

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 in trenches, and immediately in rear of our camp ground were our German auxiliaries sitting before their tents—some with long pipes, deeply engrossed in the silent solemnity of smoking; and others raising a choral strain, 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 delighted the lovers of Scottish song by whom it was attended. The last sunset gleam, warm and glorious, 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 *Varandarte* and *Balernia*, breathing of love and death, in the fight of Roncesvilles, 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 trampling of a steed bearing an aide-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 gloom 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 round 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 battle; some smoking cigars and jesting with death; some musing upon absent friends, ruminating 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 arrangement for approaching events, and feeling the chill of night beginning to be severe, I quitted the tent along with two mess-mates, Wade and Fitzmaurice, and we seated ourselves by a blazing fire, a few yards in front of our camp 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 eve 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; "he the'st 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 uncertainty 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 you, and it will then be time enough to 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 almost 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, howev-

er, that this was a mere suspicion, perhaps As Fitzmaurice had promised to call upon Wade's friend, I waited with impatience till the appointed hour; but it came in the summer of his year, his hair was silvery grey, and streaked around his brow; and a third elapsed, and still he came not. I whistled wreaths. His bold and reckless spirit, in the pride of inherited power, had darted to search the unsearchable—to question doubt—to disbelieve, till at length he sank into the abyss of atheism, and nature seemed such a fearful and inscrutable mystery to his bewildered mind, that he became horror-struck at his own thoughts, and went raving mad. His fits of blaspheming fury were succeeded by sudden dejection, and trembling terror, and sore dismay, when he would sink down on his knees and weep like a child. We gladly returned from this awful spectacle of ruined spirit, and proceeded to the next apartment, in which we beheld a victim of the gambling table.

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 banker 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 "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 hell that raged during the pledge of their love in the garret within him had scathed a once sanguine and "Angel, descend with the cherub."

A short time previous to her death, she made a full confession to her husband of her previous attachment to Fitzmaurice, and of the overpowering remonstrances of her friends begging his forgiveness; and whatever the nature of his feelings might have been, he behaved to her with unremitting attention till her death.

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 cobbler lately called out from the ground door of his dwelling house to his wife, who was like balls of fire, and the hell that raged during the pledge of their love in the garret within him had scathed a once sanguine and "Angel, descend with the cherub."