Deeds of Daring and Devotion in the War.

By Alfred T. Story.

IT is, of course, a truism that there is nothing like difficulty and danger for bringing out men's true characters and for developing all the grit and go there is in them. It may be added that when the crisis is a national one the splendour of the heroism brought into prominence is all the more striking. We cannot go back to any campaign in British history without coming across, not only acts of the most signal daring, oftentimes of almost transcendent courage, but, what is still finer, deeds of devotion so unselfish that they touch the deepest chords of the human heart. Our military biography is full of such, and one can hardly read of them without being thrilled as by a line of heroic verse. And how many tingling heart-throbs of the kind have we not received during the present war? To read the daily papers is like being at a school of heroism; and no doubt the deeds of daring and doing performed on the battlefield for the Motherland did much to stimulate the splendid rush of volunteers to the Flag when the Queen called, that sent thousands of the best of Britain's sons to emulate the traditional hardihood and the traditional devotion.

Whilst the New South Wales Lancers were at Aldershot some of them practised picking up and carrying off a disabled comrade. It was a happy thought to do so, and one can only hope, if the chance should come in their way, that they will be able to turn their dexterity to good account, and so win the soldier's highest honour, the V.C.

The decoration of the Victoria Cross, as most people are aware, was instituted as a reward to members of the British naval and military services for the performance, in presence of the enemy, of some signal act of valour or devotion to their country. Non-military persons who are serving as volunteers against the enemy are also eligible. But there is one condition attached to the distinction which is not perhaps generally known: it is that the act for which the Cross is given must be a voluntary one.

There has probably never been a war since the institution of the V.C. when so many have gone to the front with the resolution to win the coveted distinction, if it by any means lay in their path, as in the present one. Nor can we wonder when both the leading commanders—that is, Lord Roberts and Sir Redvers Buller, besides several of the generals of divisions—are V.C. heroes. Such examples fire men with a lofty spirit of emulation, and who can doubt but the many self-sacrificing deeds of which we read were in part stimulated by what their generals had done? Even where there has been no question of the Victoria Cross, the V.C. spirit has proved contagious; so much so that one could almost wish all those who have shown a spirit of sturdy devotion or brave self-forgetfulness might come in for some sort of recognition.

Take, for instance, the act of the post-mistress of Lady Grey, the chief town of the native reserve of the Free State border, who, when the Boers proclaimed the district Orange Free State territory, and sent rebels to post up President Steyn's proclamation at Lady Grey, which they did, quietly removed the objectionable document and put up in its place Sir Alfred Milner's proclamation, telling the rebels at the same time that *that* was the proclamation for them. It has been stated, in order to adorn the story, that the lady pulled down the Boer flag, which had been hoisted, and ran up the Union Jack in its place; but I have it on the best authority that there was no flag, either British or Boer, in the question. Even without the bravado of the flag, however, the deed was one of conspicuous courage.

Such deeds as this, as well as some that are still less, as it were, before the public eye, like that of Private Rogers, of the 1st Battalion Manchester Regiment, who wrapped his wounded captain in his great-coat and lay beside him all night to keep him warm, are a little liable to be forgotten, which is a pity. This act of the man Rogers I have heard doubts thrown upon. But permission has been given me to print an extract from a

letter of Captain D. R. Paton, the officer referred to, which puts the matter beyond dispute.

Writing to his father, the famous painter, Sir Noel Paton, from the temporary hospital at Ladysmith, October 24th, he says: "A private of mine and a sergeant of the Gordons dressed my wound roughly to stop the bleeding, and my Tommy and I lay down to wait for the ambulance. . . . I prefer to say no more of that night in the field—it is best forgotten; and you may be sure that I never welcomed the daylight as I did on Sunday morning. I knew that help would come with the light. . . . I am glad my Tommy—a private in my own company—stayed with me; for he wrapped me in his great-coat, and lay with his arms round me all night to try and keep me warm. If he hadn't, I am afraid I should have pegged out, for it was bitterly cold, and I couldn't move at all."

From a] CAPTAIN D. R. PATON. *[Photograph.*

CAPTAIN-SURGEON BUNTINE.
From a Photo. by Sherwood, Durban.

One would have liked to give the portrait of this hero, but it has not been possible to obtain a photograph of him.

Another deed which deserves to stand beside the above is that of Captain-Surgeon Buntine, of the Natal Carbineers. Dr. Buntine is an Australian, and was in practice at Pietermaritzburg when the war broke out. He at once set out for the front and joined the Carbineers. He was, however, almost immediately sent for to help the Royal Army Medical Corps at headquarters at Ladysmith. The Carbineers were given the honourable and onerous duty of patrolling the Free State border, and Dr. Buntine was out with them when they had a brush with the enemy at Bester's, just under the Drakensberg, towering 10,000ft. above them. The Carbineers were compelled to retire, and a trooper who was wounded had to be left where he fell. Dr. Buntine, however, rode back, accompanied by his trooper servant, Duke, placed the severely wounded man on his own horse, and then, holding the stirrup-leather of his servant's horse, ran all the way into camp. A non-commissioned officer of the same corps, Sergeant J. Todd, greatly distinguished himself by saving the life of a wounded officer at Chieveley, under a hot fire.

Many such plucky acts have been recorded during the war. At the Battle of Reitfontein, for instance, a Carbineer named Cleaver was shot through the body while the men were retiring from an exposed position, whereupon Lieutenant Compton ran back and offered to carry him under cover. Cleaver asked to be left where he was, as he was in great pain. Compton went away, but returned and again offered to take him to the ambulance. The man still declined, and the lieutenant retired under cover, being at the time much exposed. The wounded man was shortly afterwards taken up by the ambulance.

LIEUTENANT COMPTON.
From a Photograph.

Still more worthy of note is the act of Lieutenant the Hon. Ralph Legge Pomeroy, second son of Viscount Harberton, of the 5th Dragoon Guards, who, on the 5th of November, during a brush with the enemy near Ladysmith, went to the assistance of a

wounded trooper, regardless of the bullets that were viciously "spitting" through the air, and carried him out of the fire zone. A similar act of heroism was performed at Ladysmith by an officer of the same regiment, Lieutenant J. Norwood, who also at great peril to himself saved the life of a trooper.

LIEUTENANT THE HON. RALPH POMEROY.
From a Photo. by Window & Grove.

It speaks volumes for the "initiative" of the irregular troops to find so many acts of devotion and daring being performed by members of those contingents. Sir Redvers Buller, it will be remembered, looks upon initiative as the soul of the V.C. Perhaps the fact that the irregular troops are less drilled, less of the nature of machines, and possibly in consequence, like the Boers, more mobile, has its advantage in allowing their members to act more from personal volition. Certain it is that the various corps of irregular and volunteer troops have greatly excelled in acts where personal initiative has come in. Such acts have been so numerous that one cannot hope to give more than a brief selection of them.

The story of Trooper Clifford Turpin, of the Imperial Light Horse, at the Battle of Elandslaagte is an instance in point. His colonel was shot in the body, and Turpin caught him in his arms and was carrying him away to a place of safety when the poor officer received a bullet through the brain while in the trooper's arms. He put the body down and rushed on in the field, and he and one of the Gordon Highlanders were the first to get into the Boer laager and take it. For his gallantry Turpin was promoted to the rank of sergeant and his name was mentioned in despatches.

Another trooper of one of the irregular corps, namely, A. W. Evans, of the Natal Mounted Rifles, did an act for which he was recommended for the V.C. He fell into an ambush with a patrol. The patrol was

TROOPER CLIFFORD TURPIN.
From a Photo. by Hepburn & Jeanes, Grahamstown.

TROOPER A. W. EVANS.
From a Photo. by Bryne, Richmond.

retiring when the horse of a fellow-trooper, named Golding, who was on foot, broke away. Evans dashed after Golding's mount and brought it back in spite of a heavy fire from the enemy. Trooper Evans, who is nineteen years of age, had not long left St. George's School, Harpenden.

Not less worthy of note is the brave deed of Trooper Martin, of the Natal Mounted Police, who conducted Lieutenant Hooper, of the 5th Lancers, through the Boer lines to Ladysmith, and returned with a message from Sir George White for General Wolffe-Murray. Martin was recommended for promotion by General Murray, and was immediately afterwards raised to the rank of sergeant. Martin, who is a son of Captain Martin, of the Royal Artillery, Woolwich, only completed his twentieth year last July.

TROOPER MARTIN.
From a Photograph.

As the instances of bravery here given are more particularly concerned with those whose effort was rather to save life than to kill — to include the latter would necessitate a reproduction of nearly the whole list of those who have gone to South Africa — one need only mention the name of Bugler Shurlock, who, metaphorically, took the scalps of three Boers at Elandslaagte, in order to point out how, under the stress of the Empire's danger, the very boys and women became heroic. Hence it should not be forgotten that it was to a boy-bugler's presence of mind in blowing a resonant "Charge!" in reply to the sounds of "Cease fire!" given by the Boer trumpeters in order to mislead, that the victory of Elandslaagte was largely due. The incident was referred to by Mr. Pearse, of the *Daily News*. "The Devons" (he wrote) "had gained the crest on its steepest side, and the Gordons, with the Manchesters and the Light Horse, were sweeping over its nearer ridge, when, to our astonishment, we heard the 'Cease fire!' and 'Retire!' sounded by buglers. It was difficult to account for them, but not so now, when we know that the Boers had learned our bugle-calls. In obedience to that sound the Gordons were beginning to fall back, when their boy-bugler, saying, 'Retire be hanged!' rushed forward and blew a hasty charge. Whereupon ranks closed up and the victory of Elandslaagte was won."

And, speaking of boy-emulators of their commanders for the V.C., need one do more than refer to the splendid act of the little bugler, Dunne, of the 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers, who so distinguished himself in the fighting line of the Battle of Tugela River; refusing, after having his right arm disabled by a shot, to go to the rear, but, taking his bugle in his left hand, continued to advance with his company, sounding the charge and heartening the men the while? His wound necessitated his being brought home; but he was from the first eager to be allowed to go again to the front. The bugle presented to him by the Queen in place of the one he lost will doubtless long remain in his family and be treasured almost as a patent of nobility. The bugle is made of copper, with silver mountings, and bears the inscription: "Presented to John Francis Dunne, First Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers, by Queen Victoria, to replace the bugle lost by him on the field of battle at Colenso, 15th December, 1899, when he was wounded."

A good many other youngsters—yes, and women too—besides Bugler Dunne—whose photograph should be in all the schools—deserve memorials in commemoration of their courage and devotion. Take the little heroes of Mafeking—Mafeking which henceforth in British annals will stand as a synonym for all that is "game"—of whom it was written on the forty-eighth day of the siege that many of those helping in the defence were tender women and boys, some of the latter being mere children. "One boy named Chiddy," the account says, "at the summoning of the garrison to arms by church-bell on Sunday morning, arrived bringing a rifle and a bandolier. He occupies a man's loophole, and carefully records the number of shells passing over another fort." The writer goes on to say that in one house, while the breastwork was being built, three ladies remained during the Monday's shelling, with the utmost pluck. "One played the National Anthem while shells were whistling overhead. The men outside heard the music and cheered in response." Throughout the siege, too, the calm bravery of the nuns was excelled by none.

And while one is writing of Mafeking, can one omit to make reference to the first of its

heroes, who not only inspired and sustained all by his courage and resourcefulness, but when he saw any of the little ones who seemed to want comforting, would take it up in his arms, and show that he had something of the gentleness of a woman, in addition to his splendid soldierly qualities; reminding one of the lines in Wordsworth's "Character of the Happy Warrior":—

> who, though thus endued as with a sense
> And faculty for storm and turbulence,
> Is yet a soul whose master bias leans
> To homefelt pleasures and to gentle scenes.

May such traits always adorn the British warrior, as they so supremely adorn the chiefest of them all, Lord Roberts. It is that character, and the kindly acts it leads him to do, that has so endeared him to all who have come under his command. Said a private, writing to his people the other day: "He" (Lord Roberts) "passed our picket lines to see Macdonald yesterday. I stood to attention as smart as I could. 'All right, my man,' said he; 'sit down and go on smoking.' That's the general for you. He is a soldier, every inch of him. I would die for such as he." Another man, describing General Lyttelton, writes: "There isn't a bit of regimental or staff starch about him. He is just like Bobs."

Admiration of this sort is soon developed into something akin to adoration by acts like that which distinguished the Battle of Driefontein. On that day Lord Roberts, when riding over the battlefield, came across a wounded soldier, and, dismounting, gave him a drink from his own water-bottle. It was remarked at the time, by one who described the act, that it was one of those numberless little deeds of kindness and consideration, so characteristic of the veteran commander, which "serve to bind the Commander-in-Chief still more closely to the rank and file, who literally worship him."

What will not men do for those in whom they have confidence and whom they have learned to love? Some striking instances of the kind have cropped up from time to time during the war. There was the instance of the two Lancashire men at Spion Kop, both of whom were wounded, but one not so badly but he was able to walk. Said the other to him: "Tha'd better get doon th' hill while th'art able, Jem." "Nay, awm not a-gooing ta leave thee," he answered, and whilst he spoke he received a shot which proved his death-warrant.

Another splendid instance of self-forgetfulness is recorded by Mr. Treves, the celebrated surgeon. After one of the Tugela battles a doctor offered a drink to a badly-wounded soldier. "Give a drink to my pal first," said he; "he is worse hit than me." Yet (adds Mr. Treves) while the pal did well and recovered, the self-denying hero died of his hurt.

But all the heroism of the war pales before the efforts first to "fight" and then to save the guns at the Battle of Colenso. The engagement, as will be remembered, took place on the 13th of December, 1899. Colonel Long was ordered to go into position with his guns, covered by the Sixth Brigade. General Buller's account of what took place is as follows:—

"I had personally explained to him where I wished him to come into action, and with the naval guns only, as the position was not within effective range for his field guns. Instead of this, he advanced with his batteries so fast that he left both his infantry escort and his oxen-drawn naval guns behind, and came into action under Fort Wylie, a commanding, trebly entrenched hill, at a range of 1,200yds., and I believe within 300yds. of the enemy's rifle-pits. The men fought their guns like heroes and silenced Fort Wylie, but the issue could never have been in doubt, and gradually they were all shot."

Mr. Bennet Burleigh, writing of the Battle of Colenso, thus describes this thrilling incident: "There were scarcely any men left, and next to no ammunition. After that an order was given to abandon the guns, which for over one hour had fought in the face of the fiercest fusillade a battery ever endured. Yet even then all was not over, for four men persisted in serving two guns and remaining beside their cannon. One of either party carried the shell; the others laid and fired their beloved 15-pounders. But two men were left. They continued the unequal battle. They exhausted the ordinary ammunition, and finally drew upon and fired the emergency rounds of case, their last shot. Then they stood to 'attention' beside the gun, and an instant later fell pierced through and through by Boer bullets. These, I say, by the light of all my experience of war—these gunners of ours are men who deserve monuments over their graves, and even Victoria Crosses in their coffins."

Then followed the fight to recover the lost guns—a fight which will long be remembered as one of the glory spots in British military annals. We are, perhaps, too near the event to-day, and too much distracted by the many

CAPTAIN CONGREVE.
From a Photo. by Charles Knight, Aldershot.

CAPTAIN H. L. REED.
From a Photo. by Werner & Son, Dublin.

incidents and anxieties of the war, to fully grasp and appreciate those acts of splendid heroism. Notwithstanding the numberless deeds of daring produced by the war, however, these stand out, as it were, and will ever so stand, like a piece of antique sculpture adorning the frieze of Time's temple of valour. The story of the heroism of poor Roberts and his comrades can never, perhaps, be told too often. It is thus described in the *London Gazette:* "The detachments serving the guns of the 14th and 66th Batteries, Royal Field Artillery, had all been either killed, wounded, or driven from their guns by infantry fire at close range, and the guns were deserted. About 500yds. behind the guns was a donga, in which some of the few horses and drivers left alive were sheltered. The intervening space was swept with shell and rifle fire. Captain Congreve, of the Rifle Brigade, who was in the donga, assisted to hook a team into a limber, went out, and assisted to limber up a gun. Being wounded, he took shelter; but seeing Lieutenant Roberts fall, badly wounded, he went out again and brought him in. Captain Congreve was shot through the leg, through the toe of his boot, grazed on the elbow and the shoulder, and his horse shot in three places."

CORPORAL NURSE.
From a Photo. by J. Hawke, Plymouth.

Corporal Nurse and six drivers of the 66th Battery also took part in this rush into the jaws of death. Nurse, along with Congreve and Roberts, was recommended for the V.C., and the drivers—some of whose portraits are given—for the medal for distinguished conduct in the field.

Captain H. L. Reed, of the 7th Battery

TRUMPETER AYLES.
From a Photo. by Charles Knight, Aldershot.

Royal Field Artillery, with thirteen non-commissioned officers and men, then brought up three teams from his battery to see if he could save the guns. Captain Reed and five of his men were wounded, one man was killed, and thirteen out of the twenty-one horses were killed, so that the gallant little party was driven back. Captain Reed was recommended for the V.C., and all the others, including Trumpeter Ayles, for distinguished conduct medals.

CAPTAIN SCHOFIELD.
From a Photo. by Charles Knight, Aldershot.

Captain Schofield also took a prominent part in these heroic attempts at rescue, but was not, like the other officers, recommended for the V.C. General Buller says he "differentiated in his recommendations, because he thought that a recommendation for the Victoria Cross required proof of initiative — something more, in fact, than mere obedience to orders; and for this reason he did not recommend Captain Schofield, who was acting under orders, though his conduct was most gallant."

One of these days a poet, feeling the full splendour of these deeds, will give us a poem on the "Fight for the Guns at Colenso."

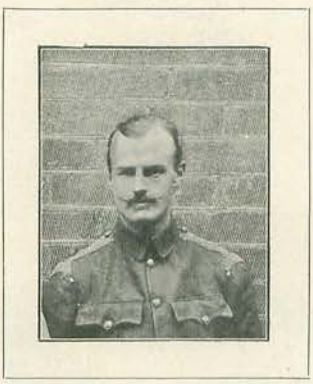
Another plucky feat which the future historian of the war will need to take full account of was of an aquatic nature, and strangely reminds one of a similar act performed by Clive at the very outset of his military career. It occurred during General Buller's second attempt to relieve Ladysmith. When on that occasion Lord Dundonald reached Potgieter's Drift he found the Boer pont, or raft, moored at the farther bank of the swollen stream, and it was very desirable to get possession of it. In view of possible Boers on the north side, the attempt was likely to prove extremely dangerous; but Lieutenant Carlisle, of the South African Light Horse, volunteered to swim the river, and six others offered to do the same. These were Sergeant Turner, Corporals Barkley and Cox, and Troopers Collingwood, Howell, and Godden—all, like the lieutenant, of F Squadron. Five of the men stripped, Lieutenant Carlisle and another simply throwing off their boots. Unfortunately, in mid-stream Barkley was seized with cramp, and would have been drowned but for Howell pluckily going to his rescue and bringing him safely into the donga, where the remainder of the party had already arrived. Barkley was quickly restored and the return journey commenced. The hawsers of the pont jammed and the machine hung in mid-stream, while Boer bullets began to whistle about the naked figures. A party of the enemy had discovered what they were at and opened a hot fire upon them at a distance of about 450yds. It was necessary once more to plunge into the water, and the enterprise would have failed but for the pluck of Corporal Cox, who again mounted the pont and got the hawser free. All this time Lieutenant Carlisle continued to keep hold of the gunwale, declining to leave Barkley, who he feared might have another attack of cramp; and, although bullets never ceased to play about them, one grazing the lieutenant's arm and another splintering the gunwale between his hands, they marvellously escaped, and were safely drawn with the pont into the welcome shelter of the south bank.

CORPORAL (NOW SERGEANT) GOULD.
From a Photo. by Charles Knight, Aldershot.

Of the many incidental acts of devotion worthy of note, one may mention that of Sergeant Sheridan, who, in the retiring movement on the last-named occasion, seeing Private Dowling wounded, carried him for half a mile, until they were both out of danger. At the same time Lance-Corporal Farrall went back under a murderous fire, and, making two successive trips, brought out two wounded men, whose wounds he dressed before moving them.

Similarly, in General French's advance to the relief of Kimberley, as well as later in

the wonderful sweeping advance first to Bloemfontein and then upon Pretoria, we read of numberless acts of individual devotion and daring. On the way from Riet River to the Modder a patrol skirmish took place, in which Corporal Fetting, of the New South Wales Lancers, was badly hurt. Corporal (now Sergeant) Gould at once went to his assistance, and succeeded in bringing him out of danger under a heavy fire. Trooper Firmin likewise distinguished himself in the same action, courageously carrying out a wounded officer of the 16th Lancers. Nor should we forget the act of Lieutenant De Crespigny, who in a reconnaissance from General French's column, on January 19th, rode back under a hot fire and rescued a dismounted trooper.



LIEUTENANT DE CRESPIGNY.
From a Photo. by Charles Knight, Aldershot.

One would like to mention other deeds of daring and devotion did space permit—deeds like that of Sergeant Parker, V.C., and Gunner Lodge, V.C., whose coolness and bravery in working the rescued guns at Koorn Spruit saved that disastrous affair from becoming a catastrophe. Deeds like that of Lieutenant Mathias, on the 6th of January, when he saved a Hotchkiss from falling into the hands of the Boers, or—finer still—like that of the sixteen Manchesters, who held an advanced post of Cæsar's Camp the whole of that critical day, and left, as "the price of Empire," fourteen of their number dead in their sangar. Nor should one forget Sergeant Boseley, who, fighting his gun on that eventful day, and having an arm and a leg taken off, bade his men "Roll me away and go on with the firing."

SERGEANT BOSELEY.
From a Photo. by Symonds & Co., Portsmouth.

The war has shown us every description of hero, from the man who, like Private Hinton, simply knew how to do his duty and die at his post as hospital attendant, or like Chaplain Robertson, who fearlessly exposed himself on the field of battle in giving such comfort as he could to wounded or dying men, to men like Baden-Powell, who seemed to be the captain of every resource, but always captain and commandant of himself, ready if need be to die in defence of the post and people under his charge, but knowing a deeper and safer wisdom in living and going "softly, softly," so as to "catchee the monkey," or—what was as good in this case—Eloff!

Many do and will continue to regret the war; but everyone must be pleased to think, not only how the nation rose to the emergency, but that it was the means of bringing to the front not only so many fine talents, but so many fine qualities to boot. It shows how secure so far the national feeling and the national tradition lie at the basis of the common life. The two things may be summed up in the words "home" and "supremacy" wherever the flag flies. The thought was well exemplified in the dream of a soldier in the hospital at Colesberg. He was feverish and restless, but towards midnight he fell into a gentle sleep; then—the story is told by a German doctor—he began to sing in a soft, low voice. And what think you he sang? "Home, Sweet Home," and "Rule Britannia." That dreaming soldier was a personification of England.