

withered leaves of the date-tree, our colonel and two officers came up to us. The colonel was an Englishman, as brave a gentleman as ever lived, aye, and as kind an officer too. He was a fine-looking old man, as tall as Bill, and as well built too; but his health was much broken. It was said he had entered the army out of break-heart on losing his wife. Well, he came up to us, I say, and shook Bill by the hand as cordially as if he had been a colonel like himself. He was a brave, good soldier, he said, and, to show him how much he valued good men, he had come to make him a sergeant, in room of the one he had lost. He had heard he was a scholar, he said, and he trusted his conduct would not disgrace the halberd. Bill, you may be sure, thanked the colonel, and thanked him, master; very like a gentleman; and that very day he swaggered scarlet and a sword, as pretty a sergeant as the army could boast of; aye, and for that matter, though his experience was little, as fit for his place.

“For the first fortnight we didn’t eat the king’s biscuit for nothing. We had terrible hard fighting on the 13th; and, had not our ammunition failed us, we would have beaten the enemy all to rags; but for the last two hours we hadn’t a shot, and stood just like so many targets set up to be fired at. I was never more fixed in my life than when I saw my comrades falling around me, and all for nothing. Not only could I see them falling, but, in the absence of every other noise, — for we had ceased to cheer, and stood as silent and as hard as foxes, — I could hear the dull, hollow sound of the shot as it pierced them through. Sometimes the bullets struck the sand, and then rose and went rolling over the level, raising clouds of dust at every skip. At times we could see them coming through the air like little clouds, and singing all the way as they