

"He fell into the cab."

THE STEEL TRACK.

BY HAROLD BINDLOSS.

(Continued from page 295.)

IT was bitterly cold, and the tossing flakes hid the hotel when the boys crossed the lines; but presently a bell began to toll, and a dazzling beam pierced the snow. Dawson knew it came from a powerful American head-lamp, and jumped back as the shadowy locomotive rolled past.

'It's Tom's machine,' Jake remarked. 'She's stopping. We'll go along and see if he can help.'

When they reached the engine, they found their friend, the fireman, standing on the line with an oil-can in his hand.

'Are you going down the track after all?' Jake asked hopefully.

'Well,' said the fireman, 'we didn't expect to, but the snow's getting deep, and orders have come for us to pilot the Express freight until she's safe on the level run to the sea. She's coming along with a big load, and has got to make her time.'

'Then you could take us down in a corner of the cab. You'll have to stop for water at the flag-station tank.'

The fireman shook his head. 'I could not. Nobody's allowed on the Express freight; she's the Company's pet train, and if the bosses saw you in my cab, I'd certainly get "fired." If you want to hear talk that would make you jump, you ask the engineer.'

They argued with him, and by-and-by he began to hesitate. He was a good-humoured man, and they sometimes gave him a basket of fruit when his train stopped near the ranch.

'I can't let you get on board, but if you jump up after she starts, I guess the engineer wouldn't put you off,' he said. 'I'll tell you what to do, if you have grit enough. We shall pull out as soon as they couple us up to the express, but she won't start easy on the short up-grade, and she'll cross the switches about as fast as you can walk. Well, if you grab the rail on the back of the tender, you can jump up on the draw-bar frame, but you've got to make the cab before we reach the top. That's important: the Express freight stops for nothing after they let her go.'

Then the engineer looked out of the cab-window, and the boys drew back against the big driving-wheels.

When they walked past the back of the locomotive, Dawson studied the frame behind the tender. 'I suppose we could get up,' he said. 'It would be awkward if we slipped.'

'Very awkward,' Jake agreed. 'You don't want to slip.'

They went back to the hotel, and Dawson spent a trying half-hour by the stove. It was hard to keep his courage up to the right point, and he noticed that Jake did not talk much. On the whole, it was a relief when he heard a whistle and the growing throb of wheels. When they hurried out, a moving, fan-shaped beam quivered in the snow, brakes screamed, and a long row of half-seen cars rolled slowly past. The cars stopped, indistinct figures began to move about, and the boys, keeping back from the line, reached a clump of junipers near the tank. They waited, shivering in the bitter wind, and Dawson wondered when the train would start. He knew he would steal back to the hotel if it did not start soon, because his pluck was melting fast.

At length somebody shouted, and a lantern flashed. A bell tolled; there was a harsh clanging and grinding,

and he was dazzled by the blaze of the head-lamp as the front locomotive began to move. It looked enormous as, rocking and snorting, it came out of the snow. Then he pulled himself together, and seized a greasy rail high up on the tender. His hand slipped, but he found a hold for his foot, and scrambled up to a narrow ledge, where Jake joined him. They could not stop there without being seen by the man at the switches, and crawling round to the back of the tender, they tried to get their breath. Dawson's heart beat painfully, for although he had, so far, managed better than he thought, the worst was yet to come.

It would be impossible to hold on when the train got up speed. If they were not shaken off, they would soon get numb and fall between the engines. Dawson had heard that one could lie between the rails while a train passed over one, but he did not want to try. They must crawl forward to the cab-door along the slippery ledge as soon as the switches were passed, and it was obvious that they must get there while the train was climbing the short incline. It would be too late afterwards.

A man's shadowy figure came out of the snow, a lantern flashed, and the rocking of the engine got sharper. The man and his lantern vanished, and Jake touched Dawson. 'Get on a move!' he shouted. 'We have got to do it now.'

Dawson set his lips, and clinging to the hand-rail, crawled round the corner. Then he hesitated for a moment, and nearly fell off. Canadian locomotives, when burning soft coal, throw off clouds of black smoke, and the boy was smothered by sulphurous vapour. The smoke was thickened by driving snow, and showers of hot cinders beat upon his lowered head. He durst not look up, and he could not see, but he durst not stop; if he did not reach the cab in the next few minutes, he would be shaken off. He moved along blindly for a yard or two, and then something caught his long coat, and nearly pulled him off the ledge. He could not see what it was, but gasped with relief when he found that he was free, and afterwards learned that Jake, following close, had trodden on his coat.

The tender seemed very much longer than he had thought. He began to fear he could not reach the cab, and tried to see if there was any way of climbing up on top; but a smooth, high wall of iron plates ran up above his head. Besides, the snow and cinders beat his face, and he could not open his eyes properly. He went on, foot by foot, while the train gathered speed and the wind got stronger. There was no time to lose, but he could not go fast. His hands slipped on the rail, he was getting numbed, and he got a shock when the foot he advanced cautiously slipped down as if the ledge had broken off. Then, as he lifted his head, a light shone into his face, and he knew he had reached the cab. The door was shut, but he beat upon it while he swung to and fro, for, with one hand occupied, he could not hold on against the wind.

For some moments it looked as if nobody had heard him: his foot slipped off the ledge and he swung outwards, over the line. Then, as the engine rocked, he swung back and struck the door, which opened, and he fell into the cab. Jake plunged after him, and the engineer, turning with an exclamation, looked hard at both. Dawson lay gasping on the floor, and Jake sat on a block of coal, his strained wet face blackened by soot.

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THE STORY OF SOME ORDERS AND DECORATIONS.

By CONSTANCE M. FOOT.

V.—SOME ORDERS OF MERIT.

CROWNS, wreaths, ornaments for necks and arms, were the personal decorations employed by the ancients for the reward of military and athletic achievements—while, later on, the personal decorations (other than those of the Orders of Knighthood) in recognition of warlike services consisted of a collar, chain, or clasp, or of even a sword of honour.

The striking of medals to commemorate important events is also known to be a very ancient practice, while the wearing of them for decorative purposes was quite common in England in the reign of Henry VIII. These early medals were worn suspended round the neck by a chain or ribbon, or might even form an ornament for the hat, but the custom of bestowing them as an honour or reward to those who had rendered service to the State in time of war is of much later date. There are some who think that the first thus bestowed were the 'Armada' medals of Queen Elizabeth, while others consider that those issued specially for the Battle of Dunbar (1650) are the earliest of which we have any reliable record of their having been distributed in the army to officers and men alike, but it is not at all certain that either of these were really what, nowadays, we know as 'Campaign' medals, and it is generally thought that the first properly so called was the Waterloo medal issued in 1817.

Again, although Britain had a navy long before a standing army was even thought of, the custom of granting rewards to the navy by medals only dates a few reigns earlier to that in which they were given to the army. In the reign of William and Mary we find the sea service marked out for special reward, and an Act passed for this purpose in 1692 was carried into effect the same year, for we read that 'Queen Mary, upon receiving news of the victory of La Hogue, sent thirty thousand pounds to Portsmouth to be distributed amongst the men, and ordered medals to be struck as tokens of honour for the officers.' Naval medals were also bestowed in the reign of Queen Anne.

George II. certainly had a medal struck in 1746 in honour of the Battle of Culloden, but though during the long reign of his successor (George III.) the country was nearly always at war, and the navy had never before been brought into such a high state of efficiency, yet, for the first thirty years of his reign, no naval medals were awarded, the first being that given for Lord Howe's glorious victory at Ushant in 1794, when it was decided to create a naval medal and bestow it upon the admirals and captains of that time as well as upon those who might distinguish themselves in the future.

But it is to Queen Victoria that we are indebted for the larger number of medals struck to commemorate warlike events as well as deeds of exceptional gallantry in both services, and it is to her that, among many others, we owe that most glorious and highly coveted Order,

THE VICTORIA CROSS,

named after her, and instituted by Royal Warrant on June 29th, 1856, at the end of the Crimean War. The idea, we are told, originated with the late Prince Consort, and he is said to have designed the medal.

It was at first conferred only on sailors of the British Navy and soldiers of the British Army, but the Order has since been greatly extended, until now every grade and rank, and all branches of His Majesty's Forces, both British and Colonial, are eligible; even the native soldiers of the Indian Army (who had previously been ineligible) having been included in 1911.

Nothing but 'the merit of conspicuous bravery' gives a claim to this decoration, and this must be shown by 'some signal act of valour and devotion to their country performed in the presence of the enemy.' Non-military persons who have served as volunteers against an enemy are also eligible.

In the case of recipients not of commissioned rank the decoration carries with it a pension of ten pounds a year, and five pounds extra for each clasp, the latter being awarded for every additional act of exceptional bravery.

Possibly you imagine that this highly valued cross is made of gold and studded with precious stones—but nothing of the kind, it is very simple and plain in appearance, being a Maltese-shaped cross of bronze. It is purposely made of this material in order that its actual value should be as small as possible. In the centre is the royal crown surmounted by a lion, while on a scroll beneath are inscribed the simple words—which yet mean so much—'For Valour.' It hangs from a bar decorated with laurel, supported by the initial 'V,' the name, corps and rank of the recipient being placed on the back of the bar. The ribbon of the Order is dark blue for the Navy and crimson for the Army.

One of the first to win the Victoria Cross in the Crimean War was Major-General Sir Luke O'Connor, V.C., K.C.B., who died in the early part of 1915 at the age of eighty-three.

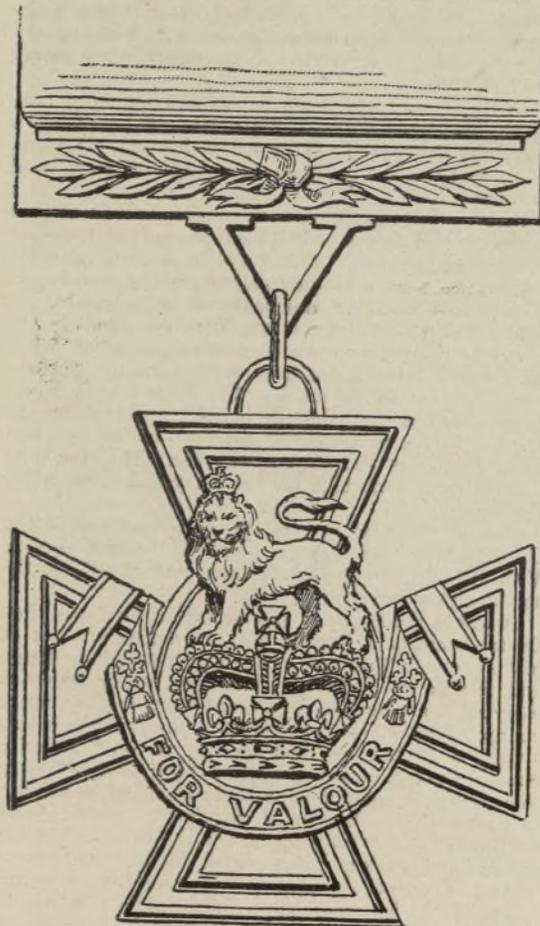
It was at the Battle of the Alma that Sir Luke, then Centre-Sergeant O'Connor, was chosen on account of his bravery to form one of the escort for the colours, and it was when the gallant young officer who was carrying the colour fell dead that O'Connor (the next in charge of it), though wounded at the same moment, struggled to his feet, and holding it aloft, proudly claimed the fort on behalf of the 'Royal Welsh.' After the capture, in spite of being badly wounded, he refused to part with the honour of carrying the colours, and continued to do so until the end of the battle. For his bravery and pluck he was awarded the Victoria Cross.

And to come to the present War, there are so many splendid V.C. heroes that it is difficult indeed to decide which to mention, for all classes have been represented in winning this most coveted of honours. The first officer to do so was Captain Francis Grenfell of the 9th Lancers, who, on August 24th, 1914, won the distinction for 'gallantry in action against unbroken infantry at Andregnies, Belgium, and for gallant conduct in assisting to save the guns of the 119th Battery, R.F.A., near Doubon the same day.' Twice after that the gallant Captain returned home badly wounded, finally meeting his death in the field in the May of 1915.

In the air, too, the V.C. has been won. It was in June, 1915, that Flight Sub-Lieutenant Warneford, of the Royal Naval Air Service, was awarded the Victoria Cross for destroying, single-handed, a German Zeppelin. With the anti-aircraft guns going off around him, he remained poised in the air in the neighbourhood of Ghent. In the early dawn he swooped down on the

enemy machine, destroying it by bomb fire. Being furiously bombarded he was obliged to descend in the enemy's country! But he made good his escape, bringing himself and his machine safely back to the base. It was an act of great daring, and it is sad to think that its hero was afterwards accidentally killed whilst flying.

Perhaps one of the most wonderful naval exploits in the present War was that which gained, for Lieutenant Norman Holbrook, the V.C. in December, 1914. It was



The Victoria Cross.

while in command of Submarine B 11 that he entered the Dardanelles and, in spite of the difficult current, dived his vessel under five rows of mines and torpedoed the Turkish battleship *Messudiyeh*, which was guarding the minefield. On one occasion he was actually under water for nine hours at a stretch, but nevertheless he succeeded in bringing the submarine safely back, though attacked by gunfire and torpedo-boats.

Space does not permit of mentioning more of the many gallant deeds which have won the V.C. in this great War, but, as we have said, all classes are represented—Territorials, midshipmen, seamen, drummers, bandsmen, even a brave piper, have alike earned the

honour. Nor must we forget the members of the Australian and New Zealand forces who have also won it by their splendid bravery and great bomb-throwing feats in Gallipoli. Speaking of Gallipoli reminds us, too, of Seaman George M. Sampson, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, the first seaman to win the Victoria Cross in the history of the decoration. He gained it for working all day under heavy fire, though seriously wounded, during the landing.

There are yet two others whose names cannot possibly be left out. One is the first Indian soldier ever to receive the V.C., Jemadar Mir Dast, who was awarded it for conspicuous bravery at Ypres; and the other, Captain Arthur Martin Leake, who has won this greatest of distinctions twice over, being, so far, the first and only man to whom a clasp (which represents the second Victoria Cross) has ever been granted since the Order was founded. He won the first cross in the Boer War for great and noble bravery, and the clasp was gained in November, 1914, for rescuing, under constant fire, numbers of wounded men lying close to the enemy's trenches.

All will surely agree, after reading but these few instances, that great as is the decoration, great and glorious indeed are the deeds that have won it.

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MEHDUM-KULY.

A Legend of the East.



On a certain day, the minstrels sat in the shadow of Mehdum-Kuly's tents, and the heart of Mehdum-Kuly, the Chief, rejoiced at the sound of their songs.

The sturdy warriors of the Tuka tribe were reclining around their Chief.

They did not approve of him. His father had been what they called a 'Ram'—that is, a great warrior. Mehdum-Kuly did not 'take after' his father. Far from it. Little cared he for the battle-cry; he preferred the songs of the minstrels to the horrid sounds of war, and, being young, he took pleasure in all kinds of innocent games and recreations.

Hence the black looks of the warriors. They could not understand their young Chief, who in their opinion was a sad coward. They said to one another that the glory of their tribe had gone down into the grave with his father.

Taking advantage of a pause in the sing-song, an old, wrinkled, white-haired warrior stood up and spoke his mind to Mehdum-Kuly.

'O son of our Ram-warrior Chief!' said the warrior, 'listen, I pray you, to the speech of the aged, and give heed to the counsel of the wise. Many brave men there are in the camp of the Tukas—men of muscle and nerve—who fear neither the glancing arrow nor the glittering spear. You, O, Mehdum-Kuly, are the Chief of our gallant tribe, yet where is your armour, where is your record of doughty deeds? You have none as yet, and for this reason the Persians jeer at us. Awake, then, Mehdum-Kuly! No longer give us cause for shame, no longer let men say that our Chief is a woman.'



"Dragging him backwards only just in time."

one who fears death, and loves not the strife of men.
Show yourself worthy of your noble father!"

Mehdum-Kuly rose from his couch to answer the old warrior.

'Every man,' he said, 'has his allotted task in this world. Must the bow be always bent, the arrow for ever on the wing? Must not even our hardy Tukas sometimes repose in order to keep up their strength?

My father was a man of war; I am a man of peace. Within my tents I would have men think and reason, and I love to hear our minstrels sing of the beauties of Nature, of the charms of our maidens. Are not these things better than slaughter?'

But in vain did Mehdum-Kuly seek to convince his men that 'Peace hath her victories no less than war.'

His speech angered the warriors. 'He is a shirker,' they muttered one to another. 'His words are nothing but running water, which gurgles over the pebbles and is gone.'

Even the young Chief's mother—who was called 'The Tigress of the Tukas'—reproached him.

All the company departed, leaving Mehdum-Kuly alone. Bitter was his grief because men thought him a coward. No longer, he said to himself, should they do so. He would take his gallant steed, Argamack, from his stall, and his arms from his tent; then he would ride forth to prove his courage. Should he fail to do so, he would return and submit himself to 'the stroke of the sharp sword,' which, according to the custom of his tribe, was the penalty of cowardice.

When the Chief announced his intention to his people they applauded loudly.

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With some difficulty (for he was not of a quarrelsome disposition), Mehdum-Kuly at last succeeded in finding some one to fight with. The man's name was Adyn. He was a brave fellow, but Mehdum-Kuly proved to be the stronger of the two. The Tuka Chief vanquished Adyn, bound him, and thought to lead him as a captive to the camp.

Wearied with the struggle, the victor flung himself down on a river-bank and fell into a deep sleep.

The river was swollen by recent heavy rains, and while the Chief slept the water came swirling over the bank, nearly touching the young warrior. Had it done so, he would have been swept into the raging flood. The prisoner, who lay further back, on safer ground, saw his captor's peril, and, bound though he was, came to the rescue. He rolled himself over and over until he reached Mehdum-Kuly, who he then seized with his teeth, dragging him backwards only just in time. The next instant the bank broke up and tumbled into the stream. But for Adyn, Mehdum-Kuly would certainly have been drowned.

And after this, what could Mehdum-Kuly do but give Adyn his liberty? He loosed his bonds, set him on his own Argamack (for Adyn's horse had been killed in the combat), and, parting from him with many blessings, sent him to his home.

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WANDERERS IN THE WAR.

BY A. A. METHLEY.

(Continued from page 291.)

IT was a lovely day by that time, lovely as so many of those August days of 1914 were; and to the children at any rate the whole business seemed more like some merry holiday picnic than a tragedy. After breakfast a start was made again, and then they went on, hour after hour, along narrow sandy roads where the trees met overhead, through rocky valleys, and across open

patches of heath, where the air was fragrant with the scent of wild thyme, and noisy with the chirping of grasshoppers and the drowsy hum of bees.

In the afternoon Roger and Val were walking together behind the rest of the party, and suddenly the boy stopped and pointed to a cone-shaped hill which could be seen in the distance above the trees.

'Look, Val! Do you see that hill? I believe that it's the place where I heard the buzzing noise I told you about, and where Jules climbed the hollow tree. Yes, I'm quite sure of it. You can see the tree now at the top.'

Val shaded her eyes, and there sure enough she could see the hill and the bare branches of the dead tree on its summit.

'I wish we were nearer,' continued Roger. 'It would be some joke to go up there again and have a look round—not that I want to see that man, the one with the scarred face; do you remember?'

'Yes, I remember,' and then something else flashed into Val's mind—the man with the scar, and the woman with him who, from Roger's description, had seemed as if she might be like Fräulein Heinz. The little girl thrust her hand into her pocket, and drew out a white envelope. 'Roger, I wish you'd take care of this for me,' she said. 'You are more used to trouser pockets than I am, and I mustn't lose it.'

'What is it?' Roger took the envelope, and turned it over in his hand. It was large and square, fastened with a red seal, and addressed in a spidery handwriting to 'Mr. J. Smith, 7 Soho Road, London, N. W.'

'It's only a letter that Fräulein asked me to post for her in London. She had to go off in a fearful hurry, you know, her mother was ill or something, and she had been going to stay in England for the summer holidays. Poor old thing, she was upset about it. And she wrote this letter to her friends in London, explaining why she couldn't come, and all about it.'

'I see; but why on earth didn't she post the letter herself?'

'I don't know; perhaps she thought it would be quicker if I took it. Anyhow, she was awfully anxious that it should go safely. She pinned it into the front of my frock with a big safety pin, and I forgot all about it until I was changing my things at the farm last night. Then I wanted the safety pin—whoever had these trousers before must have had a huge waist—and I had to take a bit in. But I promised Fräulein I'd take care of the letter, so here it is.'

'All right,' Roger laughed, and stuffed the envelope carelessly into his own pocket. 'It does seem queer that you were quite friendly with a German only three weeks ago. What sort of a person was this Fräulein of yours?'

'Oh, not half bad.' Val had never been fond of Fräulein Heinz, but she did not want to be unkind now. 'She was a bit too sentimental, but rather a nice old thing, and she used to tell us no end of stories about Germany and winter sports, and her brother, who was a student at Heidelberg, and fought twelve duels. She was most frightfully proud of him, I can tell you. Oh, yes, Fräulein was all right, even if she was a German.'

'Well, I suppose some of them are decent enough.' Roger was not much interested in the subject, and then they had to hurry along the road to overtake the donkey-cart, which was just disappearing round a corner.

That first day of the flight was a very happy one to

Val and Roger, for everything went well, and, with the bright sun overhead, and the peaceful forest all around, it seemed almost impossible to believe in war and danger. No other fugitives were encountered, and the only excitement came once when they crossed a high road, and caught a glimpse of red and blue uniformed men in the distance.

Soldiers! Roger would like to have waited on the chance of see more regiments pass, but George Bernard shook his head, and hurried them into another tree-bordered byway.

It had been hoped that a large village would have been reached by nightfall, but the pace of the travellers had to be set by the children and the slow-moving donkey, and when twilight came they were still some miles from their destination. There was nothing for it but to spend the night in the woods, so dry sticks were collected, a fire lit, and a tent contrived out of an old shawl and a bent sapling.

Marie got out an iron pot from among the piled baggage on the cart, and heated a delicious stew, and, when the meal was finished, she sat by the fire singing the baby to sleep, while George smoked his pipe, and the red light flickered on the trees and the rocks, and the sleepy, sunburnt faces of the children.

'I suppose we shall catch a train somewhere tomorrow, and get back to England the next day,' said Roger, with a note of regret in his voice; and Val, too, could not help feeling sorry that their adventures were so soon coming to an end.

The next morning an early start was made, and now they went southward, and before long reached an important highway. They came upon it suddenly as they turned a corner, and then George pulled the donkey to a standstill with an exclamation of astonishment. They all stopped too, and stared with wide, dismayed eyes at the strange scene before them.

The road was crowded with fugitives, old men, women, and little children, who struggled wearily along through the dust, and with a seemingly endless procession of carts and waggons piled high with furniture, bedding, and goods and chattels of every sort and description. There were animals, too—little herds of cows and goats being driven by their owners, and many of the people pushed heavily-laden trucks, wheel-barrows, or even babies' perambulators.

Here came an old man, staggering under a huge bundle, then a cripple limped past, leaning on a crutch, and then came women with dirty, frightened children holding their hands or clinging to their skirts.

There were sick people on many of the carts, sitting among the piled baggage, and every one was covered with dust, and looked miserable, exhausted, and utterly hopeless. It was as if all the peasants of northern France, and of Belgium too, perhaps, had been driven from their homes, and were being chased southward by a relentless enemy.

Old George's face grew very grim as he watched the pitiful procession; but it was useless to delay. This was their route, and they would have to travel by it; so he lifted Val on to the cart, bade the others keep together, and then guided the donkey down into the crowded road.

And then began a day that was like a long, terrible nightmare, a hideous confusion of pushing throngs of people, choking white dust, dazzling heat, thirst, and footsore weariness. Sometimes motor-cars whirled

along the road with loud hootings and the roar of engines, or cyclists dashed through the crowd, and again and again soldiers marched past on their way northward, and the fugitives had to push closely together, and drive their vehicles into the hedges to make way for horses and guns.

At a village which was reached at mid-day George Bernard managed to procure some food; but they hardly dared halt even for a few minutes to eat it, lest they should lose their place in the closely packed line of vehicles.

During the morning Val rode on the donkey-cart; but later she made Marie take her place; and then room had to be made for little Babette, and for the youngest boy, who had fallen on the slippery cobblestones of the village street, and grazed his knee badly.

'I shall be quite all right,' Val insisted, and for some time she plodded along sturdily enough at Roger's side; but, as the afternoon wore away, her ankle, which was still weak, grew more and more painful, until, at last, she limped to the edge of the road and threw herself down on the trampled, dusty grass.

'Roger, I'm most awfully sorry.' She looked up at her brother with a quivering little smile. 'I simply must have a rest. My foot is hurting—rather badly; but it will be better soon, and then we can easily catch up the others.'

'Oh, all right.' Roger sat down too; but although he tried to speak cheerfully, his eyes were anxious as he glanced at Val, for her face was very pale, and her forehead was puckered into a frown of pain. It was quite clear that she ought not to walk any further; but what was to be done? The donkey-cart was already out of sight, and every waggon that passed seemed to be overcrowded with passengers and baggage. As he gazed at the weary faces and bowed, trudging figures of the fugitives, trailing past in what looked like a never-ending stream, the boy felt strangely forlorn and helpless, for he realised that all these miserable people were too heavily oppressed with the weight of their own troubles to have any time, or sympathy, to spare for the misfortunes of others.

The road was running through a wood just then, and not far from where the boy and girl were seated a narrow path slanted into the thicket. It looked deliciously cool and shady under the trees, and a sudden idea came into Roger's mind.

'Val,' he said, 'why shouldn't we get into the wood and rest? That path there seems to go the same way as the road, and we could walk ever so much more quickly if we were out of this crowd.'

'Oh, yes, do let's.' Val was delighted with the plan, and after sitting under a big beech-tree for a little while, she declared that she was quite ready to make a fresh start. They turned into a narrow track, and the dust and hurry and confusion of the crowded road were left behind.

'We can get back again directly when we want to,' Roger said. 'This path is as straight as a die'; but, although the path was straight, the road turned sharply to one side soon after they left it, and then every step took them further and further into the wood. When, at last, they decided it was time to rejoin the Bernards, not a trace of the highway was to be seen. On every side there seemed to be nothing but huge trees, tangled brambles, and thick forests of bracken fern.

(Continued on page 306.)



"The road was crowded with fugitives."