

The Great Shadow

By A. CONAN DOYLE

Author of "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes"

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CHAPTER XII—Continued.

I had expected to find half that regiment of horse lying on the ground; but whether it was that their breastplates had shielded them, or whether, being young and a little shaken at their coming, we had fired high, our volley had done no very great harm. About thirty horses lay about, three of them together within ten yards of me, the middle one right on its back, with its four legs in the air, and it was one of those that I had seen flapping through the smoke. Then there were eight or ten dead men, and about as many wounded, sitting dazedly on the grass for the most part, though one was shouting "Vive l'Empereur!" at the top of his voice. Another fellow who had been shot in the thigh—a great, black-mustached chap he was, too—leaned his back against his dead horse, and, picking up his carbine, fired as coolly as if he had been shooting for a prize, and hit Angus Myers, who was only two feet from me, right through the forehead. Then he cut with his hand to get another carbine that lay near, but before he could reach it big Hodgson, who was the pivot-man of the grenadier company, ran out and passed his bayonet through his throat, which was a pity, for he seemed to be a very fine man.

At first I thought that the cuirassiers had run away in the smoke, but they were not men who did that very easily. Their horses had swerved at our volley, and they had raced past our square and taken the fire of the two other ones beyond. Then they broke through a hedge, and coming on a regiment of Hanoverians who were in line, they treated them as they would have treated us if we had not been so quick, and cut them to pieces in an instant. It was dreadful to see the big Germans running and screaming, while the cuirassiers stood up in their stirrups to have a better sweep for their long, heavy swords, and cut and stabbed without mercy. I do not believe that a hundred men of that regiment were left alive, and the Frenchmen came back across our front, shouting at us and waving their weapons, which were crimson down to the hilts. This they did to draw our fire, but the colonel was too old a soldier, for we could have done little harm at the distance, and they would have been among us before we could reload.

These horsemen got behind the ridge on our right again, and we knew very well that if we opened up from the squares they would be down upon us in a twinkling. On the other hand, it was hard to bide as we were, for they had passed the word to a battery of twelve guns which formed up a few hundred yards away from us, but out of our sight, sending their balls just over the brow and down into the midst of us, which is called a plunging fire. And one of their gunners ran up to the top of the slope and stuck a handspike into the wet earth, to give them a guide, under the very muzzles of the whole brigade, none of whom fired a shot at him, each leaving him to the other. Ensign Samson, who was the youngest subaltern in the regiment, ran out from the square and pulled down the handspike, but quick as a jack after a minnow a lancer came flying over the ridge, and he made such a thrust from behind that not only his point but his pennon, too, came out between the second and third buttons of the lad's tunic. "Helen! Helen!" he shouted, and fell dead on his face, while the lancer, blown half to pieces with musket balls, toppled over beside him, still holding on to his weapon, so they lay together with that dreadful bond still connecting them.

But when the battery opened there was no time for us to think of anything else. A square is a very good way of meeting a horseman, but there is no worse one of taking a cannonball, so we soon learned when they began to cut red seams through us, until our ears were weary of the slish and splash when hard iron met living flesh and blood. After ten minutes of it we moved our square a hundred paces to the right, but we left another square behind us, for a hundred and twenty men and seven officers showed where we had been standing. Then the guns found us again, and we tried to open out into line, but in an instant the horsemen—lancers they were this time—were upon us from over the brow. I tell you we were glad to hear the thud of their hoofs, for we knew that that must stop the cannon for a minute, and give us a chance of hitting back. And we hit back pretty hard, too, that time, for we were cold and hungry and savage, and I, for one, felt that I cared no more for the horsemen than if they had been so many sheep on Corriemuir. One gets past being afraid or thinking of one's own skin after a while, and you just feel that you want to make some one pay for all you have gone through. We took on—change out of the lancers that time, for they had no breastplates to shield them, and we cleared seventy of them out of their saddles at a volley. Maybe if we could have seen seventy mothers weeping for their lads we should not have felt so pleased over it, but this men are just brute when they are fighting and have as

much thought as two bull-pups when they've got one another by the throat.

Then the colonel did a wise stroke. He reckoned that this would save off the cavalry for five minutes, so he wheeled us into line and got us back into a deeper hollow, out of reach of the guns, before they could open again. This gave us time to breathe, and we waited it, too, for the regiment had been melting away like an icicle in the sun. But had as it was for us, it was a deal worse for some of the others. The whole of the Dutch-Belgians were cut off by this time helter skelter, fifteen thousand of them, and there were great gaps left in our line, through which the French cavalry rode as pleased them best. Then the French guns had been too many and too good for ours, and our heavy horse had been cut to bits, so that things were none too merry with us. On the other hand, Hougomont, a blood-soaked ruin, was still ours, and every British regiment was firm, though, to tell the honest truth, as a man is bound to do, there were a sprinkling of red coats among the blue ones who made for the rear. But these were lads and stragglers, the faint hearts that are found everywhere, and I say again that no regiment flinched. It was little we could see of the battle, but a man would be blind not to know that all the fields behind us were covered with flying men. But then, though we on the right wing knew nothing of it, the Prussians had begun to show, and Napoleon had set twenty thousand of his men to face them, which made up for ours that had bolted, and left us much as we began. That was all dark to us, however, and there was a time when the French horsemen had flooded in between us and the rest of the army, that we thought we were the only brigade left standing, and had set our teeth with the intention of selling our lives as dearly as we could.

At that time it was between four and five in the afternoon, and we had had nothing to eat, the most of us, since the night before, and were soaked with rain into the bargain. It had drizzled off and on all day, but for the last few hours we had not had a thought to spare either upon the weather or our hunger. Now we began to look around and tighten our waistbelts, and ask who was lit, and who was spared. I was glad to see Jim, with his face all blackened with powder, standing on my right rear, leaning on his fire-lock. He saw me looking at him, and shouted out to know if I were hurt.

"All right, Jim," I answered. "I fear I'm here on a wild-goose chase," said he gloomily, "but it's not over yet. By God, I'll have him or he'll have me!" He had brooded so much on his wrong, had poor Jim, that I really believe it had turned his head, for he had a glare in his eyes as he spoke that was hardly human. He was always a man that took even a little thing to heart, and since Edie had left him I am sure that he was no longer his own master.

It was at this time that we saw two single fights which they tell me were common enough in the battles of old, before men were trained in masses. As we lay in the hollow, two horsemen came spurring along the ridge in front of us, riding as hard as hoof could rattle. The first was an English dragoon, his face right down on his horse's mane, with a French cuirassier, an old, gray-headed fellow, thundering behind him on a big, black mare. Our chaps set up a hooting as they came flying on, for it seemed a shame to see an Englishman run like that; but as they swept across our front we saw where the trouble lay. The dragoon had dropped his sword and was unarmed, while the other was pressing him so close that he could not get a weapon. At last, stung maybe by our hooting, he made up his mind to chance it. His eye fell on a lance beside a dead Frenchman, so he swerved his horse to let the other pass, and hopping off cleverly enough, he gripped hold of it. But the other was too tricky for him, and was on him like a shot. The dragoon thrust up with the lance, but the other turned and sliced him through the shoulder-blade. It was all done in an instant, and the Frenchman cantered his horse up the brow, showing his teeth at us over his shoulder like a snarling dog.

That was one to them, but we scored one for us presently. They had pushed forward a skirmish-line whose fire was toward the batteries on our right and left rather than on us, but we sent out two companies of the Ninety-fifth to keep them in check. It was strange to hear the crackling kind of noise that they made, for both sides were using the rifle. An officer stood among the French skirmishers, a tall, lean man with a mantle over his shoulders, and as our fellows came forward he ran out midway between the two parties and stood up as a fence would, with his sword up and his head back. I can see him now, with his lowered eyelids and the kind of sneer that he had on his face. On this the subaltern of the Rifles, who was a fine well-crowned lad, ran forward and drove full tilt at him with one of the queer, crooked swords that the riflemen carry.

They came together like two rams, for each ran at the other, and down they tumbled at the shock, but the Frenchman was below. Our man broke his sword short off, and took the other's blade through his left arm, but he was the stronger man, and he managed to let the life out of his enemy with the jagged stump of his blade. I thought that the French skirmishers would have shot him down, but not a trigger was drawn, and he got back to his company with one sword through his arm and half another in his hand.

CHAPTER XIII.

The End of the Storm.

Of all the things that seem strange in that great battle, now that I look back upon it, there was nothing that was queerer than the way in which it acted on my comrades. For some took it as though it had been their daily meat, without question or change, and others pattered out prayers from the first gun-fire to the last, and others again cursed and swore in a way that was creepy to listen to. There was one, my own left-hand mate, Mike Threadingham, who kept telling about his maiden aunt, Sarah, and how she had left the money which had been promised to him to a home for the children of drowned sailors. Again and again he told me this story, and yet, when the battle was over, he took his oath that he had never opened his lips all day. As to me, I cannot say whether I spoke or not, but I know that my mind and my memory were clearer than I can ever remember them, and I was thinking all the time about the old folks at home, and about cousin Edie with her saucy, dancing eyes, and De Lissac with his cat's whiskers, and all the doings at West Inch which had ended by bringing us here on the plains of Belgium as a cockshot for two hundred and fifty cannon.

During all this time the roaring of those guns had been something dreadful to listen to, but now they suddenly died away, though it was like the lull in a thunder-storm when one feels that a worse crash is coming hard at the fringe of it. There was still a mighty noise on the distant wing, where the Prussians were pushing their way onward, but that was two miles away. The other batteries, both French and English, were silent, and the smoke cleared so that the armies could see a little of each other. It was a dreary sight along our ridge, for there seemed to be just a few scattered knots of red, and the lines of green where the German legion stood, while the masses of the French appeared to be as thick as ever, though, of course, we knew that they must have lost many thousands in these attacks. We heard a great cheering and shouting from among them, and then suddenly all their batteries opened together with a roar which made the din of the earlier part seem nothing in comparison. It might well be twice as loud, for every battery was twice as near, being moved right up to point-blank range, with huge masses of horse between and behind them to guard them from attack.

When that devil's roar burst upon our ears there was not a man down to the drummer-boys who did not understand what it meant. It was Napoleon's last great effort to crush us. There were but two more hours of light, and if we could hold our own for those, all would be well. Starved and weary and spent, we prayed that we might have strength to load and stab and fire while a man of us stood upon his feet.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Tooth Puller's Bad Reputation.
"To lie like a tooth puller" is in Le Roux de Lincy's "Book of French Proverbs" (Paris 1856), quoted from the "Dictionary of the French Academy" (1835). The tooth puller in those days was often a wandering mountebank who drew a crowd by telling Rabelaisian stories and indulging in horseplay. He sold quack medicines, and of course, lied prodigiously. Lancelongue's explanation of the origin is more amusing, though it is so circumstantial that it breeds suspicion. Furthermore—and this is conclusive—"to lie like a tooth drawer" is in Philibert Joseph Le Roux's "Dictionnaire Comique" (Amsterdam 1778) with this comment: "No one lies more outrageously than a tooth drawer, who promises not to hurt, which is not possible." And Le Roux quotes Poisson's one act play, "The Basque Poet" (1665), "But all of you lie like tooth pullers."

Honesty.
Honesty is not the best policy. It isn't any kind of policy. It's a virtue practiced for its own sake without regard for profit. Those who refrain from stealing because thieves end in jail are not honest. They are merely discreet.—Robert Quillen in Saturday Evening Post.

"Great Expectations."
Should people lie, asked, sleep at the theater? No. They should hardily expect to get bored and lodging as well.—Brooklyn Eagle.

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How Do You Know?

Yes, Herman, it is a true saying that if you put the two men in the same bed, one with the toothache and the other in love, the man with the toothache will go to sleep first.—Hamilton Herald.

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The Reason.
"Pop, when is it they call a man hardboiled?"
"When he is a bad egg."

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STORIES of AMERICAN CITIES

Midnight Mystery Out on Lake Michigan



EVANSTON, ILL.—It was midnight. Cries for help were heard out on Lake Michigan. Families living near the lake rushed down to the beach. Suddenly there was a burst of flame. The outline of a burning launch appeared. There were moving figures. The spectators thought they saw men and women in frantic struggle. The cries for help continued. Vernon M. Hunt called the coast guard station. The lookout had already discovered the blaze from his post two miles north. A party of men started for the blazing launch in Gunthorp's boat. Before they reached the spot the blaze died out. The coast guard boat arrived about the same time. The searchlight failed to reveal any floating object.

Daylight didn't help the searchers, either, or telegrams to cities along the shore. No launch was missing. But the newspaper stories of the mystery brought about its solution. Two Chicago boys 'fessed up. They were pretty badly burned. The boys are Victor Barothy, 7619 Eastlake terrace, son of Dr. Arpad Barothy, and Walter Greenberg, 1325 Birchwood avenue. Victor is 13 and owns the launch. Walter is 14. "We were coming home in the launch," said Victor. "The gas began to leak. There was an explosion and the leaking gas began to burn. We tried to extinguish the flames, but it did no good. Walter took off his shirt and ran up and down with it—I guess that was those people on shore saw when they thought they saw women running around. He wet it in the lake and we tried to use it as an extinguisher. Finally both of us got into the lake and began to fill the boat with water. After a while we got the flames out." "But the boat was waterlogged," said Walter, "and we were half a mile out. We could see lights on shore and hear people shouting. There was only one thing to do—swim in. We did, pushing the boat ahead of us a mile and a half to Rogers Park."

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Thousands upon thousands of women have kidney or bladder trouble and never suspect it. Women's complaints often prove to be nothing else but kidney trouble, or the result of kidney or bladder disease. If the kidneys are not in a healthy condition, they may cause the other organs to become diseased. You may suffer pain in the back, headache and loss of ambition. Poor health makes you nervous, irritable and may be dependent; it makes any one so. But hundreds of women claim that Dr. Kilmer's Swamp-Root, by restoring health to the kidneys, proved to be just the remedy needed to overcome such conditions. Many send for a sample bottle to see what Swamp-Root, the great kidney, liver and bladder medicine, will do for them. By enclosing ten cents to Dr. Kilmer & Co., Binghamton, N. Y., you may receive sample size bottle by Parcel Post. You can purchase medium and large size bottles at all drug stores.—Adv.

ALL THE TIME HE WANTED
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A Cleveland man with business interests in Illinois tells of an incident at a railway junction in that state. He was hungry and it was only two minutes before the departure of his train. He rushed up to the counter and exclaimed: "Give me a sandwich and a cup of coffee, quick! Haven't time for anything else."

"My friend," said the man behind the counter, "take all the time you want. Just cast your eye over this menu and I'll telephone the superintendent to hold the train a while."

"Do you mean to say that he will actually hold the train while I eat?"
"Sure, friend. This is a branch road, and there's no other train coming or going over it this morning. The superintendent will want you to have a good meal—he owns this lunch-room."

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But when the battery opened there was no time for us to think of anything else. A square is a very good way of meeting a horseman, but there is no worse one of taking a cannonball, so we soon learned when they began to cut red seams through us, until our ears were weary of the slish and splash when hard iron met living flesh and blood. After ten minutes of it we moved our square a hundred paces to the right, but we left another square behind us, for a hundred and twenty men and seven officers showed where we had been standing. Then the guns found us again, and we tried to open out into line, but in an instant the horsemen—lancers they were this time—were upon us from over the brow. I tell you we were glad to hear the thud of their hoofs, for we knew that that must stop the cannon for a minute, and give us a chance of hitting back. And we hit back pretty hard, too, that time, for we were cold and hungry and savage, and I, for one, felt that I cared no more for the horsemen than if they had been so many sheep on Corriemuir. One gets past being afraid or thinking of one's own skin after a while, and you just feel that you want to make some one pay for all you have gone through. We took on—change out of the lancers that time, for they had no breastplates to shield them, and we cleared seventy of them out of their saddles at a volley. Maybe if we could have seen seventy mothers weeping for their lads we should not have felt so pleased over it, but this men are just brute when they are fighting and have as