

ELLIS WILLIAM'S POEM

How Tom Grady Cleared the Gun

A True Story of the King's Own, or 4th
Regiment of Foot

We have read of deeds of daring done for
dear old England's sake,

Of the glorious death of Nelson, of the pluck
of gallant Drake;

Of Wellington and duty, we have often, talked
before,

And the schoolboy knows the story of
Corunna and of Moore;

Still ring from Heights of Abraham, Wolfe's
dying words, "They fly!"

Words just as fresh to-day as then. Such
memories never die.

Then the names of Clive and Campbell, of
Havelock, Lawrence, Neill,

Remind us but of victories won by British
pluck and steel.

The world was taught how heroes die when
the **Birkenhead** went down;

and on those Balaclava slopes of Light
Brigade renown,

That ride into the jaws of death filled Europe
with amaze;

Subject for painter's canvas - fit theme for
poet's praise!

Now, comrades, I'll tell ye a story; 'tis not of a
victory won,

But the deed of a lowly private, yet a deed
right nobly done;

How, face to face with death, he stood,
unaided and alone,

And we claim him as a comrade; he was one
of the old King's own.

'Twas a bleak October morning, and the
British forces lay

Entrenched round grim Sebastopol, with the
Russians held at bay.

Cold, hunger, fever, wounds, and death had
thinned that gallant band;

Yet once again, 'mid frost and snow, those
gunners take their stand.

From the early grey of morning, till the day
fades into night,

For weary months those gunners had stood
steadfast in the fight.

With fusillade of shot and shell the fortress
answered back.

As the thunder of our batteries rolled along
the left attack.

But of all those guns that volley forth along
the British Line,

None speak so sharp, or speak so true as
gallant Number Nine.

Oft had the foreman marked this gun; its
frequent battery smoke:

This morn a Russian chieftain to his willing
gunners spoke:-

"Bring your guns to bear together on that
hornet over there;

That British bulldog barks too loud, bring four
or five to bear"

So Number Nine stands silent now, and
answereth not at all,

Helpless, with choked embrasure and broken
battery wall;

All torn and rent with Russian shell, the pride
of the left attack

Is useless now in the British line and sends
no answer back.

Yet now one notes its silence,; a chief there
in command,

And, turning to the gunners, says, "Come,
lads, who'll bear a hand?"

Who'll clear the gun?" he cries aloud; but the
bravest hold their breath;

Full well they know those words imply a task
of life or death.

"Who'll clear the gun, I say?" he cries a
second time;

Then one stands forth, no gunner he, but a
private of the line.

So, silent, face to face with death, he mounts
the battery slope;

He springs up single-handed with those
Russian guns to cope,

With his own stout heart and willing hand, a
pickaxe and a spade-

A breach in the shapeless battery wall he
very soon hath made.

Now he grasps his spade in a firmer grip, and
his pick deals a heavier blow,

For every moment his last may be- he works
under fire from the foe;

Five minutes more- and the battery stands all
shapely, firm and sound.

And he leaps back safe, whilst Number Nine
hurls forth her hindered round.

"Right nobly done", cries Lulshington, as the
hero's hand he rings,

"Your name, and corps?" "I'm Grady, sir -
Tom Grady, Fourth O'King's!"

By many a Christmas fireside bright this tale
was told I ween;

It was told in the cot of the lowly, it was told to
England's Queen.

Aye! told to the Queen he served so well: and
it was not told in Vain,

For she pinned on his breast the priceless gift
- the Cross which bears her name,

I've read the Regiment's story, it's leaves
turned o'er and o'er,

But Tom's is the bravest deed I find in the
records of our corps;

So, when ye hear folks talk of heroes, or a
dead of daring done,

Tell this your Regiment's Story - How Tom
Grady cleared the gun.