

## BOOK OF THE WEEK.

## "GREEN MANTLE."\*

This stirring tale of the present war is told by a Major Hannay, who was chosen by the Foreign Office for a diplomatic mission into Turkey to discover the meaning of a certain scrap of writing that had been delivered up by a young officer just before Kut, "when he had staggered into the camp with ten bullet holes in him and a knife slash on his forehead, and had died ten minutes after."

"I folded up the paper and placed it in my pocket book.

"What a great fellow! What was his name?' I asked.

"Sir Walter did not answer at once. He was looking out of the window.

"His name,' he said at last, 'was Harry Bullivant. He was my son. God rest his brave soul!'"

It was the mission of Major Hannay to unravel the meaning of the three unintelligible words that were written on the paper, and to discover to what they referred.

"I went out of the Foreign Office in as muddled a frame of mind as any diplomatist who ever left its portals. I was most desperately depressed. To begin with I was in a complete funk. Stick me down in a trench and I could stand being shot at as well as most people; but I think I had too much imagination. In about a fortnight I calculated I should be dead. Shot as a spy! A rotten sort of ending."

His subsequent adventures justified his apprehension in all but the extreme penalty.

His companions on the mission were an American, Blenkiron, and young Sanday, who had already made a good record in the East.

Blenkiron, who appears to be almost wholly absorbed in his digestion and in playing patience, has, of course, the qualities which justify his being selected for the purpose.

He advises Hannay not to begin counting risks.

"I believe in an all-wise and beneficent Providence; but you've got to trust Him and give Him a chance. What's life anyhow? For me it's living on strict diet and having frequent pains in the stomach. It isn't such an almighty lot to give up, provided you get a good price in the deal."

The three planned to go by different routes to Constantinople, Major Hannay electing to go to the Bosphorous, through Germany, and, as he remarked "not being a neutral, it won't be a very cushioned journey." It certainly was not.

Once in Berlin it may be assumed that Hannay carried his life in his hand. Here he posed as a Boer ready to take arms against the hated English. He had the *honour* of being presented to the All Highest. He describes him as one who looked as

if he slept little and whose thoughts rode him like a nightmare.

Stumm, the German Colonel, from whom Hannay purports to take instructions, is described as the worst type of bully, and Major Hannay loses control over himself, and resents his insults in a manner that narrowly spared his life.

By hair-breadth escapes he manages to elude pursuit, and conceals himself in the cottage of a peasant woman.

"I must have run miles before I stopped from sheer bodily weakness. There was no sound except the crush of falling snow. But, heavens, how it fell! It was partly screened by branches, but all the same it was piled up deep everywhere. I stumbled on blindly, without any notion of direction, determined only to keep going to the last. I felt myself getting light-headed, and fell repeatedly, and laughed sillily every time. Once I fell into a hole and lay at the bottom giggling. If anyone had found me then he would have taken me for a madman."

It was then he came upon a cottage where the German woman took him. He gave her the food he carried, and money.

"After that my recollection became dim. She helped me up a ladder to a garret, undressed me, and gave me a thick coarse nightgown. I seem to remember that she kissed my hand, and that she was crying.

"The Good Lord has sent you,' she said, 'Now the little ones will have their prayers answered, and the Christkind will not pass them by.'"

The book concludes with an account of the taking of Ezerum by the Russians, and the deliverance from a very tight corner indeed of our three friends. Blenkiron is a splendid character, and he continued to play patience in the most impossible situations.

While waiting for what seemed almost inevitable death he tells Major Hannay—

"I'm about the luckiest man on God's earth, Major. I've always wanted to get into a big show, but I didn't see how it would come in the way of a homely citizen like me, living in a steam-warmed house and going down every day to my office in the morning. I used to envy my old dad that fought at Chattanooga and never forgot to tell you about it. But I guess Chattanooga was like a scrap at Bowery Bar compared to this. When I meet the old man in glory, he'll have to listen some to me."

This book teems with thrilling adventures.

H. H.

## WORD FOR THE WEEK.

"Will is the source of all motive power, mighty and decisive. Will has a determining effect upon the shaping of things, and by defying all resistance achieves aims which seem unattainable. The harder the task, the firmer the will. He who loosens his will goes under. This hour demands of us once more compelling will."—Ludendorff.

\* By John Buchan. Hodder & Stoughton, London.

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