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A SEPTEMBER VIOLET

BY R. JOHNSON, IN "THE CENTURY,"

For days the peaks were hoods of cloud.
The slopes were veiled in chilly rain;
We said: It is the summer's shroud,
And with the brooks we moaned aloud,
Will sunshine never come again?

At last the west wind brought us one
Serene, warm, cloudless, crystal day,
As though September having blown,
A blast of tempest, now had thrown
A gauntlet to the favored may.

Backward to spring our fancies flew,
And careless of the course of time,
The bloomy days began anew;
Then, as a happy dream comes true,
Or, as a poet finds his rhyme—

Half wandered at, half unbeliever—
I found thee, friendliest of the flowers!
Then summer's joys came back, green-
leaved
And its doomed dead, awhile relieved,
First learned how truly they were ours.

Dear violet! Did the autumn bring
Thee vernal dreams, till thou, like me,
Didst climb to thy imagining?
Or was it that the thoughtful spring
'Did' come again in search of thee?

MERE SUZANNE

By Katharine M. Macquoid.

The conductor is silent, and the horses
stamp so impatiently on the stones that
they shake the vehicle and the passen-
ger who sits inside it.

Meantime Mere Suzanne toils up the
stone street. The town is not a large one,
and she soon comes out on to a road;
there are no stones here; on each side
are hedges broken away in places, leav-
ing gaps, Suzanne toils on, looks neither
right nor left, her heart does not beat
any quicker, and yet, all unconsciously,
she is passing by the very place where
her Auguste was pierced by a Prussian
bayonet.

A little way further trees on each
side of the road afford welcome shade.
Suzanne give a start, for leaning against
one of these trees is the tourist.
She looks at him.

"Sir," she says meekly, "can you be
kind enough to tell me if the road goes
on straight to Bouillon, and how much
farther off is the Chateau?"

The traveller takes out his pocket-
handkerchief, spreads it on the ground,
and seats himself.

"Sit down, my good woman," he says;
"you must want a rest if you have climb-
ed that hill—the road is simply abominable."
He smiles approvingly as she seats her-
self at a respectable distance. "The poor
Frenchmen," he goes on, "must have
suffered horribly as they jolted up and
down hill to Bouillon."

While looking to see if the diligence is
coming he whistles a cheerful tune; this
poorly-clad old woman does not interest
him or attract his notice, or he would
see that she has been trembling since
his last words, and that tears have gath-
ered in her faded blue eyes.

"Can monsieur tell me?"—her voice is
very faint and sad—"whether the battle
was fought on this side of Sedan?"

He turns to look at her. "Did you
not know? What a pity you did not meet
me lower down! Dear me, I could have
explained to you. I have been walking
over the field—a battle-field is extremely
interesting to an Englishman—and I saw
plenty of buttons and scraps of that kind
still left about. Well," he says eagerly,
"if you look as you go down you will
surely pick up something; you can easily
get into the field by one of the gaps in
the hedge you know."

Something in her fixed gaze makes
him uneasy; he begins to wonder if she
is in her right mind, but it is such a re-
lief to have some one to speak to that he
cannot keep silence.

"What are you going to Bouillon for?"
he asks.

Suzanne has edged herself further away
from him; she does not wish to speak
again, but it is not in her nature to be
rude.

"I am going to the hospital monsieur.
I have a son there."

"Dear me," he says briskly, "that is
extremely interesting." He takes out his
red book and makes a note therein. "Do
you think you can take me into the ward
as a friend, my good woman?"

Suzanne feels troubled when she sees
that the stranger is writing down her
words, but her anger rises as she listens
to his proposal. "You are not my friend,
monsieur," she raises up and makes him
a low curtsy, "I am a poor woman, and
I cannot be of use to you."

It is a relief to her, to hear the tinkle of
the horses' bells as the diligence comes
slowly up hill. She watches it climb like
a black and yellow snail; the tourist gets
inside when it stops, and then the driver
calls out to Suzanne.

"Come, get up, my mother," he says,
"if you can squeeze in beside me you
shall ride free to Bouillon."

She raises her withered thankful face
Ah monsieur, may God bless you, I can
never thank you enough, but when my
lad is strong again he will help me to
thank you."

The driver bends forward and helps
her up carefully; then he cracks his
sounding whip, the bells give forth a
merry tinkle, and the omnibus rattles on
along the uneven, jolting road.

"You are going to your son?" says the
driver.

Suzanne's heart seems to flow out
with her words; this genial, rough look-
ing Walloon does not repel her as the
tourist did.

"Yes, monsieur, I am going to my
Auguste, my husband is lame he cannot
travel, and monsieur sees that our Augus-
te is all we have—he is our last, he is
wounded. We have others—oh yes
monsieur, there are three, but they lie
at Magenta and at Solferino."

The coachman swears roundly.

"I hope France has seen the last of an
empire, mother. These two Napoleons
and their empires have wasted blood
that it will take more than a genera-
tion to replace."

Suzanne bends her head and sighs in
her heart she agrees; she detests war
but her husband and all her sons have
been soldiers, and she cannot join in
blame of their calling.

Presently the diligence reaches the
top of a steep hill. The road descends
abruptly and in the valley below is the
river Semois circling like a silver coil
round a wooded promontory on which
show the white houses of the town of
Bouillon. The rocky neck of this prom-
ontory rises abruptly from the valley
at the foot of the road, and on it is the
dark, frowning castle of Bouillon. Be-
yond are high hills with tableland atop,
gold and emerald just now, as corn and
turnip fields glow in the sunshine.

Mere Suzanne catches at the driver's
arm, between joy and excitement she can
scarcely speak.

"Is that—is that the hospital, mon-
sieur?" She points up to the towering
fortress across the valley.

"Well, my mother, the hospital is with-
in there—they will tell you, I fancy.
Our coach stops at a little inn below"—
he points downwards—"for our yard lies
across the bridge. You see," he said,
"the town lies on both sides of the river
but you must get out on this side."

"It is not far," she says as she looks
from the place to which he points up to
the gloomy fortress.

He shrugs his shoulders.
"You will find it a long climb, my
mother, the entrance is on the other side.
Gare—gare!" he shouts as the timber
cart, drawn by two cream-colored oxen
with large, soft eyes, comes slowly up hill,
the boy in charge lying so sound asleep
on the long tree trunks chained to the
frail, picturesque cart that even the
cracking of the driver's whip fails to
rouse him.

"Yes, my mother," he says, when this
danger passed, they stop in the front of
the little vine-clad inn beside the Semois
"I think it will take you a good hour to
climb up to the Chateau de Bouillon."

CHAPTER IV.

Half way up the ascent Mere Suzanne
stopped and she looked behind her. Be-
low lay the quaint and ancient town
with the silver river in its midst, flowing
on to the right between wooded banks,
a charming picture of repose; to the left
the stream took so swift a curve as it
circled the promontory that it was soon
lost to sight.

She could no longer see the castle, for
she was directly below it, but as she turn-
ed to pursue the upward stony road, she
came in sight of the cemetery, which lay
behind the shoulder of the hill on the
further side of the promontory. It was
below her and out of her way, and yet,
Suzanne felt strongly moved to visit it.
It had often soothed her to think that
pious hands, all unknown to her, had

perhaps laid wreaths on those far-off
graves in Italy; and now she too might say
a prayer for some poor who had perhaps
died of their wounds in the hospital at
Bouillon. But no, this must be after-
wards—she could not lose a moment
in seeking her boy.

Some more toilsome climbing, and
then she reached a platform covered
with trees in front of the entrance. A
sentinel stood grimly before his box. He
was young, and he shook his head when
Suzanne spoke to him, but he looked
compassionate, although he could not
understand what she said. Suzanne
spoke, pulled the doctor's letter out of
her pocket, and showed it. The young
soldier shook his head again—then, when
he had thought a few minutes and had
looked carefully at the tired woman, he
pointed through the gloomy archway.

Suzanne thanked him, and she pass-
ed through the dark portal, green with
age and damp. Seen through the arch-
way, the court yard had looked nearer
but she found before she reached it that
she had to pass over a drawbridge with
awful chasms on either side, and then
through another portal. The gloom of
the grass-grown, neglected looking court,
surrounded by the grim walls of the
castle, was horrible, and she saw as she
passed that water trickled down the
walls, and that liverwort and ferns had
niched themselves wherever they could.
The tired woman shuddered. She had
only thought of her boy in the hospital;
was he perhaps a prisoner in these stern
looking dungeons with the Keep?

The door to which she had been direct-
ed stood open. She was relieved to see
a woman standing just within.

"Ah? good day, my mother," said the
woman in French, and Suzanne's spirits
revived when she heard her native ton-
gue and saw a friendly Walloon face.
You perhaps want the hospital—but it
is not this way."

"Yes, yes, madame, it is the hospital I
want." Suzanne nearly cried for joy. "I
was afraid this was it." She looked up
at the black stronghold, which seemed
to be a part of the dark rock on which it
stood.

"You must come with me," the woman
said; "you wish perhaps to see one of
our patients. Poor fellows! they do
not many of them get visitors—their
friends live far away."

Suzanne had felt exhausted while she
climbed the hill, but at these words her
strength came back. She was close to
her son then—in a few minutes she
should see him! A lump rose in her
throat, for she knew he must be altered
—terribly changed by all the suffering
he had gone through. Now that she had
seen for herself what the journey was
from Sedan to Bouillon, she could guess
how trying it must have been for those
poor wounded soldiers.

"Ah, the poor fellows, they have en-
ough to suffer, but they are well cared
now," the woman went on, talking fast
over her shoulder. "Oh, yes, there are
some nursing Sisters, and my sister Hu-
bertine; I to help when there is no
chance of a visitor to see the chateau.
You do not care to see the dungeons, I
fancy. Ah! but they are a sight to see,
and there are besides the 'onblettes', a
well so deep that it goes down to the
Semois."

She threw back her head as she made
this announcement, she was proud of
these awful dungeons hewn out of the
dark rock. Mere Suzanne scarcely heard
her; they had just come out of a long
passage into a larger court, and her eyes
were fixed on a range of far more mod-
ern buildings than the original chateau.
A group of three gentlemen stood out-
side the entrance doorway, and one of
these was putting something down in a
book. Then he nodded to the others
and passed quickly out of sight.

"You must speak to one of them, they
are both doctors," her conductor said to
Suzanne; and then, bidding her good bye
the friendly woman went back to her
post.

But the doctors were talking together
so earnestly that they did not observe
the small, bent figure that stood meek-
ly watching them.

At first it seemed to Suzanne as if she
could not wait—as if she must go for-
ward and push aside the man who block-

ed the doorway, and then find her way
to the bedside of her boy, but Suzanne
had long ago given up her will. She was
so accustomed to look for guidance that
there is little danger she would act re-
belliously. While the doctors talked
she began to pray, and by the time they
broke up their conference she had re-
membered that she must not murmur
against the will of the loving Father, who
had brought her thus far safely on her
way.

One of the doctors went back into the
hospital, and then the other saw Mere
Suzanne.

"What is your business, my good wo-
man? He spoke quickly but not un-
kindly.

Suzanne made a low curtsy. "I am
your servant, sir," and she handed him
letter addressed to Doctor Godefroi.
He looked at it, then gave it back to
her.

"This is not for me, it is for Dr. Gode-
froi. He was ill yesterday, and he went
down into the town, but he may be back
to day. Do you want to see one of his
cases?"

"If monsieur pleases." She tried to
smile, but her lips trembled too much.
Monsieur will perhaps be so very kind
as to tell me where I shall find my boy
He is Auguste Didier, from Caudebec,
monsieur, and he has been wounded in
the battle with a bayonet."

There was half a smile on the doctor's
lips.

"My good woman," he said; kindly,
"I am afraid you must wait till my col-
league returns. We only know our poor
fellows by their number in the hospital
wards. But you look tired, you must
not stand here; come in and rest till Dr.
Godefroi comes back. We shall know
before long—some one has gone down to
fetch him."

Poor Suzanne's head bent still lower;
she followed the doctor into a bare room
where a tall woman in a black gown and
white apron stood measuring bits of lin-
en and folding them on the white table.

The woman looked up as the doctor
came in.

"Will you let this person wait here
Hubertine?" he said. "She wants to see
Dr. Godefroi; and I fancy he will come
before long."

Hubertine looked at Suzanne and then
she pulled forward one of the wooden
chairs.

"Will you sit down, madame," she said;
"you must have found the way up so
steep."

Suzanne sat down while the nurse went
on with her work. The poor mother's
lips moved; she longed to ask for her
boy, but a great dread possessed her.
Now that she was so close to him, fear
was stronger than hope. At last love
triumphed; she got up and stood beside
the nurse; looked yet more bent and
feeble beside the tall, strong figure.

"Madam," she said, timidly, "can you
tell me how it fares with a lad called Au-
guste Didier. He is my son, or I would
not trouble you. He is in the care of Dr.
Godefroi."

The tall woman turned such a look of
compassion on her, and then Suzanne
saw that she had only one eye.

"My friend," said Hubertine, "we do
not know the names of our patients,
there are many, and the nurses are so
few that we have to go quickly from one
bed to another. Even now I am wanted
and I must leave you."

"You are, perhaps, going to my Au-
guste!" Suzanne had unconsciously clasped
her hands, and the nurse, well accus-
tomed to read unspoken words, gave
her a sad, tender smile.

"Even then I could not take you with
me—only the doctor can pass you in, but
indeed, you are mistaken. I do not nurse
any of Dr. Godefroi's patients; Sister
Francoise is with them. Allez!" she patted
Suzanne's shoulder—"you must hope for
the best; your son has the cleverest doc-
tor and the best nurse in the hospital.
Sit and rest yourself."

With a now and a kindly smile she
went away with her bandages, and once
more Suzanne was left alone.

But now she was less sad; perhaps no
more hopeful, but light had come into
her troubled soul. It was very comfort-
ing to learn that August had been cared

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