

BALLADS OF CHANCES LOST.

I.

They came too late or else arrived too soon—
These opportunities the god's provide,
We were too slow to grasp them, spurned the boon.
In some queer fashion we have let them slide.
Now lag we in the race while men deride,
Still dimly trusting that our look will mend;
But we must creep where we had hoped to stride.
And struggle somehow onward to the end.

II.

Hero's Jones' laments an outing missed in June;
Smith, stocks whose values since have multiplied;
Brown means the college year he played but-fou—
And White, the girl he might have made his bride;
And some with sorrow much more dignified
Mut-t all the while 'gainst cruel odds contend;
Brave souls with cares and griefs they try to hide,
Who struggle somehow onward to the end.

III.

So many thoughts that ring a doleful tune,
So many reasons one's poor self to chide.
No wonder hopeless mortals sit a-drown
The sad old dirge: "If we had only tried,
We might have gained on time and sailed with tide.

And reached the port with strength and days to spend;
Now, old and feeble, must we choke our pride
And struggle somehow onward to the end."

"ENVOI."

Toilers, to whom, successful joys denied,
Experience comes a tardy, testy friend,
Take heart, tak' heed, with patience for your guide,
And struggle somehow onward to the end.

SISTER GABRIELLE.

A Reminiscence of Max O'Rell During the Franco-Prussian War.

BY HIS WIFE.

When the Franco-Prussian war broke out I was a young girl, and the awful news of the commencement of hostilities made a profound impression upon me. When, four years later, I met and married my husband, it was one of my greatest delights to get him to tell me "all about the war." Of the many reminiscences of his soldier days, none, perhaps, interested me more than the story of a sweet nun who nursed him in St. Malo Hospital. This is the story just as I heard it for the first time many years ago. I hope it will not lose too much by not being told in French, as it was then given to me.

We were sitting by the bridge of Neuilly, near the Bois de Boulogne, in Paris: "There," said my husband, "is just about the spot where I was knocked over. We were fast getting the better of the Communards, and my men were warming to the work in grand style, when the piece of shell hit me, and some of the fellows carried me off to the hospital. I remember being puzzled that there should be relatively no pain in a wound of that sort, but the pain came soon enough when the fever set in. The doctor of the Versailles Hospital was a rough specimen, as army doctors often are—in France, at any rate—and you may fancy that the groans and moans of the other wounded were not soothed either. One day the doctor told me I should soon be able to be removed to a country hospital. That was after I had been under his treatment for six weeks.

"The sights, sounds and smell of the place had grown so sickening to me that I think I could have killed him when he talked of sending me to St. Malo. He came in one morning, and, in his brusque way, said, as he probed the wound for bits of shattered bone:

"We shall be able to pack you off in a few days. You would like to get transferred to St. Malo, would you not? You come from that part of the country, don't you? The air will suit you."

"He was a brute, but he had awfully good cigars, and he used to make me smoke one when he was going to have an extra go at my wound. I suppose he hoped the goodness might prove infectious. I used to call him strings of bad names while he was digging away at his work on my arm. Somehow it relieved me, and, truth to tell, he took it all in good part."

"In a few days, then, I saw the last of him, and he of me; and glad enough was I to find myself in the clean, quiet, unattended hospital in the dear old Breton town. There I had a room to myself, as each officer had, and to lie there in that sweet, sunny room and hear no sound but my own, was almost like being in heaven. The daily cleanings of the wound, still pretty painful, were recommended under the hands of another surgeon, who proved to be a very good fellow. He and I struck up quite a friend-ship after a while.

"Well, life once more was not exactly rosy. The brightness and calm were very sweet after the horrors of the Versailles hospital, and a serenity filled the air, like an echo of organ tones brought in by the nuns from chapel."

"The nun who attended to me was an angel. She did not jealously. I was there in St. Malo three months. Before one month had passed I had grown to love her as I should have loved my sister, if she had lived. I loved the sound of her voice, and the touch of her soft, gentle hands. I would have gone through the surgeon's probings without a groan, if she might have rebandaged the arm afterwards. But Dr. Nadaud always did that himself. Sister Gabrielle—that was what they called her—would come directly he had done with me, and would try the bandages to make sure they were not hurting, arrange the pillows afresh, and smooth out the wrinkles in the counterpane, and my brow at the same time, sympathizing with me all the while, in the sweetest fashion possible. Her voice was a great part of her charm: very low, and yet the clearest voice in the world. She had a way of looking at one all the time, too, with a gaze that was almost like mother's caress, and that wrapped one around with a delicious feeling of security and well-being. Sometimes she would sit and talk with me about my mother, who was ill herself at that time, and not able to come and see me.

"How old was Sister Gabrielle? Oh I suppose she must have been about twenty-four or five then. She had the Norman blue eyes, and a fair complexion, which the white wrappings about her face seemed to heighten and irradiate. Is it the white lawn, or is it a beauty that the self-denying life lends to them, which makes the faces of so many of those women look so lovely? I called Sister Gabrielle an angel just now, but when the Mother's step approached, but when

saintliness about her; in fact, it was her very ready sympathy with all my accounts of my young life in the outer world that drew my heart towards her. It was her very womanliness that set me wondering who she could have been, and what had led her to shut herself away from the world. There was little to do, lying there in bed week after week, and hundreds of times as I looked at that sweet woman moving about the room, I pictured her without the cloth, and said to myself that if she were not then a beloved wife, with a husband's protecting arm around her, and children climbing about her knees, it was not because the love that should have led to this had been wanting, but certainly because some marring chance had prevented the realization of such happiness. It amused me to 'make a pretty history to myself,' with Sister Gabrielle for the heroine. A woman with a voice like hers, and such a smile, was bound to have loved deeply. Some times, when she was not speaking, her eyes had a sad, far-away look. I can only compare it to the look of an elegant man who was toiling a hot, dusty high road to embark for a new country, might turn and give to the dear spot that he had said a long good-bye to. But that look never lasted more than a minute on Sister Gabrielle's face. It was as if the traveler settled his head afresh on his shoulders, and with fresh, vigorous resolution, stepped on into the long expanse of road that went stretching away to the horizon.

"One day—I could not help it—I broke into one of those little reveries of hers."

"My sister," I said, "is sweet and beautiful as you are, how is it that you never married?"

"With lifted finger, as one speaks to a two darling child, she said only: 'Sssh!'"

"Then with the movement of the emigrant readjusting his knapsack, she added: 'Allons! half past ten! Dr. Nadaud will be here before we are ready for him!'"

"From that day Sister Gabrielle avoided sitting by my bedside. She watched over me just as tenderly as before, but our talks were shorter, and I never ventured to repeat my question as you may imagine. Nevertheless, lying there through the long days, it was impossible not to go on wondering what had sent this beautiful woman into the quiet life where I found her.

"One day I discovered that Dr. Nadaud came from the same town as her self, and I fell at once to questioning him about her. All that I could elicit from him was that her name in the world had been Jeanne D'Alcours, and that she came of a good old Norman family. I did not learn much by that; it was not necessary to hear that she was noble, for she had the stamp of nobility in every line and in every pose of her body. For a talkative fellow, I thought Nadaud had remarkably little to say about his former townswoman; and of the scenes that she had turned her back upon forever."

"Well," continued Dr. Nadaud, "D'Alcours had lived for generations in a fine old house on the Boulevard de l'Est, and it was there that Jeanne was born. Next door lived my sister and her husband, M. Leconte, the chief notary of the town, and a man well considered by all classes of his townsmen. It is the old story of affection knotted together in the skipping rope, and proving to be as unending as the circle of the hoop. My sister had a girl and a boy. The three children played together, walked out with their mothers together, and were hardly ever separated, until the time came for Raoul to go to Paris to school. The boy was fourteen when they parted; Jeanne was only eleven, but the two children's love had so grown with their growth that before the day of parting came, they had made a solemn little compact never to forget each other.

"Eight years had passed, during which Jeanne and Raoul saw little of each other.

"The first time the boy came home he seemed to Jeanne no longer a boy, and the shyness which sprang up between them then deepened with each succeeding year.

"The boy was allowed to choose his profession, and he chose that of a lawyer. News reached Jeanne from time to time, through his sister, of the promising young student who, it was said, bid fair to win for himself a great name some day.

"At the age of twenty-two Raoul left. His parents, who were growing old, wished their son near them; and steps were taken to establish him in a practice in Caen.

"Time passed on, and Raoul had been six months in partnership with old Dr. Grevin, whom he was eventually to succeed, when Mme. D'Alcours fell ill of inflammation of the lungs, and so it happened that the two young people often met beside the sickbed, for the elder partner was not always able to attend the patient, and his young wife was called upon to take his place.

"By the time that Mme. D'Alcours was well again, both the young people knew that the old love of their childhood had smoldered in their hearts through all the years of separation, and was ready to burst into flame at a touch. But no word was spoken.

"The touch that should stir the flame soon came."

"One day in the summer following, a hasty summons from Mme. D'Alcours took Dr. Grevin to Jeanne's bedside, and a few moments' examination showed him that the poor girl had taken diphtheria. After giving directions as to the treatment to be followed, he said he would return late in the evening, or would send M. Leconte.

"It was Raoul who came.

"With horror he saw that the case was already grave, and a great pang went through him as he spoke to Mme. D'Alcours of the possibility of its being necessary to perform tracheotomy in the morning. When morning came, in fact, all next day, Jeanne hoped with a deep, longing, passionate hope.

"The day after, however, it was evident that nothing could save the girl but the operation, and was quickly decided to try the last chance.

"The rest is soon told. That at summer, as Raoul made ready for the work, the two young people told all their hearts' secret to each other in one long greeting of the eyes, that was at once a 'Hail!' and a 'Farewell!'

"The operation was successful.

"All went well with Jeanne, and in two days she was declared out of danger.

"But Raoul, unmindful of everything except Jeanne's daiger, had not been careful for himself, and had received some of the subtle poison from her throat."

"In the cemetery of Caen, high up where the sun first strikes, can be seen a grave-stone with the inscription:—

Gi-git
RAOUL LECONTE,
Decede le 18 Juillet, 1849.

And this is why Sister Gabrielle's path to heaven led through the wards of a hospital.

The Best Swimmers.

"While at the seaside last summer," said Henry L. Farnham, of Springfield, Mass., "who has been stopping at the Lindell, 'I noticed one thing that surprised me very much. That was that

the best swimmers were not to be found among those who were brought up near salt water, but among those whose early lives had been spent in the interior of the country. I also noticed that nearly all the young men from the Southern and Southwestern States could swim, while not half of the New Englanders were master of this art. The explanation I discovered to be as follows:

"A man who has been training to swim in fresh water, who once he gets in the ocean feels as if motion in the water presented no difficulties at all. The sea water is so much denser than the fresh that efforts that would send a man along by girdling them near the ground with their sharp teeth. All sorts of schemes were resorted to for the annihilation of these creatures, but in spite of the poison baits and the traps prepared for them, they increased in numbers until they threatened to destroy every crop of grain that was planted, and then they were set out.

"Five years ago the farmers of Fresno County resolved to rid the county of some of the animals, and they planned a rabbit drive. On a certain day the grain and fruit growers for miles around assembled in the fields at the southeast of France. The country was virtually deserted, and the ranks of the farmers were strengthened by men, women and children from the town who made sport of what the farmers considered business.

"First, a corral was built of wire fencing about four feet wide. This enclosure surrounding about an acre of land, and in form representing a Bartlett pear split lengthwise. The entrance was at the small end. Running out from each side of this gateway were wings of wire fencing extending nearly a quarter of a mile each way. From the extremities of these wings the people were arranged in lines, spreading out as far into the field as their number would permit without breaking the rank, until they formed a living circle around a tract of land twenty acres in extent.

"The women and children were placed nearest the fences, for in the field active work was to be done. When the line was completed and all things were in readiness, the leader of the drive gave the signal, and, yelling at the top of their lungs, and beating the ground with clubs, the line closed slowly in.

"When the advance toward the corral began, now and then the drivers, at some point in the line, would be aroused to a degree of enthusiasm that seemed almost maniacal by a light brown horse that rose from the ground and stretched itself into a dim streak that momentarily lengthened toward the opposite line of drivers. That was a jack rabbit, started from his lair. As the lines of men drew near each other the brown streaks doubled rapidly on themselves, and finally began to zig-zag wildly across the enclosure, as the frightened, long-eared creatures ran hither and thither in search of an opening through which they might escape.

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