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## XAVIER: OR COURAGE AND PERSEVERANCE.

(Translated from the French, by John Joseph Curran.)

At the very moment I was about to begin my story, I was distracted by the beating of a drum, accompanied by the joyous and tumultuous shouts of the people. It was a troop of young recruits who, under the national banner, were marching through the streets of the city. The sight of these young men filled me with a lively emotion. It was on a similar occasion that I, for the first time, saw, at Ribeauville in Alsacia, Xavier who is to play the principal role in the following narrative. The young recruits of those days, like those of the present time, used to march through the streets of the city; the same joy was always manifested, flags and ribbons were to be seen in all directions; but, at that time, there was, perhaps, more enthusiasm amongst the crowd, for then all Europe was in arms against France, and those who remained at home, and who were not called to the field of battle, looked upon those who went to fight for their country as the avengers of the Nation.

Amongst all those who were with him, Xavier—whose high stature attracted the eyes of all the lookers on—was the only one on whom grief seemed to have made the slightest impression; he was pale, and his eyes indicated that he had shed many sorrowful tears. I cannot tell for what reason; but this apparent grief, so badly concealed, seemed to me to be nothing less than the indication of a cowardly heart, and I at once condemned him as a person incapable of fulfilling the duties of a soldier.

This idea did not abandon me during the whole course of the day. It was in vain I attempted to think of anything else; I had ever present in my imagination the sorrowful face of the young soldier. During the evening I went to take a walk in the neighboring fields. I had scarcely quitted the little alley which led from my father's house to the adjoining plains, when I at no great distance, beheld the young soldier whom I had seen that morning in company with a young lady. The distance which separated me from them was too great to allow of my hearing what they were saying, but their gestures, their attitude, and their whole deportment, gave me clearly to understand that they were bidding each other a painful adieu. A slight noise made by me in walking attracted their attention; on perceiving me, they immediately separated, and withdrew in different directions. However, they almost immediately retraced their steps; Xavier opened his arms, and the young lady fell on his bosom, shedding tears in great abundance. For a long time he held her to his heart; but, at length, she drew from her breast a medal of Mary Immaculate, kissed it, and gave it to Xavier, and bidding him once more farewell, they both withdrew, soon disappearing from my sight.

This touching scene ought certainly to have taken effect upon me; while it on the contrary, seemed to irritate me. I felt that the man who could prefer woman's love to that of his country, must be a coward. Judge also of my feelings towards him, when sometime afterwards I discovered that he was not even an ordinary conscript; that he had not the merit of having offered to his country his youth and his arm; in a word, that he was a *remplacant*. He had sold himself, he had given in exchange for a vile sum of money, his blood, his liberty, his right to succeed an aged parent, his right to merit by his bravery the officer's *epaulette*. At that time I was just completing my last year of the study of law; my duties soon caused me to forget this little incident, and before long I had completely forgotten the young soldier and his enamored.

I soon returned to my home, taking with me my diplomas. My mother, proud of my success, lost no time in introducing me to all our friends; hardly a day passed that I did not receive an invitation to attend some party, or at least to join some family circle.

At length the Musicians' Festival arrived. I beheld with pleasure the arrival of that solemnity, that I had seen celebrated with so much pomp and magnificence during the days of my youth. On that day all the Musicians of Alsacia were accustomed to assemble at Ribeauville, the Lord Suzerain, of Ribeauville, in virtue of an immemorial right, used to name the king of the Musicians.

Immediately after the election of the new dignitary, all the artists, richly decorated, and wearing on their breasts silver medals, were accustomed to walk in procession to the pilgrimage of Dissembact, headed by banners and bands of music. An immense concourse of people generally crowded after them, and during the whole Festival of the ancient church, built in the eleventh century by Egenolf, of Ribeauville, rang with the harmony of their music.

During the evening the people spread over the plains and fields, and magnificent bonfires enlivened the scene.

Since that time a revolution took place in France, leaving after it naught but ruin and desolation. The Lord of Ribeauville, one of whose descendants was destined to be afterwards seated on the throne of Bavaria, was exiled, the body of Musicians was broken up, and of the ancient church of Egenolf nothing remained but a heap of ruins, and even the image of the Virgin, which, some hundred years before, had been brought from the Holy Land, had disappeared, and no longer protected the surrounding country.

However, there still remained at Ribeauville a numerous population. A number of Musicians, faithful to the ancient custom, had come that day to celebrate their festival; the youth of the city wished to enjoy the pleasure which had fallen to the lot of their forefathers in the days of their childhood. That year was the one which followed the campaign of Egypt; Bonaparte had returned to France, bringing with him order and peace, to the interior of the nation. It is true he had not as yet opened the closed doors of our churches, but the rage of persecution had subsided, and here and there might be seen numbers of the faithful listening attentively to the voice of their pastors. I happened to assist, on this occasion, at the mysteries of our divine religion, in one of these hidden places of worship, where the faithful were obliged to assemble. Alas! Catholicity did not display in those places any of that pomp which generally characterizes our religion; four bare walls formed the Temple, a few boards hastily nailed together the altar, and he who offered the sacrifice was an old and venerable priest, who had escaped the fury of the revolutionary party. But the piety and devotion of that assembled crowd well replaced the lack of ornaments, and the fervor of the congregation was a sufficient mark that God was there listening to their prayers.

At my side was a young girl whose modesty attracted my attention. She was not precisely beautiful, but there was in her countenance so much affection, her brow was so pure, her look so soft and melancholic that she soon absorbed all my attention. I thought I had seen her before, but where or at what time was more than I could remember.

At length the sacrifice commenced. Oh! readers what a spectacle! one must have seen our churches profaned, the images of our Saints destroyed, the sacred ornaments dragged in the streets, to understand the devotion with which the multitude assisted at the accomplishment of the greatest of our mysteries. Every thing being completed the congregation left the church. During the day, while walking in the city, I once more saw the young lady who, at Mass in the morning, had attracted my attention. She was in company with a middle aged man, whose features indicated a considerable amount of fatherly love. It was he rather than his partner, who enjoyed the walk, for the young lady's mind was evidently fixed on something else.—Desirous of knowing whom she might be, I approached nearer to where they were, and by entering into conversation with the gentleman, I endeavored to derive the necessary information. As I spoke rather freely, the person who accompanied her, perceiving my object, could not conceal a smile, and remarked:—

"You attempt in vain to elicit any thing from her. Mary has promised not to speak, and you know when women have taken anything into their head."

"But, Mr. Bossu," said the young lady, with a suppliant air, "why do you tease me so today?" The name of Bossu brought to my recollection when I had seen the girl, and I was about to move away when my mother came up to us. She was acquainted with Mary, the young lady in question, and appeared much pleased at seeing her. Little by little the conversation grew less reserved; Mary showed so much natural talent; she appeared so good and so loving that I felt delighted with her company, my prejudice against the young soldier commenced to be dispelled, for I felt that he who could win so noble a heart must certainly be a worthy man.

Old Mr. Bossu was a very talkative man, and I had not the least difficulty in inducing him to speak of Xavier. At the name of Xavier a tear rolled on his cheek. Mary, who had turned one side when mention was made of her beloved, perceived it, and cast on him a reproachful and anxious glance.

Mr. Bossu seeing her said, "You are right, Mary, I should not regret him so much, since you still remain with me. My son will certainly return; I hear an interior voice which assures me of it." He then narrated to me the whole history of his much regretted son. Readers, imagine my remorse when I thought of the prejudiced opinion I had formed of the young man. The soldier whom I had judged unworthy of esteem was a model of heroism and filial love.—For his father he had abandoned all; his position in society, his future prospects, and all his hopes;

it was to earn for him a livelihood, that he had consented to expose himself daily to an almost certain death. Before the commencement of the Revolution, Mr. Bossu had been a weaver. From his youth he had always remained in partnership with another weaver named Houser, who was his most intimate friend. They had married during the same year, two sisters, and had each become a father—Bossu of a son, our friend Xavier; Houser, of a daughter, the young lady already spoken of. During a number of years, they had carried on their business in a very prosperous manner and their labor and economy placed their families in a position to live respectably. However, they were not destined long to enjoy so happy an existence. Houser's wife died, and was shortly afterwards followed by her sister, to the grave. The widowers after their death, resolved not to marry again, but to devote themselves solely to the education of their children. But it was in vain that to forget their misfortune they redoubled their ardor in their daily labors; in spite of themselves, their mind was ever attached to those whom they had so dearly loved, and who had been taken from them. Houser, the younger and stronger of the two, fell a victim to his sorrow; but in dying he had at least the satisfaction to know that his friend would act as a father towards his daughter.

Immediately after the death of his brother-in-law, Bossu appeared to be quite a new man.—The sorrow which had heretofore undermined his constitution, gave way to an activity and an energetic courage which surprised all around him. Day and night he applied himself to his labor with renewed diligence; his children, for he had adopted the daughter of his deceased friend, were his only distraction, and their presence was sufficient to renew his strength when a toilsome day had worn it out. Mary was soon able to conduct the household affairs; and, thanks to the education bestowed on her by a friend, was capable of managing the accounts of her adopted father. Xavier, who had grown up strong and healthy, learned his father's trade.—In the midst of their happiness the revolution broke out. This event was a stronger blow to Mr. Bossu than all the others. All kinds of industry were ruined: money could not be obtained; in fine all the miseries—companions of war—invaded the country. Bossu, although discouraged by the misfortune, seeing that his family could not do without his labor, worked with greater energy than before. But the country had been impoverished by the emigration of the nobility, and by the general tremor, and finally it became altogether impossible to import or export goods. Bossu found himself obliged to exchange his manufacture for other merchandise; these goods in their turn lost their value; his creditors refused to accept them for his liabilities; and one day he had the misfortune to learn that the house—where his father and wife had lived and died—was about to be sold.

During the evening of the day that this sad intelligence was made known, Bossu was seated in his arm-chair near the huge family store; Mary was silently working in a corner in an opposite direction. The table-cloth and some eatables which still remained on the table, indicated that Xavier had not yet returned; and the anxious looks which the young girl cast now and again at the clock, the tic-tac of which alone disturbed the silence of the apartment, showed sufficiently that it was not customary for him to remain from home during so long a time. At length the door was opened with a great noise. "Father!" cried Xavier, "the house will not be sold! Here are six thousand francs with which to pay your debts!" and so saying, he threw on the table a purse containing the amount in gold and silver. Mary approached nearer; but, as if thunder-struck, she shrieked, and fell senseless on the floor. She had perceived on Xavier's hat, the insignia of the conscript. Xavier, after employing all the means that love could suggest, contrived to bring her to her senses. "I cannot accept your sacrifice, my son," said the father; "that girl loves you too much. Take back the money; God will not abandon us!"

"Xavier, save your father from ruin!" said Mary. "Go, and praying for you, I shall await your return." The next day he left home.

From that time I was the intimate friend of Bossu, and Mary's confidant, I had the privilege of reading first the numerous letters sent her by Xavier. The arrival of these letters, the greater number dated on the day after a victory, was, for my young acquaintance, the source of, at least, a momentary joy and happiness. Habitually she was pale and melancholic; on the reception of a letter, her cheeks became rosy, and all that day the house rang with our old Alsacia songs.

But Xavier did not feel at home in the army. His heroic courage, his exemplary conduct, all was of no avail, he could aspire to nothing, because he was a *remplacant*. An old counsellor

of the Supreme Court of Colmas, had indeed promised, at my request, to write to his Colonel, and to explain to him the motives that had induced Xavier to sell his liberty. But the old military prejudice prevailed over every other consideration, and the result of the Counsellor's endeavors was merely that of obtaining for our hero the grade of *Tambour Major*. Thus his whole thought was, as he himself remarked, to find a convenient opportunity of sending his drum-stick to the ministry, and to allow the government to arrange matters as best it could. All at once Xavier's letters ceased to arrive. At Mary's request I wrote to the Minister of War, to the army, everywhere. But the regiment to which he belonged was stationed in the far end of Germany, correspondence was no easy matter, and after all my efforts, I could learn nothing concerning him. Six months passed in this manner. I had obtained a situation in the Imperial Court of Colmar, and my numerous occupations caused me for some time to neglect Ribeauville and the Bossu family.

One day I received a note from my mother announcing the visit of a person who desired to see me very much. I left without delay, and judge of my surprise when I beheld Mary seated beside my mother. My first word was for Xavier.

"It is no longer a question of Xavier, but of myself. Xavier no longer writes to me; he is dead, or has forgotten me. Why then should I think of him any longer? No, no; I have made up my mind. A very honest man has requested me to become his wife; his fortune is far above anything that I could have expected; I therefore accept the offer without the least hesitation."

This language was so cold and sordid, was so directly opposite to what I knew of the character of Mary, and of her love for Xavier, that I thought I had misunderstood her words.

"You wish to get married?" said I. "Well, decidedly! What is there in that to astonish you? I am twenty-one years of age; I am free, and it is time that I should think of making a home for myself."

While she was speaking, I studied her appearance carefully. Poor girl! how changed she was! Her colorless face presented a sickly aspect; her eyes sunk into their orbits, shone with a feverish fire, and in the expression of her words there could easily be detected, a strong remorse or suffering of a very serious nature.

"And might I ask, Miss, the name of the person who has been fortunate enough to cause you to forget your vows and your love of Xavier?"

"His name," said she, "is Mr. Samuel Bohmer."

The name was for me another cause of surprise. In my capacity of magistrate, I had received a number of complaints and denunciations against this Bohmer, who, at that very time, was being subject to a judiciary investigation. Bohmer, son of a lawyer's clerk, had during the revolution, abandoned himself to all sorts of excesses—Schneider, the public accuser of execrable memory, had employed him as his secretary; and, thanks to the terror which his patron inspired, he had obtained at an exceedingly low figure, magnificent lots of the national property. Having miraculously escaped the condemnation which overtook Schneider, he sold his property at the return of peace, and thus realised considerable profit. Later he associated himself with a company of speculators, to purchase rents with which certain properties were encumbered. The Chief of the Association had just been arrested under a criminal accusation, and Bohmer had been allowed to remain at liberty, merely because the evidence was not strong enough against him. And this was the man that Mary wished to marry.

It was in vain that I attempted to force her to abandon her resolution. It was in vain that I recalled to her mind the despair of Xavier, when he should return; and the shame and disgrace that would come down on herself should she become the wife of a man so universally despised. To all my observations her invariable answer was: "It must be so, I am decided." At length my patience abandoned me. "Well," said I, "since you don't wish to save yourself, I shall leave you. You are twenty-one years of age, it is true; but you are a minor as far as marriage is concerned. I will go to Mr. Bossu; I will explain to him his powers, if he be ignorant of them; and all my influence will be exerted in order to prevent him from granting his consent."

"Oh! you will not do that! you will not do that!" said she, joining her hands; "the marriage must take place absolutely; and my object in coming to speak to you, was in order that you might inform Mr. Bossu of my resolution."

"I, a magistrate, to have anything to do with such an affair!"

"You have already been severe toward;

Xavier," continued Mary, bathed in tears, "once more, you judge me without having heard me; that is not right; I thought you knew me better than you do."

Mary's reproach, and the painful accent in which she addressed me, went straight to my heart. I begged of her to explain everything to me, and this is what she told me:

"With the price of Xavier's liberty, his father had paid all his debts, and given a new impulse to his business. The years of peace brought on by the consulate permitted him to extend his operations; he enlarged his manufacturing business, and in a short time found himself obliged to purchase the building adjoining his own, in order properly to carry on his extensive trade.

"The house was in good condition, and the price reasonable; the opportunity was, therefore a good one, and still it was a speculation destined to ruin Mr. Bossu. The property was encumbered by overstanding rents of which very few knew anything, even the Notary was ignorant of their existence. However, hardly had the house been purchased, when, as if by miracle, the papers were discovered, and discovered in the hands of Bohmer. This man vindicated his rights. A lawsuit took place; the case was a difficult one, and was conducted so skilfully by Bohmer's lawyer, that a judgment was rendered in his favor.

"Mr. Bossu had already undergone so many misfortunes; he had so often seen the edifice of his fortune so laboriously constructed, tumble down, that this trial was destined to give the death blow to his courage. Moreover, Xavier was not present; his prolonged absence caused Mr. Bossu to believe him dead, and the unfortunate father had not even the voice of a friend to console him in his afflictions.

"Under these circumstances, I decided on going to Bohmer, despite the natural repugnance which I had for the man. I besought him to abandon his claim, or at least to grant Mr. Bossu a short delay.

"As I went into the house, I felt as if I had entered a prison for life. The house, and its smoky appearance, the old furniture of every age, and every shape, with which it was fitted up, the cold chill that seized me so soon as I entered the damp passage; everything, in fact, seemed to foretell that a great misfortune was about to befall me.

"I had often seen Bohmer in the street, but it appeared to me that I then beheld him for the first time. He was clothed in a morning gown of white canvas, on which were painted little yellow and red flowers; he was hastily engaged before a large bureau covered with old, yellow, and dirty papers and parchments. He hardly lifted his head when I entered, and answered my bow by merely showing me a chair; he then attended to an account which seemed to absorb his attention a great deal. I had plenty of time to examine him fully; and no sooner had I remarked his low and wrinkled forehead, his short, dark, and coarse hair, his sombre countenance, than I felt as if I were in the presence of a revolutionary judge, about to pronounce sentence of death upon me. After some time he turned towards me, and said, 'What can I do for you, Miss?' Sir, I replied, I am Mr. Bossu's niece, and I desire to speak to you concerning the judgment you obtained against him. 'Ah! yes,' said he, 'the expropriation judgment; and at the same time, he laid his hand on one of the large records which lay before him. 'Ha!' said he, 'I was just looking over that affair, and as I perceive, the appeal delay has expired; I was about to send the papers to my bailiff.' But, sir, said I, is it possible that matters cannot be arranged without having recourse to such extremes?"

"What means? Your uncle purchased a house on which I have certain claims recognised by law. Unfortunately the person who sold him the house was a rogue; but what can I do? I want my money as well as other people. If Mr. Bossu pays me he will keep the house; if he does not do so, he will be obliged to leave it—and that is all I can say."

"Alas! sir, by doing so you will cause his death."

"Bah! bah! people do not die so very easily; and at any rate what can I do?"

"I immediately perceived that any attempt to soften him would be useless. Nevertheless, I related to him the misfortunes that had afflicted our family; I told him how my uncle had battled against trials of every description; I spoke to him of the filial piety and of the sacrifice of Xavier; in a word, I showed him how, in very short time, everything might be settled satisfactorily, if he would only grant a short delay. But to all my remarks he answered, 'Very true, very true—but what can I do?'"

"At length, despairing, I stood up, and was about to leave the apartment. Bohmer on a sign, and caused me to resume my seat. He commenced to walk up and down the room, and for a short time seemed occupied in profound meditation.