

THE DEAD MOON.

The moon is in a state of desecration, a dead world. *Proteror's Proteror.*
The moon is dead—defunct—played out.
So says a very learned doctor:
She looks well, beyond a doubt;
She looks like a lass, dear Proteror.

At any rate, she's more enticing
For one's own desire's sake;
And on her radiant beauty gazing,
She charms the eyes of youth and age.

And so the man up here perished!
He died in desecration, poor soul,
Poor wretch! No wife his bosom cherishes,
No children quench his consolation.

Yet she's adored by all the Grecians,
Who in her beauty's bloom, admires,
She charms the steps of staggering Upas,
And silvers of romantic streams.

And once she caught Endymion sleeping,
And she stooped to kiss him in a grove,
Upas, the grove of the dead.
It was her first and early love.

But that's a very ancient story,
And was it not her birthday,
When she in her prime, a girl,
Entombed in the grove of the dead?

Dear, darling moon! I do spot her,
I watch her nightly in the sky;
But oh! upon my word of honor,
I'd rather she were dead than L.

A RACE FOR A WIFE.

I have this story from a friend who was dear to me. He related it to me one day as we were talking on the hazards of life, more astonishing and more romantic a hundred times, than the inventions of fiction. He said that this little drama devolved itself, but still in the main, in it: "I will present you," he said to me, "and we will go together to Mezieres, where we will find one of the heroes of this narrative still living. All the romances have not yet been written; the most marvelous have still to be published. And who knows how many romances each one of us takes away with him? I have the secret of the depth of his conscience, painlessly another under the tombstone?" Eugene Decary did not know how true his words were, and the story of Jean Chevauchoux was the last that he told me. It is he who will tell you the story.

My father used to live at Rethel, in the high street, in a house I can still see before my eyes with its roof and propenings being as hospitable as if on the same one. Poor folks now the way to it. They entered with their wallet empty and went away with it full. We were all sealed one night at the fireside; my father was smoking his pipe and watching the fire burn, my mother was ironing, and I was reading, when we heard a noise at the door, and saw enter a boy, who said:

"What is the matter?"

"It is a soldier very tired who has just fallen exhausted before the door."

My father loved soldiers. He rose brusquely, ran out, and there he was, before I had taken a step, coming in again with a young soldier leaning upon him, or, rather, my father had taken him up and was carrying him like a sack of coals.

My mother hastened to draw the big arm-chair up to the fire. The soldier was made to sit, or rather recline in it, and my father said, looking at the poor fellow:

"Is it possible! Walking in that state?"

The fact is that the soldier was very thin and pale, his hair flattened on the forehead, the veins of his temples big and little finger, his face black with dust. We were then in the month of October, and the weather was beginning to grow fresh, but the poor fellow was nevertheless sweating big drops as if it had been dog days. He must have had a long tramp. His shoes were in shreds; you can see the bones of his stockings, the leather on the last foot was bleeding. The soldier did not stop, but remained in the arm-chair, with his head thrown back, his eyes half open and white as a sheet.

My mother had already put some soup on the fire and a painful of wine.

"Bah," said my father, "the first thing to be looked after is a man."

At last the soldier began to tear and eat away the shreds of leather. The soldier's feet, all swollen, and full of blisters, looked like the feet of the martyrs, swollen with pain and weakened by hard cords, which we see in the pictures of the Spanish painters.

My father dipped his handkerchief in vinegar and washed the wounds.

"You," he said to me, "make some soup."

And I began to tear up some old linen that my mother had taken out of the big cupboard.

Meanwhile the soldier had come to himself. He looked at us, at my father, my mother, and myself, and the two or three neighbors who had come in, one after another. His eyes were closing, seemed to interests everything. It was no longer the road, the stones, the great deserted woods that he saw before him, but a gay room, with a ceiling of shining oak, a cloth on the table, knife and fork laid, and a brown earthenware soup-bowl emitting a savory smell of cabbage soup.

He raised himself up, leaning on the arms of the chair, and said to my father, with confused emotion:

"Ah! Monsieur. But you do not know me."

"Ah! well, that does not matter; we will become acquainted at the table."

We had already dined, but my father wished to have the soldier company. He sat down, and the soldier, as it were, breaking every hinge and looking at the regimental buttons that shone on his cloak. The soldier ate, and ate heartily; my mother served him. My father took charge of the wine, and a glass of wine did not remain empty.

"Well," said my father, suddenly, pointing to the tin box that the soldier carried slung on cord, "you have finished your time, for there is your conge. Then why do you kill yourself by toiling all the time? You have no money for the diligences."

"I," replied the soldier. "I have received my pay and my bounty, and my mother has sent me enough to pay for a place in the coupe, if I had liked. But I could not."

"I understand," said my father, who did not understand it all. Then he asked for another bottle of wine.

When the mother came over the soldier stopped, uttered a smothered cry, and fell back into the chair. I then saw a tear in his eye. He was a young man, rather thin, but nervous, dark and with an energetic look. He was not a man to shed a tear for a little, and that tear puzzled me.

"Ah," he said with a movement in which there was a little anger, a good deal of which could not be able to wait until to-morrow morning."

"Walk!" cried my mother, terrified.

The soldier shook his head.

"You don't know, you must."

It was a woe.

In our Ardennes those primitive souls have respect and faith. I saw my father look at the young man in the face with astonishment, and with much interest.

"Yes," said the soldier, "I will tell you the whole story. You have, perhaps, saved my life; I ought, at least, to tell you who I am. My name is Jean Chevauchoux, and my father is a wood-splitter at Mezieres. He is an honest man, like you, monsieur. Seven years ago, when I drew for the concession, I was madly in love with a pretty girl, a good girl, a good girl and a pretty one. She had already asked her in marriage, and her father had not said no; but, you see, Pierre Puvoux had asked her in marriage at the same time that I did. Pierre Puvoux is a man of my age, who carries his heart in his hand, as the saying is; gay and well-looking. I ought to have detested him, and he has remained my friend. Well, Father Servan said to me as he held out his hand:

"You are worthy to be my son-in-law, my lad; but first of all you must please my wife." I will ask her.

"Marguerite, when asked, said that she would gladly consent to be my wife. But she said the same when they talked to her about Puvoux. She loved both of us, one as much as the other; she hesitated—she did not dare to decide. But still she could not marry both of us. Then more over. When the time of the wedding came, we drew lots, Puvoux and I on the same day. I had No. 3 and he had No. 7, so we both of us became soldiers. For a moment I was in a state of great fright. I confess. People at Mezieres said that Puvoux had a rich amanuensis, and that he would buy off. If Puvoux did not join the army, Puvoux would be married. Marguerite and I knew that I should be obliged to go for I was poor. I thought I should be ready to fiddle the fiddler at the wedding, reading my ears and my heart."

"I must tell you that Marguerite Servan was not her equal. I lost her now, after having waited seven years for her, upon my honor, I think I should blow out my brains."

"Pierre Puvoux was not bought off. His son died, leaving debts instead of a fortune. He had not a penny more than I had. We were obliged to shoulder our guns, and we were expected on our way bill every moment. One night Father Servan took us each by the arm and led us to an inn, and this is what he said to us as we prepared a bottle of wine for us.

"My parents are good and honest Ardennes equal in merit. I love you with all my heart. One of you shall choose the cause of the country, the other of the cause of the king. If one of you is more than the other, then you shall be the first to come and shakes hands with both of you, and she will make happy the one whom fortune shall choose. Marguerite will wait seven years. She has no preference either for you, Puvoux or for you, Chevauchoux, but she loves both of you; and she will make happy the one of you who is more than the other. I will wake you at five o'clock," said my father.

"I will wake you at five o'clock," said the soldier, with a look ardent as lightning. "I promise you."

My father then advised the soldier to go to bed. Chevauchoux did not refuse. The bed was ready. He shook hands with us and went up to his room. It was ten o'clock.

"I will wake you at five o'clock," said my father.

"Start! In this state? Impossible!"

"I know—my feet are swollen—and cut—and provided that to-morrow—you will be rested—you will be able to walk."

"Do you think?" said the soldier.

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