

And still the rain continued. It continued through the whole of that day and through the night and through the next day, a period of some six-and-thirty hours in all. During the second night the sleep of many a burgher of Fontainebleau was disturbed by the strange, distant din, and not a few, recalling in a state of semi-consciousness the bad times of 1870, sat up in bed, rubbing their eyes and murmuring that the bombardment had begun. Even a broad-awake watcher might have fancied that the little town was being made the object of a night attack. There was the booming of artillery, the cracking of musketry and mingled with these, from time to time, a peculiar crashing sound, like the shattering of innumerable panes of glass. With morning came an explanation of this curious hubbub; and it was one which turned the merriment of the honest folk of Fontainebleau into mourning. The evil news flew from house to house; for the forest, they said, was doomed. The trees, unable to support the tremendous weight of ice in which their boughs were encased, were falling as fast as their own leaves in autumn. Some were torn up by the roots, others were decapitated, others were mutilated of their limbs; it was doubtful whether, when all was over, a single tree of any size would be left standing.

The extent of the damage done, though enormous, and from an artistic point of view irreparable so far as the present generation is concerned, happily proved in the sequel to have been greatly exaggerated. At the time it could only be a matter of conjecture; for no man, save at the imminent risk of his life, could have penetrated into the forest. In the meantime, a partial thaw having set in, and the roads being once more passable, everybody hastened to the limits of the town to see what could be seen of the catastrophe that was going forward.

There was indeed something worth looking at. The pale wintry sun shone down upon a world of pure crystal. Every twig had a coating of ice of three or four times its own diameter; the great limes in the Avenue de Montesson, which leads from the chateau, were bent forward till their topmost branches met and their lowest rested upon the ground; here and there in the gardens was an evergreen shrub, seen as through a glass shade, the ice having formed round it in a solid dome, through which each leaf could be distinguished; in the forest, through the white mist that hung over the ground, was dimly discernible the huge trunk of many a fallen giant, while the ominous crash and thunder that told of other invisible calamities went on almost incessantly.

The news of what had happened had been telegraphed to Paris, and had the effect of bringing down a few curious sight-seers from the capital in the course of the afternoon. Among these might have been noticed a gentleman of care-worn and weary aspect, whose eyes, as he picked his way along the frozen streets, were not directed toward the forest (which is visible at the end of every street in Fontainebleau), but wandered restlessly hither and thither among the ranks of the passers-by as if in search of a face that was not to be found there. M. de Valmy had neither seen nor attempted to see Marguerite again since the night when he had been so ignominiously marched off by his wife from the Franchard woods. Shortly afterward the countess had declared herself satiated with rural delights, and had left for Paris, taking him with her as a matter of course; and for the last few months he had been endeavouring with all his might to stifle an infatuation of which he was more than half ashamed. How far he had succeeded may be judged from the fact that he had seized the first plausible excuse that offered to hasten down to Fontainebleau. He traversed all the high-ways and byways of the little town in the faint hope of encountering Marguerite somewhere; and in the Rue de France he did at last catch sight of a familiar face. It was not however that which he was seeking, and he dropped his eyes, having no wish to recognize or be recognized by the sturdy peasant woman who was hurrying toward him. But she saw him, and instantly barred his passage.

"Oh, M. de Valmy, is that you? You have come down to see the spectacle! Ah, monsieur, what a misfortune, what a misfortune!"

"It is indeed a misfortune, Madame Vanne," answered de Valmy gravely, a little surprised at so unmeasured a display of grief; "but let us hope things may not be so bad as they seem. The forest—"

"Oh, the forest—the forest!" interrupted the old woman impatiently; "to hear people talk one would think that the forest was a good Christian who was being assassinated. I have had more than enough of it—of that accursed forest! My niece, monsieur—you may remember my niece Marguerite—has been in love with it all her life. Yes, you may stare; but it is the simple truth I am telling you. She has taken the forest for her lover, instead of an honest man who would have made her happy, and now by way of reward, I believe it has brought her her death."

"What do you mean?" asked M. de Valmy, who had grown a little paler than usual.

Then Madame Vanne, with many tears and interjections, related how she and her niece had come into market two days before; how they, with many others, had found themselves imprisoned in the town; and how Marguerite, excited and agitated beyond measure by the reports which had reached them, had been with difficulty restrained from rushing out into the

forest to witness with her own eyes the destruction of her idol. "You conceive, monsieur, that such a thing was of the last impossibility; the woodcutters told us that one would be safer in the thick of a pitched battle than among those fallen trees. Also I gave Marguerite a good scolding, and took care not to let her out of my sight. Ah, and I allowed her to escape me after all, miserable old woman that I am! I stopped for a few minutes to talk to a friend—not five minutes—and when I turned round she was gone. I have not found her—I knew I should not find her, I know I shall never see her alive again. For months past I have felt that something was going to happen to the girl. She has not been like herself; she has been always sad and silent, and so thin that you would hardly know her again. Eh! monsieur, what is it? Where are you going?"

"I am going," answered de Valmy gravely, "to find your niece."

"Where then? We do not know even the direction that she has taken."

"But I know," said de Valmy unhesitatingly. "It is to the Rocher de Nemorosa that she has gone; and it is there that I shall seek her. Let me go; I will not be stopped!" For Madame Vanne had forgotten her good manners so far as to seize him by the arm.

"What madness! you will only be killed too. It is a suicide, nothing less; and if I did my duty, I should call the gendarmes. Still if you are quite determined—"

"I am quite determined," returned de Valmy; and Madame Vanne having relaxed her hold, he marched away for a few paces with quick, resolute strides. Then by degrees his speed slackened; he came to a standstill; finally he faced about and retraced his steps, his head sunk despondently upon his breast.

"Madame Vanne," said he, "I have reflected. You were right. I cannot claim the privilege of undertaking this sad and sublime quest. More than life is at stake here. If I were to return with Marguerite—nay, even if I were to die with her—what would be said of us? Alas! we live in a world which loves to think evil. Life is much; but good name is more; and it shall not be through me—" Emotion checked the speaker in the middle of his sentence.

Madame Vanne looked at him rather oddly. "Lord forgive me!" she muttered under her breath. "I believe the man is afraid!" She added aloud with that respectful stolidity which the peasant instinctively assumes as a cloak for sarcasm, "monsieur is full of delicacy. I have only to thank monsieur for his good intentions."

And with that she dropped a courtesy and hobbled away, leaving de Valmy who had heard the words—as perhaps he was intended to do—to his reflections.

"Was he afraid? That is precisely the question which he has never been able to answer to himself in a satisfactory manner, and which it may be hoped, has cost him some uncomfortable half-hours. No one who knew him would ever believe that he had been so, if there were any consolation to be found in that; for he had to fight many duels in his time; had even been quite badly scratched on the arm upon one occasion, and had besides been under fire repeatedly during the war. There are however degrees of courage; and possibly M. de Valmy, who had little or no belief in a future state of existence may have hesitated to resign this pleasing, anxious being after so useless and inglorious a fashion. Be that as it may, he turned his back upon that awful and mysterious forest, and gloomily made his way to a hotel, where he ordered a room and awaited events.

Marguerite never returned. Two days later one of the search-parties which had been organized found her body, where de Valmy had predicted that she would be found, near the Rocher de Nemorosa. She was lying in the snow, half concealed by the colossal elm-bough which had dealt her death-blow. It was better to have died like that in a moment than to have perished slowly of cold, said those who broke the news to Madame Vanne, and who, like most bearers of ill-tidings, were determined to dis-own some germs of comfort in their melancholy mission.

A modest cross in the cemetery, close to the borders of the forest which she loved so well, marks the spot where reposes all that was mortal of Marguerite Vanne, "dite Nemorosa, Reine des Bois."

"Her soul is with the saints," says Madame Vanne, drying her eyes as she rises from the little mound beside which she has been duly reciting a De Profundis on the *jour des morts*.

"And where is that?" asks M. de Valmy, with the mildly satirical smile of a Pilate asking "What is truth?"

"Where yours will never join it, monsieur," returns the old woman roused to sudden wrath.

M. de Valmy carries a huge wreath of yellow immortelles tied up with a black ribbon. He is accompanied by his wife, who has commanded him to bear this tribute of respect to the memory of "that interesting and unfortunate young girl." It may be confidently asserted on behalf of Madame la Comtesse, that she both knows how to chastise the sinner, and will lose no opportunity of turning her knowledge to good account.

Victor Berthon is still unmarried. If he remains so for the rest of his days, his case may at some future date be cited as a rare instance of the triumph of constancy over time.

W. E. N.

A HARD TASK.—To find a better remedy for dyspepsia, indigestion, and impurities of the blood, than Burdock Blood Bitters. Price \$1.00, trial bottles 10 cents.

A FEW HINTS FOR THE TABLE.

We are sorry to see a disposition on the part of some of our exchanges to make jests of asparagus eating. It is by nature a delicious vegetable, but in build it is designed to prove a decided injury to people of infirm digestion, that is, when cooked in the whole, which is the popular way. A man unused to table-etiquette should, when invited out, or when at a hotel table, decline such articles as he is confident he cannot dispose of with ease. These are, principally, asparagus, green corn on the cob, chipped potatoes, small game, oranges, and stewed fruits whose pits are too large to be swallowed with safety. However, he does not always use this firmness, and his plate comes to be filled or surrounded by things which are designed to build him up, but which threaten to tear him down, and before them he quails in fear and confusion. If he does not have the strength to decline them when passed, he must either leave them about his plate as embossed monuments of his folly, or risk his life, and the garments of his neighbour, in their disposal. To the uninitiated a stalk of asparagus is a formidable object. To get it into his mouth without dropping it inside of his vest requires tact. He observes that the popular way is to use it as a bow with his mouth as the fiddle. It is rarely he ventures on this plan, on an exaggerated opinion of its magnitude. And the caution is proper enough, perhaps, as in applying the bow he may miscalculate the exact location of the fiddle; and to offend in this respect, even in the smallest degree, is to disarrange one's nose or mar one's chin. Then, there is another danger. The stalk may lop down, causing an entirely new effort to be made; or it may part in the middle from too great an enthusiasm in closing upon it, leaving a very small particle in the mouth, with the handle in the fingers, and the most palatable and larger part inside the vest. If taken up as a whole on the fork, and we find that new beginners generally pursue this course, it has to be coaxed and crowded into the mouth with as much demonstration as though it was a dog being put out of doors. And when safely housed there is the indigestible end or handle to be disposed of. It cannot be returned to the plate. To be swallowed at all, it must be chewed very fine, and in this process all the delicate and rich flavour of the balance of the stalk is lost in the depraved taste of the tough fibres. A man should become thoroughly familiar with asparagus before going into society with it. Corn on the cob is rather difficult to manage. Perhaps the better way is to cut off the corn, but to the beginner very unsatisfactory results quite frequently attend this operation. If he hears too hard, and he invariably will, on the top of the cob, the lower end, resting on the plate, will suddenly slip from its place, and plough through the small dishes with awful ferocity, leaving ruin and desolation in its train. Stone fruits should be prepared without the pits, except in the case of cherries, whose pits are so small as to readily permit of their being bolted into the system in great quantities. But with prunes and peaches it is an altogether different matter, and unless a man's oesophagus is of a most accommodating nature, a less alarming disposition of the pits than swallowing them must be discovered. This a serious dilemma to the diffident man. In the home circle they may be spilled out on the cloth or thrown under the table. But in society these simple means of escape are frowned upon. If a man has a goodly number of hollow teeth they can be quietly conveyed to such receptacles for the time being, but in absence of this he must either eject them into a spoon and thence to the plate, as society demands, or carry them banked under his tongue until he can get away from the table and slip them back of the ottoman. Next to asparagus, chipped potatoes are a source of well-grounded apprehension in the mind of the man who has given no study to table etiquette. Of a strikingly tempting appearance, he takes them on his plate without realizing the awful danger he is rushing upon. He does understand that a knife is tabooed in lifting food to the mouth, and he resorts to his fork, and begins to think that there are some things which are more easily lifted with the latter than with the former article. A chipped potato is such a thing in appearance only. It cannot be speared without breaking it, and to get one across the tines is only to follow it four times around the circumference of the plate, and to have it roll off nineteen out of every twenty times it is secured. A slice of chipped potato, if untrammelled in its movements, will weaken the most powerful intellect, unsupported by experience. So, really, there is nothing in these things to make sport of, but very much indeed to deplore and grieve over.

MEISSONIER AND HORSE PAINTING.

Governor Stanford, of California, has a fancy for instantaneous photographs of horses in motion. Of the eighty-five hundred views taken of his fine horses, Arabian horses, and pure blooded runners, he has made a choice of some one hundred and fifty views, which he has had handsomely bound and has brought with him to Europe. Meissonier had seen one of the photographs and was desirous of examining the entire collection. He at first supposed that the same sixty photographs on the same plate had been taken on different intervals, and said to Governor Stanford that the one position which we invariably see with the naked eye had been omitted; but when Governor Stanford explained to him that each photograph had been taken in the five-thousandth

part of a second, and that twenty-four had all been taken successively within the space of a half-second, the bright eyes of the little man were filled with wonder and astonishment. "How!" he said, "all these years have my eyes deceived me!" "The machine cannot lie," answered Governor Stanford. The artist would not allow himself to be convinced, and rushing to the other room, brought forth a miniature horse and rider made of wax by his own hand. Nothing could be more perfect, more beautiful, than this statuette. The horse was in the position of one moving at a slow gait, but he explained that he was the first to find this position, and when he first painted his horse all cried out against him, denying that such was correct. However, at the present day all horses are painted in the same manner. The artist insisted that there must exist the position which all persons discern of extended limbs when the horse is at full speed, but Governor Stanford explained to him how horses were obliged to sustain a center of gravity, and eventually proved to him that were the horse in the position he described he must necessarily on coming to the ground break in two. It was almost pitiful to see the old man sorrowfully relinquish his convictions of so many years, and tears filled his eyes as he exclaimed that he was too old to unlearn now and begin anew.—Paris Letter to Sacramento Union.

VARIETIES.

A FRIEND writing from Milan tells a piquant anecdote, illustrative of the spread of knowledge through Italy. His little daughter arrived one day from the dancing school full of excitement at her promotion to the class in which the "Sirocco" was danced, which, being considered the most elegant and difficult dance of all, argues the attainment of perfection in the dancer. The proud father was delighted, and went to the school to witness the triumph of his child in that new Italian dance. He was astonished at finding that it was nothing but "Sir Roger de Coverly" transformed into "Il Sirocco," and advertised to be taught at all the fashionable academies in Milan!

"WHEN we are married, Lucy," said the poor man's son to the rich man's daughter, "our honeymoon shall be passed abroad. We will drive in the Bois, promenade in the Prada, gaze down into the blue waters of the Adriatic from the Rialto, and enjoy the Neapolitan sunsets, strolling along the Chiaia." "How delicious," she murmured, "but John, dear, have you money enough to do all this? for pa says I needn't expect anything till he dies." John's countenance underwent such a change that she couldn't help asking him if he felt sick. "No, darling," he answered faintly. "I am not sick. I was only thinking that perhaps we had better postpone the marriage until after the funeral."—Brooklyn Eagle.

THE ADVENTURES OF A POST-CARD.—A member of a club at Chaux de Fonds, having made a bet that he would send a post-card round the world, addressed one to "Messrs. Maniglet and Co. 13, Rue de la Balance, Marseilles, France; Cairo, Egypt; Bombay, India; Hong Kong, China; Yokohama, Japan; San Francisco, California; New York, United States; return to Messrs. Maniglet and Co., at Chaux de Fonds, Switzerland." In one corner of the post-card were the words—"Post-masters are requested to forward." The post-card in question was duly returned at the end of August, bearing the post-marks of Marseilles, April 2; Port Said, April 9; Suez, April 12; Bombay, April 26 and 27; Hong-Kong, May 20; Yokohama, June 6 and 11; and San Francisco, June 27. The card had been stopped at New York, but on the 15th of August it was sent on in an official envelope, accompanied by an intimation that, according to the regulations of the Postal Union, cards of this kind should not be transmitted through the post.

A BOURBON ANECDOTE.—John J. Crittenden used to tell this anecdote to illustrate the fidelity of his people to the "wine of the country": A leading politician of the State (Kentucky), stopping for the night at the house of a countryman in one of the southeastern counties, found the entertainment he got the more satisfactory because of a barrel of very respectable whiskey having been just brought in. Returning a month afterward from an electioneering tour, and disappointed in not being able to get even a drink, he reminded the host, with some impatience, that only a month ago he had a barrel full in his pantry. The look that preceded the answer to this reminder was composed of surprise and resentment:

"Looker here, my friend, do you spect one bar'l o' whiskey to last *always*, and 'specially when a man's got a wife and six children, and the cow's gone dry, and they've got no milk?" "Never!" answered the candidate—"certainly not. I didn't understand the situation, or I'd never have asked so foolish a question. This molasses-and-water is—well, it's simply—splendid."—Editor's Drawer, in Harper's Magazine for November.

WOULD NOT BE WITHOUT IT.—One who has fairly tested Dr. Fowler's Extract of Wild Strawberry, though prejudiced against proprietary medicines in general, writes—"I would not rest over night without this reliable remedy for sudden attacks of Cholera, Cramps and Cholera Morbus so prevalent in the summer season. I keep a bottle ready at hand."