

Poetry.

ANEMONE, OR WINDFLOWER:

VARIABLENESS.

"Unstable as water thou shalt not excel."—Gen. xlix. 4.

Now ardent for the battle; now Turning back with fear-struck brow;

As on the shore the swelling wave

Doth eger roll the sands to lave;

And then with trembling heaving back,

As swiftly in its own track—

So, oft with frantic haste thou hast

The sober-minded pilgrim past;

And then mid flowers at sport and play

Lift loitered out thy closing day.

Shame on thee! Shame! Unstable thou

Hast oft times stained thy cross-girded brow;

Thou to the world unheeding bore;

Thy first-best and most of scorn;

And with thyself, thy Savour there

Hast led its scoffs and jeers to bear.

O thou! (in name) CRUISE! soldier, strive

A more determined life to live;

But one thing do, and let that be,

A living for eternity.

R. W.

THE GRENADEER.

On the 18th of October, 1812, Napoleon, accompanied by the Prince d'Eckmuhl, better known as Marshal Davoust, commanding the first division, commenced that eventful retreat from Moscow so disastrous to the immense army that had followed him.

At the close of a march which had been rendered more difficult by the state of the roads and continual rain, the emperor arrived on the 23d at Borovsk, and there passed the night. The next morning, while indicating the order of march so to gain Maro-Jaroslavit, where he counted on making some stay, he learned that, at the distance of four leagues before him, the Delizian division, under the orders of Prince Eugene, had found that village, with the surrounding woods and heights, unoccupied.

"Colonel," replied Trigaud, with a stoical tranquillity, "you may charge me with such if you please, but I laugh at it. Dead or alive, we shall carry you to Smolensk. It is the order of the marshal, and he never requires that his orders should be obeyed."

"You are but a coward," said he to Trigaud, "who will not dare to do what I ask—to shoot me through the head!"

"Believe me, Monsieur le Marechal? Nevertheless, we have already passed more than six leagues." "It is true here, but Moscow is not more than a hundred and sixty versts altogether from Maro-Jaroslavit. Four days' march is sufficient to clear that distance, and it is our sixth day. Koutouff has been in advance of us."

"Is it then a battle?" said Napoleon, impatiently, as the cannon were heard more distinctly, and seemed to be approaching. "Go, Davoust, go; quicken your troops, and infuse a note of your spirit into them; for we must act now—not to conquer, but solely to preserve."

Notwithstanding the haste with which the marshal executed the orders of the emperor, he did not arrive on the scene of action until after the success of the French troops had been assured. However, the combat still raged with fury at the extremity of the village, which presented the most horrible spectacle. Delzon and his brother general had also fallen while leading the last attack. While thinking over the blighted hopes of his emperor, and mourning the fate of his brave companions the attention of Davoust was arrested by the voice of a soldier, who, covered with blood, and endeavoring to extricate himself from the heap of carnage which surrounded him, feebly exclaimed, "Heavens! my friends left me here to die without succour!"

It was Koblinski. Davoust immediately recognized him, and leaping from his horse, gently raised the sufferer in his arms, cheered his drooping spirits, and dispatched a messenger for the surgeon general. On his arrival with his assistants, he examined the wounds and the glance exchanged with the marshal told more eloquently than words could convey how slight were the hopes entertained of the recovery of the unfortunate Pole.

"It is a soldier's fate," said Davoust in a voice trembling with emotion, "Gentlemen, exert your skill to the utmost." The effect of the bullet had been such as to make amputation necessary, which the brave Pole bore with fortitude, the Prince remaining by his side during the operation. The wound being dressed, he embraced the sufferer, and spoke in tones of hope and encouragement; and having recommended him to the care of a few whom he could confide in, mounted his horse to join the emperor, who waited with impatience.

The marshal addressing the man who had first spoken, demanded his name. "Joseph Trigaud."

"Well, Trigaud, it is to you that I confide my aide-de-camp. Thou and thy comrades shall be answerable for him. Soldiers, guard him as you would your colours."

"Yes, yes, Vive l'Empereur! We are responsible!" cried all the grenadiers.

A litter was immediately constructed, on which the Pole was laid, and carried in the centre of the company, which soon after continued its march. In the meanwhile, the retreat of the main body of the army, commenced at first in good order, soon presented, from the intensity of the frost, a frightful aspect of disorganization, selfishness, and misery. The company of grenadiers slowly pursued their course, and were soon isolated amidst immense plains covered with the wrecks of the army. Sometimes in a square, with the litter of Koblinski in the centre, they repulsed with the bayonet the charges of the dragoons of Miloradovitch, or returned the unexpected attacks of Platon with a withering fire, ever acting on the defensive, but always calm, silent and steady. By these means their numbers had gradually diminished, and when, on the 30th of October, they reached Viazna, out of the entire company of grenadiers, not more than thirty survived. Still these brave men, abandoned and left to themselves, preserved, amidst the general discontent, that moral force which conquers even events. It was their honour, and not their lives, that they sought to defend. It was sufficient for them that one of the most illustrious marshals of their emperor had said to them, "To your honour and bravery, I confide my aide-de-camp: you are to restore him to me."

These words had acted as a talisman, which had not lost its force under the pressure of misery, privations, and even death.

After three weeks of continual hardship, the few men who remained of the devoted and heroic company scouted with disdain, and looked on as an affront, the repeated prayers and solicitations of the Pole, who, seeing himself the cause of so many sacrifices and sufferings, had besought them to save themselves by at once putting an end to his misery.

"Thou art but a coward," said he to Trigaud, "who will not dare to do what I ask—to shoot me through the head!" "Colonel," replied Trigaud, with a stoical tranquillity, "you may charge me with such if you please, but I laugh at it. Dead or alive, we shall carry you to Smolensk. It is the order of the marshal, and he never requires that his orders should be obeyed."

"If you had but buried me yesterday in the snow, when attacked by the Cossack, I should ere to-day have suffered no more."

"The Cossacks would have disinterred and buried you alive," replied Trigaud, who during the previous night had made his own body a protection to the wounded man. "Those eaters of candles would rejoice to have your skin; but they must first take mine—is ready for them. Oh, the savages!"

"You are but a coward," repeated the Pole, in a feverish transport, which shook the litter on which he lay.

"Be calm, be calm, my colonel; you know that the carbines of the marshal have ere now taught the necessity of obedience. Why then do you wring us by speaking those disagreeable things? However, it is all equal to me; I shall not reply to you." He who spoke thus, nearly perished, with all his companions, in the passage of the Voss, while endeavoring to protect the sacred deposit confided to them. The waters of the torrents were, within twenty-four hours, changed into sharp and bristling masses of ice; and owing to this circumstance, but a few of the grenadiers reached the opposite bank. Some days subsequently, when Trigaud awoke after a few hours repose, he found that but four of his comrades survived, the others having perished from the stupifying effects of the frost—a miniature of what the great body of the army was at that moment suffering, and which has left in the military annals of Napoleon such horrible reminiscences. Before the day had closed, they distinguished, on the edge of the gloomy horizon, a line of houses, the route to which was marked by the dead bodies left by the immense army which had proceeded there. It was Smolensk—the land of promise—where the things looked forward to as the greatest luxuries might be procured—a fire, shelter and a little bread. A cry of joy escaped the five brave men who still supported the litter of Koblinski. Three, however, fell to rise no more when within sight of the town; a fourth soon after shared the same fate; and but one grenadier—Trigaud—was left to brave the elements with the now inanimate body of the Pole. Not being able to carry him, he slowly dragged him along, and at length perceiving some men at a distance, called to them for assistance. They soon came to his aid, and he reached Smolensk in a few hours, after twenty-two days of fighting, fatigue, and misery. He entered, it is true, the only survivor of his company; but he cared not, since he had redeemed the promise made to the Prince d'Eckmuhl.

The next day Trigaud learned that the marshal had arrived but a few days previously, and was then in the town, which presented the appearance of one vast hospital, protected by sentries, and extending to the very suburbs. The skeletons of horses, which had been converted into food, were scattered in every street and the doors and windows of the houses had long since been consumed as fire-wood by the frozen and famishing soldiery. It was in one of the houses in the outskirts of the town that Prince d'Eckmuhl had established his quarters, and thither Trigaud, assisted by some soldier, bore the insensible body of Koblinski and laid it on some straw at the doorway. On entering the house, he perceived an officer on guard in an outer room, enveloped in the ragged remains of a cuirassier's cloak, of whom he demanded to speak with the marshal.

"What seek you of him?" asked the officer, without changing his posture.

"I come to render an account of a mission with which he charged me at Maro-Jaroslavit, and to deliver up the deposit confided to me."

"The prince is at this moment in council; you can remain and rest yourself until it is concluded."

"Certainly," said Trigaud, who spoke in a tone of sadness; "but mayhap, in the meantime, you would make known to him that the grenadiers of the second company of the forty-eighth regiment of the line, Fryant's division, first corps, to whom he entrusted the care of his aide-de-camp, Colonel Koblinski, have fulfilled his orders; and that the company are awaiting the honour of passing under his inspection."

At the name of Koblinski, Davoust, who had entered and heard the latter part of the conversation, but who had not recognized in the worn and emaciated being before him the once noble-looking grenadier, advanced and demanded of him, "Where is my aide-de-camp?" "He is here; at the door."

"And the company?" said Davoust hastily. At these words Trigaud told the posture of a soldier without arms, placed his heels in a line, and slowly raising his head replied in a grave voice, "All present, my marshal!" "I have demanded where are a company of grenadiers of the forty-eighth," repeated the prince in a tone of impatience. "I have replied. Here!" and Trigaud placed the back of his hand to his forehead. "But thy comrades—where are they?" "Ah, that is different, my marshal. You ask where I have left my comrades? That is your question—is it not?" Davoust made a sign in the affirmative impatiently striking his foot on the ground. "Well, that is soon told. The last of them are at the bottom of the Voss, close by; the remainder under the snow. All!"

"How? All?" "All, without an exception," replied the soldier, as his haggard and sunken eyes filled with tears. The prince could not suppress a movement of terror and pity, and seizing the arm of Trigaud, who shook convulsively, he repeated in an agitated tone—"All say you?" "Yes, all, except me. I am the last!" "Without speaking, Davoust moved to the place where Koblinski lay, while Trigaud, raising himself to his full height, proudly exclaimed—"He is here alive! It was I who brought him!"

PROVIDENCE.

(From Littell's Living Age.)

"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" I recollect that, when a lad, I was crossing the east River from New York to Brooklyn, on a very foggy day, in a small ferry-boat. My father and several other individuals, belonging to the same society with himself, were desirous of going to Flushing, on Long Island, to attend a meeting. It was necessary, therefore, to cross the river early, and when we arrived at the foot of Fulton-street, we found that the steamboat had just left the wharf. Being unwilling to wait for its return, we made a company, with the passengers who stood on the ground, sufficient to tempt the ferry-men to put off in a small boat, and convey us across the river. The ferry-men hesitated for some time, but at length the offer of a sufficient reward induced them to set out. The reason of their objection to starting was that the thick fog rendered the passage uncertain. They could scarcely see from one end of the boat to the other; and much they feared that they would lose their way, and row about the river for several hours to no purpose.

At length we set out, the ferry-men magnifying the difficulties of the passage as much as possible, in order to enhance the value of their services. When we first left the wharf, a stranger stepped towards the stern of the boat and took the helm. Every eye was fixed on him who had assumed this responsible station, from which every passenger had shrunk. But now that one of their number had seen fit to take the command of the boat, on whose skill and knowledge solely depended the success of our little voyage, every one was disposed to criticise him. There could be no doubt that if he failed in bringing us safely to the landing-place on the opposite side, he would be obliged to endure the reproaches of every one who had embarked. Indeed, it was soon perceived some were unable to wait for his failure before they gave vent to their feelings. Thinking it a matter of certainty that he could not find the way to the ferry stairs during a fog as impenetrable as mid-night darkness, they began to murmur in anticipation. The ferry-men were the first to evince their uneasiness, by casting glances at each other, which were noticed by the passengers, and regarded as prognostic of ill success. One of the passengers then asked the stranger at the helm, if he did not think he was going too far up the river. The stranger bowed and made answer that if any other gentleman present wished to take the helm, he would resign it to his charge; from which it was readily inferred that so long as he held his place he intended to be guided solely by his own judgment. This answer silenced complaint for a time, as no other individual felt disposed to relieve him of his responsibility.—But the uneasiness of the passengers increased as we proceeded; and when we became entirely surrounded by a fog, and no object in sight by which our course could be directed, the murmurs and conjectures of the little company were audibly expressed.

"Why don't he put the helm up," said one, nestling in his seat. "We shall come out somewhere near the navy yard," said another. "He had better let the helm go and trust to the ferry-men," said a lady present. "Why don't he keep the tiller to him," said an elderly black woman anxiously.

As the stranger paid no attention to these remarks, his silence was set down for obstinacy; and I am afraid that a few observations were added which somewhat exceeded the bounds of civility. The stranger evidently heard these injurious observations, for he made answer again, that if any other gentleman wished to take the helm he would resign it to his hands. Just about this time a dark object appeared on the water, and as it became more visible through the fog, it was recognized as a vessel which lay at anchor between the landing places on either side of the river. This convinced every one that, so far, the stranger had gone as correctly as if the bright sun had shone unclouded upon the river; and silence was at once restored. All murmurs were hushed, satisfaction appeared on every visage. But the vessel very soon faded again in the mist, and again nothing but fog and water surrounded us. Dissatisfaction once more prevailed, and the steersman received a great many instructions in his duty, to which he paid no heed, and only returned for answer, as before, that he was willing to resign his station to any one who would accept it.

After a great deal of fretting and needless discomposure, the travellers perceived land dimly emerging through the dense fog of the morning. Shapeless and unusual as everything appeared, it is to be wondered that some had imagined they had reached the navy yard, about a mile above the proper landing place.—But all doubts were at an end, when the prow of the boat struck the ferry stairs, and we discovered that the stranger had conveyed us as straight as an arrow to our point of destination.

Many years have passed away since the occurrence of this event, yet occasions which have taken place, have frequently brought it to my recollection. When I find fault with the ordering of Providence—when I have heard them undertake to account for His decrees, who maketh darkness his pavilion, and whose ways are past finding out—when I see the good distressed, and apparently ready to murmur at the decrees of Heaven,—I remember the man at the helm; and I say to myself, that however inscrutable may be the great Father of Life, and however he may suffer darkness and doubt to overshadow our souls, he knows what is best for us; and makes all things work together for good in the end. We have a pilot at the helm of the universe who can see through the mists which envelop us, and will bring all his ransomed creation safe to the haven of eternal rest.

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