

FENESTRELLA.

BY T. W. PARSONS.

From this loved window and my Cardinal's chair
I watch the world's face altering with the hours,
From frost and drifts and ice-bound brooks to flowers,
And catch spring-shadows on a landscape bare.

In youth bleak Winter chilled me to despair!
My ravaged woodland walk, my broken bowers,
Brought dreams of death, freezing my folded powers;
Or worse, a life of penury and care!

But Time has taught me this: if hope's a cloud,
Changing its colour till it melt away,
Fear is as fanciful. Our hearts are cowed
By their own conjuring: the ripper day
Finds hopes and fears but battlements of snow.
Wind-built, sun-gilt,—which one night's rain lays low.

A SMOKE ROOM YARN.

BY J. H. B. J.

In a previous number of the CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS has been recorded a yarn told in the smoke room of the S—n, one of the Allan line of steamers, on a voyage across the Atlantic. It was a Christmas Eve and we had many yarns, and after the completion of No. 1, the chairman called for a volunteer as being worth two pressed men for the next, and pending that useful individual declaring himself, proceeded to charge his pipe, and anathemize "Lamps" (the ship's boy) and all his ancestors—if he ever had any—from one generation to another, for neglecting his duty in not providing the needful supply of Eddy's patent safety matches, after which edifying proceeding he summoned the ubiquitous steward and despatched him in search of various cunningly-devised and to be carefully compounded beverages, threatening instant annihilation if that last squeeze of lemon in his "toddy" was exceeded by so much as one drop.

Having by these vigorous efforts blown off the superfluous steam, as he put it—he settled down to a careful scrutiny of the countenances of his audience, expressing his determination, if the volunteer did not quickly come to the front, to proceed to that never failing resort of an absolute monarch—a conscription. This dire necessity was luckily for many of us averted by the interposition of a passenger who offered to read a manuscript in his possession which he explained he had come upon amongst the papers of a deceased relative, and which was entitled "Rough Sketches of a Life."

SCENE I.

Some wise man, an Eastern potentate, possibly an Arabian Knight, on being informed that any of his acquaintances had come to unmitigated grief is credited with the saying—who is she?, his opinion being that a petticoat must be at the bottom of all the evils that male flesh is heir to in this sublunary sphere. Whether this sweeping denunciation of the fair sex is justifiable or not, this deponent sayeth not, but it certainly held good in the case we have now to do with.

Will the reader kindly in imagination transport himself to the village of H—, in one of the midland counties. There at the moment we are writing about he will see a young man listlessly leaning against the door post of the village inn. He is tall, well-formed, his dress a cut between that of a gamekeeper and a gentleman, and yet there is a something indescribable about him, which unmistakably stamps him as belonging to the latter class. His hat cast carelessly aside displays a frank open countenance browned by exposure to the sun; a clear blue eye and a wealth of dark brown hair, complete the picture; his name Geoffrey Grey, his occupation—nothing—a most difficult thing to do well. He is the only son of his mother and she was a widow. His father, who in his lifetime had been the village doctor, died when he was young, leaving a bare competency to his widow.

Geoffrey had been educated (dragged up would be the more appropriate description) at Christ's Hospital the so-called Blue Coat School, and had returned to the maternal roof intending to follow in the footsteps of his father, and with that object in view had registered himself as a disciple of the village Esculapius when "who is she?" as our oriental friend would have said, appeared on the scene. Now it must be understood that I have neither space nor time to make this a three volume novel. I must leave to the fertile imagination of indulgent readers the generally speaking pleasant task of following our hero through the various love scenes incidental to this portion of his history, as their individual tastes may direct; for my present purpose it must suffice that his wooing was unpropitious, and not being a philosopher, like the poet, who must have been a man of singular good sense, who wrote,

"What care I how fair she be
"If she be not fair to me."

He took his rejection in very bad part, and when smarting under the disappointment and humiliation, he met that accommodating and sympathizing individual a recruiting sergeant, prowling round seeking whom he might devour. He fell an easy prey to his seductive eloquence. A few words devoted to a description of this military Adonis will not be entirely lost. His well burnished spurs jingled musically as he strode along, his sword scabbard clanked on the flaps with a truly martial sound, his gold laced jacket was imposing in its gorgeous magnificence; his hair brushed, curled and parted with mathematical precision; his moustache was simply killing, and on his head "perched upon three hairs" he wore his jaunty gold-laced forage cap, and in his hands he twisted the tiniest and

nattiest of canes, and gaily hummed the while a refrain from the latest regimental band selection. Exceedingly well satisfied with the world and much more than satisfied with himself,

In truth he led a merry life
No care had he, no married strife.

No wonder during his brief sojourn

"He stole all the hearts
"Of the maids in those parts."

Such was sergeant McCallum, Royal Horse Artillery, on recruiting service, and soon the transfer was accomplished of the talismanic shilling from the pocket of the sergeant to the palm of Geoffrey Grey, thus completing the purchase of one more fine specimen of food for powder, another seeker of the bubble reputation at the cannon's mouth.

I wonder is it a singular opinion that I hold in believing that we have each one of us a ministering angel watching over us influencing for good, now speaking through the conscience trumpet tongued, now standing in the path with upraised hand warning us of coming evil, rejoicing in our triumphs, sorrowing in our defeat, alas! how often the latter.

If this is so, where was Geoffrey's better angel in this hour of sore trial?

Our hero having been duly warned, knew that he had to join a batch of recruits for whom the hour had come to join the depot of the regiment, and at last the hour came. Time, tide and a recruiting sergeant never waited yet, at all events not for a recruit.

Silently he dressed, gathered his few traps in a satchel and prepared to leave the home that had sheltered him so long. One glance and that a parting one round the little room he called his own; at this moment his eye rested on the note he had written and addressed to his mother, and let us thank God for the honor of human nature that he wavered—he felt a throbbing at his heart and the unwonted tears welled unbidden in his eye. In his mind he pictured her who loved him so well, with a love so unchanging, so unselfish, so devoted, now so unconscious of the sword suspended over her head, the thread sustaining which he was about to sever, and an almost uncontrollable impulse came over him, to rush in and confess how he had done those things he ought not to have done, and left undone those he ought to have done.

Ah! where was his better angel then? Thrust aside, the voice of love and duty smothered by the demon of pride. Pride opened the door and pointed down the stair. That stair down which in days gone by he had oft times ridden "pick a back" a happy innocent child.

The very clock ticked with a solemn and reproachful sound. The crickets on the hearth it seemed to him had changed their tune and chirruped with a mournful note. The very stairs creaked louder than their wont as though determined to protest against so vile a deed; at last the door was reached, the latch was raised and the irrevocable step taken—once in the open air he seemed to breathe again.

The perfume from a thousand flowers and shrubs filled the morning air. The dew drops glistened on the scarce opened flowers, and just then, as though to mock his misery, a lark rose from her dewy lair and mounting heavenward carolled her morning greeting to the rising sun.

These were but a tithe of what he almost unconsciously noticed, but they were stamped upon his memory to be recalled and pondered o'er in after years with many a penitential tear.

Silently he strode along severing an association of his whole life at every step he took, and then arose the picture of that sad awakening of the mother whose grey hairs he was bringing in sorrow to the grave, and whose face he might never see again. Ah, friends, in pity let us turn away, for such a grief as this is surely sacred, draw close the blinds within that stricken household and softly let the curtain fall; for us this scene is ended.

SCENE II.

We pass over an interval of some years before recording the second scene in this sketch, we find our hero in an English garrison town to which he had been consigned like a bale of goods and following up this commercial view imagine him duly marked off, numbered, ticketed and put into stock, in a word a thorough soldier. And now it is not out of place to endeavour to give an idea of what a garrison town is like.

Silkwich is the place, and the barracks naturally claim the first attention. They resemble elongated Brobdiagnian Manchester cotton factories, with an arch connecting the two, duly surmounted by the Royal Arms and very desolate the look (i. e. the Barracks not the Royal Arms.) In front the gravelled parade, and in the distance Silkwich common; to the left the Garrison chapel where the consolations of religion are "served out" weekly (weakly enough) with the regularity of other regimental necessities. At the other extremity of the parade is the Gun Park with its *chevaux de frise* enclosure bristling with "armstrongs," "mortars," modern "muzzle loaders," and ancient carronades. Close at hand the Rotunda rears aloft its head, containing a museum of implements of death, arranged so as to facilitate to the aspiring recruit the comparing of the clumsy manner in which our ancestors licensed murder with the scientific apparatus in this enlightened age, placed in his hands for the satisfactory accomplishment of the same desirable end.

Then comes the main guard with its peripatetic sentry who seems perpetually endeavouring to go somewhere usually in a hurry, changing his mind and returning for all the world like a

wild beast in a cage, varying the process by an occasional halt and a "stand at ease," during which interval in his arduous labours he has time to tip an occasional wink to any good-looking nurse afflicted with military proclivities. But here comes the field officer of the day followed by his mounted orderly. Hark to the sentrie's rattling summons "Guard turn out."

And now a walk down, past hospitals where blue coated patients wile away the weary hours, past long rows of stables where the imaginative warhorse can, if so disposed, cry ha, ha, and smell the battle afar—past soldier's quarters rejoicing in a perpetual washing day and a plethora of embryo artillerymen. Past officer's quarters where beardless warriors, lolling on the steps, vote the service a *baw* and then adjourn to mess; past soldiers great and soldiers small, soldiers red and blue; some on duty, some on pleasure bent. Let us follow one of the latter; of course he cannot pass "The Gun," it is a Silkwich institution and occupies that coign of vantage, a corner. It is in short a Gin Palace, all glorious within and without, rejoicing in plate glass and stucco front no less than three doors labelled respectively wholesale, bottle and family departments. God help the family who patronize this department. "He leaves all hope behind who enters here. "Such ought to be the motto emblazoned on its front.

Let us try the bottle department where we find resplendent in plate glass, mirrors in carved and gilded frames, sparkling glass ware, a cheerful light and a hearty welcome, so long as the money lasts. It is ever thus the devil baits his hook.

Here is a subject worth, when found, making a note of. See that bucolic youth fresh from the plough tail, now overflowing with porter and patriotism, bedecked in party coloured ribbons like the prize cattle he so lately attended, his flushed face and unsteady gait betokening a persevering "passing of the Rosy" à la Dick Swiveller, and a too frequent application to the flowing bowl as represented in this case by a foaming quart pewter pot. Hear him with the voice of a Stentor giving his idea in song, musically as he fondly imagines, of the delights of the "Gay life of a young recruit." He thinks that tune will last for ever, and that to him has been vouchsafed the halcyon day of everlasting beer and skittles.

We leave him certain that his evening's amusement will not bear his morning's reflection and here we have another military episode, a deserter handcuffed and between his armed escort he has a hang-dog look and well he may feel, well he knows his fate for many a day to come. Just what our bucolic friend is too likely to turn out after his brief dream of glory and skittles has departed and the fumes of doctored beer evaporated.

And now we wend our way up Sandy Hill the via sacra of Woolwich; here we meet the last scene of all. Hark to the slow and measured tread of armed men escorting some dead comrade to that bourne from which no traveller returns. List to the solemn booming of the muffled drum, and the shrill notes of the wailing life blending with the loud resounding trumpet, now with a fierce and a defiant tone and anon sinking to a low and plaintive wail. Such is the "Dead march in Saul." The soldier's dirge, the warrior's requiem,—who can hear unmoved its mournful melody, who gaze upon a scene like this untouched?

Slowly the mournful cortege mounts the hill and disappears from sight; soon three rattling volleys fill the air and all is over.

"The cocks shall clatter on the echoing horn"
"No more shall wake him from his lowly bed."

Go, carve this upon his tomb in monumental brass, spread it abroad, ye winged winds. Engrave it on your heart of hearts, ye kings and princes, that full surely:

The path of Glory leads but to the grave.

And here is Silkwich common famed in many a mimic fight. Here frantic adjutants galloping to and fro, storm and swear, expending both their own and their charger's breath to very little purpose. Here youthful "subs" just commissioned from the adjacent military academy, in imagination flesh their maiden swords. Here generals "guiltless of their country's blood" air their dormant military genius and finally here the patient British Taxpayer can calmly contemplate the process of converting his hard cash into insubstantial smoke.

Amidst such scenes as these our hero passed his uneventful life until one day the following startling appeal met his eye in that mysterious second column of the "Times."

"G, G, is earnestly entreated to return to his home at H—, his mother being dangerously ill."

Reader, did you ever come upon your name in that same mysterious column in which such hopes and fears, such joys and sorrows, such merciful forgiveness, and such stern rebukes are wont to be recorded?

For one moment, his heart stood still never till then had he fully realised his own baseness. Again in fancy he saw that pleading eye, tender and true, each glance of which he knew so well and the remembrance of which had never left him for a single day. Again a child he climbed her knee the envied kiss to share, and now, alas, bound too swiftly to that better land, and he might be too late to say Farewell.

Brief time sufficed to see him on his way. The train sped on, past many a well remembered scene, but all too slow for him.

At last he stood upon a rising ground overlooking the village. There stood the church

with "its ivy mantled tower" just o'ertopping the ancient elms at whose base "the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep."

The boys just trooping out of school, turning to mirth all things of earth as only children can. Here, at his feet, the babbling stream wound its silvery way along. The ford with its time-worn stepping stones, and close at hand the clattering mill. Here, the cricket field, and there, the old Town bridge. The very path he trod, the stiles he clambered over, seemed each and all to greet him as an old familiar friend, and stretching far and wide around him the glorious landscape hill, and dale, and wooded height, while here and there stood out in bold relief against the leafy back ground, one of

"The stately homes of England,
How beautiful they stand—
Amidst their tall, ancestral oaks
Thro' all the pleasant land."

Who would not love, and if he needs must, who would not fight for such a native land?

But, hark! what sound is that swinging upon the breeze, breaking upon his reverie? It is the tolling of the passing bell telling of one more traveller, who has reached his journey's end, where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.

A sad foreboding came upon him, he hurried on and soon is at the gate; unseen and unannounced he enters, climbs the familiar stair and finds himself in the dread presence of death. Too late—too late—to receive from her the forgiveness he so much needed, and which he knew awaited him. Mortal had put on immortality. Too late, too late! what would not he have given then for

"The touch of a vanished hand,
The sound of a voice that is stilled."

Once more pull down the blinds, and softly let the curtain fall forever, this scene also is ended.

At this stage our chairman who, under the soporific influence of the toddy aforementioned, was enjoying forty winks, woke with a start, and finding the lateness of the hour, adjourned the meeting until next evening. Soon we were all snugly ensconced in our respective berths, rocked to sleep on the bosom of the mighty deep.

SCIENTIFIC.

MR. JAMES LAMONT, the Arctic explorer, yachtsman and sportsman, says that he is perfectly sure that the vibrations of a boat striking against an ice field are conveyed a distance of two miles or more. Whenever in his expeditions the bow of his boat came in contact with ice every seal for miles raised its head and was on the alert.

THE Imperial Russian Technical Society has reported favorably to the Government on the introduction of the decimal system, which is now everywhere established in Europe, except in England and Russia. The report says that the Russian people will easily fall into the change, as the Russian measures do not vary much from the French; it likewise advises that the metrical system be taught in the schools, and that cheap pamphlets be published on the subject.

At the Devonport Navy Yard in England, the other day, further experiments were made with Lieut. Mackaroff's patent safety collision mats, the result being entirely satisfactory. Several vessels, after having received such damage as would otherwise have proved fatal, have already been saved by means of the invention, together with thousands of lives. The Imperial Russian Navy, in which service the inventor holds a commission as acting lieutenant, has used this invention for some years past.

THE largest armor plate ever made was produced on March 15th, at the Cyclops Works of Messrs. Crammell & Co., in Sheffield, England. The thickest made previously was fourteen inches, but the plate made on the 15th was twenty-two inches thick. It is one of several intended for two war vessels now constructing for the Italian Government. The plate, which weighs thirty-five tons, will be tested by a 100 ton gun. Each vessel will have two turret guns. The plate was very successfully rolled.

THE German General Staff has published a report on the trials made since 1871 with regard to the employment of balloons for military purposes. All attempts to direct balloons have failed. It is hoped that means for mounting and descending without throwing out ballast or letting out gas, and for renewing during the voyage by chemical means the provision of gas, will shortly be discovered. Balloons should not be too large, and the covering should be as dense and at the same time as light as possible. The experiments for discovering the means to direct balloons are being continued. The questions of the most suitable proportion between the diameter of the screw and the height of the balloon, of the best shape to be given to the wings, and of the number of the wings, are also being studied.

THE use of the phonetic alphabet was ably discussed before the Polytechnic Society at Cooper Institute on Thursday evening last by Mr. Leland, S. P. Andrews, and Prof. Boynton of Syracuse.

A Mr. Andrews states that a few years ago the Japanese Minister at Washington told him his nation stood in need of a new language. It was desirable that English literature should be introduced among them. But the Japanese tongue was not sufficiently comprehensive to express it. A word from the Mikado, and any language could be introduced in their schools. Used thus for a single generation, it would become the language of the country. The objection to English lay in its arbitrary and difficult pronunciation, and its many useless, silent letters. For this reason the Japs have introduced the study of German. Our language has been discarded for carrying an excess of needless consonants and diphthongs, the result being that fourteen letters out of every hundred in our books and newspapers convey no sound whatever.

TRAVELLERS on railroads are often desirous of knowing the speed at which they are moving, and, as a general thing, are not aware that with the aid of a watch they may readily do so, even when mile posts are not placed along the track. This may be done, says the *Scientific Press*, by simply counting the number of rails which are passed over in any given minute. On the best laid roads the hammering sound made by the wheels in passing from one rail to another is quite audible, and may be easily noted on which ever side of the car the observer may be sitting. All rails are either twenty-four or thirty feet long—the length may be easily ascertained by pacing or by measuring with a pocket rule at any station where the train stops. Then by counting the number of rails passed in thirty or sixty seconds, the speed of travel may be calculated by any passenger. When a train moves 14.67 feet a second, it is travelling at the rate of ten miles an hour, or a mile in six minutes.