

A SOLDIER'S TALE.

I shall never forget the scene. The evening parade was over, and our officers assembled in groups, were sauntering over the ground, discussing the news of the day, and planning schemes of amusement for the morrow. A short way in front were a body of pioneers, raising redoubts and forming intrenchments, and immediately in rear of our camp ground were our German auxiliaries sitting before their tents—some with long pipes, deeply engaged in the silent solemnity of smoking; and others raising a choral stave, and, in the wild and beautiful strains of their country, singing themselves home. The wood and watering parties had just returned from their labors, and the general bustle of the camp was beginning to settle down in the low hum, preparatory to repose. Our band of music, however, still lingered on the ground, playing some old national airs, and delighting the lovers of Scottish song by whom it was attended. The last sunset gleam, warm and gorgeous, was sleeping on the hills, in glorious contrast with their sombre shadows, lengthening over the land, like outposts of the night.

"One air more before we go," cried an officer to the band, which was preparing to depart; and immediately it struck up the beautiful strain of *Durandarte and Balerna*, breathing of love and death, in the light of Roncesvalles, from whose field of fame we were then not far distant. The effect of the music was heightened to a thrilling degree by the time, place, and circumstances in which it was performed: the plaintive and flute-tones sinking like a death wail, and chording with the deep base of trumpet and trombone, which pealed forth, deepened and rolled away in dying thunder through the calm.

The performance had just ceased, when we were suddenly aroused from the reverie in which it had entranced us, by the tramping of a steed bearing an aid-de-camp at full gallop. Suddenly he reigned in his charger before the tent of our commanding officer, to whom he delivered certain despatches; and, observing that he had a long ride before him, immediately resumed his journey, and setting spurs to his horse, was soon lost in the gathering gleam of night.

It is with a strange and thrilling sensation—when an enemy is immediately in front—that the order for an advance before day-break is heard in camp, accompanied, as it always is, with the ominous serving out of three days' provisions, and sixty rounds of ball-cartridge to each man; with the bustle of packing up the heavy baggage—the noise and hubbub in the camp—the deep and hollow rolls of the great guns, dragging up from the rear—and the congregating together of the officers in their tents, preparing for the movement; some speculating upon the results of the coming day; some smoking cigars and jesting with death; some musing upon absent friends, rummaging on the past, or peering into the future; and perchance, a few—a very few thinking beings pondering on the final destiny of man, the mystery of death, and the searchless secret beyond the grave. Having made our brief arrangements for approaching events, and feeling the chill of night beginning to be severe, I quitted the tent along with two messmates, Wade and Fitzmaurice, and we sought ourselves by a blazing fire, a few yards in front of our canvas habitation. Our conversation, as might be supposed, turned upon the expected events which to-morrow's dawn would usher in, when, observing that Fitzmaurice remained silent and thoughtful, "I'll lay a bet," said Wade, "that our friend here has a love affair on hand; and that there is some fair lady in England of whom he is thinking; for I'm sure nothing less could make a soldier, and one of lights too, look so melancholy upon the evening of a battle, with the stirring prospect of a glorious affair with the enemies of his country so near at hand."

"You have guessed rightly," answered Fitzmaurice, with a faint smile; "the thought of a fair girl is indeed busy at my heart. My passion, though not unknown to her, nor, as I believe, unreturned, was yet—owing to a sense of my dependent situation and the uncertainties of a soldier's life—never formally declared; and though this seems all the better under present circumstances, yet, strange to say, I cannot help regretting not having spoken out, and made a confession of my attachment."

"Nonsense!" rejoined the other; "if you are to return home, you will find her waiting for you, and it will be time enough. I have greater cause than you to be thoughtful, being already betrothed to the woman I love most upon earth, and of whom to-morrow may deprive me for ever. But of the fortune, of which you regret the want, I at most regret the possession—for a poor man is at least, pretty sure of the affection of his mistress; but it was so long before I obtained from mine something like even a reluctant consent, that I have since had some painful misgivings, lest she may have been wrought upon by the remonstrances of her friends, to accept what, in point of fortune, they might consider an advantageous offer, and thus have been induced to give her hand, where she could not bestow her heart. I own, how-

er, that this was a mere suspicion, perhaps unjust to her, and which I endeavored to dismiss from my mind. I have merely mentioned it at present to show that life is never free from annoyance; and that wealth, of which you regret the want, has not conferred happiness upon me. And now, since we have been thus far each others' confidants in these matters—should we all live to return to England, you shall be present at my marriage, and give me your opinion of the bride."

To this prospective arrangement we readily agreed; and in order to prepare for the approaching conflict, at an early hour we retired to rest.

To be awakened from a sound sleep, even to the ordinary labor of life, is felt for the moment to be unpleasant—what then must it be to be startled from the deep repose of the weary soldier, to the work—not of life, but of death—from the dreams of happiness and home, to the horrors of the bloody trade—from refreshing rest into maddening turmoil.

At the beat of the warping drum, we got under arms and marched in the shadow of night to the advanced posts, where we remained under cover of a stunted wood until day break.

At the first gleam of dawn, a signal gun fired, and we rushed on to the attack. The fight was long and bloody—but British valor, ardent as enthusiasm, confident as faith, and obstinate as the instinct of the bulldog, was at length crowned with success; and the day which had been lowering and tempestuous, was closed with victory and golden calm. The sound of the trumpet was succeeded by the song of birds, and the roar of the battle by the vague and mystic lullaby of the coming night. The remnant of our regiment had assembled on the slope of a green hill, to which the stragglers of the Light company were returning, singly, and in pairs; and I came up to the ground just as the last of the survivors arrived.

He who has been a sojourner for long years in distant lands, knows with what tremors and misgivings the home of his youth is approached; but these are faint compared to the feelings with which the survivor of the battle's bloody day rejoins the remnant of his regiment, which returns at night. With a palpitating heart I heard the calling of the muster roll, and marked with breathless suspense, the pauses that succeeded each familiar name—to which there was no reply. At length, those of my two friends were called, and, with lightened heart, I heard the response of their well known voices. Our meeting was one of delight and congratulation; and, as the tents did not come up, we bivouacked beneath an old tree during the night.

The succeeding events of the campaign I pass over, as not being in any way connected with my story. Suffice it therefore to say, that the conclusion of the war took place a few months after this affair; and having passed unscathed through its various vicissitudes, by a more than usual good fortune, we all three met in London, that great rendezvous of military men upon their return from abroad.

We adjourned to the old Slaughter Coffee House in St. Martin's Lane, where we passed the evening; in the course of which, Wade adverted to his marriage, which, he informed us, was to take place in a few days, and claimed the fulfilment of our promise to be present at the ceremony; at which we renewed our engagement to attend. Accordingly, at the time and place appointed, we arrived together; there were few persons present, and they were but indistinctly seen in the dim light of a curtained apartment. The bride was led into the room, deeply veiled, so that we could not distinguish her features. Her head was bent downwards, and she seemed much affected during the ceremony, but began to regain her composure towards its close. As soon as it was concluded, she lifted her veil, and looking timidly upwards, disclosed a face of exquisite beauty, beaming through tears. At that moment I was suddenly startled by a deep convulsive sob; and, turning round, beheld Fitzmaurice, pale as ashes, and staggering towards the door, through which he instantly glided away. My first impression was, that he felt sick, owing to the warmth and closeness of the room; but, upon observing the simultaneous agitation of the bride, who seemed about to faint, a suspicion flashed across my mind, that in the new married lady, he had recognized the object of his attachment, while her violent emotion seemed to indicate some secret intelligence between them, and to render it probable that the fear, which Wade had expressed to us, respecting the state of his wife's heart towards himself, were but too well founded. However this might be, he did not seem to have observed Fitzmaurice's agitation and sudden departure, and probably ascribed the momentary indisposition of the bride to the feelings natural to a young woman on such an occasion. Meanwhile, the company having partaken of some refreshments, the new married pair set off upon their journey, and the party separated.

Pondering upon the scene I had just witnessed, I returned to my lodgings; but, feeling the time tedious, I passed the evening at the theatre. I retired to rest rather fatigued, but could not sleep, so much were my thoughts haunted by the events of the day. As Fitzmaurice had promised to call upon me the following morning, I waited with impatience till the appointed hour; but it came in the summer of his years, his hair was all passed, and he did not arrive. A second and a third elapsed, and still he came not. I then feared he might be unwell; and feeling certain misgiving respecting him, I forthwith sallied into the street, and proceeded towards his lodgings.

Upon arriving there, and inquiring for my friend, I was informed, that, on the afternoon of the preceding day, he had come home in a state of great excitement; and, having hastily packed up his baggage, and discharged his bill, had ordered a hackney coach, in which he drove away—no one knew whither. There was something in all this ill calculated to ease my apprehensions, and I forthwith set on foot an inquiry after him, but I could obtain no clue to a discovery; and, after trying to trace out his movements in vain, I gave up the pursuit, hoping that time or chance would throw some light upon his sudden and mysterious disappearance.

After the perils and privations of war, the news of peace had been hailed in the camp, as tidings of great joy; and, in common with others, the return to my country, and the comforts of home, were pleasant things to me. But as soon as the novelty was over, the old instinct of the soldier, the hankering after excitement and the love of change, again began to return; I became "restless and wearisome," and sought relief in the vicissitudes of travel.

After wandering over the continent for about a year, I was recalled, by matters of a domestic nature, which required my presence in England, where upon landing, I proceeded towards London, and was overtaken by darkness at an inn but one stage from the metropolis, at which I took up my abode for the night. In passing up stairs, I was accosted by a voice familiar to my ear, and looking up, recognized in the speaker my old messmate, Wade. Upon my inquiring after his lady, he informed me that she was then along with him at the inn, where they had just arrived from a jaunt in the country, which he had been giving her, in consequence of ill-health and lowness of spirits; and that they were to proceed next day to call on a medical friend of his, who had been very successful in the treatment of nervous complaints, and mental dejection, and who then superintended a private asylum a few miles from town, where many patients laboring under seemingly incurable melancholy, had obtained great benefit, and frequently complete recovery. He said he wished to consult the doctor respecting his wife, whose health had not been improved by means usually employed; and, as the residence of his friend lay only a little way out of the direct road to London, he took my promise that I would accompany them on their visit on the following day. Upon entering the breakfast parlor next morning, I was introduced to Mrs. Wade, as a friend of her husband, who had been present on the occasion of her marriage. At that word a hectic flush fevered her cheek for a "burning moment," but speedily passed away, leaving her paler than before. After a few common-place topics had been discussed, Wade asked me if I had lately heard from Fitzmaurice, where he was, and what he was about? A deeper tinge than before again overspread the face of Mrs. Wade, and confirmed my suspicion. I answered briefly, that I had not heard of my friend for sometime, and was not acquainted with his movements. The subject then dropped, and the conversation turned upon generalities, until we arrived at the doctor's residence, which was within a short walk of the asylum he superintended.

He received us with a quiet kindness rather to be felt than expressed. He was apparently about fifty years of age, of a grave but gentle demeanor, with an eye which rested upon its object with a fixedness not the less searching for the want of quickness and brilliancy. His voice was soft and low, and there was altogether about him an air of repose, as if the emotions of troubled minds, which he had so long witnessed, had chastened down in him all human passion into quiet endurance and unchanging calm.

After dinner was over, Wade made allusion to the state of his wife's health, and the doctor, after putting some questions and giving her some general directions, stole a look at her unobserved, and then rallied her upon the unreasonableness of low spirits in a young married woman; took occasion to advert to the bad consequences of indulging in any secret unavailing grief, which, he observed, had often led to the most deplorable of human maladies, even mental derangement; of which he stated many melancholy cases in the asylum under his care; and having thus excited our curiosity, in accordance with our wishes, he agreed to satisfy us with a sight of some of his patients. We approached the asylum through spacious and beautiful grounds, and having passed its gates, were conducted by its superintendent to its secret cells. The first which we entered was tenanted by a raging maniac, who stood before us with fettered hands and visage fierce and fiend-like, screaming curses upon nature, and shrieking out that there was no God—his eyes glared like balls of fire, and the heel that raged within him had scathed a once sanguine and

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After the last duties were paid to her remains, he set off for the continent, to seek, and haply to find, in foreign scenes, excitement to life and alleviation of its sorrows.—*Edinburgh Magazine.*

THE PRETTY VIXEN.

With angel face, and faultless form,
How strange that you're not to my liking,
Yet, when you cuff your spouse and storm,
I own your beauty—vastly striking!

A Comparison.—Dr. Cox, speaking of Alcohol, at a meeting of a Female Temperance Society, remarked that there was no more nourishment in Alcohol, than in a flash of lightning.

A colder lately called out from the ground floor of his dwelling house to his wife, who was cursing the pledge of their love in the garret: "Angel, descend with the cherub."