

DISCIPLINE MUST BE MAINTAINED.

A GROUP OF ANECDOTES.



FEW days since, when reading a tale entitled "Let Nobody Pass," the incidents there related brought forcibly to my mind three different anecdotes of real life illustrating the same motto, and which, though they are not of a "thrilling" nature, may still be interesting to some readers from the mere fact of their being true.

One of these occurred in 1864 (I think) when Lord Lawrence was Governor-General of India. His Excellency had just returned from England to assume his onerous duties, and was spending a short time at (what might be called his country seat) the Government House at Barrackpore.

Any one who knew Lord Lawrence will remember his utter disregard of personal appearance. Excepting on public occasions he paid so little attention to his dress as to appear almost shabby, which seems strange in a man who so well understood the character of the natives, and who could not have lived so many years in India without knowing how much importance they attach to pomp and show; and who, moreover, as representative of the Queen-Empress, and Governor of such a vast territory, was expected to appear with suitable ceremony.

The day after his arrival at Barrackpore he took a walk, with some of his staff, in the beautiful park; and on their return to Government House they were refused admittance by the sentry, a Punjâbi soldier, who had not seen them go out. In vain the staff officers explained, reasoned, and insisted. The sentry would not listen to them. His orders were peremptory. No one must pass but those who had particular business with his Excellency, and could give a satisfactory account of themselves. And he wound up with what appeared to him an unanswerable argument—

"The Lord Sahib would not wear such shabby clothes, so it's no use to try to deceive me."

It was not until some official, known to the sentry, came out of Government House and assured him of his mistake, that the poor man, who had only wished to do his duty, realised what he had done. He was so terrified at having refused admittance to the "Lord Sahib" himself, that he fell down in a fit, and was carried away to the hospital. I believe he recovered, and, no doubt, his convalescence was hastened by Lord Lawrence's pardon, and the assurance of his Excellency's satisfaction at his having so faithfully carried out his orders.

II.

The second incident is of a totally different nature, though it, too, was consequent on the advent of a new Governor-General.

I think it was on the occasion of Lord Dalhousie's arrival that the troops in Calcutta were assembled to do him honour, lining the whole length of road from the landing-place to Government House. One part of this road leads directly to the Cathedral, the graceful spire of which is a conspicuous object for some distance round. The orders had been issued that the road was to be kept perfectly clear, no conveyance of any kind but the *cortège* of his Excellency being allowed to pass. All were in readiness, and full of expectation, for the guns from the fort had fired their salute, announcing that the Governor-General had set foot on Indian soil, when suddenly a closed carriage appeared on the piece of road mentioned above, the driver having very cleverly contrived to slip in from a by-way.

The young officer in charge of that particular spot immediately gave chase, but the coachman was driving fast, and he had to ride some distance before he overtook him. Shouting to him to stop, he repeated the order, and told him to turn his horse's head at once.

The man, a native, chattered and gesticulated as only a native can, but the officer was inexorable. The road *must* be kept clear, and already clouds of dust in the distance showed that his Excellency's cavalcade was fast approaching. At this critical moment a lady's tremulous voice was heard from within the conveyance, the blinds of which had hitherto been closely drawn, so that the occupants could not be seen.

"Oh! pray let us pass on. I am going to the Cathedral to be married, and if we are obliged to go the long way round I shall be too late!"

Here was a dilemma! The bridegroom was awaiting the bride, while she, poor lady, was letting "the tear doon fa'," though from quite a different motive to that of Jock o' Hazeldean's betrothed. Her evident distress moved the young officer to pity, and though he dared not himself disobey his orders, he did the best he could by representing the case to his commandant, who gallantly taking for his motto *Place aux Dames*, and considering that if all things are fair in war they are equally so in love, gave the required permission, having, no doubt, made a mental calculation as to the length of time that might elapse before that cloud of dust should develop itself into something more definite.

Let us hope that the lady, being married, "lived happily ever after" (as the story-books say), and that she never had reason to repent the hour when her tears were even more powerful than the stern sense of duty and discipline over the heart of a British soldier.

III.

The third illustration of "Let nobody pass" occurred during a certain cold season in India, when a considerable force was collected at one of our large stations for a camp of exercise. The camp was

pitched just outside the cantonments, from which it was separated by a road, and surrounded by a ditch, communication being afforded by temporary bridges which were guarded at either end by a sentry.

One evening the colonel commanding one of the regiments (who was better known for his kindly disposition than for any special military qualities) had been dining with a friend in the station, and returning

But here a fresh difficulty arose, for the first sentry, who had previously allowed him to pass, had by this time awakened to a sense of his position, and—thinking, no doubt, with his companion at the other end of the bridge, that this opportunity, of keeping guard over a superior officer was too good to be lost, and a chance that might never occur to him again—refused to let him return without his giving the “parole.”



"A LADY'S TREMULOUS VOICE WAS HEARD FROM WITHIN THE CONVEYANCE" (p. 115).

rather late, he made his way to the bridge which was nearest to his own tent. Unfortunately, he did not know either the “parole” or “countersign,” but he trusted to the sentries knowing him (although they were not his own men) and allowing him to pass.

He was so far right that the first man, having recognised him, was satisfied with the answer “Friend” to his challenge, and let him get on the bridge; but the second sentry was more particular and demanded the countersign. Of course the colonel could not give it, and though he explained the situation and stated who he was, the sentry stood firm. Seeing no other alternative, the crest-fallen field-officer determined to beat a retreat and return to cantonments for the night.

The position was a dreadful one. Imagine an elderly field-officer of irreproachable character, and in command of a regiment, being thus kept under guard of two sentries at an hour of the night when all respectable people should be in bed! But there was no help for it, and for some little time the gallant colonel had to submit to his fate. And he might have remained there until the small hours of the morning had he not been rescued by the fortunate arrival of a friend, who was also returning to the camp from cantonments, and who, giving him the information he required, freed him from arrest.

Moral—A word in the mouth is worth two in the Order-book.