

Prose.

WATCHWORDS OF LIFE.

While there's a hand to strike!
While there's a young heart brave!
While there's a task unthought!

DER SHOEMAKER'S POY.

Der meat-chopper hanged on the white-washed wall,
For no custom-roomed to de butcher's stall—
Der sausage-masheen was now longer in blay,

Tales and Sketches.

THE COUNTESS.

The immense drawing-room was blazing with light. There was, in fact, but one dark spot—it was the little old countess, still reclining upon that hare-like appendage, and half buried within the black velvet cushions.

It was a portrait—the portrait of a charming young girl, but so life-like, so fresh, so beaming with gladness, that she stood there, the very personation of the "avenue-yelp'd Euphrosyne."

Could it have been that little, impudent waiting-maid, Eugene turned round. The colonel turned round. Well, the countess was as motionless as a statue, while Lisette, with a face half an all long, was sweeping the ponderous fan with the regularity of a Chinese punka.

"Lisette, does the gentlemen allude to the picture in the oaken panel?" asked the countess, without turning her haughty head.
"Oh, yes, madame."
"It is an original, monsieur," said the countess, with a slight, very slight inclination of her head.

"Ah, was there ever such a fright!" quoth the wicked little countess, viewing herself in the full-length mirror. "What think you now, my good Lisette, are we in danger of being run away with?"
"Ah, but my dear lady, what a pity! you so young, so charming! Heavens! that odious cap, that horrid wig—ah, let me tear them to pieces!" cried Lisette, preparing to disrobe her young mistress.

"Ha! ha! my friend, what say you now to running off with our fair hostess?" cried the colonel laughing, and slapping Montepan upon the shoulder.
"Why, as the lady does not seem to have the use of her limbs, I must give it up, colonel."
"Good. But what a misfortune; had this widow been but young and charming, we might have crossed swords for the possession of these fine domains."

"Yes, yes, you are right, Eugene. Some step-daughter, perhaps, held in 'durance vile,' through jealousy; some dependent niece; yes, yes, for only fancy the old lady at the harp, or sweeping the guitar; in fact, the idea is too absurd. Let us summon Jacques."
"Ah, Jacques, come in Jacques. Charming old lady, your mistress—you have lived here, I suppose, at this old chateau—fine place—beautiful scenery—I say, you have lived here, I suppose, many years, good Jacques."
"Your mother! A-h!" screamed the countess, and she buried her face in her handkerchief—suddenly she became convulsed—there was a merry peal of laughter—then low, deep sobs succeeded.

"Hark, how mournfully echo the drums, as the regiment slowly winds through the rugged defiles of the mountain.
And the countess and Lisette stand, watching them from a turret of the old chateau.
"Ah, poor fellows! and they were such charming cavaliers! Alas!" exclaimed Lisette, wiping her eyes, "and now, my lady, as they are gone, I suppose I may as well put away your venerable grandmother's wig."
"Ye-o-s, Lisette—heigho!"
"And the cap, and the—"

"Nonsense! That is impossible; the colors are as fresh and glowing as if painted yesterday, and it should be more than fifty years old. No, no, good Jacques, you mistake."
"Ah, your honor, just like the picture does my beloved lady looks to me, even to this day!"
"Then, by all the saints in the calendar, I wish I saw with your eyes? But the harp, the piano—who plays?"
"Why, my lady plays and sings like an angel; a-hem, I mean—that is—she did play like an angel."
"Ah, but her fingers are getting stiff, eh, Jacques?" added the colonel, "no offence, Jacques—thank you—good night."

"You are not well this morning, my friend!"
"Perfectly so, my respectable lady; but my regiment leaves to-morrow."
"Ah, it is you, madame; you who are not well—alas, you have exerted yourself too much!"
"Ah, it is only faintness, with which I am sometimes seized. I am better now."

"Your mother! A-h!" screamed the countess, and she buried her face in her handkerchief—suddenly she became convulsed—there was a merry peal of laughter—then low, deep sobs succeeded.
"Ah, heavens, you are very ill!" exclaimed Montepan, not doubting the poor lady was in hysterics, "and I—I have caused it! What a mishap! Lisette—Adolphe—" and seizing the fan, he began to wave it rapidly over the head of the unfortunate countess.
In a moment, however, she recovered herself. "Alas! my friend," said she, "you touched a chord, of whose vibration you little dreamed." Then drawing a valuable ring from her slender finger, "Accept this, my dear young friend, in token of the regard with which you have inspired me. If, at any future day, you have a boon to ask of the Countess d'Argentine, send me this ring, and it is granted. Adieu, my friend!"

"Come, come, Montepan, a truce to your melancholy, for to-night, man!" exclaimed one.
"See, there is the beautiful Marchioness D—; one glance at her bewitching face would warm the heart of an anchorite; and there, too, is that 'superb' madame, with her gazelle eyes, and the charming little brooch—but, who is that lovely creature just entering the box of La Duchesse de B—? Look! look! what an angel! tall, dark, Barthelemy's friend, tell me, do you know who she is?"
"Ah, I don't know; so they level their eyes, and declare that who is the most divine creature they had ever beheld."

"How can you remain so insensible to the peerless charms around? See, there is the beautiful Marchioness D—; one glance at her bewitching face would warm the heart of an anchorite; and there, too, is that 'superb' madame, with her gazelle eyes, and the charming little brooch—but, who is that lovely creature just entering the box of La Duchesse de B—? Look! look! what an angel! tall, dark, Barthelemy's friend, tell me, do you know who she is?"
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ture, whose whole soul seems only intent upon the stage.
Ah, well may she gaze, for it is the living image of the picture, which hangs in the saloon of that chateau, afar off among the mountains, and which, fresh and immaculate, has hung in the inner chamber of his heart for a whole year, that is so dear. Fortunately, surprise and joy do not often kill one—if so, alas! poor Eugene, he must have given up the ghost on the spot.

Again her eyes met his, but this time she did not withdraw them, while a blush like the shadow of a rose mantled her sweet face. To render her resemblance to the portrait more perfect, she was dressed in pure white, with a few flowers entwined among the beautiful tresses which fell untrammelled around her. Montepan hid his face in his hands a few moments to assure himself this was no illusion; he looked again—oh, happiness! she was still there!
Convinced now that his imagination had not played him false—that he really saw before him the original of that enchanting picture—Montepan scarcely knew how to deport himself in the first delirium of his joy. Then a thousand conflicting thoughts hurried through his brain. Who could she be? what connexion could she possibly have with the inmates of that old chateau? why did his venerated friend the countess, whose parting gift still sparkled upon his finger—why did she always shun inquiry when he ventured to speak to her of that beautiful portrait? True, Jacques had affirmed this picture was that of the countess herself; but the fallacy of this assertion was now fully established; yet, strange anomaly, so inseparably was the countess associated with the picture in his mind, that now to separate the two he found most painful. Suddenly the conversation he had held with the countess at their last interview; her agitation, when he alluded to the ties of parent and child, and her remark, "you have touched a chord of whose vibration you have little dreamed," occurred to him, and with it the rapid conviction that this beautiful creature, whose resemblance to the portrait would almost challenge belief, could be no other than the daughter of the Countess d'Argentine. Yes, he was sure of it, and some unhappy difference had led to the estrangement of mother and child—what a misfortune! and so young and beautiful! Could she be married? Married! ah, heaven forbid! And raising his eyes with almost an imploring look to the spot where he had beheld her, he finds, alas! the fair unknown has vanished, leaving no trace by which he can hope to see her again.

"If to meet an old friend will be agreeable to M. Montepan, the Countess d'Argentine will be at home to-morrow morning at twelve, Hotel de B—, Rue Chaussee d'Antin."
Such was the billet which awaited our hero upon his return from the opera.
"Ah, happy moment! The excellent countess was then in Paris; he should behold her again, that estimable, venerated friend; and ah, rapture!—her daughter—that beautiful impersonation of all the loveliness which once adorned her mother—her too, he should see—he should speak to her—perhaps touch her fair hand, perhaps—"

The next morning, at twelve o'clock precisely, Montepan was at the Hotel de B—. He was introduced into a beautiful saloon, where he was told the countess would soon receive him.
The certainty of so soon meeting this beloved friend drove all other thoughts from his mind; even the portrait and its lovely counterpart were forgotten. The same delightful feeling to which he attributes all the sweetness of filial regard, and which he experienced so forcibly at the chateau, again stirs his bosom. He wonders through which of the many doors the couch of the countess will be drawn; he listens eagerly for her approach, when suddenly the tapestry at one end of the apartment is slightly raised, and the same lovely girl whom he had seen in the box of the Duchesse de B— glides in, and, with a graceful bend of the head, desires him to be seated.
"Conceive, if you can, his emotion! It was with difficulty he could even return the salute of the fair lady, and I am sure you would have felt quite ashamed of his awkwardness, had you been there. At length he ventured to ask, 'Have I the pleasure of addressing the daughter of my honored friend, the Countess d'Argentine?'"