



CHATTERBOX.

A PIGEON TOWER IN EGYPT.





“‘They went that way, down the road,’ he said, with a wave of his hand.”

A A



## WANDERERS IN THE WAR.

By A. A. METHLEY.

(Continued from page 351.)

### CHAPTER XVI.

**D**URING the early part of the day that followed his encounter with the wounded soldiers, Roger met with many stragglers from the retreating army, men who had lost their way in the woods and had wandered eastward, or, disabled and only able to make slow progress, had drifted apart and lagged behind.

Once he came upon a limping little detachment led by a young officer, who, with his right arm in a sling, was beating a toy drum with the other hand, while a man behind him played a merry tune on a little flute; then there was a great motor lorry, stranded by the side of the road, its crew working feverishly at repairs, and again and again there came gaunt, hollow-eyed men who stumbled painfully along, singly or in couples, and threw themselves down, sometimes, to snatch a few minutes' rest on the dusty grass before continuing their weary march.

As the hours wore away, fewer and fewer of these vagrant soldiers were encountered, and at last they ceased to come altogether, and the roads and lanes and narrow forest tracks were empty and silent once more.

It was a very hot, sultry morning. There was not a breath of wind. The leaves hung motionless from the branches of the trees, and the birds seemed to have hidden themselves away in the bushes.

It was as if the whole countryside were waiting, watching and listening for something—something terrible—that would surely come before long.

In the villages and scattered hamlets through which Roger passed, the same uneasy sense of foreboding and uncertainty seemed to be abroad, and he found it very difficult to make any one pay attention to him or attempt to understand his anxious questions.

Many of the houses were barred and shuttered, as if the inhabitants had either fled away, or were concealed behind closed doors and windows; while those people who remained moved about restlessly, or stood in groups whispering together, and from time to time glancing fearfully towards the north.

'Uhlans!' That word seemed to be on every one's lips. It was evidently a word of terror in these peaceful French villages, and all the time—away in the distance—the sullen thunder of guns could still be heard.

At about noon, Roger reached the place where Captain Durand had made his last inquiries on the previous night. He found his way to the inn; but now, apparently, nobody remembered the car with the little boy and the wounded Englishmen in it, or, if they did remember, they were too busy and too much worried to answer questions. Roger grew almost desperate in his eagerness to find out something about his little sister's whereabouts, and at last the landlady lost her temper, and in a long, angry speech, of which he could only understand a few words, declared that hundreds of automobiles had passed yesterday, that they had been all making inquiries about each other, and that it was impossible for her, in these days, to trouble her head about such matters.

Then she pushed Roger out of the kitchen, into which he had followed her, and slammed the door in his face.

The boy wandered away, feeling as if everything

were against him, and, as luck would have it, instead of going on through the main street, he turned aside, went past the church, and soon came to the outskirts of the village. Here he found another inn, a pretty, trim little place, with a row of evergreens in tubs outside the door, and behind them several small, white-painted tables.

An old man in a green baize apron was languidly polishing one of these tables, and, after a moment's hesitation, Roger went up and spoke to him. 'Automobile, last night—dernier nuit—avec petite fille; no, petit garçon and homme wounded.'

It was small wonder, perhaps, that Roger, hitherto, had met with but small success. The waiter stared at him, and then his face relaxed into a smile. 'I speak English,' he said slowly. 'I stay five, six months in London. What does Monsieur want to know?'

Roger drew a long breath of sheer relief, and then burst into a flood of eager questions. The old man puckered his forehead thoughtfully. 'A motor-car, with a little boy in it, a little boy dressed like Monsieur, and a wounded Englishman.' Yes, he remembered, they stopped there last night, at about eight o'clock, or earlier, perhaps, and made many inquiries.

'Inquiries!'

'Yes, about an automobile that might have passed, a military automobile, with officers in it, a boy, and a motor cycle. The lady was distressed, desolated, when we could give her no information.'

Roger began to feel that, at last, he really was coming to the end of his troubles and difficulties. So Val and her new friends were searching for him, as he was searching for them. Surely before long, they must meet.

'She ask us—the lady—if we could take the Englishman into the inn; but it was impossible. Every room was full; many people on the way to Paris. What could we do? And the car drove away at full speed.'

'Which way did they go? Tell me, please. The little girl—I mean the little boy—is my sister. I must find her.'

The old waiter glanced at Roger with a twinkle in his eyes, and then shrugged his shoulders wearily. It was a strange business; but so many strange things had happened during the last few days—so many things might still happen—and there was no time to be amused or interested. 'They went that way, down the road,' he said, with a wave of his hand. 'There is a place five miles away, with a good inn, the "Lion d'Or," kept by a man named Lemaitre; they may have stayed there, or perhaps they went on to Paris. It would be well, Monsieur, for you to go to Paris, too—or to England. They say that the Germans are coming. But in the meantime Monsieur should have breakfast; one must eat. Germans or no Germans, and it is past midday. Coffee could be ready in a few minutes—or, at least, a pistolet.'

Roger would not wait for a meal, as he was eager to be off on his quest, but he accepted a pistolet, which proved to be a large roll, cut in half, and with butter and a slice of ham inside. With this in his hand he trudged away down the road, which soon led once more into the cool, green depths of the forest.

The boy's face was very grave as he set out on his solitary journey, and, although it seemed certain that Val was safe and with friends, his heart was full of dread and misgivings. With the lessening of his own anxiety, he had time to let his thoughts dwell on



the terrible disaster with which France—and perhaps England, too—was being threatened.

The British army had been defeated, and was retreating before the Germans. That one great unbelievable fact swamped and dwarfed all minor considerations, and he wished, with a sick feeling of powerlessness and desperate longing, that he had been older, eighteen instead of fifteen, so that he might have been of some use, and able to take his part in the great conflict.

It was all so bewildering, and so utterly unexpected. Roger's thoughts whirled round and round in a giddy circle, as he tried to piece together the scraps of information he had gathered, and to realise what the events of the past few days must mean, and then, like a gleam of sunshine through a dark cloud, he remembered Alf, and the young soldier's voice, with its cockney twang, its weary huskiness, and its cheery, undaunted courage, seemed once again to be sounding in his ears.

'Are we down-hearted? No!' He had often heard the words in England shouted by noisy football crowds or by excited holiday-makers, but they had gained a new significance now, and as he repeated them to himself he held up his head defiantly, squared his shoulders, and tramped on down the white dusty road with a firmer tread than before. He even began to whistle after a time, but to-day there seemed to be only one tune that he could remember: 'It's a long way to Tipperary, it's a long way to go.'

Early in the afternoon Roger reached the village of which the old waiter had told him, but instead of finding Val there he met with nothing but disappointment and fresh difficulties.

It was evident that bad news had just been received in the place, for the church bells were clashing out a warning peal, belated fugitives were streaming through the streets with babies or heavy bundles in their arms, shop-keepers were hastily putting up their shutters, and everywhere there was dread, confusion, and excitement.

On the steps of the little town hall a number of men with grave anxious faces were gathered together, discussing the emergency, and the steps to be taken to meet it, and already notices bidding the people be calm, and offer no resistance to the enemy, had been posted up.

In the group outside the town hall were the Mayor, the white-haired priest, and other leading men of the place; and as they talked it could be seen that they glanced northward from time to time at a stretch of white sunlit road which curved round a wooded hill, and then led down into the village.

The inn, a big stone building standing on one side of the market-place, seemed to be deserted, except by a little lame boy, and a huddle of frightened women. Roger went in there, but could get no answer to his questions, until at last he remembered something that the old waiter in the green baize apron had said. 'Monsieur Lemaitre; where is Monsieur Lemaitre?' he said; and in reply the lame boy got up from the bench where he was sitting, limped out into the sunshine, and pointed across the square to the town hall.

Roger hesitated, for it seemed a formidable thing to interrupt that solemn conclave; but the Germans were coming, and if Val was here he must discover her whereabouts, and take her away without a minute's delay. He thanked the boy, ran round the square, and slipping unnoticed among the men touched the arm of the priest, who was standing apart a little behind the others, and whose pale face looked gentle and friendly.

'Monsieur, please can you speak English?' he began, and when a shake of the head was the only answer, he plunged recklessly into his usual questions.

'An automobile? Last night; have you seen it? With a little boy and a wounded Englishman?' A man who was standing next to the priest overheard the words, and turned quickly, but before anything else could be said, there was an exclamation, a movement, hands were pointed, and a thrill of excitement seemed to run through the group.

A motor-car had swung round the curve of the hill, and now it swept down the road, and came to a jarring standstill in the market-place. There were soldiers in it, grey-clad men, with spiked helmets, and hard, stern faces.

Other cars followed quickly. In a little while the square seemed full of them, and then in the distance appeared mounted men and guns. The bright afternoon sun glittered on swords and spear-points, and metal harness. The warning bell in the church tower ceased its clamour, but the air was noisy with the clatter of horses' hoofs, the rattle and rumble of heavy wheels, and the sound of harsh voices. The time of dread and waiting was at an end. The Germans had come at last.

(Continued on page 366.)

### A STRANGE PRESENT.

AN Englishman of rank, while staying in Burmah, once received a queer present from the King of that country. It was placed in a golden box, locked with a golden key, and the Englishman was gravely told that it was a most valuable offering. But when he opened the box he found—not a purse of gold or a jewel of price—but only a few hairs taken from the King's white elephant.

This was not a joke on the part of his Majesty; he and his Court really considered the gift a most valuable one, for in Burmah a white elephant is a sacred animal and treated like a royal personage. One of the King's titles, indeed, is 'Lord of the Celestial Elephant and Master of many White Elephants.' S. BRAINE.

### THE LUPIN-SEEDS.

ONE chilly day in late November, a poorly dressed man was wandering along a road winding among hills. He was a man of noble race who by a brother's wrong-doing had been brought to poverty. Now, as he walked along that winding road, he heard the distant song of olive-gatherers. The sound cheered him, and he said to himself, 'Perhaps I may find work and food over there.'

Then the man took from his pocket some lupin-seeds—all the food he had. As he ate them he thought bitterly, 'Could ever any one be poorer than I am?' His spirits fell again as he brooded over his troubles. He wrung his hands and stamped his feet.

Something made the man look round, and he saw, coming along the road behind him, another man, who was picking up and eating the shells of the lupin-seeds, which the man in front had thrown away!

And the man in front felt ashamed of his impatient, rebellious temper. He called to the man who was following.

'Come and walk with me, my brother,' he said, 'and we will share the lupin-seeds between us. If we help each other, perhaps God will help us both.'





"Another man was picking up and eating the shells of the lupin-seeds."





"He was court-martialled and sentenced to death."

#### HOW A SOLDIER KEPT HIS WORD.

**C**AMBRONNE was a notable French general, who began—as we say—‘at the foot of the ladder.’ In 1795, he was a corporal in garrison at Nantes.

Although scarcely twenty years of age, he had already fallen into the snare of intemperance, and was often quite drunk. He was always full of life and vigour, and when he had been drinking he became terribly



excited, and did mad things. In one of his drunken bouts, Cambronne struck an officer.

For this offence he was court-martialled and sentenced to death.

The Colonel of his regiment was very sorry about this, for he saw that the young soldier was a capable fellow, who but for his one weakness might be of great service to his country. So the Colonel appealed to an influential Government official, at that time in Nantes, for Cambronne's pardon.

'Impossible!' said the great man. 'We must make an example of him. If we allowed men who strike their officers to go unpunished, there would soon be an end of discipline in the army. Corporal Cambronne must die.'

But the Colonel would not take 'No' for an answer. He kept on begging and praying for the soldier's pardon until at last he obtained it—on one condition. This was that Cambronne should never again become intoxicated.

Glad at heart, the good Colonel hastened to the military prison, where he asked to see Cambronne. He found him downcast and repentant.

'You have committed a grave fault,' said the Colonel.

'Yes, sir,' replied Cambronne, 'and I am going to pay for it with my life.'

'Perhaps,' said the Colonel.

'Perhaps?' You know how merciless military law is. I have no hope of pardon; I must die.'

'No, my lad, you will not die yet, for I have brought you the pardon you despaired of. I had some difficulty in obtaining it. The Government will remit your sentence and restore to you your rank, on one condition.'

'A condition? Oh, sir, tell me what it is! I would do anything to save my life, and, above all, my honour!'

'The condition is that you never again get drunk.'

'Oh, sir, that is impossible!'

'Impossible'—when your life is at stake? Then you will be shot to-morrow. Think of that!'

'Well, sir, if I am never to get drunk, I must never again taste wine, for Cambronne and the bottle are so fond of one another that when once they are together they cannot bear to part.'

'Then why not promise to drink no more wine?'

'You are asking a hard thing of me, sir. Never, never, to drink wine!'

And Cambronne hung his head, and looked very doleful.

'But,' he went on, 'even if I do make such a promise, what guarantee will you have that I shall keep it?'

'Your simple word of honour will be quite sufficient,' replied the Colonel. 'I know you well enough, Cambronne, to feel sure that when you have once given your word you will keep it.'

The young soldier still kept his eyes fixed on the ground.

'Well, Cambronne,' said the Colonel kindly, 'which is it to be? Come, make your choice!'

'You are too good to me, sir,' said Cambronne. 'I thank you for your confidence in me; indeed, I think that I am even more grateful for that than for the hope of pardon which you hold out to me.'

He raised his head. 'God hears,' he said reverently. 'I, Cambronne, do solemnly promise and vow that during the whole future course of my life no drop of wine shall ever touch my lips. Are you satisfied, sir?'

'Yes, my dear fellow,' replied the Colonel, 'I am satisfied. To-morrow you will be free. Be always a brave soldier, and use in the service of your country the life which she has given back to you to-day.'

On the following day Corporal Cambronne returned to duty.

Twenty-five years later he was General Cambronne. He had distinguished himself in the Battle of Waterloo, where he had commanded the Imperial Guard, and he was known as a very skilful and gallant officer.

After the fall of the Empire he settled down peacefully at Paris, beloved and honoured by all.

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Cambronne's former colonel, now an old man, had also retired from active service. Hearing that the General was in Paris, he invited him to dinner. Other old friends and comrades were also invited, and the Colonel duly honoured the occasion by providing a sumptuous meal. The place of honour was assigned to Cambronne. He sat at the right hand of the master of the house, who, in the course of the banquet offered his guest a glass of old, very rare, and precious wine, reserved for special occasions.

Cambronne stared in surprise at the Colonel. 'What are you offering me?' he asked.

'Some Rhine wine, General. It is more than a century old. You will find scarcely anything like it in Paris.'

Cambronne still looked queerly at his host, who continued: 'I assure you, General, this wine is excellent. Just taste it, and—'

'And my word of honour, Colonel!' interrupted Cambronne, banging his fist on the table. 'And the prison at Nantes, and the pardon, and my vow! Have you forgotten all these things, my good friend? Or have you such a poor opinion of Cambronne as to think that he has done so? I gave my promise to you, and I have kept it.'

The Colonel, it is needless to say, ceased to press the wine upon his guest. Such staunch fidelity commanded his warmest admiration, and he felt very proud and happy to have saved such a man for the service of France.

E. D.

### THE BABY BUNNIES.

TOBY had a little gun;  
Toby thought he'd like some fun;  
Off he started towards the glade  
Where the baby rabbits played.

Twenty bunnies there he found,  
Frisking gaily all around,  
With their little ears of brown  
Bobbing up and bobbing down.

Toby watched and fired a shot,  
Yet no prize his prowess got,  
All the bunnies scuttled down,  
Through the lanes of Rabbit town.

Long did Toby wait about;  
But no more they ventured out.  
'Perhaps,' said he, as home he sped,  
'All the bunnies are in bed.'

F. LE N. BOWER.



## WANTED—A FOOD CONTROLLER.

THE Lord Mayor's banquet, in its palmy days, was a mean and meagre repast compared with the feasts of imperial Rome. Lucullus, a distinguished Roman general, prepared for Cicero and Pompey a nice little meal which cost 1000*l*. There were only three of them to eat it. Vitellius did not spend less than 3200*l* upon each of his banquets, and in order that he might have what he liked, ships plied incessantly between the Gulf of Venice and the Straits of Cadiz. The Emperor's cook was a very important person, and it was only fair that he should receive a good salary. He had hard work to satisfy the extravagant whims of his master. Galba's *chef* must have had to rise very early (unless, as seems more probable, he worked all night), for Galba breakfasted before daybreak, and his breakfast would have fed a hundred families. *Ælius Verus* invented a dish in which sows' flanks, pheasants, peacocks, ham, and wild boar's flesh were all mixed up together. Geta insisted upon having as many courses as there were letters in the alphabet, and each of these courses had to include all the viands whose names began with the same letter.

Don't you think that these people needed a food controller?

## THE COWARD.

(Concluded from page 340.)

CICELY stood irresolute for a moment, the papers in her dress rustling with her agitated breathing. Then, with an impulse of self-preservation, she started into the secret passage, and frantically closed the panel behind her. There she stood alone in the darkness, and unable to get back even had she wished to! She heard a door open, and then voices.

'He is here!'

'Aye, but where are the papers?'

Then silence—although they were searching the pockets of the unconscious man. At last, a growl of disappointment. 'He has not got them! Search! They must be hidden somewhere.'

Cicely remained motionless, hearing them stamping about, pulling out drawers, opening and slamming the doors of cupboards, looking everywhere for the papers which she held. She felt faint and bewildered—what was she to do? Suddenly the darkness gripped her with a panic terror, and she almost screamed. Then she thought of her father, wounded, exhausted, yet striving to the last to fulfil his mission. Marie's taunt rang in her ears: 'No Delaroche has ever been a coward before!' With an effort she mastered her terror, and tried to think.

'The passage leads out of the house,' she murmured. 'Once I am away from here maybe I can elude the rebels, and give the packet to Prince Rupert.' A thousand difficulties beset her. How was she to find her way in the dark? Was there the least hope of finding the Prince? Would it not be better to wait? But then she remembered once more her father's bravery and her sister's scorn. 'I will not disgrace our name,' she thought. 'She shall not call me a coward again!'

And with that she set her teeth and walked forward,

feeling her way through the darkness. The passage sloped downwards, and was quite straight, the walls on either side being of panelled oak. Suddenly the floor seemed to give way beneath her feet; she fell some way, and then stopped herself, shaken and bruised. She felt on either side of her, and came to the conclusion that this was the beginning of a flight of steps. Down and down she went, testing every stair with her foot, for many were broken, and some were altogether missing. The walls were now of stone, cold and slimy, and she knew she was beyond the house. At last the stairs came to an end, and she traversed a long, winding passage. Drops of water fell on her from the roof, making her start and shudder; often she stepped into ice-cold pools, and several times slipped and fell on loose stones. Above everything, she could hear the echo of her feet; pad, pad, as though some stealthy presence was following her through the darkness. Her high-strung nerves gave way beneath the horror of that feeling, and she screamed aloud. Her scream went echoing on and on like some fiendish malicious laughter, until she thought that she was going mad. At last, however, when she could bear no more, the passage began to slope upward; the close, dank air became fresher, and she breathed more easily. Then a sudden turn of the passage brought her in sight of an opening. She fought her way through a tangle of bushes, so dense that it almost obscured the light, and sank down, half-fainting, in the open air. She soon pulled herself together, whispering incessantly, 'I will not be a coward! I must find the Prince!'

Then she looked about her. She was, as her brother had said, in the woods on the hillside about a mile away from their home. Some way beyond her a road stretched through the trees, along which a small party of Cavaliers were galloping. She ran towards them, waving her handkerchief to attract their attention, and the leader of the party reined in his horse. He was a tall, handsome man, magnificently dressed, though travel-stained and weary, and his features seemed vaguely familiar to the child.

'What do you want with me, little mistress?' he asked, curtly, but not unkindly.

Cicely, looking up into his dark eyes, felt that she was in the presence of a friend. 'I must see the Prince—Prince Rupert,' she answered hurriedly.

The Cavalier looked astonished. 'I am he,' he replied. 'And what is your business?'

She handed him the little packet, and slipped to the ground, utterly exhausted, watching him as he read the contents.

'You have rendered His Majesty a great service,' he said at last. 'How did this come into your possession?'

Still shivering from the ordeal she had passed through, Cicely told her story.

'And you had the courage to go alone through an unknown passage in total darkness?' commented the Prince, when she had finished.

'What else could I do?' replied Cicely. 'They have always called me a coward, and I was terrified, but I could not disgrace my father's name.'

The Prince, with his courtly grace, bent from the saddle, and raised her fingers to his lips in a gesture of homage. 'I faith, you are a worthy daughter to Sir Anthony,' he said heartily. 'I have never met a braver girl.'

FRANCES M. BUSS.





“‘I must see the Prince—Prince Rupert.’”