

“ ‘Plenty bad man come,’ he said, pointing to the sea.”

THE TRAP-BREAKERS.

By HAROLD BINDLOSS.

THE evening was dark, and a gusty wind shook the black pines that crept down to the beach. Now and then a few big drops fell, and the long swell of the Pacific rolled up the strait dividing Vancouver Island, in Canada, from the American State of Washington. Foam curled about the boulders, and the rumble of the surf was like the roar of a train; but there was some shelter behind the point, from which the big fish-trap ran out. The trap was made of massive posts, laced with nets that would lead the salmon into pockets. The fish could enter the pockets, but could not turn back.

Mr. Winthrop; Jake, his son; Gardner, who owned the trap; and Tom Dawson sat behind a rocky ledge. Blue wood-smoke drifted past them from the spot where a few other men were cooking supper. Winthrop's little sloop was anchored close up.

'It's going to be a pretty good night for the trap-breakers, and I'm glad you came along,' Gardner remarked. 'There's only a dozen of us, counting your boys, and I understand they have forty toughs and bad men in the wrecking gang.'

'I don't know why you expect them,' Mr. Winthrop replied. 'We met the patrol-boat, and Wheeler imagined the wreckers would break the Johnston trap, back at False Point. He said he'd got a hint.'

Gardner smiled. 'Sure he had! My notion is the wreckers put the hint about. While Wheeler watches False Point, they'll jump off and cut the Foster net, or make trouble for me. The Foster crowd's big enough to handle them; I don't know if I can.'

'What's the trouble about?' Dawson asked. 'I don't altogether understand why they want to smash the traps.'

'It's rather involved,' said Mr. Winthrop. 'When I bought the ranch, the salmon came up the creeks in such numbers that we used them for manure, but by degrees the canneries thinned them out. Then they began to catch them in the strait, and men who could buy a boat and drift-net earned good pay, until the canners built their traps on the coast. This made trouble, and now the drift-net men claim they're up against capitalists who are taking away their living and have no right to stop the salmon reaching the river-mouths. One feels some sympathy with them.'

'You don't own a trap!' Gardner rejoined. 'I've put all my money into nets and posts, and don't see why a crowd of toughs, who want to charge the canners what they like, should smash them up. Anyhow, there'll be some fight first!'

'Seems to me there's always trouble when we change our way of doing things,' Jake remarked.

'That is so,' said Mr. Winthrop. 'Somebody's bound to suffer. We begin by doing things separately, and it's an expensive plan. Then we combine to do them together, and by-and-by the big companies break up the small groups. A rich combine can do things cheap, and the man who'd sooner work alone must go.' He paused and smiled. 'Before long the Foster Company will take Gardner's trap.'

'Then they've got to pay my price,' Gardner replied. 'Wish I knew if the fellows meant to look me up to-

night or not. Let's see if any boats are hanging about the point.'

He went off with Mr. Winthrop, but the boys stopped behind the rock, and Jake said presently, 'Wheeler on the patrol-boat seemed pretty sure they were going to raid False Point, and Gardner will have trouble if they come here instead. I wish we'd met Ah Lee. He was buying salmon round Victoria not long since, and I guess he'd know.'

Dawson nodded. They had saved the Chinaman from drowning, and he had once or twice helped them when they badly needed help.

'Ah Lee knows everything,' he agreed. 'Still, we didn't meet him, and it's getting dark and beastly cold.'

They were silent for a time, while the wind wailed in the pine-tops and the surf roared on the beach. The fire had sunk, for the men had gone off to their posts, and there was nobody about. Dawson shivered, and watched the little sloop roll on the long swell. He was not exactly afraid, and Jake and he had insisted on landing, but he began to wish they had stopped by the stove in the cabin. Waiting and wondering when a gang of savage wreckers would attack one rather got on one's nerves. Mr. Winthrop did not come back, the wind had freshened, and it was nearly dark.

'Hallo!' Jake exclaimed. 'What was that?'

A stone rattled close by, and Dawson jumped. He half expected to see the wreckers, but an indistinct, lonely figure stood a few yards off. Then he laughed. 'Ah Lee! You have come again when we wanted you!'

The Chinaman looked very cool as he advanced. Ah Lee was never in a hurry. 'Plenty bad man come,' he said, pointing to the sea; 'smashee fish-tnap.'

'How many? Where are they?' Jake broke in.

'Five—six boat. See him by Long Beach. Patlol man not savvy; watchee False Point.'

The boys asked questions that Ah Lee answered with imperturbable calm. He had come in a Siwash sea-canoe, and the trap-breakers had let her pass, no doubt thinking there were Indians on board. Ah Lee imagined they meant to break the Gardner net, because the big Foster traps were strongly guarded.

'Somebody must go for Wheeler right now,' Jake remarked. 'Wish I knew where the old man and Gardner are.'

They ran along the beach, shouting, but the noise of the surf drowned their voices and nobody answered. When they were out of breath Ah Lee came up, and Jake asked if the boats were full. Ah Lee said they were, and Jake turned to Dawson. 'They're big boats: it means a crowd that will roll up Gardner's lot, but he's going to fight and will sure get hurt. Well, since we can't find him, our best plan is to go for Wheeler.'

Dawson thought hard. The wreckers were not far off, and time was valuable. It was not a long run to False Point, and the wind was fair, while the patrol-boat's powerful engines would soon bring her back. Dawson felt that they ought to ask Mr. Winthrop, but he was not about. 'I don't know if I want to stop or not,' he said. 'Anyhow, Wheeler would be of more use than us.'

Jake agreed, and giving Ah Lee a message, they ran down the beach.

(Continued on page 342.)

LAUGHTER.

A DEATH from laughter sounds a strange thing, but there are several stories told of people who have met their death in this way.

Zeuxis, the great painter, having painted a hag, we are told, went into such convulsions of laughter at the sight of his own work that he died. Bulwer Lytton tells us the story of Chalcas the soothsayer, in his *Tales of Miletus*. A ragged fellow once told him that he would never drink of the wine made from the grapes grown in his own vineyard. When the wine was made, Chalcas gave a great feast, and sent for the man to show him how false his prophecy had been. The thought of how he had proved the falsity of the prophecy struck him as so absurd that he laughed and laughed so continually that he died.

A similar story is the one told of Ancaeus, the helmsman of the ship *Argo*. When the wine was in course of time set before him, Ancaeus, sent for the slave that he might laugh at him as a false prophet. 'There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip,' said the slave, and at that moment the news was brought in that a wild boar had got into the vineyard and was destroying the vines. Ancaeus rushed out to kill it, and in the encounter was killed himself.

THE STORY OF SOME ORDERS AND DECORATIONS.

By CONSTANCE M. FOOT.

VI.—FOUR NEW ORDERS, AND SOME TO WHICH WOMEN ARE ADMITTED.

ONE of the many consequences of the War is the creation of several new medals. We have already mentioned one (the Distinguished Service Medal), but there are yet four more, the chief of which is undoubtedly

THE MILITARY CROSS,

the new decoration for War service, which is to be worn immediately after all orders and before all other decorations and medals—except the Victoria Cross. It was instituted by King George V. on January 1st, 1915, for the distinguished and meritorious services in time of war of captains and commissioned officers of lower rank and warrant officers, either officers of the British Army or the Indian or Colonial military forces, and to be awarded only on a recommendation by the Secretary of State for War.

It consists of a silver cross with an Imperial crown on each arm, the centre bearing the letters 'G.R.I.' and is worn hanging from the left breast by a white ribbon with a purple stripe just under two inches in width. Like the Victoria Cross, it carries no title of any kind, but should any recipient prove unworthy, the medal will be taken away from him. The first list of officers rewarded with this great distinction is a long one, but we can only mention a few among the many brave names and deeds. Colonel Dimmer—one of the earliest to receive it, but now, alas, dead—was a soldier of whom his country may well be proud, for he not only rose from the ranks to be a field officer, but had already gained the Victoria Cross before winning this new distinction.

Another Military Cross hero is Second Lieutenant Lankester, who gained this decoration for great gallantry and cleverness in March, 1915. He was forward obser-

vation officer in the firing line, and worked incessantly, both day and night, to keep his telephone line open. His wires were often broken by the incessant firing, but, nothing daunted, this brave man continued to mend them. He was most useful to the artillery in conveying information and bringing back messages; except for his courageous help all communication would have been cut off.

A somewhat different kind of heroism led to the bestowal of three other Military Crosses. A Zeppelin was passing over a railway station at Revigny, in Brabant-le-Roi, where stood a train of seventy trucks containing explosives. The trucks were uncoupled and no engine was on the line.

'We must save those trucks!' shouted the station-master. 'I want two volunteers!' he added. At once two men offered themselves, and, aided by the station-master, proceeded to couple the trucks; then signalling for an engine, coupled that also. Meanwhile two porters had arrived on the scene; one of these sprang on to the train and whistled. The train moved off safely as the Zeppelin dropped bombs on the station!

The sister service has also a special medal for the Great War, known as the

NAVAL GENERAL SERVICE MEDAL.

This is given for smaller naval warlike operations whether these be in the nature of active service or of police guarding, and was instituted by the King in the autumn of 1915, because there seemed no other medal quite suitable for the purpose. The ribbon of the medal is white with crimson borders, and two crimson stripes, the clasp having suitable words on it.

The first award was made to the officers and men of H.M. ships who were employed in the operations for the suppression of the arms traffic in the Arabian Sea or Persian Gulf between October 1909 and the early days of the war.

Nor are troops fighting in Africa forgotten, for in March 1916 an Army Order announced that His Majesty the King had been graciously pleased to approve of a new medal being struck to commemorate local military operations against native tribes in East, Central, and West Africa.

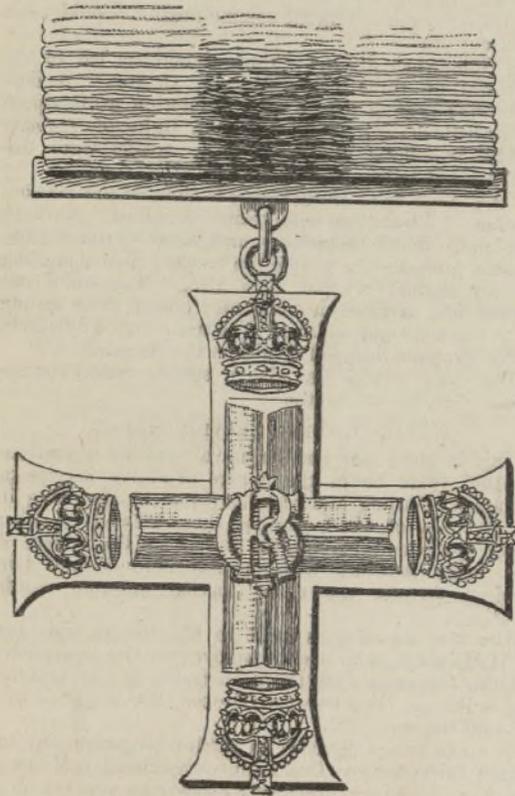
This latest of the new decorations is known as the

AFRICA GENERAL SERVICE MEDAL,

and is the same in design as a medal of the same name awarded by King Edward VII. in 1902. That had on one side the head and bust of its founder in the uniform of a field-marshal, and on the other Britannia, with a lion gazing over a desert towards a rising sun. The ribbon was yellow with black edges, and two narrow green stripes, and was struck to commemorate continuous fighting in that part of the world; but the interesting fact to remember is that within a year after the end of the Boer War a contingent of Boer mounted riflemen were fighting on our side in the Somaliland campaign, and received this medal and the clasp that goes with it.

The new medal bears on one side the head and bust of the King, but is, in all other respects, the same. In each case in which the medal is issued a clasp is affixed, noting the operation for which it is given. One was granted to the forces taking part in the operation against the dervishes at Shimber Berris in November 1914 and February 1915, and also against rebel

troops in Nyassaland in January and February 1915. Any officer or soldier already in possession of the previous medal only receives a clasp. One of these bears 'Shimber Berris 1914-15,' and the other 'Nyassaland 1915.'



The Military Cross.

Legend links the name of a woman with the origin of that most famous Order of the world—the Garter, but however this may be there is no doubt that in very early days women were admitted almost as freely as men to this Order. To-day we find only the names of the Queen Consort and the Queen Mother enrolled amongst the members, but formerly it often included those of the wives and daughters of knights and other women, these being styled 'Dames de la Fraternité de St. George' (Ladies of the Order of St. George), in proof of which entries are found at intervals in the Wardrobe Accounts between 1376 and 1495 of the delivery of robes and garters to them. Since those days women have been seldom admitted to Orders, and then only those specially set apart for them, Florence Nightingale being the exception when, as you have already heard, she was enrolled among the 'famous few' of the 'Order of Merit.'

But of the Orders specially set apart for women there were, until recently, but two, the earlier of which,

THE ROYAL ORDER OF VICTORIA AND ALBERT, was instituted in 1862 by Queen Victoria, and consisted of the Sovereign and forty-five ladies. This Order has

been enlarged more than once, the last time being in 1880, since when it has never grown any larger. It is divided into four classes, the first two of which are composed entirely of royal ladies, both British and Foreign.

The badge bears on one side the heads of the reigning sovereign and consort, surmounted by the Imperial Crown, and is worn suspended from a white watered ribbon.

The other and younger Order is that of

THE IMPERIAL ORDER OF THE CROWN OF INDIA.

This Order, which is also due to Queen Victoria, was instituted on January 1st, 1878, and ordained to consist of (in addition to the Sovereign) such of the princesses of her Majesty's Royal and Imperial House as she might think fit to appoint; Indian ladies of high rank, and wives or female relatives of important personages holding office under the Indian Government. It was enlarged as recently as 1900.

The Badge is decorated with the royal monogram in diamonds, turquoises, and pearls, this being surrounded by a pearl border and surmounted by a jewelled and imperial crown; it is worn hanging from a light blue watered ribbon edged with white.

Women's opportunities of work in the service of their country had been, for many years, few and far between, and such as they were for the most part unrecognised officially, until in 1883 good Queen Victoria instituted

THE ROYAL RED CROSS,

a decoration to be awarded to ladies or nursing sisters in recognition of special services rendered by them in



The Royal Order of Victoria and Albert.

nursing the sick and wounded of the Army or Navy whether in the field or in military hospitals.

The Great War in which we are engaged made a demand for hundreds and hundreds of women to nurse the wounded at the Front, or in the hospitals at home, and so nobly and ably did these respond that their services brought about the need for changes in the rules of the Society, though its decoration remains much the same.

By command of the King, at the end of the year 1915 new rules were made, and the decoration was divided into two classes. The First Class consists of a cross, enamelled red, edged with gold, and bearing on the arms the words, 'Faith, Hope, Charity,' and the date of the

institution of the original decoration; in the centre is the Royal and Imperial effigy or likeness, while on the reverse side, in the corresponding place, is found the Imperial cypher and crown raised—'in relief,' as it is called.

The Second Class consists of a cross of the same form and size, but in frosted silver, and has a red enamelled Maltese cross placed upon it, the centre bearing the Royal and Imperial effigy in relief. On the arms of the reverse side are inscribed the words 'Faith, Hope, and Charity,' and the date; the centre (as in the First Class) being occupied by the Royal and Imperial cypher and crown. In both classes the cross is attached to a dark blue ribbon of an inch wide, edged with red. This is tied in a bow and worn on the left shoulder.



The Imperial Order of the Crown of India.

The new rules provide that the 'decoration may be worn by members of our own royal family, and may be conferred upon queens or princesses of other countries who have specially exerted themselves in providing for the nursing of the sick and wounded of foreign armies and navies.' Either class may be conferred upon any members of the Nursing Services without restriction as to rank, or upon other persons engaged in nursing duties who may be recommended by the Secretary of State for War or the First Lord of the Admiralty. Both classes of the decoration may farther be conferred upon any ladies recommended by the above who have voluntarily undertaken to establish, conduct, or help in hospitals for sick and wounded soldiers and sailors, or performed valuable services in connection with the Red Cross at home or abroad.

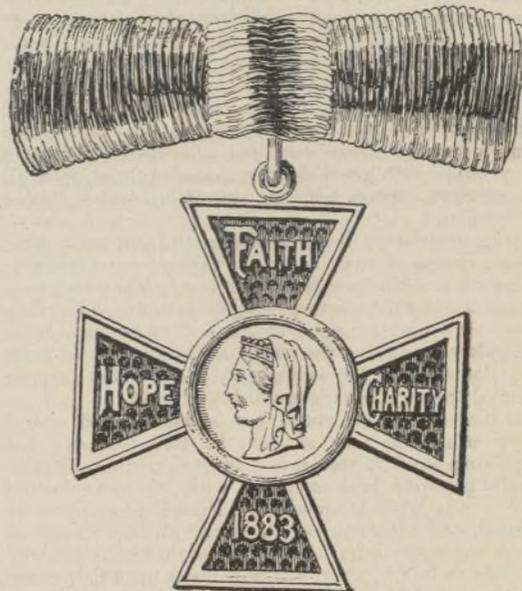
Recipients of the First Class are called 'Members of the Royal Red Cross,' and are entitled to place the letters R.R.C. after their names; while those of the Second Class are known as Associates, and may use the letters A.R.R.C.

Devoted women from all parts of the Empire have earned this decoration, and a highly honourable one it is too, being as well merited in its way as any of the other Orders, for every British soldier fighting at the Front knows that there is behind him the most wonderfully organized medical service the world has ever seen, and that all that medical skill and tender nursing can accomplish will be done to relieve his suffering. Since the old days of the Crimean War, when the 'Lady of the Lamp' led the way to more skilled nursing, hundreds and thousands of her sisters have followed in her footsteps—that great 'Army of Mercy,' as it has been called,

who wear the red cross, a sign that their errand is one of mercy and not of war.

It is impossible, as in the case of the other Orders and Decorations, to mention more than one or two instances of the thousands of brave deeds performed by members of the Red Cross; but there are some names which have perhaps specially stood out during the present War in connection with this work. For instance, one of the first parties of English nurses to go to the Front was that headed by the Duchess of Sutherland, who, with her nurses, took up residence in a convent at Namur. Upon the fall of the city the Duchess was arrested by the German authorities, and it was only through the intervention of the American Minister that she and her brave helpers were allowed to leave.

Then, again, very familiar in our papers has been the picture of the 'Lady on the Black Horse'—Mrs. St. Clair Stobart, whose name is loved and blessed by the Serbians for all that she has done for them. She was first heard of as nursing the wounded in the Balkan War of 1912, when in command of a detachment of the Women's Sick and Wounded Corps, which she herself had founded. When the present War broke out, she



The Royal Red Cross Medal.

went to Brussels to take charge of the Red Cross Hospital there; but had the misfortune to arrive only a few hours before the Germans marched in, and was in consequence imprisoned for some time; only managing with great difficulty to get away home. She did not, however, long remain idle, for early in 1915 we hear of her out in Serbia acting as the head of a British hospital, where she did splendid work at a time when one-third of the Serbian doctors had died of typhus. This was not by any means all though, for she showed, perhaps, even more heroism when the Serbians had to leave their own country.

These are but a few, a very few, instances of heroism in this particular work, and no one plays a braver part than the Red Cross nurses, for they have no special

protection against injury except what the enemy accorded them as an act of grace.

With this we bring to a close our short account of 'Some Orders and Decorations,' trusting that it will have helped our readers to realise afresh something of that true spirit of Chivalry and Knighthood which has ever prompted all brave and noble deeds, and which this Great War has proved to be as present in the knights of the twentieth century as it was in those of the Middle Ages.

CONSTANCE M. FOOT.

WANDERERS IN THE WAR.

By A. A. METHLEY.

(Continued from page 323.)

CHAPTER XIV.

IT had been one thing to ride a motor bicycle in the park at Monkton Ashe, with the owner of the machine near at hand to give what help or advice was necessary, but Roger found that it was quite a different matter to act as a dispatch rider in an unknown country, through unknown perils and towards an unknown destination. Every stone in the road seemed an obstacle, and every bush a hiding-place for an enemy; but it would never do to fail, so he gritted his teeth, bent over the handle-bars, and drove the cycle forward at a reckless pace.

A very few minutes took the rider out of the wood where the accident had taken place, and then there came a long white road bordered with tufted poplars, a large house with green shutters fastened closely over all its windows, a pond, a bridge, and then another stretch of woodland.

'Go straight on towards the south; you must come across troops of some sort before long, and then give this packet to the commanding officer.' That had been one of the last directions given by the wounded Englishman. It sounded simple enough, but, as he tore on for mile after mile along the empty roads, all sorts of fears and doubts and forebodings of what would happen whirled through Roger's mind.

If it were English troops that he encountered, everything would be easy enough, he told himself; but supposing—and it was much more probable—that it should prove to be Frenchmen with whom he had to deal? The boy's knowledge of French was still very limited, and although no doubt the all-important dispatch would speak for itself, how should he explain why he came to be its bearer, and how insist upon help being sent back to Val and the wounded man without delay?

There was time in that wild, nightmare-like ride to vaguely think of these difficulties, but it was impossible to consider them seriously or to decide how they should be faced. All Roger's strength and wits and courage were needed for the management of the motor cycle; but fortune favoured him in an amazing way, and although he had many hairbreadth escapes, one disaster after another was avoided. At last he reached a great open heath, dotted with clumps of thick wood, and came to the top of a hill from which he could see the road, winding on and on for miles like a white ribbon.

The boy slackened speed for a minute to take breath, and then, suddenly, far away in the distance, he saw a figure silhouetted against the sky—a figure that was almost identical in shape and pose with the one that he had seen on the little hill behind the deserted village.

'Soldiers at last! I wonder if they're French or English.' Roger almost spoke the words aloud; and then he remembered something that the dispatch rider had said, and, in his consternation, nearly lost his grip of the handle-bars.

'There may be some stray Uhlans about.'

'What are Uhlans?'

'Oh, German cavalry—lancers.'

Uhlans! The boy remembered pictures he had seen some time or another in illustrated magazines and forgotten. Yes, there could be no doubt about it, for, far away as he still was, every detail of the horseman's figure was clearly outlined—like a tiny toy soldier—against the clear blue sky. There was the strange distinctive helmet, the high boots, and the long lance with a fluttering pennant at its point.

As Roger watched, a second trooper jumped his horse over the bank that bordered the road, and he was followed by another and another and another. They drew closely together, and one stretched out a hand pointing westward. It was evident that they were discussing routes to be taken.

Between Roger and the Uhlans the road dipped into a belt of wood, and, at the pace at which he was going, there was only a moment in which to decide what was to be done. So far, he had not been observed or heard, for the wind was blowing towards him, and it might be possible to dismount in the wood, drag his machine into the bushes, and hide until the danger was past.

There could be no doubt but that this would really be the best and the most prudent plan; but, novice as he was, Roger felt very doubtful whether, having once stopped the motor-bike, he would be able to start it again without assistance or advice. He must run no risks of such a misfortune, for, if he were stranded, what would happen about the message that had to be delivered at all costs? At all costs! The boy set his teeth, tore into the wood, through it, and out again into the open, and then, with a wild yell and a deafening blast of his motor-horn, he plunged right into the middle of the group of horsemen.

The Uhlans were taken completely by surprise at this sudden onslaught, for hardly had they heard the sound of Roger's engine before he was among them, and everything was panic, clamour, and confusion. The startled horses stampeded in every direction, and there was such a shouting, such a clanging of hoofs, such a rattle and jingle of harness and accoutrements as Roger had never heard in his life before. One horse reared upright, almost throwing its rider backwards, another scrambled up the bank, and a third tore madly away along the road.

Only one trooper stood firm, his lance at rest, as if to bar the boy's way; but the motor cycle was completely beyond Roger's control in that moment of mad excitement, and he dashed straight on.

The man dragged his horse aside, with a shout of fury, and then he drew a revolver and fired it at the small figure, which, bent almost double, was flying at a break-neck speed along the road.

Roger heard the shot and saw the splutter of dust as the bullet struck the ground ahead of him, but he did not feel in the least afraid. Other shots followed, but they were all wide of the mark; and then the road turned sharply to the right into a patch of wood, and he was out of sight and out of danger.

About twenty minutes later he raced round another corner, and had to swerve sharply to one side to avoid

collision with a couple of motor-cars which were drawn up in the road. In each were several French officers, wearing smart but dusty uniforms, and with gleams of gold on caps and shoulders. A large map had been spread out and was being studied closely. The men's faces were all very grave, and they talked together in low, hurried voices.

Roger drove his cycle recklessly into the thick bushes at the side of the road, almost threw himself off it, and stumbled forward. 'The commanding officer—which is the commanding officer?' he stammered breathlessly, and then he dragged the leather case out of his pocket and held it out at arm's length. 'I have to give this to the commanding officer.'

The Frenchmen were almost as much amazed at Roger's sudden and unexpected appearance on the scene as the Germans had been, and for a moment or two they stared angrily at the strange-looking little scarecrow who had interrupted their conference so unceremoniously.

Roger was wearing the leather cap and goggles of the wounded dispatch rider, and this headgear contrasted strangely with his rough peasant clothes, while in addition he was smothered with dust and grime. Now he dragged off the cap and confronted the soldiers with a white face and two bright, excited eyes. 'I have to give this to the commanding officer,' he repeated. 'It is important, very important. I was told to bring it at all costs.'

Every word of French that Roger had ever known seemed to have deserted him completely now, but fortunately one of the officers could speak English well. This man came forward, took Roger's arm, and led him up to the larger of the two cars. 'Here is Colonel Bonnard,' he said; 'you can give him your message.' And then the packet was delivered up, opened, and eagerly scrutinised.

The soldiers' faces grew even graver than before as they read the papers, and a consultation followed, during which Roger stood alone in the dusty road, feeling very tired and very small and very insignificant. At last, however, the English-speaking officer, who was a tall young man with eye-glasses and a kindly smile, turned to the boy and laid one hand on his shoulder. 'The Colonel wants to speak to you,' he said—'to thank you for bringing the message, and to ask you a few questions. Don't be alarmed, my friend; I will act as your interpreter.'

Roger looked up gratefully at his new friend, and then mounted on to the step of the great car, shook hands with the Colonel, who was an imposing, white-haired man, and was closely questioned as to everything that had happened. Luckily he had noticed the name of the deserted little hamlet near which Val had been left with the wounded man, and, with a little help, was able to find on the map the exact place where the accident had taken place. Then there came another hasty discussion, after which the motor-cars parted company, the cycle being hoisted into one of them, while the Colonel bade farewell to Roger with a second cordial handshake and a ceremonious military salute.

The English-speaking officer remained with the other car, together with an elderly man, who had a fierce grey moustache and much gold lace on his cap, and a soldier chauffeur. The latter busied himself in careful preparations for a start.

When everything was ready, the younger officer spoke to Roger again. 'Now we must be off,' he said. 'Get into the automobile, my friend—there is no time to be lost.'

Roger hesitated for a moment, an anxious expression on his face. 'We are going back to fetch Val?' he inquired, and the other answered with a nod and a smile.

'Yes, we are going back to fetch your sister and the wounded Englishman,' he said, 'and you are coming with us to show us the way.' And then he helped the boy into the car, and the next moment it was speeding ahead on its way northward.

The motor did not go back by the same roads as those that Roger had taken, and the heathery upland where he had met the Uhlans was given a wide berth. When they were in its neighbourhood, however, and caught sight of its breezy summit in the distance, the boy noticed that a sharp watch was kept by his companions, and that revolvers were brought out and held ready.

Roger breathed quickly with excitement, wondering whether he was really going to be in a battle; but there was not a sign of man or horse to be seen and the whole country seemed to be empty and deserted.

The Uhlans had disappeared. Who could tell in which direction they had gone? And then a sudden terror gripped the boy's heart as he thought that, perhaps, they might have ridden towards the little wood where Val kept watch beside the wounded Englishman. He turned to the young officer with a flood of anxious questions, but the man made light of his fears and smiled reassuringly. 'Oh, no, you need not be afraid. The Germans will have gone towards the west, that is much more likely, or perhaps they are still lurking in the wood over yonder. We shall find your little sister safe enough where you left her, never fear, and afterwards there will be a fine ride for us all. How should you like to see Paris?' Then he turned the conversation into other channels, and, after questioning Roger about his journey to St. Denis-sur-Meuse, he described how he had himself run away from school when he was ten years old and tramped thirty miles to his own home.

In a very little while the pair were fast friends; but Roger noticed that although Captain Durand—that was the young officer's name—smiled and laughed gaily enough, his sunburnt face looked worn and haggard and his eyes were very grave behind the glasses of the pince-nez.

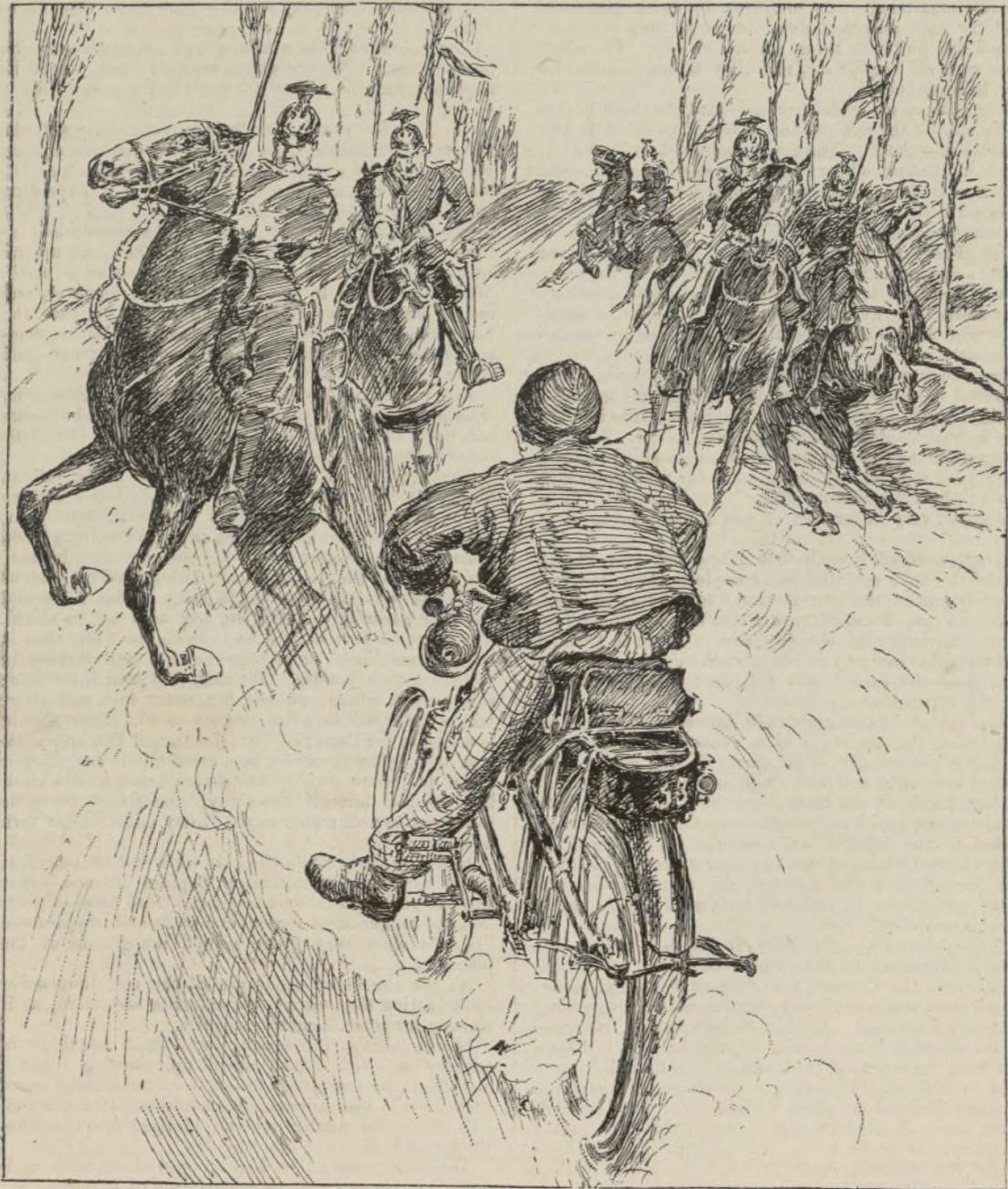
As for the other occupants of the car, they never spoke during the journey, but sat grim and stern, as if waiting for some danger or surprise.

'Look, that's the wood! We shall be there in another minute.' Roger stood up, pointing eagerly, and then the car swept under the over-arching trees, turned aside into a narrow road, and came to a standstill. The boy sprang out and plunged into the dense thicket of bushes and bracken.

The next moment he had stopped short, with wide horrified eyes and a sharp exclamation of surprise.

Val and the dispatch rider had gone! They had disappeared completely, although some broken fern-fronds showed where the wounded man had fallen, and on the trampled grass were two leather gauntlet-gloves and a damp straw hat.

(Continued on page 338.)



“He plunged right into the middle of the group of horsemen.”