

THE ROMANCE OF M. DE BELLEISLE.

(By James Payne, in Harper's Handy Series.)

It will surprise some young people of the United States to learn that so late as the last century "a great tract of American territory called Louisiana" was transferred by the French Government to the West India Company, who sent a thousand men under the command of M. de Belleisle to people it. They will be still more astonished to learn that St. Bernard's Bay in the Gulf of Mexico, to which that gentleman's ship was carried by adverse winds, was at that time a region inhabited by cannibals. At this spot in company with four brother officers, M. de Belleisle, having ventured too far on a shooting excursion, and being given up for lost, had the misfortune to be left behind. The little party suffered great extremities of hunger, and demanded their commander's dog, which, though he refused to be a party to its destruction, he gave up to them. But as they were weakened by their privations, the animal broke away from them as they were about to kill him, and disappeared in the woods.

The four officers all died of hunger under M. de Belleisle's eyes, who dug holes in the sand for their bodies, though near to death himself. The extremities to which he was reduced were such that "overcoming the natural disgust which they created, he subsisted on the worms he found in rotten wood." A few days after the death of his comrades his faithful dog suddenly reappeared, and "fawning upon his master, and with great demonstrations of joy," laid an opossum at his feet. Perhaps he was merely performing the natural duties of a retriever, but it is no wonder that M. de Belleisle attributed to the animal a nobler motive; it seemed to him to say, "Here is wherewithal to support life, master."

Nevertheless, it was fated that he should lose the dog, though it could hardly be said that they parted company. As he slept one night at the foot of a tree, a tiger came to the spot and seized the poor animal, and though he let go his hold, it was terribly wounded. Fearing lest it should go mad, M. de Belleisle compelled himself to kill the dog, and then—to such lengths can hard necessity drive human nature—he ate it.

After wandering about in solitude for days, he fell into the hands of the Attakapas, an Indian tribe whose name was derived from their practice of drying human flesh before devouring it. M. de Belleisle, however, was so miserably emaciated that the idea of drying him did not occur to them. "They took him for a spectre, till he pointed to his mouth and implored for food." They gave him human flesh and fish, to which latter dish he of course confined himself; and then, stripping him of his clothes, they divided them among themselves, and carried him to their village to fatten.

It is difficult to imagine a more unpleasant state of affairs than this. Nothing, it is said, need to alarm Lord Byron like the idea of growing fat, but M. de Belleisle was much more alarmed than Lord Byron. "He was consumed with terror at beholding the savages feast upon the fattest of their prisoners of war, and in constant expectation of attaining the least plumpness, of sharing their fate, and having his brains beaten out with clubs." One would have thought that the mere apprehension of such a fate would have kept him as thin as a lath. But he was reserved for a far other fate. An ancient Attakapa widow took a fancy to him, and adopted him as her son. From that moment he was set at liberty, and considered one of the nation, "and soon learned the Indian manner of conversing in dumb show and of using the bow and arrow." Having been

so fortunate as to slay a number of some hostile tribe, he was regarded as a warrior which did not, however, secure him against practical jokes.

On a certain hunting expedition, when he had made, as he flattered himself, a very respectable meal on venison, an Indian said to him: "How feeble is prejudice! Formerly you couldn't touch human flesh, and now you have been unconsciously enjoying it amazingly." Poor M. de Belleisle was thereupon exceedingly unwell.

Two years afterwards, certain deputies arrived from a distant tribe, who, "attentively gazing" on the unhappy Frenchman, observed that in the country they came from (New Mexico) there were white men like him. He had preserved his commission in a box, and having made some ink from soot, he contrived to write at the bottom of the document: "I am the individual above mentioned; I was abandoned in St. Bernard's Bay. My companions died of hunger, and I am captive among the Attakapas." He gave this in private to one of the deputies, informing him that it was "speaking paper," and that if he presented it to the chief of the French in his own country he would be well rewarded.

But the deputy was so foolish as to tell the secret, and the other Indians, thinking the paper was something magical and valuable, tried to snatch it from him. He slipped through their fingers, however, by swimming across a river, holding the document, lest it should get wetted, like Cesar, above his head. "After a journey of four hundred and fifty miles he arrived in the country of the Natches." The French commander there, M. de St. Denis, was an officer of distinction; "he had made the first journey overland, from Louisiana to Mexico, where he married the Spanish Governor's niece, and was greatly respected." Upon receiving his countryman's letter, he was moved with pity for him, and at once dispatched ten mounted Indians, with guns, to his assistance.

The Attakapas had never heard a gun fired, and when these visitors discharged their muskets, took it for portable thunder. Under these circumstances they permitted M. de Belleisle to leave them without the least resistance; otherwise they were very unwilling to lose him, and the poor widow wept bitterly on his departure. Thus he escaped from a captivity which would otherwise certainly have lasted his days.

This brief romance of real life ends very prettily. The Spanish Governor, who had never been able to conquer the Attakapas, sent them presents for their kindness to their prisoner, with an especial gift to the widow; moved by which unexpected generosity, they sent ambassadors in their turn to make alliance, and these were accompanied by the widow herself. "Since that period," our author gravely informs us, "the inhabitants of Louisiana have left off eating human flesh," as indeed my readers may have heard from other sources.

THE TWELVE DANCING PRINCESSES.

There was a king who had twelve beautiful daughters. They slept in twelve beds, all in one room; and when they went to bed, the doors were shut and locked up, but every morning their shoes were found to be quite worn through, as if they had been danced in all night; and yet nobody could find out how it happened, or where they had been.

Then the king made it known to all the land, that if any person could discover the secret, and find out where it was that the princesses danced in the night, he should

have the one he liked best for his wife, and should be king after his death; but whoever tried and did not succeed, after three days and nights, should be put to death.

A king's son soon came. He was well entertained, and in the evening was taken to the chamber next to the one where the princesses lay in their twelve beds. There he was to sit and watch where they went to dance, and in order that nothing might pass without his hearing it, the door of his chamber was left open. But the king's son soon fell asleep; and when he awoke in the morning he found that the princesses had all been dancing, for the soles of their shoes were full of holes. The same thing happened the second and third night; so the king ordered his head to be cut off. After him came several others, but they had all the same luck, and all lost their lives in the same manner.

Now it chanced that an old soldier, who had been wounded in battle, and could fight no longer, passed through the country where this king reigned; and as he was travelling through a wood, he met an old woman who asked him where he was going. "I hardly know where I am going, or what I had better do," said the soldier, "but I think I should like very well to find out where it is that the princesses dance, and then in time I might be a king." "Well," said the old dame, "that is no very hard task; only take care not to drink any of the wine which one of the princesses will bring to you in the evening, and as soon as she leaves you pretend to be fast asleep."

Then she gave him a cloak, and said, "As soon as you put that on you will become invisible, and you will then be able to follow the princesses wherever they go." When the soldier heard all this good counsel, he determined to try his luck, so he went to the king, and said he was willing to undertake the task.

He was as well received as the others had been, and the king ordered him royal robes to be given him, and when the evening came he was led to the outer chamber. Just as he was going to lie down, the eldest of the princesses brought him a cup of wine, but the soldier drank it all away secretly, taking care not to drink a drop. Then he laid himself down on his bed, and in a little while began to snore very loud as if he was fast asleep. When the twelve princesses heard this they laughed heartily, and the eldest said, "This fellow, too, might have done a wiser thing than lose his life in this way!" Then they rose up and opened their drawers and boxes, and took out all their fine clothes and dressed themselves at the glass, and skipped about as if they were eager to begin dancing. But the young man said, "I don't know how it is, while you are so happy I feel very uneasy; I am sure some mischief will befall us." "You simpleton," said the eldest, "you are always afraid; have you forgotten how many kings' sons have already died, even if I had not given him his sleeping draught he would have slept soundly enough."

When they were all ready, they went and looked at the soldier, but he snored on, and did not stir hand or foot, so they thought they were quite safe; and the eldest went up to her own bed and clapped her hands, and the bed sank into the floor, and a trap-door flew open. The soldier saw them going down through the trap-door one after another, the eldest leading the way, and thinking he had no time to lose, he jumped up, put on the cloak which the old woman had given him, and followed them; but in the middle of the stairs he trod on the gown of the youngest princess, and she cried out to her sisters, "All is not right, some one took hold of my gown." "You silly creature," said the eldest, "it is nothing; but a nail in the wall." Then down they all went, and at the bottom they found themselves in a most delightful grove of trees; and the leaves were all of silver, and glittered and sparkled beautifully. The soldier wished to take away some token of the place, so he broke off a little branch, and there came a loud noise from the tree. Then the youngest daughter said again, "I am sure all is not right, did not you hear that noise? That never happened before." But the eldest said, "It is only our princess, who are shouting for joy at our approach."

Then they came to another grove of trees where all the leaves were of gold; and afterwards to a third where the leaves were all glittering diamonds. And the soldier broke a branch from each, and every time there

was a loud noise, which made the youngest sister tremble with fear, but the eldest still said it was only the princess who were crying for joy. So they went on till they came to a great lake; and at the side of the lake there lay twelve little boats with twelve handsome princesses in them, who seemed to be waiting there for the princesses.

One of the princesses went into each boat, and the soldier stepped into the same boat with the youngest. As they were rowing over the lake, the prince who was in the boat with the youngest princess and the soldier said, "I do not know why it is, but though I am rowing with all my might we do not get on so fast as usual, and I am quite tired; the boat seems very heavy to-day." "It is only the heat of the weather," said the princess, "I feel it very warm too."

On the other side of the lake stood a fine illuminated castle from which came the merry music of horns and trumpets. There they all landed and went into the castle, and each princess danced with his princess; and the soldier, who was all the time invisible, danced with them too; and when any of the princesses had a cup of wine set by her, he drank it all up, so that when she put the cup to her mouth it was empty. At this, too, the youngest sister was terribly frightened, but the eldest always "glanced her." They danced on till three o'clock in the morning, and then all their shoes were worn out, so that they were obliged to leave off. The princesses rowed them back again over the lake, but this time the soldier placed himself in the boat with the eldest princess; and on the opposite shore they took leave of each other, the princesses promising to come again the next night.

When they came to the stairs, the soldier ran on before the princesses, and laid himself down; and as the twelve sisters slowly came up very much tired, they heard him snoring in his bed; so they said, "Now all is quite safe;" then they undressed themselves, put away their fine clothes, pulled off their shoes, and went to bed. In the morning the soldier said nothing about what had happened, but determined to see more of this strange adventure, and went again the second and third night; and everything happened just as before; the princesses danced each time till their shoes were worn to pieces, and then returned home. However, on the third night the soldier carried away one of the golden cups as a token of where he had been.

As soon as the time came when he was to declare the secret, he was taken before the king with the three branches and the golden cup; and the twelve princesses stood listening behind the door to hear what he would say. And when the king asked him, "Where do my twelve daughters dance at night?" he answered, "With twelve princesses in a castle underground." And then he told the king all that had happened, and showed him the three branches and the golden cup which he had brought with him. Then the king called for the princesses and asked them whether what the soldier said was true; and when they saw that they were discovered, and that it was of no use to deny what had happened, they confessed it all. And the king asked the soldier which he would choose for his wife, and he answered, "I am not very young, so I will have the eldest." And they were married that very day, and the soldier was chosen to be the king's heir.

HE WAS A COALY DOG.

"Expect they had some fine pups up at the Chicago dog show," remarked a passenger from Ohio, "but I have a dog at home I wouldn't trade for the best of 'em."

"What breed is he?"

"Don't know exactly, but call him a coaly."

"Collie, you mean?"

"No, I mean just what I say—coaly. Money wouldn't buy that dog. He's a cur, but we couldn't keep house without him. You see several years ago I trained him to bark at the railway trains as they pass our house. That's his sole business—barking at trains. Well, he annoys the railway so that every fireman and brakeman on the road have sworn to kill him. Oh, but he is a valuable dog!"

"I can't see where the value comes in." "You can't? Well, you could if you was in my place and had all the coal you could burn and some to sell through right off at your back door, free of cost."—*Train Talk, Chicago Herald.*