
FAMILY TRADITION

By W. PETT RIDGE.

I DON'T seem to remember, my dear grandson, very much about the Crimean War whilst it was going on. We lived then, you must know, on the south side of the Park (those were the palmy days of the Bickerstaffe family), and, as quite a little girl, I used to ride on a brown pony in Rotten Row. I fancy my mother had told Crimstone not to talk to me about the fighting, for when he met other grooms in charge of other young people he always winked and gave a jerk of his head in my direction before he started to talk with them in an undertone. My governess (who, I afterwards found, had lost a sweetheart in the Black Sea storm of November of fifty-four) sometimes cried, and when I asked the reason, blamed a persistent attack of earache. But when my papa came home during the winter of fifty-six with his empty right sleeve pinned across his chest, then mamma released everyone from bonds of secrecy. My governess explained details with the aid of the globe set near the window in the school-room; and, having become engaged to the son of a second-hand furniture dealer in Brompton Road, was able to teach geography and impart history without tears.

"Miss Henrietta," she said, answering one of my questions, "if you ask me again why God allows men to fight each other I shall have to be very cross with you, and stand you in the corner with your face to the wall. You will please write out, on your slate, the word Dardanelles ten times, and I shall expect to find no mistakes in spelling."

I recollect that my papa bought for me at the Soho Bazaar in Oxford Street a box of wooden soldiers, and when mamma remonstrated with him, saying that a china doll would have been more appropriate, he laughed and said it was a pity I was not a boy, but he thanked goodness for the fact that I was a Bickerstaffe.