lived 624 months. How am I to live to the best advantage the next, and last, one?

OCTOBER 5TH.—For the first time for many years the paper has come and I have not even opened it. The Money Market, latest odds, all has lost its interest. For weeks I have been busy trying to make my usual autumn purchases of horses; scanned every advertisement. Now I do not care a penny if every good hunter in the land is coming to the hammer. I would not walk across the street to see the best nag ever foaled. Some men would say a short life but a merry one. I could not be merry if I tried.

3 o'clock.—Now for a short spell before I begin reading. It has been very hard to resist taking a second opinion. Twice I have found myself in Harley Street. Why do I resist? For the same reason, I suppose, that a man hesitates to fire off his last cartridge or a castaway to eat his last biscuit. How have I spent the day so far? By thinking, thinking, thinking "What priced Bible, sir?" What an idiotical question. "Calf or morocco?" However, I am sorry I lost my temper, hardly in character, too, when you are buying a Bible. I do not think I have opened a Bible since my poor wife died. If she were only alive now, how different it would be! I wish I was as safe of heaven as she. Poor thing, how she did plead with me to lead a new life! And I meant to, God knows I did! But gradually things went back pretty much as they were before, and now it seems downright mean to try and promise to spend your last month out of