

turn so soon as the health of his mother should be restored.

The Colonel's reply to Pierre's application was, "that, as the regiment might at any moment be ordered to take the field, no leave of absence could be obtained."

Pierre Pitois submitted. A fortnight elapsed; a second letter was received by the Colonel, in which Pierre informed him that his mother had died without the consolation of giving her last blessing to her only child, and in which he again solicited leave of absence, saying, that "he could not state his reason for this request—it was a family secret,"—but earnestly imploring his Colonel not to deny him this favour.

Pierre's second letter was as little successful as the first. The poor fellow's captain merely said, "Pierre, the Colonel has received your letter; he is sorry for the death of your old mother, but he cannot grant the leave of absence you require, as the regiment leaves Strasburg to-morrow."

"Ah! The regiment leaves Strasburg; and for what place, may I ask you?" said Pitois.

"For Austria," replied his officer. "We are to see Vienna, my brave Pitois;—we are to fight the Austrians. Is not that good news for you? You will be in your element, my fine fellow!"

Pierre Pitois made no reply: he seemed lost in deep thought. The captain caught his hand, and shaking it heartily, said—

"Why do you not speak, man? Are you deaf to-day? I am telling you that in less than a week you are to have a set-to with the Austrians, and you have not one word of thanks for the good news!—Nay, I verily believe you have not even heard me."

"Indeed, Captain, I have heard every word, and I thank you with all my heart for your news, which I consider very good news."

"I thought you would," said his officer.

"But Captain, is there no chance of obtaining leave of absence?"

"Are you mad?" was the reply. "Leave of absence?—the very day before taking the field!"

"I never thought of that," said Pierre. "We are then on the point of taking the field; and at such a time, I suppose, leave is never given?"

"It is never even asked."

"It is quite right—it is never even asked. It would have the appearance of cowardice. Well, then, I will not press it any more; I will try and get on without it."

"And you will do well," replied the Captain.

The next day, the 12th regiment entered Germany; and the next—Pierre Pitois deserted.

Three months after, when the 12th regiment, having reaped in the field of battle an abundant harvest of glory, was making its triumphal entry into Strasburg, Pierre Pitois was ignominiously dragged back to his corps by a brigade of the *gens d'armes*. A court-martial is immediately called. Pierre Pitois is accused of having deserted at the very moment when his regiment was about to meet the enemy face to face. The court presented a singular spectacle. On the one side stood forth the accuser, who cried—

"Pierre Pitois, you one of the bravest men in the army, you, on whose breast the star of honour yet glitters, you, who have never incurred either punishment or even censure from your officers, you could not have quitted your regiment—quitted it almost on the eve of battle—without some powerful motive to impel you! This motive the court demands of you; for it would gladly have it in its power—if not to acquit you, which it ought not perhaps to do or to desire—at least to recommend you to the Emperor's mercy."

On the other side stood the accused, who answered, "I have deserted without any reason, without any motive; I do not repent: if it were to do it again, I would do it again—I deserve death.....pass sentence."

And then came some witnesses, who deposed,—“Pierre Pitois is a deserter, we know it is a fact, but we do not believe it.” And others averred, “Pierre Pitois is mad; the court cannot condemn a madman. He must be sentenced then, not to death, but to the lunatic asylum.”

This last alternative had very nearly been adopted, for there was not one person in the court who did not consider the desertion of Pierre Pitois as one of those singular occurrences beyond the range of human possibilities, which, while every one is forced to admit as a fact, no one can account for, or comprehend. The accused, however, pleaded guilty most positively, and was most