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THE LUCKIEST MAN.

I

"Ho, you beggars, why don't you raise a row an' give us a chance o' fightin' and glory, an maybe promotion?"

Corporal MacBean shook his fist savagely at the colossal barrier of mountain peaks that barred the horizon, rummaged among his pockets for his tobacco and pipe, and sat himself down to smoke furiously and to think upon the incomparable bad luck of Miss Janet Sloane.

Indirectly "Miss Sloane was the cause of the remarks with which my story opens, remarks addressed not to the mountains, but to the swarthy, turbulent throat-cutting crew who inhabited them, for there was for once in a way, peace upon the northwestern border of India and Corporal MacBean was the king for war and promotion, all for the sake of the bright eyes of Miss Janet Sloane the daughter and heiress of Colonel Sloane of the Sappers.

Miss Sloane was certainly a very pretty girl.

So it happened that many gallant sergeants and privates, without pretension and without a penny, who possessed no home prospects of home in distant Woolwich were all exclaiming more or less for the sake of Janet Sloane.

But Miss Sloane, respectfully of them, smiled impartially upon them all, pointing out at the time that she could be a dear soldier.

And down to the most hardened and stiffest warrior a smile from Janet was an Napoleonic order, easily the most dignified.

Corporal MacBean was of a recent acking of Janet, wonderful indeed, over six months had elapsed since he had first fallen under the influence of that fatal smile and unlike most of his fellow-soldiers he had not been cured.

On the particular afternoon he could find no refuge in his dreams, for that very morning he had seen Janet smile with divine sweetness upon the sergeant major and the thought of that smile and of the Colonel's horse properly at Woolwich summer in his bosom.

In this inventory he was unfortunately enough to forget a very important item, he had claims upon the attention of Janet Sloane.

"Allo Beano" cried a private, nudging at his elbow.

Corporal MacBean turned and the fifteen-year-old face, the fair and beautiful face, the face that had been his dream for two years.

The face of the forgotten dem Miss Victoria Donelly, daughter and sole heiress of Capt. Donelly, the special charge of Miss Sloane, and the darling of the whole garrison of Fort Victoria.

Miss Victoria was quite three and a half years old and was already beginning to develop the tender graces of about to be an alarming extent. She knew every man in the garrison, even the Ghoorkas, who hated women and all proximity thereto.

She was very much attached to Beano, as she called Corporal MacBean, in consequence with the rank and file of the garrison and Beano shared in the popular adoration accorded to this fair motherless babe.

Beano was always good for a game of horses, and once in harness would lose his head and paw the ground and curvet more nobly than any real polo pony. Furthermore, he could dress Fuzz dolls better than any other man in the garrison, the regimental tailors not excepted.

"Good afternoon, missie," replied Corporal MacBean that we'd be a long, enjoying shade."

"Private Doolan for the mouthpiece, interfered Chubby politely.

"This lie, missie," replied the corporal.

"Yes," lisped Chubby with impressive gravity. "I'll bend thee a letter in the selfpoint note and sign it 'Private Doolan-big other'."

"Bid be missie" inquired Corporal MacBean absently.

He was wondering where Janet Sloane could be for little charge had evidently given her the slip during their afternoon walk round the cantonments.

"I don't think Private Doolin is a very brave man," continued Chubby judiciously.

"Why not missie?" asked the corporal.

"You wouldn't holler if you had a tooth out, I know. Nurth said you wouldn't, because you are too brave," added Chubby emphatically.

"Did she though?" Corporal MacBean sat up with a sudden interest.

"When she saw that, it made me ashed, he has given up his pipe for the fun.

"Private Doolin said 'Arrow, crow.' And I asked Nurth if you would cheer that.

"If she thought now," continued Corporal MacBean with unusual interest, "if she thought now, Chubby, you know, I'd do—anything for you, my boy."

A sudden notion occupied Miss Victoria affably as she squatted down comfortably by his side.

Better than that. A whole menagerie in Noah's ark full of lions and tigers and camels and cows and asses. Yes, then there'll be Shem, Ham and Japhet, all green hats and yellow breeches.

"An fed coaths!" interjected Chubby breathlessly. "Or fourth they have fed coaths if they were in the service. Then there'd be rabbits.

"Of course there'd be rabbits, missie with long ears.

"Like some other rabbits I know of—leading that child away when I'm looking for her everywhere, thinking that some or those gun-stealing Dutchmen had gone and—

"Hush!" cried the corporal, and Chubby ceased in a fright. For the second time Janet Sloane in all the glory of her white-stringed bonnet regarding him with a none too friendly look in her fine eyes.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Sloane," said Corporal MacBean humbly and ponderously. "I was just saying what you were in my anxiety about. Miss Victoria, or I would have brought her to you at once. I was just telling missie that I was going to make her a Noah's ark.

"A nice Noah's ark you'd make!" replied Miss Janet with scorn. "I wonder you don't try and improve your mind instead of loafing about reading a lot of trashy novels and putting ideas into that child's head."

The rank injustice of this charge reduced Corporal MacBean to the dumb silence of utter astonishment.

"You are unkind, nurth," piped Chubby's little voice. "An you told me that Corporal MacBean was so brave an good only just now when Private Doolan hollered?"

"Hold your tongue, miss, and come along o' me at once!" cried Miss Sloane, blushing furiously and seizing Chubby's arm. "I don't keep telling you that no good it comes of you always talking to a parcel o nasty common soldiers, learning their bad manners and their impudence! I wish you a very good afternoon, Corporal MacBean, and I'm sorry I'm so unlucky as to be the means of your losing your stripes, I'm sure, for I'm certain you not to go asking unmaking questions of a poor little innocent child about people who don't want to have anything to do with the likes of you! A Corporal indeed!"

Janet suddenly disappeared as she disappeared down the other slope of the transport. And Corporal MacBean sat down again in despair for he and not understand women. One thing he knew, he must immediately himself to that he might have an opportunity of asking Miss Sloane to share his lot as a sergeant.

The opportunity came a few nights afterward. A half hour or so before dawn three shots rang out. Then a sentry was found lying curled up on the ground with a long Michan knife through his shoulder.

"More rifles, boys," suggested Chubby who came running up. "The gat is on at Fort Clinton where we had been only last night."

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SALUTED AND BLUSHED.

cream from Janet, that cut Beano's heart like a knife. Red and hot across his eyes and he rode as a maniac toward the mountains about some all-wise of time in the day of the wildly gallopin' for the best forum in the garrison was.

The crest broke in a swimming mist of blue sky. Then the distant mountain tops took form and Capt. MacBean sat up and rubbed his eyes and looked about.

There were four of them, one, two, two four he counted. Then he recognized four he was mistaken.

Rocky Hills lounged around him which he had up to the group of Jetsuch that galloped wildly and all of him. One of them turned in his saddle and shot came whirling back. Then they all drew rein and a corporal's whole head thick and fast as a hailstorm. Then the group from the middle bow of the leader.

It was Chubby, unharmed, for she was a little way than passed and picked herself of a small boulder.

"Ye gods!" he gasped, "I'm murdered! Where's the Dutchman? Where's the Dutchman? Where's the Dutchman?"

"Hush!" said the corporal. "Hush! Hush! Hush!