

## The Flags of Our Forces at the Front.

BY CHRISTABEL OSBORN.



HE depth and passion of the patriotic enthusiasm with which the whole English people have been fired have been in themselves some compensation for the bitterness of victory deferred. It is long since any serious warning has been given to the nation that the glorious record of the past could only be preserved through struggle and sacrifice; and while our troops in South Africa are facing the enemy, perhaps no better occupation could be found than to recall the stories of some of their hard-fought fights of earlier days.

The colours of a regiment! A simple phrase, but what a wealth of glorious meaning is bound up in those few words! Only a bit of embroidered silk, and yet the very soul of the regiment, the symbol of its honour, the record of its triumphs, to preserve which life is counted a worthless thing! Who is there

whose heart has not been moved and fired as he looks at the tattered and war-worn colours which so often hang in our cathedrals and churches; by the memories they recall of glorious deeds and heroic self-sacrifice? The rich crimson damask that marks the cavalry standard, the embroidered roll of battles in which the regiment won an honoured name, the badges and mottoes that recall its history, have alike faded into one general dimness, but still the tattered relics remain, sacred memorials of war, the symbols

of a courage and heroism that go far to redeem its savagery and barbarism. There must, indeed, be few who have not felt the "stir of fellowship," alike in victory and defeat, with those who shed their blood to bring the colours home in honour from many distant battlefields; but too often those hard-fought fights have become mere names to us; the faded letters do but shadow forth a past which we neither know nor love, and we forget to claim our share in the glorious records of our Army.

Of all cavalry standards, the most magnificent in appearance are those which are borne by the Household Cavalry, the 1st and 2nd Life Guards and the Royal Horse Guards. Detachments of these regiments are at the time of writing at the front with Colonel Neal in command, under General French. For some reason not very easy to explain, cavalry standards have never held

such an honourable position as infantry colours. They were not consecrated, and new ones were usually taken into use without any solemn ceremony of presentation. No cavalry standards were carried at the Battle of Waterloo, and some years later, in 1834, Hussars and Lancers discontinued using them. In 1858 a regulation was made that all standards should be crimson, and that only one should be borne by each regiment. To this rule, however, the Household Cavalry are an exception.



STANDARDS AND TRUMPET BANNERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD CAVALRY.

From a Photograph.

Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



Each regiment has a Queen's standard and three regimental standards, or one for each squadron, all of crimson silk damask. The Queen's standard bears the Royal Arms, and the regimental standard the Union badge of the Rose, Thistle, and Shamrock on one stalk, and the roll of distinctions is embroidered on both. On the trumpet and kettledrum banners it is interesting to note the two angels or winged Cupids supporting the Crown, one on each side. They appeared on the standards as well in the days of James II., and formed part of the Royal Arms of France occasionally adopted by the Stuarts.

The Life Guards and Horse Guards are amongst the oldest corps in the service, their formation dating back, like that of the Grenadier Guards and the Coldstreams, to 1660. They served with distinction in Marlborough's wars, and nearly a century later were maintaining their old reputation in the prolonged Peninsular struggle. At Waterloo, the three regiments, under Lord Edward Somerset, were posted at Mont St. Gean, and their gallantry in repulsing the charges of the French Cuirassiers won them a special meed of praise from the Iron Duke himself. At the close of the battle, indeed, they were so reduced in numbers as to form but a single squadron, but they, nevertheless, joined in the general advance. The bugle with which the decisive charge was sounded is still preserved. Each regiment possesses a pair of silver kettledrums presented by King William IV.

Standards are carried by Dragoon Guards

and guidons, or swallow-tailed pennons, by Dragoons. Both bear in the centre the title or badge of the regiment, surrounded by the Union wreath of the Rose, Thistle, and Shamrock. The records of many of the regiments of Dragoon Guards date back to the days of the Revolution.

The famous Union Brigade, which has made itself a name in many a gallant charge, is composed of the three regiments of Dragoons, the Royals, the Scots Greys, and the Inniskillings. There are no prouder or more honoured mottoes in



GUIDON AND TRUMPET BANNERS OF ROYAL SCOTS GREYS.

*From a Photo. by Wyrall & Son, Aldershot.*

the British Army than those of the Scots Greys—attached to General French's Division. They carry on their guidon: "Second to None" and "Nemo me impune lacessit," and well has the regiment proved its right to bear them. In the mighty battles of Marlborough's wars their service commenced, and at Ramillies they charged through the French Cuirassiers and captured in triumph the famous white standard of the Régiment du Roi. At



Waterloo the united charge of the Scots Greys and the 92nd Highlanders, and their overthrow of

It was the Grenadier Guards who formed Maitland's Brigade at Waterloo, and it was from their overthrow of the French Grenadier Guards at that battle that they gained their name, and henceforth carried on their colours a grenade beneath the badge.

A pair of the colours so honourably carried by a battalion of this regiment at Waterloo are now hanging in the chapel of Wellington Barracks. Nearly forty years later the Guards showed that their mettle was in no way altered during the long fight at Inkerman against overwhelming odds, and are still maintaining the gallant tradition of their regiment on



REGIMENTAL COLOURS 1ST BATTALION GRENADEIER GUARDS.  
From a Photo. by George Neveus, Limited.

D'Erlon's column, was one of the turning-points of the battle.

Infantry regiments have each a pair of colours. Under Elizabeth each company had a colour of its own, and retained it even after several companies had been united into a regiment. Then came in the custom of drawing up regiments in three divisions, a body of pikemen in the centre, flanked on either side by musketeers; and the number of colours was accordingly reduced to three. Under Queen Anne the pikemen and the third colour disappeared together. At the present time the Royal West Surrey Regiment (2nd Foot) still possesses a third colour, sea-green, like the ancient facings of the corps.

the South African veldt. An additional distinction of the Grenadier Guards is the possession of a State colour, bearing the



STATE COLOUR 1ST BATTALION GRENADEIER GUARDS.  
From a Photo. by George Neveus, Limited.





THE BUFF COLOURS 2ND BATTALION OXFORDSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY.  
From a Photo. by George Newnes, Limited.

Royal cipher, reversed and interlaced, a colour which was first presented to them by William IV. The 1st Battalion, Windsor, the 2nd Battalion, Wellington Barracks, and the 3rd Battalion form part of the Guards' Brigade under Colville with Methuen. Their gallant conduct in the battles along Kimberley Road is well known.

The buff colours, so often carried to victory by the famous 52nd (2nd Battalion Oxfordshire Light Infantry, now stationed at Ferozepore, Punjab; whilst the 1st Battalion is in South Africa, in General Kelly-Kenny's Division), the "regiment never surpassed in war since arms were first borne by men," have now become white. One of the old colours, with its long roll of honours, still hangs in the banqueting-room at Whitehall, now the home of the United Service Institution. What deeds of daring are recalled by every name! Ciudad Rodrigo, where the 52nd and the 43rd furnished the storming party, and the forlorn hope; Waterloo, where the 52nd drove back the far-famed Imperial Guard, under the great Ney himself, with such success that as the Prussians advanced in pursuit their bands played the National Anthem in compliment to the troops, and a Prussian officer rode forward and embraced the colours in token of his admira-

tion. Other names of honour have been added since then, notably Delhi, recalling the heroic storming of the Cashmere Gate, a deed of daring perhaps never surpassed in war.

Side by side with the colours of the 52nd hang those of the 66th (2nd Battalion Berkshire Regiment), serving with General Gatacre, and taking part in his famous night march which ended so disastrously. Their colours bear the record of many hard-fought fights, above all, Albuhera, in memory of the fiercest and most sanguinary of all the Peninsular battles. There the King's Colour of the Buffs (3rd Foot) was only saved by the heroism of Lieutenant Latham, who snatched it when the ensign was taken prisoner, and, though wounded and trampled on, managed to conceal it underneath him, until the advance of the Fusilier Brigade drove back the enemy. There, too, the 57th (18th Battalion Middlesex Regiment) won their nick-

name of the "Die-hards." Their Colonel, Inglis, who was leading the advance, was wounded, but refusing to be carried to the



PORTION OF THE COLOURS OF 1ST BATTALION MIDDLESEX  
REGIMENT.  
From a Photo. by Albert Coe, Norwich.



rear, he maintained his position in front of the colours, calling to the men to "Die hard." They obeyed his command. When the fatal hill was won one officer and sixty-eight men were left unwounded to gather round the shattered remnants of the King's Colour, which had been riddled by more than thirty balls. The memory of such a deed of valour has served as an inspiration to the regiment in other hard struggles, and at Inkerman Captain Stanley rallied his men with the words: "Die-hards, remember Albuhera."

The wild hills and dangerous passes of Afghanistan have seen many heroic struggles. During the disastrous retreat from Cabul in 1842, of which only Dr. Brydon arrived to tell the tale at Jellalabad, out of 682 men of the

44th (1st Battalion Essex Regiment, now with Gatacre in South Africa) at Cabul on October 1st, but fifty survived, wounded and prisoners. The retreat began in January, and almost immediately the attack commenced, the army marching harassed by the incessant fire of the Ghilzais. At Jagdallak a determined attempt was made to beat off the enemy, when the 44th lost 200 men. At Gandamuk the last stand was made. On a little hill the survivors of the 44th, some seventy-five in number, yet held out

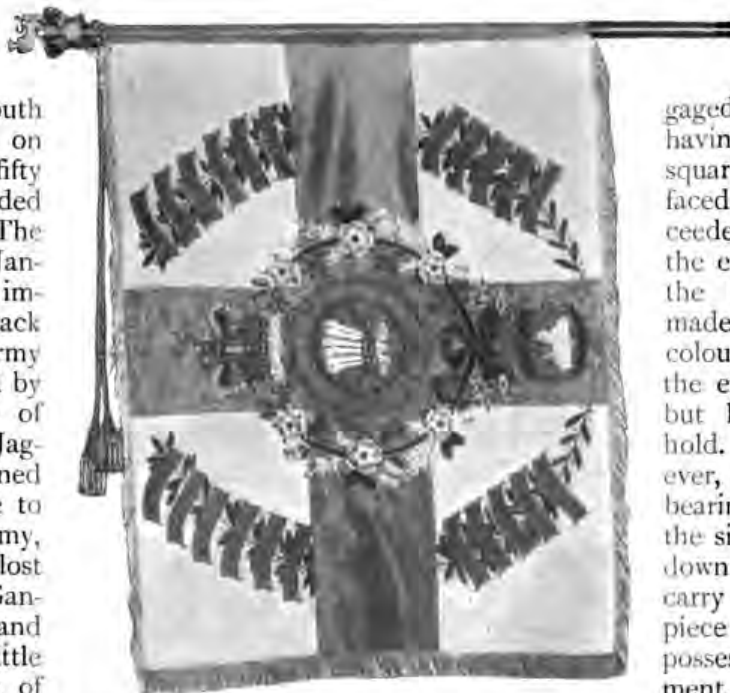
against an overwhelming force of Afghans for two hours, till their ammunition was expended. Lieutenant Soutar was one of the few who escaped death. He had wrapped the regimental colour round his body, and being struck down in the fight, the colour was exposed to view. It was thought by the Afghans to indicate high rank, and he was carried off a prisoner. He was able to retain the colour, and when the avenging force arrived it was brought back to India, where it was carried for some time by a newly-recruited 44th, and was finally placed in the Church of Alverstoke, Hants, over a monument erected to the officers and

men who fell in that fatal campaign. The Queen's colour was intrusted to Sergeant Carey, but he was killed, and in the confusion of a night march the colour was lost.

It was not the first time that the 44th had fought well in an unequal battle. In the Peninsular they received the nickname of the "Little Fighting Fours," and on the retreat from Burgos they formed the rear-guard and were reduced to forty-two men of all ranks fit for duty. It was on this occasion a sergeant of the regiment came to an officer and said: "Sir, the mules and camp-kettles are lost, but as I am the only man of the company left, it is not of much consequence."

At Quatre Bras the regiment was attacked

by a force of lancers in the rear, when already engaged in front. Not having time to form square, the rear rank faced round and succeeded in beating off the enemy. Some of the French lancers made a dash for the colours and wounded the ensign in the eye, but he retained his hold. A lancer, however, succeeded in bearing off a piece of the silk, but was shot down before he could carry it off, and the piece is still in the possession of the regiment. A similar incident of the rear rank of a regiment successfully facing



REGIMENTAL COLOURS OF 1ST BATTALION SOUTH LANCASHIRE REGIMENT. *From a Photograph.*

round and repulsing the enemy occurred in the case of the 28th Foot (Gloucestershire Regiment) in the Egyptian campaign of 1801. Both battalions are serving in South Africa. Part of the 1st is attached to General Clery's Division, and a part is in Ladysmith at the moment of writing. The 2nd Battalion of this famous regiment serves under Lieut.-General Kelly-Kenny. In honour of this exploit, until 1881 the 28th wore their regimental number on the back as well as the front of their head-dress.

Not a few of the special privileges of many regiments have arisen from some brilliant feat of arms on the battlefield. On the



anniversary of Waterloo the men of the 1st Battalion South Lancashire Regiment (the Prince of Wales's Volunteers, the old 40th), which forms part of General Woodgate's Brigade in Sir Charles Warren's Division, wear a laurel leaf and deck the colours with wreaths, for on that day fourteen sergeants besides officers were killed and wounded in their defence, and the silk was almost shot away. Indeed, the regiment was so reduced in numbers that by the time the Prussians came up it had become difficult to form square. For many years the 40th had the honour of bearing on their colours more victories than any other single battalion regiment.

Every infantry regiment took its colours into the Crimea. At the halt before the assault on the heights of Alma the staff were riding along the front of the troops, by whom they were received with thundering cheers, and Marshal St. Amand exclaimed: "English, I hope you will fight well to-day!" "Hope!" exclaimed a voice from the ranks of the 55th. "Sure you *know* we will."

The 55th (2nd Battalion Border Regiment) formed part of the 1st Brigade of the fighting division under General Pennefather, and suffered severely both at Alma and Inkerman. The 2nd Battalion Border

Regiment, the old 34th, did not arrive in the Crimea till December, 1854. The first colours to wave on the great redoubt at Alma were those of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, which had been presented to the regiment by the Prince Consort. The lieutenant was shot down, but others took his place, and so gallant was their action that General Sir George Brown, who was leading the advance, called out: "Hurrah for the Royal Welsh! I shall remember you!" He himself was wounded and fell from his horse, but mounted again immediately, with the assistance of a rifleman, who in all the din and excitement of the battle yet found time to ask: "Are your stirrups the right length, sir?"

The Royal Welsh, as everyone knows, forms part of the Fusilier Brigade under Major-General Barton, serving with Buller in Natal.

At Inkerman the Grenadier Guards took their colours to the sandbag battery, where they remained the whole morning, and the colours of the 21st (Royal Scots Fusiliers) were only removed from the field by Lord Raglan's orders, after three officers and seventeen sergeants had fallen in escorting them.

The colours carried by the 93rd Sutherland





Highlanders throughout the Crimean campaign, and which had been presented to the regiment by the Duke of Wellington, have now received a honoured place in Glasgow Cathedral. The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (the old 93rd) have contributed their quota to the South African War, inasmuch as the 1st Battalion is in South Africa with Major-General Pole-Carew's brigade under Lord Methuen. It is the only infantry regiment entitled to record the name of Balaclava on its colours. As the Russian cavalry advanced to the attack in heavy columns, Sir Colin Campbell called to the Highlanders, "There is no retreat from here, men! You must die where you stand!" and the answer came back, "Aye, aye, Sir Colin, and needs be, we'll do that!" They did not alter their formation, but received and repulsed the charge standing only two deep—the "thin red line."

From the frosts and snows of the Crimea they were soon to find themselves under the burning sun of India, making forced marches, with the same general in command, to bring relief to beleaguered Lucknow. And it was another Scottish regiment, the 78th (the Ross-shire Buffs) which received the name of the "Saviours of India." They also marched to Lucknow in the vanguard of Sir Henry Havelock's relief column, and the colours they carried through that splendid advance are still to be seen in the Town Hall at Dingwall. But there is not one of the Highland regiments the name of which does not recall some heroic story to the mind, and

it is but a few weeks since the Black Watch (42nd Highlanders) have been adding fresh honour to the roll. They will ever be remembered as having followed their beloved Wauchope up the trenches at Magersfontein, and to have stood unflinchingly before the withering hail of bullets which decimated their ranks.

The Castle and the Key, the arms of Gibraltar, are carried on the colours of several regiments in recognition of their services there in 1704. The Sphinx, super-

scribed "Egypt," marks the regiments who served under Abercrombie in 1801; and the Royal Marines wear a laurel badge in memory of the capture of Belle-Isle in 1761. This regiment shares with the Buffs the privilege of being able to march through the City of London with drums beating and colours flying, a privilege that may arise from the fact that both are sometimes thought to have been first recruited from the train-bands of the City.

The 13th (1st Battalion Somersetshire Regiment), which endured the siege of Jellala-

bad under Sir Robert Sale, carry in honour of their brave defence a mural crown on their colours, with the word "Jellalabad." The circlet of a mural crown is decorated with battlements: it was given by the Romans to the man who first scaled the walls of a besieged city. The 2nd Battalion of this famous regiment is in Major-General Clery's Division.

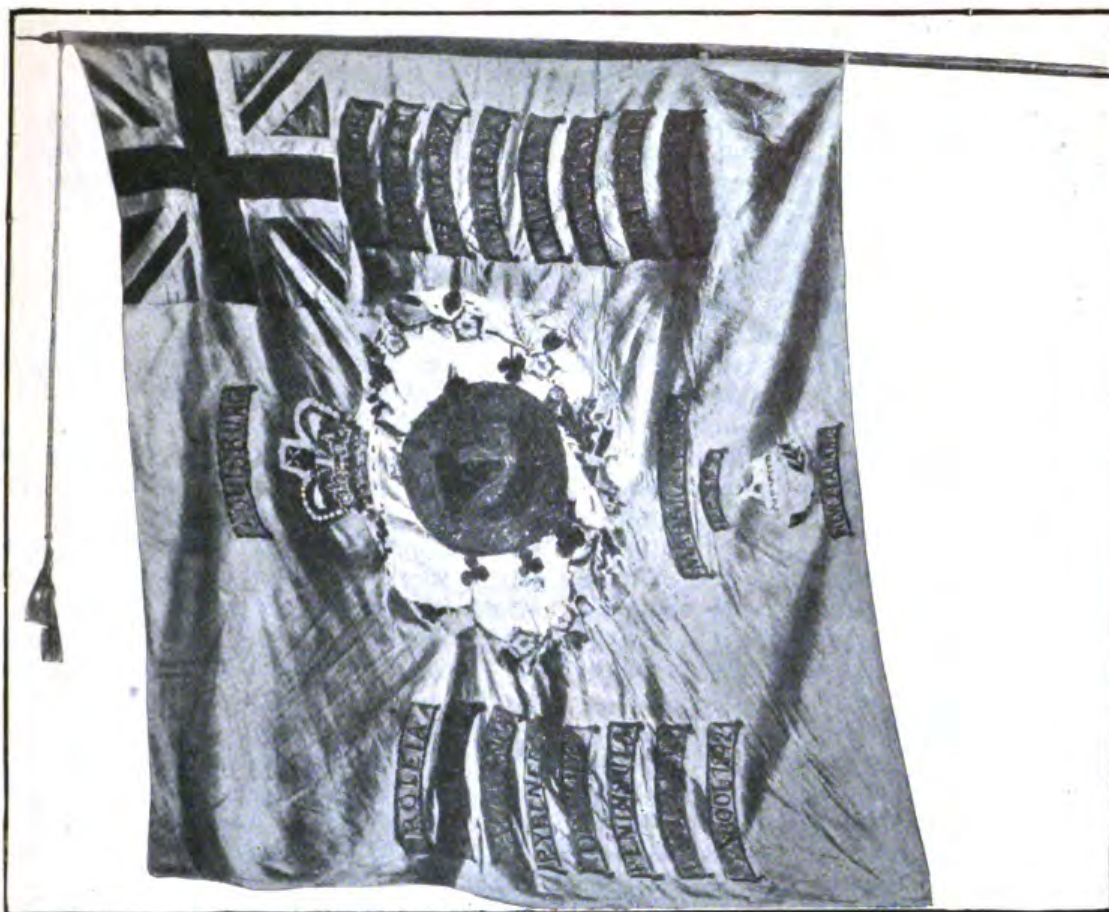
Whole volumes would be required to tell in detail the story of all the famous names



COLOURS OF 78TH (THE ROSS-SHIRE BUFFS)—NICKNAMED "THE SAVIOURS OF INDIA."

From a Photo. by J. Munros, Dingwall.





REGIMENTAL COLOURS OF THE 40TH REGIMENT (2ND SOMERSETSHIRE).  
From a Photo. by J. Wyrall & Son, Aldershot.

emblazoned on regimental colours, and of all the blood-stained laurels gained by British soldiers in every quarter of the world. It may be, perhaps, that after years of peace and prosperity a time of stress and storm is coming once again for England, and, like our forefathers of old, we may have to face a world in arms. But, whatever the odds against us, our national character must indeed have changed if we ever consent to sink below the standard they have set. There is no doubt that our soldiers will display the same unflinching courage which has always marked them; but, perhaps, there may be need to see that as a nation we have not degenerated through our long enjoyment of all the material advantages of peace, and prove we can not only rise for a moment to an outburst of patriotic

enthusiasm, but that we also possess the same dogged perseverance which alone can bear the pressing strain and painful sacrifices of a prolonged war, and the same resolution not to recognise our own defeat which has so often led us to victories in the past.

Those great deeds are half-forgotten now: the records are hidden away in regimental histories: the colours are fading in our churches; but if ever we feel a thrill of pride in the greatness of our Empire or in the noble place held by our national flag, let us remember too "how vast the debt we owe to those who died."

Never the lotos closes, never the wildfowl wake,  
But a soul went out on the east wind that died for  
England's sake—  
Man or woman or suckling, mother or bride or maid—  
Because on the bones of the English, the English flag  
is stayed.

NOTE.—I cannot conclude this article without acknowledging my great obligations to the commanding officers of many regiments and to other possessors of historic colours, by whose kindness alone it has been possible to procure the special photographs with which it is illustrated.