

**THE KING'S OWN
BORDERERS.**

A Military Romance.

VOL. II.

BY
JAMES GRANT

"Memories fast are thronging o'er me,
Of the grand old fields of Spain;
How he faced the charge of Junot,
And the fight where Moore was slain.
Oh the years of weary waiting
For the glorious chance he sought,
For the slowly ripened harvest
That life's latest autumn brought."

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THE KING'S OWN BORDERERS.

CHAPTER I. A LAST REJECTION.

"Ae fond kiss and then we sever!
Ae farewell, alas for ever!
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee;
Who shall say that Fortune grieves him
While the star of hope she leaves him?"
BURNS.

Ignoring the source or cause of the excitement among the household, Cosmo lounged into the breakfast-parlour, where the silver urns were hissing amid a very chaste equipage, and where the September sun was shining in through clusters of sweet briar and monthly roses, and as he seated himself he handed to his father a long official-like document, at the sight of which his mother changed colour, and even Flora, who looked charming in her smiling radiance, lace frills, and morning dress of spotted white muslin, lifted her dark eyelashes with interest.

"What's the matter, Cosmo?—your leave cancelled?" asked Rohallion.

"Oh no, my lord—nothing so bad as that."

"A summons from headquarters, I see."

"Something very like it," drawled Cosmo; "read it to the ladies. Spillsby, some coffee—no cream."

The letter ran briefly thus:—

"Horse Guards, &c., &c.

"SIR,—I have the honour to acquaint you, by direction of His Royal Highness the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief, that it is now in his power to appoint you to one of the second battalions lately raised for the line and for immediate foreign service, provided that within a fortnight you are prepared to assume the command, in which case your name shall appear in the next Gazette.

"I have the honour to be, &c., &c.

"Major the Hon. C. Crawford,
&c., &c."

"A fortnight!—are we to have you only for a fortnight, my dear, dear Cosmo?" exclaimed Lady Rohallion, all her maternal tenderness welling up at once.

"You will not, I fear, have me so long, my dear mother," said he; "and you, Flora," he added in a low voice, as he purposely held his plate across her for a wing of grouse; "and you——"

"Give you full leave to go, with my dearest wishes, and your heart unbroken. Come, Cosmo," she added in the same low voice, and with a soft smile; "let us part friends, at least."

Cosmo's eyes seemed to shrink and dilate, while a cold and haughty smile spread over his otherwise handsome features, as he turned quietly to discuss his grouse, and said to the butler,—

"Spillsby, tell the groom to have a horse saddled for my man—take Minden, the bay mare—as I must despatch a letter to Maybole within an hour."

Breakfast was hurried over in silence and constraint, then Cosmo, kissing the brow of his mother, who was already in tears,—for the only real emotion that lingered in the Master's heart was a regard for his mother—played with the silk tassels of his luxurious dressing-gown, and lounged into the library to write his answer to the military secretary, and profess himself to be completely, as in duty bound, at the disposal of His Royal Highness, and proud to accept the command offered him.

He soon penned the letter, and sealed it with the coronet, the shield *gules* and fess *ermine* of Rohallion, muttering as he did so,—

"The line—the line after all; a horrid bore indeed, to come down to that!"

He threw open his dressing-gown, as if it stifled him, almost tearing the tasselled girdle as he did so, and planting his foot on the buhl writing-table, lounged back in an easy-chair, where he strove to read up Sir David Dundas's "Eighteen Manoeuvres," and fancied how he would handle his battalion without clubbing the companies or bringing the rear rank in front; by taking them into action with snappers instead of flints, as old Whitelock did at Buenos Ayres, or committing other little blunders, which might prove very awkward if a brigade of French twelve-pounders were throwing in grape and canister at half-musket range.

Soothed by pipe, and by the silence of the place, and by the subdued sunlight that stole through the deep windows of that old

library, so quaint with its oak shelves of calf-bound and red-labelled folios and quartos, its buhl cabinets, and square-backed chairs of the Covenanting days, its half-curtained oriel window, through which were seen the ripe corn or stubble fields that stretched in distance far away to the brown hills of Carrick. Soothed, we say, by all this, Cosmo dawdled over the pages and the diagrams of the famous review at Potsdam for some time before he became conscious that Flora was seated near him, busy with a book of engravings.

Then begging pardon for his pipe and his free-and-easy position, a bachelor habit, as he said, he arose and joined her. Leaning over the back of his chair, as if to overlook the prints, while in reality his admiring eyes wandered alternately and admiringly over her fine glossy hair, the contour of her head, and little white ears (at each of which a rose diamond dangled), and her delicate neck, which rose so nobly from her back and beautifully curved shoulders, he said in a low voice, and with considerable softness of manner, for him at least,—

"Pon my honour, friend Flora, I believe you really begin to love me, after all."

"How do you think so, or why?" she asked, looking half round, with her bewitching eyes full of wonder and amusement.

"Because we always quarrel when we meet, and that is called a Scots mode of wooing, isn't it?"

"So our nurses used to say, long ago."

"And were they right?"

"Now, dear Cosmo, let us talk of something else, if you please," she urged pleadingly.

"Why so?"

"A dangerous topic has a strange fascination for you."

"Dangerous?"

"Unpleasant, at least," said Flora, pettishly.

Cosmo flung the "Eighteen Manœuvres" of Lieutenant-General Dundas very angrily and ignominiously to the extreme end of the library, and folding his arms stood haughtily erect before Flora, whose bright eyes were fixed on his, with a smiling expression of fear and perplexity combined.

"Can it be possible," he began, "I ask you, can it be possible, Miss Warrender——"

"Oh, you are about to address me officially—well, sir?"

"Can it be possible, Flora, that you still love this unknown protégé of my foolish mother—this nameless rascal, who has run away, heaven knows where? By-the-bye, I wonder if Spillsby has overhauled the plate chest since he went!"

Flora was silent, but his *brusquerie* and categorical manner offended her, and filled her eyes with tears.

"This weeping is enough," continued the exasperated Cosmo, who, though he had no great regard for Flora, felt his self-esteem—which was not small—most fearfully wounded; "you do love him."

"And what if I do?" she asked, very quietly, but withal rather defiantly.

"Very fine, Miss Warrender—very fine, 'pon my soul! That old jade, Anne Radcliffe, with her 'Romance of the Forest,' her 'Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne,' and this new Edinburgh fellow, Scott, with his 'Marmion,' and so forth, have perfected your education. Your teaching has been most creditable!"

"This taunting manner is not so to you," replied Flora, resuming her inspection of the book of prints.

"Oho! we are in a passion again it seems?"

"Far from it, sir—I never was more cool in my life," said she, looking up with a wicked but glorious smile.

"And where has this runaway gone? His friends in the servants' hall heard something of him last night or this morning, if I may judge from the pot-house row they made."

"He has gone into the army," replied Flora, with a perceptible modulation of voice.

"The army!" replied Cosmo, really surprised; "enlisted—for what?—a fifer or triangle boy?"

"No," replied Flora, curling her pretty nostril, while her eyes gleamed dangerously under their long thick lashes.

"For what, on earth, has he gone then?"

"A gentleman volunteer."

"A valuable acquisition to His Majesty's service!" said Cosmo, laughing, and, greatly to Flora's annoyance, seeming to be really amused; "do you know, friend Flora, what a volunteer is?"

"Not exactly, sir," said Flora, again looking down on her book of prints with a sigh of anger.

"Shall I tell you?"

"If you please."

"We never had any in the Household Brigade—such fellows are usually to be found only with the line corps."

"Ah—with corps that go abroad and really see service—I understand."

"Miss Warrender, the Guards——"

"Well, *what* is a volunteer?" asked Flora, beating the carpet with a very pretty foot.

"A volunteer is a poor devil who is too proud to enlist, and is too friendless to procure a commission; who has all a private's duty to do, and has to carry a musket, pack, and havresack, wherein are his ration-beef, biscuits, and often his blackball and shoebrushes; who mounts guard and salutes me when I pass him, and whom I may handcuff and send to the cells or guard-house when I please; who is not a regular member of the mess and may never be; who gets a shilling per diem with the chance of Chelsea, a wooden leg, or an arm with an iron hook if his limbs are smashed by a round shot; who is neither officer, non-commissioned officer, nor private—neither fish, flesh, nor good red-herring (to use a camp phrase). Oh, Flora, Flora Warrender, can you be such a romantic

little goose as to feel an interest in such a fellow as I have described?"

Mingling emotions, indignation at the Master's insulting bitterness, pity for Quentin, and pure anger at the annoyance to which she was subjected, made Flora's white bosom heave as she quietly turned her eyes, with a flashing expression however, upon the cat-like regards of the sneering questioner, and said,—

"Who are you, sir, that would thus question or dictate to me?"

"Who am I?" he asked, while surveying her through his glass with amusement, perplexity, and something of sorrow in his tone.

"Yes, sir—who are you?"

"I am, I believe, Cosmo, Master of Rohallion, and Colonel to be, of a very fine regiment; so I can afford to smile at the pride and petulance of a moon-struck girl."

"Oh, how unseemly this is! Whatever happens, let us part friends," said she politely, perhaps a little imploringly.

"So be it," said he, kissing her hand as she retired.

"Now, the sooner I am off from this dreary paternal den the better. Away to London at once. Andrews!—Jack Andrews," he shouted, in a tone almost of ferocity: "show me the last newspapers." They were soon brought, and Cosmo's sharp eyes ran rapidly over the advertisements. "Let me see," he pondered, "travelling by mail is intolerable; one never knows who the devil one may be boxed up with for a week, a fever patient or a lunatic, perhaps! The smacks are crowded with all manner of rubbish, travelling bagmen, linesmen going home on leave, sick mothers

and squalling babies. What is this? The good ship *Edinburgh*, pinck-built, near the new quay at Leith, sails for England without convoy—carries six 12-pounders—master to be spoke with daily at the Cross—to be *spoke* with. Faugh! what says the next advertisement? 'A widow lady, who is to set out for London next week in a post-chaise, would be glad to hear of a companion. Enquire at the *Courant* office, opposite the Old Fishmarket-close, Edinburgh.' Egad! the very thing—widow lady—hope she's young and good-looking. I'll answer *this!*"

Such advertisements in the London and Edinburgh papers were quite common in those days, when travelling expenses were enormous.

He replied to it, and departed from Rohallion in a great hurry soon after. Whether with a fair companion or not, we are unable to say.

We hope so, and that on the journey of about four hundred miles to London, the amenity of the fair widow consoled him for the final rebuff he met with from Flora Warrender.

CHAPTER II. THE MESS.

"He is more fortunate! Yea, he hath finished;
For him there is no longer any future.
His life is bright; bright without spot it was,
And cannot cease to be.

O 'tis well with him,
But who knows what the coming hour,
Veiled in thick darkness, brings for us!
Wallenstein.

The mess-room of the 2nd battalion of the 25th Foot, in old Colchester Barracks, was a long room, and for its size rather low in the ceiling, which was crossed by a massive dormant beam of oak. Good mahogany tables occupied the entire length of the room, with a row of hair-cloth chairs on each side thereof. It was destitute of all ornament save a few framed prints of the popular generals of the time, such as the Duke of York, so justly known as "the soldier's friend;" Sir Ralph Abercrombie, who fell in Egypt; Sir David Dundas, the hero of Tournay; Sir David Baird, flushed with triumph and revenge, leading on his stormers at Seringapatam; the sad and gentle Sir John Moore, and others.

The room was uncarpeted, but the number of tall wax candles, in silver branches, on the long table, and in girandoles, on the mantelpiece and sideboard, together with the quantity of rich plate that was displayed, and the brilliance of the assembled company, about thirty officers in full uniform, their scarlet coats all faced and lapelled to the waist with blue barred with gold, and all their

bullion epaulettes glittering, had a very gay appearance; thus the general meagreness of the furniture passed unobserved.

At mess the coats were then worn open, with the crimson silk sash inside and over a white waistcoat. Nearly all the seniors still indulged in powdered heads, while the juniors wore their hair in that curly profusion introduced by George IV., then Prince of Wales. A few who were on duty were distinguished by the pipe-clayed shoulder-belt and gilt gorget, which was slung round the neck by a ribbon which varied in every corps according to the colour of its facings.

Amid much good-humour and a little banter, they seated themselves, and the president and vice-president—posts taken by every officer in rotation—proceeded to their tasks of dispensing the viands.

Quentin was seated next his host, Major Middleton, about the centre of the table, and he surveyed the gay scene with surprise and pleasure, though looking somewhat anxiously for the face of his kind friend Warriston, who was to be a guest that evening, but was still detained on duty.

To him much of the conversation was a perfect mystery, being half jocular and half technical, or that which is stigmatized as "shop." It chiefly ran on drills, duties, and mistakes—how badly those 94th fellows marched past yesterday, and so forth; while the standing jokes about Buckle's nag-tailed charger, Monkton's old epaulettes, Pimple's last love-affair, and the old commandant's state of mind on discovering that Colville had a fair visitor in his guard-room, seemed to excite as much laughter as if they had all

been quite new, and had not been heard there every day for the last six months.

Some rapid changes would seem to have taken place at the headquarters of the 2nd battalion. The old colonel of whom Quentin heard on the march from Ayr, had sold out, and a Major Sir John Glendinning come in by purchase. One gazette contained a notice of this, and a second announced the death of Sir John in a duel with an officer of the Guards. The lieutenant-colonelcy was thus again vacant, and all present, even Monkton, hoped the step would be given in the regiment, that old Major Middleton would get the command; thus all would have a move upward, and who could say but Quentin Kennedy might obtain the ensigncy which would thus be rendered vacant? But poor Middleton had served so long, and had seen so many promoted over his head, that he ceased to be hopeful of anything.

Some of the youngsters drank wine again and again with our young volunteer, a spirit of mischief being combined with their hospitality. To "screw a Johnny Raw" was one of the chief practical jokes at a mess-table then, as it is at some few still; but Middleton's influence soon repressed them.

The cloth removed, the regimental mull, a gigantic ram's head, the horns of which were tipped with cairngorms and massive silver settings, was placed before the president, and was passed down the table from left to right, according to the custom of all Scottish messes. The mull was the farewell gift of Lord Rohallion, and the gallant ram was the flower of all that he could procure in Carrick.

The proposed expeditions to Spain and Holland soon formed the staple topics for discourse and surmise; but none present had

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