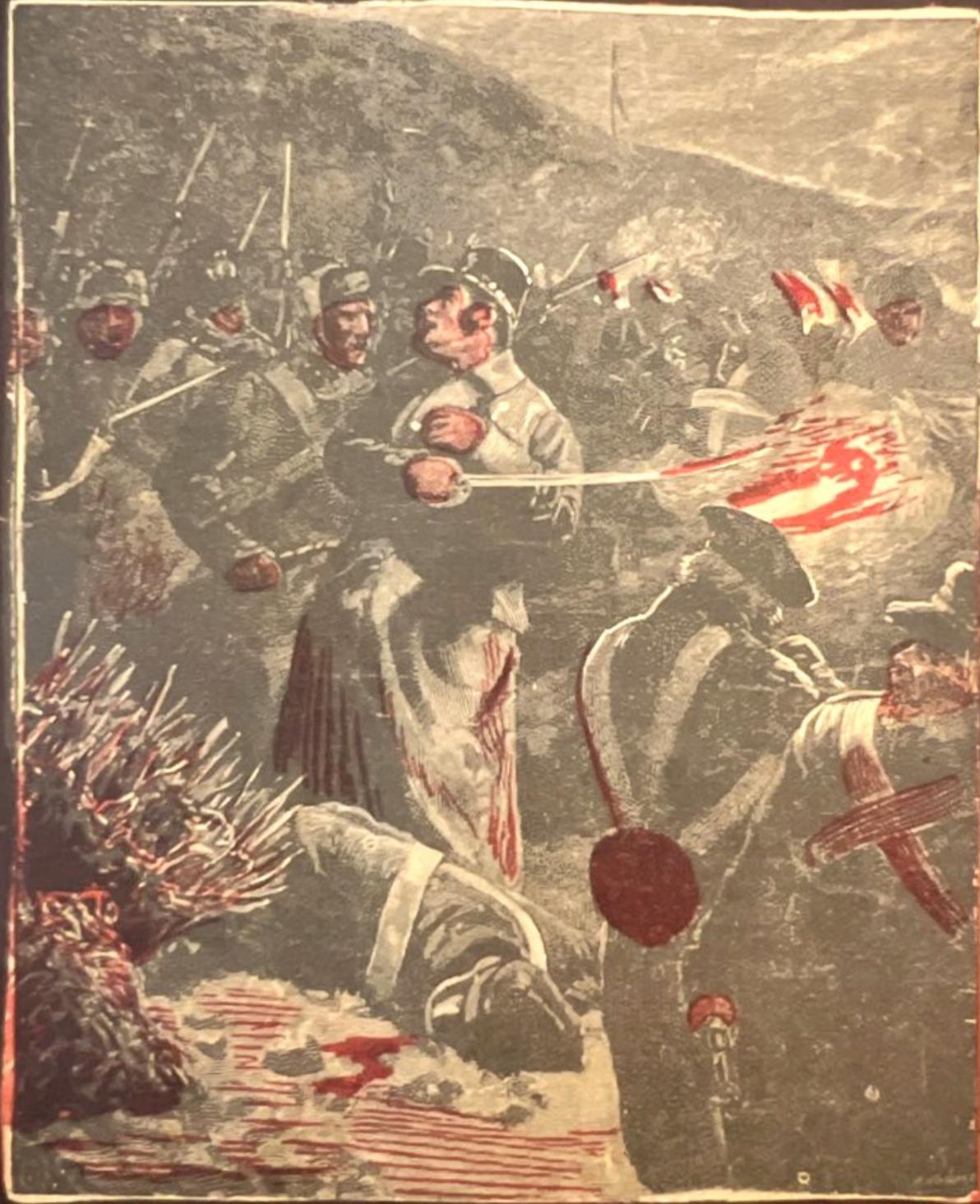


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HYP.

CAPTAIN HEDLEY VICARS,

97th Regiment.

HEDLEY VICARS was born in the Mauritius on the 7th of December, 1826. His father was an officer in the Royal Engineers. The family estate was Levalley, in Queen's County. There was little to distinguish the early days of Hedley Vicars from those of other healthy, high-spirited boys. Active and fearless, he was foremost among his playfellows wherever fun or frolic was to be found. Open-hearted and generous, quick to resent an injury, but ready to forgive, he was a universal favourite with them, whilst his sweetness of temper, and kind, unselfish nature, especially endeared him to his family at home. His faults were those of an energetic and wayward disposition, and those legends which are wont to be preserved in families record occasional instances of his odd and amusing perversity. When the children were gathered around their mother to repeat texts of Scripture in turn, Hedley, refusing to enter into the spirit of the little circle, would contribute nothing but "Remember Lot's wife."

Loss of health obliged his mother to return to England with her children, whilst their father was detained in the Mauritius by military duty. He came home to rejoice the hearts of his family in the year 1835, and died four years afterwards in the prime of manhood at Mullingar, West Meath, where he held a military appointment. When the boy was twelve years old his father's dying hand was laid upon his head, with the earnest prayer, "that he might be a good soldier of Jesus Christ, and so fight manfully under His banner as to glorify His holy Name." It might almost seem that faith had given to the departing Christian, as to the aged Jacob, a voice of prophecy. Knows he not now, and will he not yet more perfectly know, in a day for which a groaning creation looketh, how fully a faithful God granted to him this his last prayer?

On Christmas day, 1843, his mother received a letter announcing that her son had obtained a commission in the line, written by the same hand which, on Good Friday, 1855, informed her how faithfully unto death that commission had been fulfilled.

Early in the following spring he commenced his military career by joining the depot of the 97th Regiment in the Isle of Wight. He was an ardent lover of his profession, and from first to last was devoted to his duties. In writing to his mother an account of his first review, with its fatigues of marching, skirmishing, and firing, he adds, with boyish pride, "But my zeal for the service kept me up."

In the autumn of 1844 he returned home to take leave of his family at Langford Grove, in Essex, before sailing for Corfu. His eldest sister well remembers his joyous bearing as he first exhibited himself to them in the Queen's uniform, and her own admiration of the bright, intelligent countenance, broad shoulders, and well-knit, athletic figure of her young soldier brother. A few weeks afterwards he sailed for Corfu, now fairly launched in the world, and in a profession beset with temptations. At Corfu he entered with spirit into all the amusements which offered themselves to him. His letters to his family were now less frequent than ever before or afterwards, and at this period of his life his reckless disposition often led him into scenes of which his conscience disapproved, and to excesses which, though never matured into habits, and, by the grace of God, early and for ever abandoned, were afterwards the subject of bitter and humiliating remembrance. In reference to this he wrote in 1854: "You will be spared poignant remorse in after years by remembering your Creator in the days of your youth. I speak from heartfelt experience. I would give worlds, if I had them, to undo what I have done."

The Soul's Awakening.

The 97th was ordered to Jamaica in 1848. From Maroon Town he thus writes to his mother: "I see it all now. It is I that have caused your illness, my darling mother. Ever since the receipt of your last letter I have been in a dreadful state of mind. I feel that I deserve God's severest punish-

ment for my undutiful conduct towards the fondest of mothers, but the excruciating thought had never before occurred to me that He might think fit to remove her from me. Oh, what agony I have endured! What sleepless nights I have passed since the perusal of that letter! The review of my past life, especially the retrospect of the last two years has at last quite startled me, and at the same time disgusted me. You will now see the surest sign of repentance in my future conduct; and believe me that never, as far as in me lies, shall another moment's anxiety be caused you by your dutiful and now repentant son:”

The remorse which he thus affectingly expresses was caused by his having incurred debt, to no great amount, but such as he knew would become a burden to a widowed mother. During his residence in one of the Mediterranean isles he had become acquainted with a family who showed him great hospitality, and in maintaining social intercourse with them, and sharing their pleasures, he had involved himself beyond his means. It was the first and last time that his unselfish nature thus transgressed.

In writing at the same time to his sister he alludes to forebodings of an early death occasionally coming across him, and wishes he were “prepared”: “I am no coward, but the thought of death is solemn, and the idea of dying far away from home, with no fond mother or sister to give me comfort in my last moments is sad enough. Yet I hope the effect of these reflections is wholesome, and will make me consider seriously whether I am fit to die.”

He wrote to his mother from Newcastle, Jamaica, on 5th June, 1849: “I must now tell you of the death of a brother officer, Lieutenant Bindon. He died on the 13th of May at five o’clock in the morning. Poor fellow, his was a short but painful illness. I remember when I went into his room the sun was shining brightly through the windows, the birds were singing cheerily, and the merry laugh of the light-hearted soldiers (plainly audible from their barracks) grated harshly on my ear. He was dead! Looking at his meek and placid face, calm and unruffled, I could hardly believe that I was not gazing on the living man. But, alas, his soul had fled! He was a robust and

stalwart-looking man, about twenty-four years of age. With God's help I trust I have learned a lesson and a warning from his sudden death. He was buried the same evening in the small graveyard at the foot of the hill as you enter the cantonment. I, as senior subaltern, had command of the firing party. When we arrived the twilight was fast verging into darkness, and the funeral service was read by the light of a candle. This is soon over, and then all retire from the grave except myself and armed party of forty men. We then give three volleys—the rolling echoes are still reverberating when the earth is thrown in—and all is over. Such has been the melancholy end of my poor friend and mess-mate. I was deeply affected, and could not restrain my tears all the time. I felt my voice choked when I gave the command, 'Fire three volleys in the air'."

In July, 1849, we find him entrusted with the management of a sort of regimental carnival, an entertainment which lasted two days, having been given by the 97th to the neighbouring families who had shown them hospitality and attention. At the close he expresses a sense of dissatisfaction, without any definite reason for it, but "is glad it is over."

Drinks from the Broken Cisterns.

About this time he writes, with his usual frank simplicity: "I have given up my cottage for the last fortnight to some invalids from Kingston and their doctor, and have domiciled myself in my kitchen. They are very grateful to me for my kindness." His cottage and garden were his playthings, and his refined taste displayed itself in their decoration, although this was now exercised with strict economy, for he writes that he is "saving every fraction he can to pay off his few remaining debts," and winds up his information with the announcement: "In a short time, dear mother, your son will be entirely out of debt. Hurrah!"

The 97th left Jamaica for Halifax, Nova Scotia, in June, 1851. Almost immediately after landing he was ordered to Canada to take charge of volunteers for a regiment there. It was in the autumn of this year that he visited the Falls of Niagara, and his journal is written with deep and enthusiastic delight, describing his in-

THE GREAT CHANGE.

7



Inset—Preaching to his Men.

The Dawn of Life (page 8).

creasing excitement from the moment when he first distinguished the distant roar of the waters to that which "filled him with sublime and awful joy when they first broke upon his sight." He expresses his belief that no one could be an atheist whilst beholding the majestic power of God as displayed in the stupendous magnificence of those Falls; and whilst returning day after day to refresh and solemnise his spirit there he realises with renewed earnestness the sinfulness of wasting life in a mere search after pleasure, and is impressed with the importance of having a fixed aim of sufficient strength to be a lever to his life. Self-interest, he has found, even when calculated upon with the reckoning of eternity, is not strong enough at all times to raise a man above the dominion of his own inclinations. He knew not yet "the expulsive power of a new affection," for he had not learned to say, "The love of Christ constraineth me."

Passes from Death to Life.

Hitherto Hedley Vicars had been the subject only of the awakening work of the Spirit. In later days, when he looked back on that period of his life, he distinctly stated: "I was not then converted to God." He was seeking, but he had not found, "the grace of life."

It was the month of November, 1851, that, whilst awaiting the return of a brother officer to his room, he idly turned over the leaves of a Bible which lay on the table. The words caught his eye, "**The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin**" (1 John 1. 7). Closing the Book, he said, "If this be true for me, henceforth I will live, by the grace of God, as a man should live who has been washed in the Blood of Jesus Christ." That night he scarcely slept, pondering in his heart whether it were presumptuous or not to claim an interest in those words. During those wakeful hours he was watched, we cannot doubt, with deep and loving interest by One who *never* slumbereth nor sleepeth; and it was said of him in Heaven: "**Behold, he prayeth!**" (Acts 9. 11). In answer to those prayers he was enabled to believe, as he rose in the morning, that the message of peace *was* "true for him," "**a faithful saying, and worthy of all accepta-**

tion" (1 Tim. 1. 15). "The past," he said, "then is blotted out. What I have to do is to go forward. I cannot return to the sins from which my Saviour has cleansed me with His own Blood."

An impetus was now given in a new direction of sufficient force to last till the race was run, until he could say with the Apostle Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4. 7). Thenceforth *he lived*. And the life he now lived in the flesh he lived by the faith of the Son of God, of whom he delighted to say, with realising faith and adoring gratitude, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2. 20).

Makes a Good Start.

On the morning which succeeded that memorable night he bought a large Bible and placed it open on the table in his sitting-room, determined that "an open Bible" for the future should be "his colours." "It was to speak for me," he said, "before I was strong enough to speak for myself." His friends came as usual to his rooms, and did not altogether fancy the new colours. One remarked that he had "turned Methodist," and, with a shrug, retreated. Another ventured on the bolder method of warning him not to become a hypocrite: "Bad as you were, I never thought you would come to this, old fellow." So, for the most part, for a time his quarters were deserted by his late companions. During six or seven months he had to encounter no slight opposition at mess, "and had hard work," as he said, "to stand his ground." But the promise did not fail: "The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger" (Job 17. 9).

All this time he found great comfort in the society of a few brother officers who were walking with God, but especially in the faithful preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by Dr. Twining, Garrison Chaplain at Halifax, and in the personal friendship of that man of God, which he enjoyed uninterruptedly from that time until the day of his death. Under so deep an obligation did he consider himself to Dr. Twining that he frequently referred to him as his spiritual father; and to his scriptural preaching and

teaching and blessed example of "walking with God" may doubtless be traced, under the mighty working of the Holy Spirit, those clear and happy views of the Christian life and that consistency and holiness of life which succeeded his conversion.

A heart so large and loving by nature as that of Hedley Vicars can scarcely accept the open invitation to come to Jesus for pardon, peace, and eternal life, without giving an immediate response to the injunction, "Let him that heareth say, Come" (Rev. 22. 17). Accordingly he began to teach in a Sunday school, to visit the sick, and to take every opportunity of reading the Scriptures and praying with the men singly. Of three of these, whom he describes as "once great sinners, nearly as bad as myself," he could soon say confidently that they had followed him in turning to God. At the same time he was also the means of awakening some of his brother officers to make the earnest inquiry: "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16. 30).

Made Adjutant of the Regiment.

The Adjutancy of his regiment was offered to him by his Colonel in the spring of 1852, with these flattering words: "Vicars, you are the man I can best trust with responsibility." This appointment appears to have given universal satisfaction amongst officers and men, although one of the officers remarked, jestingly, "He won't do for it; he is too conscientious." This conscientiousness was not only evinced in his military, but also in his private life. Every amusement which he found to be injurious in its effect on his spiritual condition was cheerfully relinquished. In a letter to his eldest sister he inquires her opinion of balls and other public entertainments, and adds: "I have of late refused every invitation to such amusements on finding they made me less earnest and thoughtful, and indisposed me for reading and prayer."

We find his growth in grace indicated in the following letter to his sister: "I have been fighting hard against sin. I mean, not only what the world understands by that term, but against the power of it in my heart. The conflict has been severe, it is so still; but I trust, by the help of God, that I shall finally obtain the mastery. What I pray for

most constantly is, that I may be enabled to see more clearly the wicked state of my heart by nature, and thus to feel my greater need of an almighty Saviour. You cannot imagine what doubts and torments assail my mind at times, how torn and harassed I am by sinful thoughts and want of faith. Well may I call myself the 'chief of sinners!' I sometimes even add to my sins by doubting the efficacy of Christ's atonement, and the cleansing power of His precious Blood to wash away my sins. Oh, that I could realise to myself more fully that His Blood 'cleanseth us from all sin!' I was always foremost and daring enough in sin. Would that I could show the same spirit in the cause of Christ. Would that I felt as little fear of being called and thought to be a Christian as I used to feel of being enlisted against Christianity!"

Touching Letter to His Brother.

To his brother he wrote: "You will perhaps be surprised as you read this letter at the change which has come over me. Yes, I believe and feel that I am a changed man; that I have taken the important step of declaring on whose side I will be. Oh, that I could persuade you to enrol yourself with me on the side of Jesus Christ! As Newton says, 'I know what the world can do, and what it cannot do.' It cannot give or take away that peace of God which passeth all understanding. It cannot soothe the wounded conscience; nor enable us to meet death with comfort. I have tried both services. For twenty-four years have I lived under the thraldom of sin, led by the devil. None need despair of being welcomed by the Saviour when He has pardoned and brought to repentance such a sinner as I have been. The retrospect of my past life is now miserable to me; yet before I was taught by the Spirit of God, I thought and called it a life of pleasure! The very name, when applied to sin, now makes my heart sicken. Even then I never could enjoy recalling the occupations of each day; and think you my conscience was quiet? No, though again and again I stifled it, as too many do. Bitter experience has taught me that 'there is no peace to the wicked.' Blessed be God, I know now that I am pardoned and reconciled to God, through the death of His Son.

How happy is the Christian when he has this assurance! If you have not yet turned entirely to God, take my advice, and if you want to find true happiness do so at once."

A letter dated 23rd June, 1852, indicates his steady progress in the new course: "My darling mother,—If you look out you will probably see my name in the *Gazette* in a fortnight or so, as the Colonel sends the recommendation home by this mail. My worldly prospects will soon be considerably improved. What reason I have to be thankful to Him who, notwithstanding my utter unworthiness, has been so kind and merciful to me! Four or five of my brother officers attend Dr. Twining's Bible class. One of them has, I trust, been truly converted. He was, like myself, about the last in the regiment one would ever have thought likely to become religious; but God's ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts. I trust his example may do much good. It is grievous to see how little regard men pay to the salvation of their never-dying souls. But I must ever remember that I was once like them, and worse; and that it is only through the grace of God that I am now different. It may be truly said of me, 'Is not this a brand plucked from the burning?'"

The same earnest tone pervades all his letters during the remainder of his residence in Nova Scotia. We find allusions to conflicts and difficulties in overcoming temptations and establishing a new course of life. "But I know it must be done, and in God's strength it shall be," is ever the conclusion.

The Creed of His Heart.

From his diary, kept daily with conscientious regularity and faithfulness, we give the following passage which might truly be called the creed of his heart: "I have got over some rough ground since I was first led to seek after happiness, where alone it can be found, in the Gospel of Jesus. I have had to battle much against the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil; but though often on the point of giving up the struggle in despair, the goodness, the long-suffering, the wondrous loving-kindness of my God have guarded me and watched over me, and kept me from falling utterly away from Him. Oh, what cause have

I to give Him most humble and hearty thanks for all His goodness towards me! When I look back on my past life, nearly six and twenty years, I see nothing but an accumulation of transgression and sin. Oh, my soul, let me remember with disgust and horror that for nearly five and twenty years I was a willing servant of Satan. What aggravates my wickedness is that it has been all committed in spite of the advice and warnings of a truly Christian mother, and how often I have silenced the voice of conscience. But why dwell any more on a life which has been wasted? Why bring up the remembrance of sins, each one of which would have murdered my soul had I died in the act of commission? I do it that they may humble and prostrate me in the dust before that holy God who has said, 'The soul that sinneth it shall die.' I acknowledge, O my God, that Hell is my only desert, that were I ever consigned to its abode it would be but just recompense for my transgressions. Let me ever keep in mind that if I am saved it must be entirely and solely through Divine mercy in Christ Jesus. Were I to be judged according to my works I should be justly condemned. But thanks be to God for the gift of His precious Word, which reveals His wondrous love in sending His only begotten Son into the world to die for sinners. There I read that Jesus Christ was crucified for me, that He bore in His own body all my sins, that **His Blood cleanseth from all sin**, that He has paid the penalty due to sin, that He has satisfied God's intense hatred towards sin. Had my Salvation depended upon keeping the Law I should be without hope, for I have broken it thousands of times. But through this Man, the Lord Jesus, is preached the forgiveness of sins, and they that believe are justified from *all things*. Oh, then, let me close with God's free offering of Salvation to all, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved' (Acts 16. 31). Let me look to Christ as my righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Let me lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset me, and let me run with patience the race set before me, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of my faith, working out my own Salvation with fear and trembling, remembering that

it is God that worketh in me to will and to do His good pleasure. I would from this day give up the remainder of my life to the service of God. I will keep on this diary that I may be able to trace the progress I make in the Christian life, and I will faithfully put down everything. May my motto be, 'Not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' ”

Happy Days at Home.

The 97th landed in England in the month of May, 1853, and went into barracks at Walmer. The long-desired leave came at last, and on the evening of the 15th of June he arrived unexpectedly at home whilst his family were attending a week-day service. The joy of that meeting was one with which a stranger intermeddleth not.

To the family and friends of Hedley Vicars the year which followed his return home was one of interest and happiness of no common kind. The heart of his widowed mother “sang for joy” as she marked “the exceeding grace of God in him,” and his sisters and brother found him to be at once a cheerful companion, a faithful friend, and a wise adviser. The time of his leave was chiefly spent at Terling Place, Essex, the seat of his brother-in-law, Lord Rayleigh, whose brotherly kindness and Christian love made his house truly a home to Hedley Vicars. Here he enjoyed the unreserved interchange of warm affection with every member of his family. Daily they gathered round him for the study of the Word of God, and after the nightly farewells to the drawing-room circle he met his mother and sisters again for holy conversation and prayer. Precious indeed must have been those too fleeting hours of unreserved fellowship of hearts, dimly foreshadowing a more lasting and perfect communion yet to be.

Yet hearts were buoyed up by “the Blessed Hope,” as the following letter to Lady Rayleigh indicates: ‘There is much in the signs of the times to make us believe that the Redeemer’s advent is near. It *may* be we shall not taste of death, but be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Beloved sister, let us live in hourly expectation of that solemn yet joyful event. Let us judge our own state by the happiness the thought gives us, and not rest satisfied

until the language of our hearts shall be, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus' (Rev. 22. 20).

Personal Friendships.

Hitherto it is from the testimony of others that this imperfect outline has been given of the life and character of Hedley Vicars. But now it has to be our happy privilege to gather from personal observation, and in the enjoyment of no common Christian friendship, the proofs of how exceeding abundant was the grace of Christ towards him.

In the month of October of the same year my father, my sister, and I were renewing a friendship of former days by a visit to Terling Place. A letter was received on the morning of the 11th by Lady Rayleigh, promising a visit from her brother, which caused such tumult of joyous excitement at the breakfast table, and so much shouting and clapping of hands amongst the children, as soon as the news was made known to them, that, in my ignorance, I supposed the young soldier had only just arrived from Nova Scotia. At dinner that day he was beside me. Not knowing anything of his character, I ventured rather cautiously at first on the subject one would fain have the faithful courage to speak of to every fellow-creature. At the first touch of the chord his pleasant countenance lighted up, and his eyes glistened as I told him of a remarkable instance of the grace of God. On his renewing the conversation in the evening, I said, half-inquiringly, "These subjects seem to have an interest for you?" "Nothing in the world is worth calling interesting by their side," he answered, with a fervour which told its own story; and then gave me an outline of the manner in which God had worked the great change in his own soul. With forceful simplicity he told the point of the story; how the words, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin," became the sheet-anchor of his soul, adding, "Thus was I born again of the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."

Scarcely had Hedley Vicars sailed for Gibraltar when the startling order for an army to proceed to the East shook the heart of peaceful England to its centre. Partings took place such as had not been known in the land for forty

years, and farewell blessings were given, to extend over fields of bloodshed and death. "Pray for him," was the watchword from friend to friend, as a husband, a son, or a brother went forth to fight the battles of his country. Every sight of the Queen's uniform called forth emotions of generous enthusiasm from all conditions of men; and efforts were made by those who felt that higher interests were at stake than of this mortal life only to carry the message of peace to men who were on the eve of being engaged in the horrors of war. Every pulse of the country beat only for her soldier sons.

Each time the newspaper was unfolded, the number of some fresh regiment ordered to hold itself in readiness for active service, or the brief notice of a troop transport having sailed, brought home the trial to the hearts of hundreds more.

Setting out for the Crimea.

At length came the notice of the 97th being under orders. The pang with which this announcement was read by those to whom the name of Hedley Vicars had become so dear may well be imagined. As his friends had been under the impression that he might be detained at Gibraltar until he joined his regiment there on his way to the East, it was an indescribable relief to them to find that he was again in England, and that they should see his face once more.

The following letter was written shortly after his return: "Windsor, 15th March.—Thank you very much for your valued letter, which affected me not a little. We are, as far as men can judge, on the eve of war; and I shall soon, perhaps, be engaged in all the horrors of battle. But even *then*, believe me, I shall ever remember with deepest gratitude the friend who has so often cheered and comforted my too cold and wavering heart. At the feet of Jesus I would take up my resting-place, and learn of Him who was 'meek and lowly in heart.' Oh, how I long to have more, much more, of His ever-anxious solicitude and tender concern for souls, and something more like His confidence and love towards a Heavenly Father! I see many shortcomings in myself and much remaining worldliness and vanity, but 'the righteousness of God, by faith of Jesus Christ, is unto all and upon all them that believe,'

Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava. 17



"'Charging an Army while all the world wondered'" (page 24).

Captain Nolan was the first to fall.

for there is no difference.' 'Thus the righteousness of God without the law is manifested,' since we are 'justified *freely* by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.' It is to this glorious truth I would ever cling in life or in death, for I have thus 'boldness to enter into the holiest by the Blood of Jesus.' This same Saviour 'appears now in the presence of God for us,' where 'He ever liveth to make intercession for us.' Would that all we love were safely sheltered beneath the Cross! My heart aches when I look around upon most of those whose lot has been cast, like my own, in the army; for, notwithstanding the war which is so close at hand, and in which we shall in all probability be engaged, how little change is visible in their walk and conversation!"

On the 29th of March he came from Windsor to meet us in London and return with us to Beckenham. On the evening of his arrival he addressed upwards of a hundred navvies, besides several of the young men of the village at the reading-rooms. They were crowded to excess, and many more men surrounded the doors. He chose for his subject, "Prepare to meet thy God" (Amos 4. 12), and no man on dying bed could have spoken with greater solemnity and earnestness. Yet there he stood, a strong young man amidst strong young men, "putting himself alongside of us as a fellow-sinner," as one of them remarked, "and yet so good now, and such a *man* withal!" One after another they crowded around him for a shake of his hand, and to wish him safety and success. We heard them saying among themselves, "It's a pity such a fine fellow as that should go to be shot," and several of them met at the further end of the village to make an agreement to pray for him regularly. With two of them the next morning he had private conversation and prayer at their own request. On his way to the station he visited a dying navvy at Sydenham, with whom he prayed. The man said, "He never heard such a prayer; it went straight to his heart."

Busy Days before Sailing.

One day when we were in London I happened to meet him when on my way to a hospital to see a sick navvy whom I had known in Beckenham. He requested per-

mission to go also. I hesitated on finding that there were fever cases in the ward for which I was bound ; he was amused at my fears for him, saying that in old times he had spent many hours of the day by the side of yellow fever patients at their quarters in the West Indies, reading novels to them. "So now you need not fear for me if I read the Bible to your mild fever cases in England!" From that time he regularly visited that poor man twice a week, although the hospital was six miles distant from Kensington Barracks, and even in the hurry of his last day in England found time to bid him farewell.

During each of his succeeding visits to Beckenham he addressed the poor in one cottage or another in different parts of the village. At a carpenter's cottage, in an adjoining hamlet, a large number of young men, chiefly navvies, were present that evening, and at our request he told them the story of his conversion. To illustrate the recklessness of his life before that great change took place he mentioned, amongst other facts of useless and even sinful daring, that when he was in the West Indies, at the time the cholera was raging, he and one brother officer determined to punish another for being afraid of it. "Let us put him in a coffin!" said Hedley. No sooner spoken than acted upon. A row of coffins stood at the hospital door. Undeterred from their reckless purpose by finding one after another filled by a silent occupant, they at last succeeded in their object. The companion of Hedley Vicars in this sinful practical joke was seized with cholera shortly afterwards, but by God's forbearing mercy *he* was spared for better things.

On the 6th of May he went down to Terling. The impression left on the minds of all his family by this visit, which *he* knew to be his last before leaving England, was that of increased earnestness, amounting to solemnity. Twice, at Lord Rayleigh's request, he led the devotions at family prayers ; and those who heard him bore away a conviction of his meetness for that state of which he spoke with holy longing : "Absent from the body, *present with the Lord.*" His subject on the first day was 2 Corinthians 5, on the last, Revelation 22.

Very early in the morning of the day he left for London he and his mother met for prayer. He knelt long by her side, pouring out his heart in pleading with God for her, that grace and strength might be given for every hour of need. Strengthened in spirit by that prayer, she was able, with his sisters, to accompany him as far as the station. The remembrance of his last embrace, his last look, his last blessing, enriches their hearts still, and makes the place of their parting seem almost holy ground.

Four Hundred Lives Altered.

A few days before the Light Company of the 97th left Kensington Barracks for their embarkation I had an opportunity of conversing with some of the men. They spoke with great respect and affection of their favourite officer. One of them, named Reynolds, said: "Since Mr. Vicars became so good he has steadied about four hundred men in the regiment." "Four hundred!" was repeated with surprise. "I don't mean that he has made all the four hundred as good as himself. That he couldn't. I know God alone could do that. But while he was Adjutant—and since, too—he has sobered and steadied nigh four hundred of the drunkenmost and wildest men in the regiment. There isn't a better officer nor a better man in the Queen's service."

On the evening of Wednesday, the 17th, he attended the first public meeting in Exeter Hall for the Soldiers' Friend Society, in which he was warmly interested. Some of his men were also present. The order had come for the embarkation of his regiment. The fulfilment of an old promise was now claimed by him, that we should meet him at Waterloo Station and cheer him with a last "God bless you!" there. But on Thursday afternoon he sent a note by express to say that he had just received orders to leave London at six o'clock, and that much as he had rested on the promise of this last act of friendship in England he could not request its fulfilment, as the hour was so early.

It need not be said that the hour was of no moment to those who loved him. By six o'clock we drove up to the Waterloo Station. It was a lovely morning that 19th of

May. The sunshine, glittering on the bayonets of the men as they marched up the steps to the station, seemed to mock the tears of wives, sisters, and friends who accompanied them. I saw a young wife quit her hold of her husband's hand and approach Hedley Vicars with a manner of respectful confidence, as she said to him, "Oh, Mr. Vicars, *you* will see that Cottrell writes to me *regular*, won't you? It is my only comfort to know that you will." The kindness and sympathy of his tone, as he answered her, told that her confidence was not misplaced.

Just then his brother arrived, and during the delay which followed before the train started, we read the 121st Psalm in the waiting-room. I remember the deep well of quiet confidence in his eye as the words were repeated to him, "The Lord is *thy* keeper." There was something in the tone of his voice that day which struck like a distant knell upon our hearts. It was a foreboding tone. However strongly hope may have sprung up afterwards, we felt at that moment that it was our last parting.

Busy Life in Hospital.

The path of Hedley Vicars for nearly three years past had been a shining light in the eyes of all who watched it. But during his last year upon earth it shone "more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4. 18).

Sailing in the "Orinoco," he landed in the Piraeus in June, 1854, visited Athens, stood on "Mars Hill," wrote many precious letters home, one of which forcibly expressed the deliberate choice of his soul: "I would not, for all the world could give me, go back on my former state. I have gained immeasurably more than I have given. In exchange for fleeting pleasures now I have hopes of lasting joys which mortal eye hath never seen, nor ear heard of, nor heart can conceive. I have been brought into 'riendship with God through the merits and precious blood-shedding of my Redeemer and the influence of the Holy Ghost. And in place of an aching heart I have tasted of a peace which passeth understanding."

Hedley Vicars was now to enter on the most solemn period of his life. To those who watched the guidings of the Divine hand, it will be scarcely necessary to point

out the wisdom of that providence which led him to Greece, and kept him there throughout the awful prevalence of the cholera and malignant fever, a visitation which, within the space of thirty-four days, deprived his regiment of one hundred and twenty of its ablest and finest men.

As no spiritual instruction was provided for either Protestant or Roman Catholic soldiers, the field was his own. He began his work by undertaking the command of funeral parties for other officers, who gladly relinquished to him a task so little congenial to their feelings. In this way he obtained frequent opportunities of addressing the living around the graves of the dead, warning them to flee from the wrath to come, and beseeching them to close at once with offers of free pardon and mercy from that Divine Redeemer who is "the life of them that believe, and the resurrection of the dead."

On the first of these solemn occasions his heart was too full for words, yet the tears which stifled his voice had an eloquence of their own for the brave men around him. They reckoned not the less confidently on his dauntless courage in every hour of danger.

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin."

The solemn and tender tone of his own feelings communicated itself to them, and thus were their hearts opened to receive the message he so longed to deliver.

It was "the love of Christ constraining" him, and no mere sense of duty which led Hedley Vicars to spend the greater part of his days, and often of his nights, in the pestilential air of the crowded hospitals:

"Seeking, as men seek for riches,
Painful vigils by the bed,
Where the sick and dying stretches
Aching limbs beside the dead."

Dearer than life to him was the hope of persuading the dying to look to Jesus, remembering the breadth of the promise, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, *all* ye ends of the earth" (Isa. 45. 22). And doubly did he prize the opportunity when the lighting up of a dying eye at the Name of Jesus assured him that he was ministering to one of the brethren of his Lord, for he was not unmindful of

the words, "I was sick, and ye visited ME" (Matt. 25.36). Whilst thus intently occupied in promoting the spiritual welfare of the men of his regiment, he was no less keenly alive to the best interests of his brother officers. Although open opposition on the part of those who differed from him in religious opinion had long ceased, he did not know until now how firm was his hold on their feelings and confidence. When laid aside by illness they all welcomed his visits, and generally asked him to repeat them. The reality of Salvation was now proved beyond all question. It had been weighed in the balances with mere worldly motives of action, and had not been found wanting. Confidence could no longer be withheld from principles which had subdued to thoughtful tenderness for the souls of those around a spirit amongst the most buoyant and dauntless of them all.

Writing home from the Piraeus at this time he says: "It is well to have the love of Jesus Christ in its reality in our hearts. What solid peace and rich enjoyment we obtain by 'looking unto Jesus!' Where else shall we behold the boundless love of our Heavenly Father?

"What else could have led me to the side of men dying of pestilence, for how could I have spoken to these poor suffering creatures of the love of God but by 'looking unto Jesus?' And to whom could I implore them to look but to Jesus? Baptismal regeneration, Church privileges, the sacramental system, confession, and priestly absolution may do for some people when in health, but no smile of joy from a sick man, I *believe*, would ever be the fruit of such miserable comforters in the last hour. When a dying man can say or feel, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth,' he wants no more; it is Jesus he thirsts for and longs to hear about. I have witnessed the effect of even the Name of Jesus. I have noticed a calm and peaceful look pass more than once over the ghastly face of the dying as that blessed Name passed my lips."

Winter before Sebastopol.

The miseries of the winter before Sebastopol have passed into history. It is not needful here to describe the sufferings of our country in the persons of her bravest sons, or to

recall the unforgotten story of her dearly-bought victories. Battles won on the cold soil of the Crimea by weary men, worn down by hunger, bore terrible witness to the quenchless nature of British courage. The men who stormed the heights of Alma, who, in the dreadful fight of Inkerman conquered again, amidst fog and darkness, of whom a mere handful at Balaclava were seen "charging an army, while all the world wondered." Such men have proved their steel. Yet there is a limit to human endurance; and when men of this mould have been seen to weep, as on night after night, succeeding days of starvation and toil, they were ordered to their work in the freezing trenches, who can estimate the exhausting misery they had first endured?

Towards the end of November he was in command of an outpost, which was not only an important position, open to the attack of the enemy, but was also a piquet furnished by the 97th. On either side of it were hills covered with stunted brushwood, in front was a ravine leading to Sebastopol. Here, by day, a subaltern was in command of fifty men; by night, the captain on duty with fifty more. The first force was then sent up to a cave on the left of the ravine, where a breastwork had been thrown up. For nearly three weeks the party defending the outpost had to sleep in the open air, or at best under roofing made of bushes, through which the wind and rain freely penetrated. At length, however, two tents were pitched—one for the company, the other for its officers. Hedley gave up his own tent to his men, and continued to rough it in the open air, considering himself more hardy than many of them.

Many of his letters at this time have a singular combination of almost apostolic devotedness and love, with the gallant ardour of the soldier. A few extracts must suffice:

Diary of Life in Camp.

"Camp before Sebastopol, 29th Nov., 1854.—"We did not go on shore till the evening of the 20th. The rain poured in torrents all day. We landed in boats, and were well drenched before we reached the encamping ground, and looked more like drowned rats than live soldiers. It was dark before the tents were pitched. Parties were at



"Men of the 97th, follow Me" (page 32).

once sent out to collect firewood, the wrecked vessels furnishing us with ample materials. Soon camp fires were blazing in all directions, and officers and men gathered round them to dry their clothes and warm themselves, for the nights here are bitterly cold. I can assure you I enjoyed some cheese and biscuit not a little. But before I looked after myself I saw my company as snug and comfortable as 'adverse circumstances would admit of,' and afterwards made them a little speech around the bivouac fire, combining as well as I could some religious advice, with a few words about our duties as British soldiers, and ended by saying, 'Lads, while I have life I will stick to the colours, and I know you will never desert me.' (My position in the line is next to the officer who bears the regimental colours.) The poor fellows cheered me long and loud. I have had very little trouble with them, less so by far than others complain of. Indeed (though I say it, that should not) I know they like me, and would do anything for me; and all officers who treat soldiers like men with the same feelings as their own, and take an interest in their welfare, find they do not see much insubordination nor want any courts martial. Yet I am very strict with my men, but they soon get accustomed to this. About ten o'clock I read by the light of my first bivouac fire Psalms 23, 90, and 19 with Captain Ingram, and derived great comfort and peace from them. One of my brother officers came up to warm himself while I was reading, and begged me to go on (not that I had any intention of stopping). God grant that he may soon find 'a dwelling in the secret place of the Most High,' even in the heart of the Lord Jesus, and be able to say, 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I will not fear what man can do unto me.' Resting on Jesus, my precious Saviour, I went to sleep securely. My bed was made of dry leaves, with a stone for the pillow, and but for the biting cold I should have slept like a top.

"The regiment fell in at daybreak. We had a fine view of the surrounding country. Encamped on our right was the brigade of Highlanders, their tents stretching away on the heights above us. Beneath lay the burial ground, in which the Turkish soldiers were continually burying

their dead. Far away in our front was the plain with the battery beyond, in endeavouring to take which the Light Cavalry suffered so fearfully. Through our telescopes we could see the Russians moving about like bees. Our lines are very extensive and naturally strong, all the country around being hilly. In the afternoon I walked into Bala-clava, a miserable place, the streets indescribably dirty. Many British, French, Turkish, and Tartar soldiers were moving about in all directions. I saw several men of the Guards looking very different to the appearance they present in St. James's Square, with unwashed faces, tattered coats, and trousers patched with red and gray. Dead cattle were lying by the wayside, and others were quietly dying. The condition of the once beautiful horses of the Scots Greys was such that a butcher would have been ashamed to be seen driving one in his cart.

Arrival before Sebastopol.

"On the morning of the 22nd we received the order to march for the lines before Sebastopol, and came in sight of the white tents of the French and English, after a rough march of seven miles. Vestiges of war were to be seen all along the road. Ten dead horses were laid in one place side by side, and the ground was strewn with shell and round shot. The Zouaves turned out as we passed their camp, and cheered us most vociferously. We returned the cheer with as hearty a goodwill, and soon after reached our ground. The tents were soon pitched, and, although very wet, I never slept more soundly in my life. We were scarcely settled when the rolling of cannon from Sebastopol and the French and English batteries began, and I may say that ever since they have been going at it continually.

"We are all anxiously waiting for Lord Raglan to storm Sebastopol; for, though we must lose many in doing it, yet anything would be better than seeing our fine soldiers dying as they are daily."

"Dec 1.—It is stated that 20,000 French have landed at Eupatoria, and, as a set off to this, that 30,000 more Russians have entered the Crimea; but, whatever their numbers may be, with God's help, we are sure to beat them. I am for the trenches to-morrow morning at three

o'clock (I shall be relieved at six o'clock in the evening). I think more of the pouring rain and standing in thick mud all the time than of Russian grape and bullets; but, you see, we must be content to have both! You will be sorry to hear that sickness is still prevalent, and I am afraid this rain, which began again yesterday after three days of fine weather, will fill the hospitals. Two officers and forty poor fellows were sent down to Balaclava yesterday for the recovery of their health. It was pitiable to see them. Few, if any, will ever return. I saw them off yesterday morning; some wept as they wished me good-bye. They were so delighted to get the tracts and Testaments I had brought with me that they began reading them aloud as soon as I put them into their hands."

"Dec. 15.—We are expecting every day to meet the enemy in open field or to storm the fortress. I wish they could go at it at once. Be not anxious about me. I am safe in the arms of my Saviour—I *feel* it, I *know* it—in life or in death."

"Dec. 16.—I have only returned about half an hour from the trenches of the advanced work, where we have been since half-past four o'clock this morning. The rain poured in torrents all night. We turned out in the midst of it (three officers and 200 men), and started for the rendezvous, where detachments from the several regiments assemble previous to marching off together for the trenches. We had to ford two mountain torrents, which considerably damped our feet and legs, if not our ardour!"

Meets Duncan Mathieson the Scripture Reader.

"Dec. 17.—How glad I shall be to see the soldiers' missionary, Duncan Mathieson! It will refresh and cheer my soul. Oh, that there were many more labourers in this harvest! Why are there not more Scripture readers sent out? They are grievously wanted here. I am so longing that every soldier, before he dies, should be told of Jesus, made acquainted with all He has done for him; for many, I fear are grossly ignorant of the way of Salvation. There are very few chaplains left in the Crimea now; even if they all returned in health it would be impossible for them to reach half the spiritual wants of the army. A staff of

Scripture readers would be invaluable to them—men who would devote themselves to their work night and day."

"Dec. 18.—I am, thank God, quite well—never better, and what is more, *clean*. I dined to-day off soaked biscuit fried with lard, a capital dish; boiled ration pork, very good; potatoes, middling, with mustard and salt."

"Dec. 21.—How strange it seems to me now the years when I lived without a 'Saviour near'—a dark hideous blank. What think you is it that sustains and supports me now in the midst of all I have endured, and with the knowledge that at any moment I may be summoned into the presence of God? Surely nothing but faith in a living Saviour. 'I know that Jesus died and rose again,' and that He has made, what I never could have done myself, full atonement and satisfaction for sins. What then have I to fear?

"When I take mine eyes from the crucified Saviour I tremble and am without hope. Any other stay will prove but a bruised reed. I have had to endure something of the reproach of the Cross, as in short all must and will who follow the Lord Jesus Christ. But I feel sure this moment, whilst I write, if I had not been given a firm persuasion in my heart and mind of the sufferings once endured by Jesus on Calvary, and by Divine grace been led to behold Him as the Lamb of God, the Saviour of sinners, and therefore of myself, I should long ere this have been the same, if not worse, than in former years.

"Your outward-forms of religion, whether in the shape of Popery or Tractarianism, may change the visible conduct of a man, but only a dying Saviour received into the heart can ever change the soul, and make it pure and fit, through the power of the Holy Ghost, to dwell hereafter with Christ, and to enjoy the pleasures of Heaven."

"Jan. 26, 1855.—Owing to the rapidly decreasing numbers of the British army the duty in the trenches is now very severe. But whenever I feel inclined to repine, I turn my eyes to the sufferings of my Redeemer on Calvary, and soon forget my hardships, or count them as nothing. The day before yesterday, when I was in the trenches, I seated myself on a gun-carriage and read with great com-

fort the first of Ephesians. My thoughts dwelt chiefly on those few cheering words, 'ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED.'"

"Feb. 19.—On my return to my tent, who should I find there but Mr. Duncan Mathieson, the soldiers' missionary from Balaclava. He remained with me for about an hour, and I do not think I ever enjoyed a more heavenly conversation than with this man of God. We read the third chapter of Ephesians, and he prayed with me. When he left, I saw that three of my brother officers were standing close by; they must have heard that fervent prayer. Who knows but that one of them may be led to pray for himself to-night. God grant it!"

Hedley Vicars' Last Letter.

"March — and 16, 1855.—Your letter of the 18th contained no small comfort for me. We have lately lost several men in the trenches. On Wednesday last Captain Craigie, of the Engineers, who regularly attended our prayer meetings, was killed by a shell in the Middle Ravine. I was on piquet there on that night, and he was struck only a few minutes before I came up with my men. Poor fellow! he was quickly called into eternity, for he never spoke a word, but fell instantly after being hit; but I feel-sure he was READY, and is now safe for ever! I liked him very much, and his death has cast a gloom over our small band.

"We were turned out the night before last by a very heavy firing in our front; it lasted for about twenty minutes, when it ceased entirely, but ere long we were again alarmed by a second cannonade, and we once more stood to our arms. It was a fine star-lit night, and as I stood gazing in the direction of the fusillade I thought I had never witnessed a more imposing spectacle. Shells in quick succession were shooting up into the air, with the bright flare of artillery reflected over the brow of the hills in our front, and the lurid flashes of musketry, as volley after volley chimed in, accompanied by the wild cheers of the combatants, which we could plainly hear at intervals, even amidst the deafening roar. In less than half an hour all was quiet, and we returned to our tents. It was an attack made by the French on a Russian advanced work, from which they drove the enemy, but were in their turn

driven out. The French had 200 killed and wounded, and the Rifles lost eleven men. We are anxiously expecting our batteries to open in good earnest, but they say there is not quite enough shell or shot up yet. How delighted I am that you told me the day which is appointed for national prayer! We shall keep it in the camp, too, please God. Jesus is *near*, and very precious to my heart and soul."

Victory at Last.

The night of the 22nd of March was dark and dreary. The wind rose high, and swept in stormy gusts across the Crimea. There was for a time a stillness over the three armies, like the calm before a tempest. At the advanced post of the British forces, on the side nearest the French, was a detachment of the 97th Regiment, commanded by Captain Vicars. No watch-fire on that post of danger might cast its red light, as aforetime, upon the Book of God. Yet was that place of peril holy ground. Once more the night breeze bore away the hallowed sounds of prayer. Once more the deep, earnest eyes of Hedley Vicars looked upward to that Heaven in which his place was now prepared. Perhaps in that dark night he pictured a return to his country, to his home, and thought of all the loving welcomes which awaited him.

Soon after ten o'clock that night a loud firing commenced, and was sustained in the direction of the Victoria Redoubt, opposite the Malakhoff Tower. Taking advantage of the darkness of the night a Russian force of 15,000 men issued from Sebastopol. Preserving a sullen silence, they approached from the Mamelon under cover of the fire of their ambuscades, and effected an entrance into the French advanced parallel before any alarm could be given by the sentries. After a short but desperate struggle the French were obliged to fall back on their reserves.

The columns of the enemy then marched along the parallel, and came up the ravine on the right of the British lines for the purpose of taking them in the flank and rear. On their approach being observed, they were supposed to be the French, as the ravines separated the Allied armies. Hedley Vicars was the first to discover that they were Russians. With a coolness of judgment which seems to

have called forth admiration from all quarters, he ordered his men to lie down until the Russians came within twenty paces. Then, with his first war-shout, "Now 97th, on your pins, and charge!" himself foremost in the conflict, he led on his gallant men to victory, charging two thousand with a force barely two hundred. A bayonet wound in the breast only fired his courage the more, and again his voice rose high, "Men of the 97th, follow me!" as he leaped that parapet he had so well defended, and charged the enemy down the ravine.

"This Way, 97th."

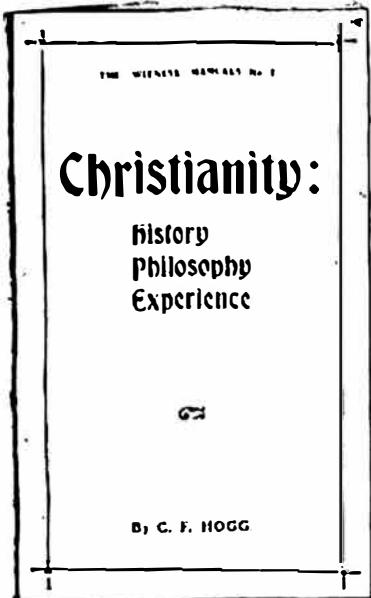
One moment a struggling moonbeam fell upon his flashing sword as he waved it through the air, with his last cheer for his men, "This way, 97th!" The next, the strong arm which had been uplifted hung powerless by his side, and he fell amidst his enemies. But friends followed fast. His men fought their way through the ranks of the Russians to defend the parting life of the leader they loved. In their arms they bore him back, amidst shouts of a victory so dearly bought. To each inquiry, Hedley Vicars answered cheerfully that he believed his wound was slight. But a main artery had been severed, and the life-blood flowed fast. A few paces onward, and he faintly said, "Cover my face; cover my face!" What need for covering under the shadow of that dark night? Was it not a sudden consciousness that he was entering into the presence of the Holy God, before Whom the cherubims veiled their faces?

As the soldiers laid him down at the door of his tent a welcome from the armies of the sky sounded in his hearing. He had fallen asleep in Jesus, to awake up after His likeness, and be satisfied with it. There as he joined in the mighty acclaim, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," to understand to the full the meaning of the words which first brought joy to his soul:

**"THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST HIS SON
CLEANSETH US FROM ALL SIN."**

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