

BEAUTIFUL LEAVES.

Fading beneath our passing feet,
Strewn upon lawn and lane and street,
Beautiful leaves!
Dyed with the hues of the sunset sky,
Falling in glory so silently,
Beautiful leaves!

Never to freshen another spring,
Never to know what the summer may bring,
Beautiful leaves!
Withered beneath the frost and cold,
Soon to decay in the common mould,
Beautiful leaves!

So will the years that change your tint
Mark upon us their autumnal print,
Beautiful leaves!
So shall we fall from the tree of time,
Fade as ye fade in a wintry clime,
Beautiful leaves!

But when the harvest of life is past,
And we wake in eternal spring at last,
Beautiful leaves!
May He who paints your brilliant hue
Form of our lives a chaplet new
Of beautiful leaves!

(For the Canadian Illustrated News.)

SUPER FLUMINA.

I.

Some twenty years ago the American Fur Company was one of the principal institutions of my native city. It was the centre of a great trade, especially in the summer months when the mountain boats went up with provisions and came down loaded with Indian goods and curiosities. In that locality were seen piles of pictured buffalo robes, huge elk horns, beavers in large tin boxes, grizzly bears chained in the yard, heaps of delicious buffalo tongue and chipped meat to be dished with the small-grained Indian corn. All descriptions of queer people haunted the spot, speaking every variety of lingo. There were Creoles from Portage des Sioux and Cape Girardeau—bright-eyed, agile fellows and very garrulous; Canadian *coureurs des bois*—dark, thick-set, great trappers, and forever smoking; Mexican trappers, in leathern suits—copper-coloured, mustachioed, good marksmen, marvelous riders, treacherous and vindictive; Western hunters of the Daniel Boone or David Crockett type, chiefly from Kentucky and Missouri—tall, lank, great story-tellers, hard swearers, indefatigable tobacco chewers, lynxes in vision and invaluable guides. Those were the men employed by the company in their excursions among the Indians of the Missouri and Yellowstone.

The old warehouse was the last place in the world where one would look for scenes in the poetry and philosophy of life. Yet such were found there. When only a youngster I used to spend many an hour within its walls, listening to the stories and adventures of these singular men, and on reviewing my mental history I find that my imagination is still tinged with the hues of the romances heard there in my boyish days, from the lips of fallow-faced, dark-browed trappers.

To-night, as I rehearse these bygone things, I call to mind one narrative especially, recited in my hearing by an old *voyageur* from the north, between two pipes of Perique and with the accompaniment of several horns of Bourbon. The story was told in French and in grotesque fashion, but I give the substance in my own words, with a distinct reliance on the accuracy of my memory.

II.

Vidal, (such was the narrator's name without any prefix that I knew), had received a good education and was destined by his parents for a professional life. But he was a wild fellow and preferred shifting for himself. He engaged in the service of a trader, at the headwaters of the Ottawa. There he remained several years, till a new field of activity opened before him. His employer having undertaken to carry on the commerce of furs, in addition to his lumber trade, chose Vidal as his agent and representative to visit the land of the mink, the otter and the marten. The youth had two objects in undertaking the adventurous journey. The first was to please his patron and thereby advance his own interests, and the second was the hope of obtaining the hand of his patron's daughter, on his return.

Ascending the Ottawa as far as the Matawan rapids, he crossed to Lake Nipissing, on which he embarked in a birch canoe, propelled by two Indians. He went down French river into Lake Huron, thence passed onward to Lake Superior. After leaving it, through marsh and morass, through immense stretches of pine forests, the three advanced rapidly, carrying their canoe on their shoulders, or shooting into every little stream that would bear them on, till they reached the settlement of Assiniboia in the Red River region. There, after a few days' halt they laced on their snow-shoes and pushed forward to the great valley of the Saskatchewan.

Vidal's instructions did not require him to go beyond this point, but as he was ahead of the time allotted him, his adventurous spirit prompted him to move still farther north along the line of the Athabaska—McKenzie. For this part of his journey he furnished himself with a tobogan drawn by two polar dogs. His Indian guides followed on snow-shoes. When they were weary with their tramp, they each took a turn in the single seat of the parchment sleigh. The buoyant heart of young Vidal exulted in the rapid drive through the frozen landscape. The sharp blast exhilarated his blood and his enthusiasm would often burst out in shouts of encouragement to the harnessed dogs. Thus for a fortnight the three advanced due north until they reached the furthest outpost of the Hudson's Bay Company. Here they would have stopped if Vidal had not learned that there was a missionary station still higher along the McKenzie. He resolved to penetrate that far. On the evening of the second day out, he came up to a huge cross planted on the river bank and around which were clustered a few Indian huts. He was benumbed with cold and fatigue, but the sight of the holy man coming forth to meet him, revived his courage. The sound of his native tongue, which the stranger spoke, was unusually pleasant to his ear, and it was with overflowing thanks that he accepted an invitation to the missionary's cabin. The boreal night came on apace. The sky was of a bronze hue, and the dazzling whiteness of the snow-banks was brought into weird contrast with it, clothing trees, rocks, and all outlying objects in a covering of ghastly sheen. Vidal soon felt overpowered with fatigue. In spite of him, his eyes closed and slumber gained upon him. After sharing with him the scant and

coarse refreshments of his hut, the good missionary persuaded him to throw himself on the buffalo robes before the fire.

III.

He was soon buried in deep sleep and remained in that state for a considerable time, but towards the middle of the night, he suddenly awoke. His feelings on finding himself in that strange place may be imagined. The cabin where he lay was pitch dark, except such portions as were dimly lighted by the flickering flames of the spacious hearth. Directly before his eyes, above the chimney piece, was a crucifix of dark wood, laying against the rude wall, all begrimed with smoke. Over his head, on the rough hewn rafters, he could faintly discern quarters of caribou and antlers of wild deer, while opposite, he spied the dusk form of the missionary, crouched on a low seat, in a corner of the fire place. The solitary man was probably saying his matins, for he held in his hand a large breviary with horn clasps, one finger being inserted between the pages, while he meditated on the sense of the biblical words. Vidal gazed at the lonely watcher as he sat with his dilated eyes fixed on the fading embers, when suddenly amid the universal stillness, he pronounced in a deep, hollow voice, the pathetic words: *Super flumina Babylonis*. "On the waters of Babylon we sat and wept, when we remembered Zion."

Vidal was startled by the aptness of the citation. The exile of the Hebrews on the inhospitable banks of the Euphrates struck him as singularly illustrative of his own forlorn condition, snow-bound on the margin of the great river of the North and far away from home. He remembered also, that the missionary had told him he was a native of Marseilles and had toiled for nearly ten years among the Esquimaux and the wild denizens of the Polar Sea. He, too, on repeating the dirge of the Israelites might recall with regret the sunny shores of the Mediterranean, where dwelt in tropic warmth and comfort the dear ones whom he had loved. No wonder he paused and meditated on the funeral song. No wonder that his voice was hoarse and his pale cheeks were wet with tears.

O, memories of home! Wherever we may wander, through whatever scenes of life we may pass, they haunt us like a grace, sweetening our regrets, comforting our solitude and nerving our resolution against despondency. On the tops of inclement mountains, or in the exuberant grassy valleys; in the depths of untravelled forests, or on billowy prairies stretching to the setting sun; under the dreamy palms of Southern latitudes where the murmur of summer seas lulls to gentle slumber, or in arctic climates where the sough of boreal blasts exhilarates the thin blood with a keen vitality, everywhere the thoughts of home accompany and console the traveller, the wanderer and the exile.

Suddenly, Vidal experienced a feeling of suffocation. It seemed that the chill cabin had grown intolerably warm and that he must have fresh air. He arose and sought the door. The movement awoke the missionary from his reverie.

"Where are you going, my friend?" he said.

"To breathe the outside air, father."

"It is deadly cold to-night. Do not venture out."

Vidal insisted and explained his reason. The missionary said nothing and let him go.

IV.

On issuing from the cabin, Vidal felt instantly relieved and his mind was at once absorbed in the sublimity of the spectacle which greeted his eyes. The heavens were illuminated by the mysterious rays of the aurora borealis. More than one half of the Northern portion of the sky was resplendent like a plate of burnished steel. Midway between the zenith and the horizon, there stretched a belt of leaden hue, similar in colour to a storm cloud and looking as though it were charged with rain drops. Out of this murky zone, streamed forth columns of silver light, struggling up to the high heavens or sinking into the bosom of the polar sea, whose spectral glaciers, on nights like these, are said to be phosphorescent with electric fires. Vidal had scarcely taken in the grandeur of this scene when his material vision seemed to be completely blinded and his mind wrapped up in the contemplation of a purely spiritual object. It was a waking dream. Right in the midst of the circumambient glory, full in the glittering reflection of the elemental light, he saw his own Geneviève, gliding towards him with open arms and eyes brimful of love. The countenance was not only beautiful, with the beauty and softness of youth, but it wore an expression of serenity and peace which made it angelically fair. She seemed no longer to belong to earth, but to be passing thence to higher spheres and stopping a moment to greet him on her way. He was transported at the sight, not through fear, but through enthusiasm. He longed to throw himself into her arms and with all the power of his soul, he cried out: "Geneviève!"

The missionary doubtless overheard him, for Vidal felt the former's hand laid softly on his shoulder.

"Friend," said the priest. "What ails you? Come in." At these words, the young man's emotion collapsed. The bright vision faded away, the brilliant light had vanished from the sky and all was dark.

On re-entering the cabin, the heat sent a thrill through his whole person. He felt reanimated and restored to full consciousness.

The missionary made him sit down by the fireside.

"Why did you call out just now?" said he.

"Did I call, father?"

"Yes, the name of Geneviève."

Vidal started as the memory of the vision returned to him for a brief instant.

"If I called Geneviève, good father, I was naming one who is the fondest object of my affection on this earth?"

And he went on to narrate the circumstance of the apparition. The missionary manifested the deepest interest.

"Is it right?" asked Vidal, at the conclusion of his narrative, "is it right to believe in the visitation of spirits?"

"Why not?" was the ready reply. "For my part, I have no hesitation to believe in apparitions. A lonely missionary like me, far away from all the solaces of life, would die of mental inanition or exhaustion, had he not the spiritual world to commune with. Often, often have the comforts and blessings of Providence come to me in the mystical revelations of my beloved."

"It is only the dead who can thus appear," said Vidal sadly.

"But the living can appear in dreams."

"Yes, father, but I was not dreaming. I was certainly awake and this is no mere phantom of the imagination."

The priest shook his head, dropped his eyes and said nothing. This confirmed the youth in his opinion. He could doubt it no longer. Geneviève was dead.

It was a case of presentiment. Psychologists may wrangle as they like, but there are many such in life.

After a long pause, the two resumed their conversation, the missionary endeavoring to comfort the young man with hopes which he evidently did not entertain. He then proposed that they should retire to rest.

On the morrow Vidal assisted at the orisons which the missionary offered for his flock in his rude chapel. After that ceremony, he returned to the cabin where he partook of a copious breakfast of fat moose.

The missionary would have wished to detain him a few days, but Vidal decided to turn his steps homeward at once. The two then embraced for the last time.

"You go and I stay," said the priest mournfully. Vidal looked at him with compassion, but did not answer.

"God speed you, my son, and may his angels guide you!"

The traveller felt that he had indeed an angel to guide him in Geneviève.

On the outskirts of the Indian village, he turned and waved a last farewell to the missionary, who was watching him in the distance.

Losing sight of him thus alone on the banks of the McKenzie, the youth was painfully reminded of his doleful words: "*Super flumina Babylonis*." He then understood what heroism is capable of enduring.

He encountered more dangers and delays on his return than he met on his outward journey, and instead of reaching the settlement, at the time pointed out by his employer, it was eighteen months before he arrived there.

"And Geneviève?" I remember having asked him, as I sat by listening with the keenest interest.

"Geneviève," answered the old voyageur in a husky voice, "Geneviève was dead! She died on the precise day and at the precise hour that I saw her on the McKenzie."

I remember as if it was only yesterday, how the announcement struck my imagination.

"And you have wandered ever since?" I said timidly.

"You guess rightly, my boy. What else could I do? I have wandered on and on, but my race is now nearly run. I have the confidence that I shall meet her there," pointing to heaven.

How children will remember things! Long years have passed since then, but while I write, my memory goes back to the dusky office of the American Fur Company, on that dull bleak October afternoon, and I see, as if it were before me, the shaggy, weather-beaten, but not ignoble face of the old voyageur. He has just finished his story, he holds his pipe listlessly in his fingers, his eyes gaze sadly into the firelight and he murmurs, with heartfelt appropriateness, the sepulchral words—I hear them distinctly:—*Super flumina Babylonis, illuc sedimus et flevimus dum recorderemur Zion!*

J. L.

(For the Canadian Illustrated News.)

PRESENCE OF MIND.

"Yes, my boy, but I'll tell you what's better still—"absence of body." We all felt very much relieved.

We were a party of three assembled in the rooms of my friend Chessington, and we had been debating the subject of the title of this article. Now, I need scarcely say that it is impossible for a party of intelligent Englishmen to discuss this topic without one of the number perpetrating the time-honored joke above recorded.

We had all shrunk from the responsibility until Maloney, who, I have reason to believe has Irish blood in his veins, and who possesses considerable native cheek, relieved our minds as aforesaid, and we resumed the topic with renewed vigour.

It appeared, that without exception, we were all persons of remarkable self-control in extremely trying circumstances, and numerous anecdotes were related to prove the possession of this desirable qualification.

The number of lives which Chessington has saved by the display of his singular coolness in times of danger would, I imagine, if the accomplishment were more general, make a considerable difference in the labour market, and make the much vexed subject of emigration quite a secondary consideration; but as his readiness of resource is accompanied by much hesitation of speech, the point of his anecdotes was rather marred by Maloney cutting in prematurely and spoiling his climaxes.

My Irish friend gave one practical illustration of presence of mind which I confess did not impress me favourably. I am naturally very abstemious, but talking, with me, always induces extreme thirst, and I was just stretching out my hand to replenish my tumbler when Maloney, with what he chose to call presence of mind but which I beg to designate as abominable selfishness, emptied the remains of the whiskey into his own glass.

Maloney also related an anecdote illustrative of his self-possession, which at the time I thought rather amusing, but which since the episode of the whiskey I regard as emblematical of a want of moral principle in a man no doubt otherwise estimable.

It appears that in his youthful and impecunious days, when debts were many and coins were few, he had reason to believe that a writ was out against him at the suit of an indignant and long-suffering tailor, and he kept a sharp look out for suspicious-looking characters, meditating a retirement into the country as soon as funds were available. I will let him tell his story in his own words:

"Ye see, me boys, I had been at the berryin' of poor Macdermot, who ye'll recollect was on the staff of the *Morain' News*, and I had just got back to the house to change me mournin' garments when I saw at the door an ugly looking customer who had just rung the bell. Says I to myself 'Ye look mighty like a bailiff,' so I steps up to him and I said, 'Who is it ye'll be wantin', sir?' Says he, 'Does Mr. Maloney live here?' 'Is it live here?' says I. 'Why, haven't ye heard about the poor fellow?' I've just come from the funeral, and if ye're a friend of his, perhaps ye'd like to put your name down to a small subscription I'm gettin' up for his family,' and I pulls out a red covered memorandum book—more by token it was old Molasses the grocer's book, and a devil of a score there was in it too. By jabsers the fellow took himself off like a shot, and never waited to ask another question, and next day I was off to the country. There's presence of mind for ye, me boys."

I felt very much inclined to say something cutting about absence of principle, but I refrained—somehow I always get the worst when I say any thing sharp to Maloney—and after a