

wore and disclosed their pale blue hussar jacket, were all encased in what was (for the purpose of this peculiar combat) a not inefficient suit of armour; for the thick, coarse, long grey outercoats which they wore gave excellent protection against the cuts of an Englishman's sabre, and was not altogether incapable of even defeating a thrust; whilst the shako was of such strength and quality as to be more effectual than a helmet against the edge of the sword.

In such skill as is gained by the sword exercise there was not perhaps much disparity between the combatants; but the practice of our service up to that time had failed to provide the troopers with those expedients of fence which he would be needing when assailed in the direction of his bridle-arm; and this of course was a somewhat imperilling defect for a horseman who had to combat in a crowd of enemies, and was liable to be attacked on all sides.

In some parts of the column the combatants were so closely locked as to be almost unable, for a while, to give the least movement to their chargers; and wherever the red-coated horseman thus found himself inwedge and surrounded by assailants, it was only by the swift-circling "moulinet," by an almost ceaseless play of his sabre whirling round and round overhead, and by seizing now and then an occasion for a thrust or a cut, that he was able to keep himself among the living; but the horse, it seems, during these stationary fights, instinctively sought and found shelter for his head by bending it down, and leaving free scope for the sabres to circle and clash overhead. At other places—for the most part perhaps in those lanes of space which were constituted by the usual "intervals" and distances intervening in the mass—there was so much more freedom of movement that groups of as many as ten or twelve Russians who had fallen out of their ranks would be here and there seen devoting themselves to a common purpose by confederating themselves, as it were, against particular foes, and endeavouring to overwhelm the knot of two or three Greys or Inniskillingers which they deemed to be the most in their power. Where this occurred, the two or three redcoats, more less separated from each other, would be seen striving to force their way through the masses before them, and attended on their rear by a band of assailants who did not, most commonly, succeed in overpowering the tall horsemen, but persisted nevertheless in hanging upon them. Our troopers, thus encompassed, strove hard, as may well be supposed, to cut down the foes within reach; but in general the sabre seemed almost to rebound like a cudgel from the thick grey outer-coat of the Russian horsemen; and, upon the whole, there was resulting as yet but little carnage from this singular example of a fight between a heavy column of halted cavalry and the knots of the taller horsemen who were riving it deeper and deeper.

With but few exceptions, the Scots Greys were of the race which the name of their regiment imports; and, from a conjuncture of circumstances which must needs be of rare occurrence in modern times, the descendants of the Covenanters had come upon an hour when troopers could once more be striving in that kind of close fight which marked the period of our religious wars—in that kind of close fight which withdraws the individual soldier from his fractional state of existence, and exalts him into a self depending power. A Scots Grey, in the middle of our own century, might have no enrag-

ing cause to inflame him, but he was of the blood of those who are warriors by temperament, and not because of mere reasons, and he, too, had read his Bible. Men who saw the Scots Grey in this close fight of Scarlett's, travel out of humanity's range to find beings with which to compare him. His long-pent up fire, as they say, had so burst forth as to turn him into a demon of warlike wrath; but it must not be inferred from such speech that he was under the power of that "blood frenzy" of which we shall afterwards see an example, and the truth can be satisfied by acknowledging that, as his fathers before him had ever been accustomed to rage in battle, so he too, in this later time, was seized and governed by the passion of fight. When numbers upon numbers of docile obedient Russians crowded round a Scot of this quality, and beset him on all sides, it did not of necessity result that they had the ascendant. Whilst his right arm was busy with the labour of sword against sword he could so use his bridle-hand as to be fastening its grip upon the long-coated men of a milder race, and tearing them out of their saddles.

Engaged in this ceaseless toil of fighting for life as well as for victory, the Greys and the Inniskillingers were hardly so self-conscious as to be afterwards able to speak at all surely of the degree of confidence with which they maintained in this singular combat of the few against many; but of those who observed from a distance, there was one who more swiftly and more surely than others could apprehend the features of a still pending conflict. Almost from the first, Lord Raglan perceived that our horsemen, though scant in numbers, and acting singly or in small knots, still showed signs of having dominion over the mass that they had chosen to invade. Whether the cause of this ascendant be traced to the greater height and longer reach of horsemen, to the unspeakable advantage of being the assailants, to the inborn pride and warlike temperament of our men, or, finally, to all these causes united, the actual result was, that the redcoats, few as they were, seemed to ride through the crowd like sure tyrants. The demeanour of the Russian horsemen was not unlike what might have been expected. Gazing down as they did from a slope, even those who were not in the foremost ranks could see the exceeding scantiness of the force which had made bold to attack them, and accordingly they seemed to remain steady and free from alarms of the kind which seize upon masses; but still the individual trooper who chanced to be so placed in the column as to have to undergo the assaults of one of the Scots Greys or Inniskilling Dragoons seemed to own himself personally overmatched, and to meet the encounter almost hopelessly, like a brave man oppressed by the strong. Without apparently doubting—for there was no sign of panic—that overwhelming numbers must secure the general result, he yet found that, for the moment, those mere numbers could not give him the protection he needed, and he would so rein his charger, and so plant himself in his saddle, and so set his features, as to have the air of standing at bay. Of the objects surrounding our people whilst engaged in this closely-locked fight, none stamped themselves more vividly on their minds than those numberless cages of clenched teeth which met them wherever they looked.

From the time when the "there hundred" had fairly closed with the enemy, there was but little recourse to carbines or pistol; and the movement of the horses within the

column being necessarily slight, and on thick herbage, there resulted little sound from their tramp. The clash of sabres overhead had become so steady and ceaseless, and its sound so commingled with the jangle of cavalry accoutrements proceeding from thousands of horsemen, that upon the whole it was but little expressive of the numberless separate conflicts in which each man was holding to life with the strength of his own right arm.

In regard to the use made of their voices, there was a marked difference between our people and the Russian horseman. The islanders hurled out whilst they fought those blasts of malediction by which many of our people, in the act of hard striving, are accustomed to evoke their full strength; whilst the Russians in general fought without using articulate words. Nor, instead, did they utter any truculent theological yells, of the kind which, some few days later, were destined to be heard on the oatfield. They had not as yet been sanctified. It was not till the 4th of November that the army of the Czar underwent that fell act of consecration which whetted his people for the morrow, and prepared those strange shrieks of doctrinal hate which were heard on the ridges of Inkerman. But although abstaining from fierce yells, the grey-mantled horseman in general was not therefore mute. He sometimes evoked, whilst he fought, a deep, gurgling, long-drawn sound, close akin to an incoherent roar; or else—and this last was the predominant utterance—a sustained and continuous "zizz" of the kind that is made with clenched teeth; and to the ears of those who were themselves engaged in the fight, the aggregate of the sounds coming thus from the mouths of the Russians was like that of some factory in busy England, where numberless wheels hum and buzz. And meanwhile, from those masses of Russian horsemen who stood ranged in such parts of the column as to be unable to engage in bodily combat, there rose a low murmur of that indefinite kind which attests the presence of a crowd without disclosing its humour. As heard on the edge of the Chersonese, a mile and a half towards the west, the collective roar which ascended from this thicket of intermixed combatants had the unity of sound which belongs to the moan of a distant sea.

The sight of the enemy's cavalry deliberately wheeling in upon the rear of a British regiment kindled so vehement a zeal in the heart of the Royals, and so eager a desire to press instantly forward to the rescue, that there was no ceremonious preparation for a charge. A voice cried out "By God, the Greys are cut off! Gallop! gallop!" Then there broke from the Royals a cheer. Their trumpets sounded the gallop, and without for a moment halting, but endeavouring to "from line on the move," the regiment sprang hastily forward. Indeed, the movement of the first or right squadrons was so rapid that the left squadron could not perfectly come up with it, and the regiment made its attack in short echelon of squadrons. In this order, but with its ranks imperfectly formed, the regiment advanced at a gallop against the right flank and rear of the in-wheeling line. In spite of this onset, the Russian wing continued its wheeling movement so long as to become defenceless on its extreme right. At the near approach of the Royals, that outer part of the wheeling line which was the most immediately exposed to its assailants broke off from the rest; and then the horsemen

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