

**THE VICTORIA CROSS; AN OFFICIAL
CHRONICLE OF THE DEEDS OF
PERSONAL VALOUR ACHIEVED DURING
THE CRIMEAN AND BALTIC CAMPAIGNS,
THE INDIAN MUTINES AND THE PERSIA,
CHINA, AND NEW ZEALAND WARS**

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The Victoria Cross; An Official Chronicle of the Deeds of Personal Valour Achieved during the Crimean and Baltic Campaigns, the Indian Mutines and the Persia, China, and New Zealand Wars by Various

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VARIOUS

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DURING

THE CRIMEAN AND BALTIC CAMPAIGNS,

THE INDIAN MUTINIES,

AND THE

PERSIA, CHINA, AND NEW ZEALAND

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PREFACE.

IN military feats of individual valour performed as often by obscure as by conspicuous persons, the sources of the first illustrations of the most noble families of Europe are to be found. And of this prime feature of their pedigree the descendants of these families are usually more proud than they are of any subsequent honourable achievements. Indeed, so much is martial descent coveted by those who have risen to aristocratic rank, that, where veritable chronicle fails to confer it, tradition and fable are even by law and commerce frequently appealed to, to supply the deficiency. No other renown, we all feel—it may be very unphilosophically—emblazons like military renown. The highest civic dignity, the worthiest acts of civic virtue, look pale in the comparison; and Dr. Johnson was right when he said, that our greatest lawyer—the *omnis homo*, the all-accomplished Lord Mansfield—would feel inclined to creep under the table if the Duke of Marlborough were suddenly to appear before him. Since the mediæval era, however, it is only great captains who have inspired this sense of superiority. The subordinates of both services, and the common soldier and common sailor, have long since escaped all particular attention; and we must go back to the ancient times of Greece and Rome, and to the middle ages—to Troy, to Marathon, to stories of Horatii and Curiatii, to Asclon, to Azincourt, and to Poitiers—to find

personal prowess and bravery brought into prominent relief, and so rewarded as to hand name and fame down to posterity. It is true that the art of war being thoroughly revolutionised by the invention of gunpowder, exploits of the kind alluded to have no longer the paramount importance they possessed previous to that discovery. But we have come very erroneously to the conclusion, that, because they have, for this reason, sunk, generally as soon as enacted, into oblivion, they have ceased to be abundantly displayed by modern troops. The rich catalogue of the heroic actions of officers and men of all ranks in our army and navy, published in the *Gazette*, which announces the first distribution of the VICTORIA CROSS, may be compared, even to the enhancement of their lustre, with any either pagan or chivalric epochs have produced; and this record of deeds of extraordinary daring should inspire those mentioned in the glorious roll with the same sort of legitimate pride a nobleman feels when pointing to the like feats of the first founder of his family.

We have made these remarks, associating the exploits recorded in the *Gazette* with historic events of a like kind, because noble actions, like fine paintings, should be placed at some distance from us, and set in a rich mellow light, in order to bring their beauties out into full display. With the same purpose in view, let us suppose that these exploits belonged to the period of chivalry, and that they had been religiously preserved through centuries by some of our most time-honoured aristocracy, not as traditionary stories, but as facts clearly stated in the official annals of the time. In that case, what precious heirlooms they would be considered, with what superb satisfaction they would be contemplated, and how proudly would they, on rare and select occasions, be exhibited

by their possessors as their original title-deeds, their first letters-patent of nobility or of family distinction.

The private, graced with such a distinction, is no longer a plebeian. He is not one of the multitude, but one apart from the multitude. Even if his social and military rank should remain unchanged, he is raised morally much above his former self; and we are glad to see that many who have earned the VICTORIA CROSS as privates, or as corporals or sergeants, wear it first over an officer's uniform. With conduct in peace equal to their valour in war—and the latter seems to guarantee the former—these men cannot fail of promotion; and officers decorated at the same time with the same badge, for the same deeds of daring in close conflict with the enemies of their country, must already feel on an equality, in the highly-prized glory of personal intrepidity, with those who, as companions and brothers, have taken, in such equalising moments, as often as not the lion's share in their common perils. Between superior and inferior, so associated in signal dangers and signal rewards, there must necessarily be cordial respect and admiration; and this chivalric sense of honour, raising the soldier, in one respect, to a par with the officer, must needs mitigate and strengthen discipline, and give the service generally a higher standing than it has ever heretofore possessed, both in its own estimation and in that of the public.

The VICTORIA CROSS, with its inseparably appendant memorial of individual heroism, discriminates as no other badge of military merit has ever done. It picks out from all ranks single persons for a special dignity awarded to deeds of a very narrowly special description, and thus bears upon it the very image and superscription, as it were, of each valiant