

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

ONLY A DAISY.

Only a daisy, indeed,
Plucked from its stem for the whim of an hour;
Cast on the path as a valueless flower:
Left there to die as a weed.

Love and trust reared its head
Up from the fostering lap of the ground,
Into the bright happy world it had found:
Now the poor daisy is dead.

'Tis but a daisy has died:
Strolling down through the park one day,
He, the young lord from the Hall, came this way,
Plucked it, and threw it aside.

Nay, had it been but a rose,
Delicate, scented, Persian sweet,
Would it have lain so sad at my feet?
What is a daisy? Who knows?

Had he but just let it lie,
Maybe some day there had come to the place—
One who would care for its innocent grace,
Take to his heart the "daisy's eye."

FREDERICK A. DIXON.

THREE DAYS OF SANCTUARY.

(From the Overland Monthly.)

Little, if anything, about the story can be gleaned from the Martelle annals. For it was not a matter of which the family could endure even the memory; and hence, in those records, so carefully devoted to the commemoration of high alliances and deeds of gallantry and honour, there appears, in the case of Hugh Martelle, only a barren entry of birth and death.

It began in the great cathedral, late upon the afternoon of St. Pancras' Day, when the soft twilight was gradually closing in about the gray, sculptured walls. When a few lingering rays of the setting sun, gleaming through the richly stained glass of the windows, fell upon the marble pavement of the nave, pouring over the tessellated blocks broad patterns of gold and purple light, which, for a moment, shone bright and dazzling then became flickering and uncertain, and, at last, one by one, gently faded away. When, after a moment of confusion, the great cathedral had become deserted, excepting where, here and there, at the foot of some heavy, overshadowing column, a single form could be seen crouching down, unwilling, in the awakened fervour of devotion, to quit the sacred place.

Then it was that the clashing of steel, mingled with loud oaths and alternate cries for assistance and revenge, resounded from the very entrance of the porch. At a sound so unsuited to the sanctity of the place, each remaining worshipper started up, and stood with blanched countenance gazing down the nave, endeavouring to comprehend the meaning of the angry clamour.

"A De Bracy! Revenge! A De Bracy!" cried three or four infuriated voices at the porch. "Down with him!"

"A Martelle! Help!" was the single response, in a tone of alarm and desperation.

The clash of weapons continued; they fought their way still further into the body of the cathedral, and, in a moment, while the few worshippers stood irresolute whether to remain or fly, one of the combatants, holding in his hand a rapier dripping with blood, was forced through the inner door into the nave. For a second he yet stood at bay; and then, as three or four pressed hard upon him, he turned and fled toward the altar. The others pursued for a few steps, then suddenly stopped, impressed with the irreverence of their action, slowly sheathed their swords, and, scowling fearfully, strode out. Only one remained, with his weapon unsheathed, watching the receding figure of the fugitive. He, too, at length thrust his sword into its scabbard, with an energy which made the arches of the building echo, and then, with an oath of disappointed rage, he passed out through the porch. The few whose devotions had been so suddenly interrupted, stole cautiously away, and the fugitive was left apparently alone.

The flying man advanced toward the altar, near which he flung himself, panting from the exertion he had undergone, and smiling now and then in satisfaction at his escape and their discomfiture. Nevertheless, a shade of trouble passed across his face, as he fancied that he saw figures clustering about the far-off porch. But his fears were vain. The sanctuary of the altar was too powerful to be violated, and, though an army might peer in through every window, the criminal who had once gained the holy precincts was safe.

All at once the fugitive held himself addressed, and, looking behind, he saw an old, white-haired priest near him.

"Hugh Martelle," said the old priest, starting with an expression of pain as he recognized the features turned toward him, "how is this? What brawl have you been engaged in? Why enter this place with your naked sword? There is blood upon it, too! Speak!"

"I slew an enemy who attacked me in the street, Father Ambrose," was the response. "I was driven to this place by his adherents; and I now claim shelter and sanctuary."

"Sanctuary you can have, my son," the priest replied. "But put off your sword. No one should dare to approach God's altar with a weapon in his hand. Shall I take and keep it for you?"

For a moment the fugitive clutched his rapier more tightly. He was unwilling to be left entirely defenceless. He remembered cases where even the altar-steps had not restrained the revengeful passions of men; and he dreaded lest that might happen now, and he be cut down like a dog, without a single protecting weapon. But he could not go into the public street; and it was years since the protection of the Church had been outraged. So, with a sigh, he sheathed his sword, unbuckled the scabbard, and handed both to the old priest.

"O Hugh, my son!" said the priest, as he turned away, "I would that any one but you, whom I have watched with so much care for years, for the love I bore your parents, had been placed in such a desperate case. Perhaps, though, my fears are groundless. It may be that what you did was in self-defence, and could not be avoided; and perhaps, ere long, the magnanimity of your enemies may insure your freedom. Meanwhile, as you wait for man to relent, why not seek the pardon of God, who is ready to forgive at any time? Will you not now confess?"

"Confess? I cannot now, Father Ambrose. I would rather wait."

"Be it, then, as you will, Hugh. To-morrow, perhaps, if you are here, your mind will be in a better frame. And now, rest in peace. God's altar will be your security, unarmed as you are."

The old priest turned away, with a sigh, and Hugh Martelle was left alone. His thoughts were none of the most cheering. He knew that he had done that for which there could be no forgiveness among men; he might be protected for a day or a week, but hunger or the desperation of weariness would force him into the world again, and that for months to come, were he to tarry so long, his enemies would be watching every avenue of escape.

The great cathedral grew yet darker and darker. The bright spots of sunlight had long faded from the marble floor, and the hideously carved corbels had entirely vanished from the sight. The only light of a cheering nature which could be seen was beyond the doorway, where the glitter of a silver-smith's shop, opposite the cathedral, threw a faint beam across the narrow street. Upon this little glow, Hugh Martelle dreamily fixed his gaze. By it he saw the forms of people passing to and fro. Now it was a group of belated workmen hurrying homeward, then a courtier preceded by a link-boy bearing a flaming torch, and now a band of noisy young men, swaggering along with wild and reckless yells. He wondered whether, in the gathering darkness, he could steal forth and evade pursuit; and, with the hope, he resolved to make the attempt. But, at that very moment, he saw, against the dimly lighted window of the silver-smith's shop, two forms arrayed in casques and breastplates, bearing in their hands their naked rapiers. He sank back with a groan of discouragement.

The air was chilly in the great cathedral, and suddenly Hugh Martelle felt a sharp, shooting pain in his right arm. He placed his hand upon the spot, and detected a clammy, cold, sticky substance: it was blood. He had been wounded in his encounter—unknowingly, while the excitement lasted. It was only a flesh-wound—not dangerous, if properly attended to; but, neglected, would cause him much suffering. Every moment the pains increased, and tormenting thirst began to parch his lips. He tore off his sash, and endeavoured to bind up the wound; but having only his left hand to work with, failed in each attempt: when suddenly a low, soft voice said:

"Hugh Martelle, let me do that for you."

Raising his eyes, he beheld a female figure bending sympathizingly over him. At first, in the gathering darkness, he could not recognize the speaker; but gradually, as he laboriously scanned the dark, liquid eyes, the parting lips, and the waving hair, and endeavoured to recall the somewhat familiar tones of the voice, he faintly whispered:

"Is it you, Louise?"

"Yes, Hugh."

The young girl removed the tangled scarf and bound up the wound, touching him all the while so lightly that not another twinge of pain came to agonize him, and his heart, for the moment, reproached him. A year had passed since he had seen her. A poor girl, living by single toil in the miserable quarter of the city where artists, artisans, and students congregated, her beauty had won his heart; and, by his systematic vows—believed by her, but uttered by him in mere gallantry—he had won her affections. Then other objects crossed him, and he forgot her, until now, when all others forsook him, she came to his relief.

"Louise, I have wronged you," he muttered.

"Wait—let me finish this," she said, as she carefully smoothed down the last fold of the bandage. Then placing her hands upon his shoulders, she strove to gaze into his face. Even in the darkness, he could feel those black eyes burning into his soul, and he drew her unresistingly to his lips.

"I have wronged you, Louise," he said again.

"But it is I, Hugh, who was foolish in believing that a knight of a proud family could always stay to comfort a poor, unknown girl," she answered. "They say you have slain Gaspard de Bracy," she added, "and that will atone for much."

"You knew De Bracy?"

"Knew him?"—and her eyes flashed. "The base, unmanly ruffian tried to woo me, not by fair words, but by force! His lackeys, Hugh, would have borne me away to him, in spite of tears and entreaties, had not a band of students, with only their bills and clubs, beat back the swords of De Bracy's men."

A ray of hope flashed on Hugh Martelle's soul.

"And can you still command the assistance of your brave students, Louise? Listen. You see how my enemies encompass me, so that I cannot escape without help. To-morrow, at early dawn, bring a party of brave men to beat down those knaves who guard this door. Once rescue me from their toils, and we will go together to another land, where we can live only for each other. I am wearied with the follies of this court. Help me only to escape, and I will turn student, artist, artisan, or what you will, if I can thereby remain at your side until death."

"O, Hugh! will you do all that for me?" exclaimed the amazed, delighted girl.

"As my soul lives!" said he. There, at the altar's foot, they matured their plans. She would bring him food, in the morning, to replenish his wasted strength; she would bring him a sword, that he might assist in his own deliverance; and she would bring a band of fifty students to deliver him. As they heard the sacristan close one of the ponderous doors, they were warned to separate. With a parting kiss, the confiding girl skipped down the nave and left the building; and he, with the pain of his wound assuaged, and hope brightening almost into certainty, lay down upon the altar-step to sleep.

Hugh Martelle slept, and dreamed. He dreamed of freedom, but not of the freedom of another land, with the life-long love of the poor Louise. In his visions—true companions of his waking thoughts—he had merely used her to insure his escape, and, after a few months of cunning intrigue, had purchased amenity for the past, and regained his position at the Court. For this, he had again abandoned the young girl; and, when he awoke, the influence of his dreams still controlled his thoughts, and he raised himself with a curl of derision upon his lips.

As he awoke, he bent his ear to listen for the sounds of deliverance. Then, remembering that previously she was to bring him food and a weapon, he eagerly watched to see the light form, so hopefully tripping up the nave. It was time, for the cold ray of dawn was already stealing through the windows, and chasing the shadows from every dark crevice of the arches. The huge doors had already been thrown open. No worshippers had yet entered the cathedral; and, if Louise should now come, they would be alone.

She came at last—not tripping along in the gaiety of anticipated happiness, but with the quiet tread of terrible deter-

mination. The lips were compressed, and the eyes flashed fire. Her appearance startled him, and, with a thrill of dread, he glided from behind a pillar and hesitatingly advanced to meet her. Summoning a deceitful smile upon his face, he stretched forth his arms to enfold her, but she sprang aside.

"Touch me not, Sir Hugh Martelle," she cried.

"Louise!" he murmured, with a conscious-stricken face, as he partly guessed the truth. Once more he advanced toward her, but she shrank from him.

"Touch me not!" she exclaimed, again; and, while her voice, in the shrill accents of contempt, rang through the arches, her whole figure trembled with passion. "Is it true, then, what I heard spoken last night of you in every street and lane of the city, in palace-court—where I went to listen—and in my own low hovel, where they made me hear?"

"What, Louise?"—and he stood before her, hardly daring to meet her eye.

"Hearing your name branded with contempt by all the lowest and basest, not one of whom would have been low or base enough to do as you have done! Hearing the name I once loved, because I thought it might be a surety for noble deeds, now hissed and hooted at, and only mentioned with a sneer or curse!"

"But, dear Louise!" he repeated, with suppliant, outstretched arms.

"Stand back, Sir Hugh Martelle! I tell you again that I will not have you touch me! They say you struck a coward blow; that when you saw your enemy, you did not meet him face to face, like a man, but stole up behind and slew him, unsuspecting that danger was nigh."

She knew it was true, for she heard the story repeated unvaryingly from castle-court to tavern-haunt, and heard nobles and beggars unite in the same curse upon the coward. Still she bent her gaze earnestly upon him, hoping to hear from his own lips a contradiction. But he could not speak. He stood before her, confessing the truth by his trembling mien.

"It is, then, true," she exclaimed; and her voice, while it rang with anger, had a low wail of agony woven into it.

"Oh, Sir Hugh Martelle! God forgive me that ever I had ought to do with you! Rather should I have been the prey of your victim. He was rough and cruel, and could not have known what power there might be in gentle and unadorned affection; but he would have died an hundred deaths ere he consented to dishonour his fair name as thou hast done."

"Louise," he murmured, imploringly, "I confess it all. It is done, and can not now be undone. I repent it much. Forgive it all, and let us fly. There, in the other land we have spoken of, we will forget the past, and strive to lead a better life."

"With you?" she cried. "Go with you, whose name is a by-word and scorn to rabble crowds? With you, whose memory must henceforth be one of infamy? Rather would I be the slave of the poorest beggar in the city, did he have an honest soul. Rather would I live with a gallows thief; for many such exist through daring deeds, and would scorn to fill the pouch by coward stabs."

"I have gold, Louise. We will—"

"I would not touch your gold, Sir Hugh Martelle. There is the mark of blood upon every piece. Stay now in your shame and die. Your gold will not save you. All your wealth could not buy the help of one of those who, last night, would have perilled themselves for you at my bidding."

"Go, then!" he uttered, with an oath, as his rage overcame his prudence. "Leave me to die here, if you will. Get you again to your hovel and your artist-students, and find out the value of their coarse love."

"Coarse it may be, but honest, Sir Hugh Martelle. There is not one of them who will not now stand a thousand times higher in the sight of Heaven than you. I will go, and forget that I ever defiled my sight by casting a glance upon you."

Once more he tried to move her pity.

"Louise, can it, indeed, be you who treat me so? Last evening, you acted differently. See! with what care you then bound up my wound. Let us escape from here; and whatever you wish, I will then do. Only, for the love of Heaven, suffer me to escape."

"I bound up your wound!" she interrupted. "It must have been some devil in my form. Or, if I did, it was when I thought you were yet true of heart and great of soul. Where is it? Let me see! I bound up that? Eternal infamy be the portion of that hand that did it, if it suffers its foul work to remain. There! there! Now die in your shame, Sir Hugh Martelle!"

Ere he could prevent her, she had torn away the bandage. A cry of pain escaped him as the sudden action re-opened the wound. He fell back against a pillar, and when he recovered himself, he saw her indignant form stalking down the nave.

Soon people came in, not to go through their devotions, but only to gratify their hate or curiosity by a sight of the fugitive. He knew all such the moment they entered. They did not steal in tremulously, with hearts bowed down by reverential awe; but they stepped through the threshold as coolly as though entering their own homes, and gazed earnestly around in search of their object.

A knight of the Court stepped in. He bore upon his cap the insignia of a De Bracy, and, with a quiet glance, he swiftly swept the circuit of the cathedral, to be sure that the fugitive had not escaped. Recognizing him, at last, still standing against the pillar, he glanced defiance, significantly touched the hilt of his sword, drew it half forth, but it fell back again with a clash, and haughtily departed. There was a corner of the cathedral, near the altar-step, which was so environed with pillars and cumbrons mouldings that it was dark when all else was light. Thither he retreated, unable to endure the inspection any longer.

His wound pained him. The rudely dissembled bandage had dragged the flesh apart; and the open sword-cut, clogged with blood, began to fester. He could not close it again, or even wrap the bandage around with tolerable skill. With a curse, he flung the sash away; and, as the cold currents of air circled around and touched the flesh, the sharp, shooting pains increased, until, little by little, they extended from limb to limb, and, at last, every part of his body thrilled with anguish. He had eaten or drunk nothing since the afternoon before, but this alone would not have discomforted him. His wound, in leading to fever, had produced an intolerable thirst, and, at last, he sank down helpless.

It was not sleep he felt, for all the time he had a dim consciousness of his situation. He lay prostrate in the corner, at times finding strange, horrible images chasing themselves through his brain. Yet all the while he dimly saw the groined