

THE REVENGE.

A BALLAD OF THE FLEET BY ALFRED TENNYSON.

I.

At Flores in the Azores Sir Richard Grenville lay,
And a pinnace, like a flutter'd bird, came flying from
"Spanish ships of war at sea! we have sighted fifty-
three!"
Then swore Lord Thomas Howard: "For God I am
no coward!"
But I cannot meet them here, for my ships are out of
sight,
And the half my men are sick. I must fly, but follow
quick.
We are six ships of the line; can we fight with fifty-
three?"

II.

Then spoke Sir Richard Grenville: "I know you are no
coward;
You fly them for a moment to fight with them again.
But I've ninety men and more that are lying sick
ashore.
I should count myself the coward if I left them, my Lord
Howard.
To these inquisition dogs and the devildoms of Spain."

III.

So Lord Howard past away with five ships of war that
day.
Till he melted like a cloud in the silent summer
heaven:
But Sir Richard bore in hand all his sick men from the
land
Very carefully and slow.
Men of Bliford in Devon.
And we laid them on the ballast down below:
For we brought them all aboard.
And they blest him in their pain, that they were not left
to Spain.
To the thumbscrew and the stake, for the glory of the
Lord.

IV.

He had only a hundred seamen to work the ship and to
fight.
And he sail'd away from Flores till the Spaniard came
in sight.
With his huge sea-castles heaving upon the weather
bow.
"Shall we fight or shall we fly?
(Good Sir Richard, let us know,
For to fight is but to die!)
There'll be little of us left by the time this sun be set."
And Sir Richard said again: "We be all good English-
men.
Let us bang these dogs of Seville, the children of the
devil.
For I never turned my back upon Dun or devil yet."

V.

Sir Richard spoke and he laugh'd, and we roar'd a
hurrah, and so
The little Revenge ran on sheer into the heart of the
foe.
With her hundred fighters on deck, and her ninety sick
below:
For half of their fleet to the right and half to the left
were seen.
And the little Revenge ran on thro' the long straits
between.

VI.

Thousands of their soldiers look'd down from their decks
and laugh'd.
Thousands of their seamen made mock at the mad little
craft.
Running on and on till delay'd
By their mountain-like San Phillip that, of fifteen
hundred tons,
And upshadowing high above us with her yawning
tiers of guns,
Took the breath from our sails, and we stay'd.

VII.

And while now the great San Phillip hung above us like
a cloud
Whence the thunderbolt will fall
Long and loud.
Four galleons drew away
From the Spanish fleet that day.
And two upon the larboard and two upon the starboard
lay.
And the battle-thunder broke from them all.

VIII.

But anon the great San Phillip, she bethought herself
and went
Having that within her womb that had left her ill-
content:
And the rest they came aboard us, and they fought us
hand to hand,
For a dozen times they came with their pikes and mus-
queteers,
And a dozen times we shook 'em off as a dog that shakes
his ears
When he leaps from the water to the land.

IX.

And the sun went down, and the stars came out far over
the summer sea,
But never a moment ceased the fight on the one and the
fifty-three.
Ship after ship, the whole night long, their high-built
galleons came,
Ship after ship the whole night long, with her battle-
thunder and fame;
Ship after ship, the whole night long, drew back with
her dead and her shame,
For some were sunk and many were shatter'd, and so
could fight us no more—
God of battles, was ever a battle like this in the world
before?

X.

For he said, "Fight on! fight on!"
Tho' his vessel was all but a wreck,
And it chanced that, when half of the summer night was
gone,
With a grisly wound to be drest he had left the deck,
But a bullet struck him that was dressing it suddenly
dead,
And himself was wounded again in the side and the
head,
And he said, "Fight on! fight on!"

XI.

And the night went down, and the sun smiled out far
over the summer sea,
And the Spanish fleet with broken sides lay round us all
in a ring:
But they dur'd not touch us again, for they fear'd that
we still could sting.
So they watch'd what the end would be,
And we had not fought in vain,
But in perilous plight were we,
Seeing forty of our poor hundred were slain,
And half the rest of us maim'd for life
In the crash of the cannonade and the desperate strife:
And the sick men down in the hold were moest of them
stark and cold.

And the pikes were all broken or bent, and the powder
was all of it spent,
And the masts and the rigging were lying over the side;
But Sir Richard cried in his English pride,
"We have fought such a fight for a day and a night
As may never be fought again!
We have won great glory, my men!
And a day less or more
At sea or ashore,
We die—does it matter when?
Sink me the ship, Master Gunner—sink her, split her in
twain!
Fall into the hands of God, not into the hands of Spain!"

XII.

And the gunner said "Ay ay," but the seamen made
reply:
"We have children, we have wives,
And the Lord hath spared our lives.
We will make the Spaniard promise, if we yield, to let
us go:
We shall live to fight again and to strike another blow."
And the lion there lay dying, and they yielded to the
foe.

XIII.

And the stately Spanish men to their flagship bore him
then,
Where they laid him by the mast, old Sir Richard caught
at last,
And they praised him to his face with their courtly
foreign grace:
But he rose upon their decks, and he cried:
"I have fought for Queen and Faith like a valiant man
and true:
I have only done my duty as a man is bound to do:
With a joyful spirit I, Sir Richard Grenville, die!"
And he fell upon their decks and he died.

XIV.

And they stared at the dead that had been so valiant
and true,
And had holden the power and glory of Spain so cheap:
That he dared her with one little ship and his English
few:
Was he devil or man? He was devil for ought they
knew,
But they sank his body with honor down into the deep,
And they man'd the Revenge with a swarthier alien
crew,
And away she sail'd with her loss and long'd for her
own:
When a wind from the lands they had ruin'd awoke
from sleep,
And the water began to heave and the weather to
moan,
And ere that evening ended a great gale blow,
And the wave like the wave that is raised by an earth-
quake crew,
Till it smote on their hulls and their sails and their masts
and their flags,
And the whole sea plunged and fell on the shot-shatter'd
ramp of Spain,
And the little Revenge herself went down by the island
craze
To be lost evermore in the main.

A CAPITAL STRATAGEM.

My uncle was a kind-hearted, eccentric old
gentleman, very fond of having his own way, and
of managing other people's concerns as well as
his own—in which latter propensity he had been
over-indulged, as I consider it, because he hap-
pened to be a bachelor, and the only rich man
of the family.

My father, who had several children to provide
for held an office under Government, and resid-
ed in the unfashionable wilds near Les In-
valides, while my uncle inhabited an elegant
house in the Chaussee d'Antin.

"Adrian, my boy," would my father con-
tinually repeat to me, "try and please your un-
cle: it will be all the better for you."

Now I was of an age to be wholly disinter-
ested in money matters, therefore these worldly-
minded maxims my father was endeavouring to
instill into me, found but little responsive echo
in my heart.

Still, I loved my uncle as a good nephew
should, and was ready to please him, provided
his inclination did not run counter to my own.
Thus, he would fain have made a merchant of
me, that I might earn a large fortune, as he had
done in another line; contracting for the army.
But my vocation was already decided, and I
chose to be a painter.

"This is a pity," said my father, shaking
his head: "but of course you must take the
consequences."

The consequences were that in a few years'
time, I had gained the prize for Rome, whither
I was sent at the expense of Government; and
there, after spending the usual period, I paint-
ed a picture that was purchased for hard cash,
as I begged my father to inform my uncle, by an
English amateur.

On my return to France, after passing a com-
ple of days with my family, my father suggest-
ed the propriety of my going to pay a visit to
my uncle, who was staying at Auteuil, where he
had purchased a villa. I accordingly set out
one morning, with my sketch-book in my pocket,
going, not by the shortest way, but in search of
the picturesque as I went along.

Having forgotten the precise direction given
me for finding my uncle's villa, I became en-
tangled in a labyrinth of pretty habitations,
each of which lay snugly embowered amongst
trees, like so many birds' nests; and that one
of them contained a singing bird, I presently
became aware, on passing by the green Venetian
blinds of a ground floor. I had grown difficult
to please in matters of voice and music since I
had visited the land of song, but the rich flood
of melody that streamed forth from that house
seemed to penetrate my very soul.

Yet it was but a simple tune—there was no
straining after effect, no running up and down
the scales; it was, in short, the difference be-
tween a rustic beauty and an artificial one. I was
entranced, and felt unable to stir until the voice
had ceased; and then a wish to catch a glimpse
of the fair musician made me advance cautiously
and endeavour, with more enthusiasm than dis-

cretion, I own, to dart a glance through the op-
en window, screened only by the closely fasten-
ed Venetian blinds.

The lane I was in was at the back of the villa,
and I could walk close up to the window; so as-
suming the sauntering gait of a mere passer-by,
I slowly turned my head towards the blinds as I
passed, fervently wishing at the moment that I
could have been shadowless like Peter Schlemil.

What a charming interior met my vagrant
gaze! Books, flowers, music, ladies' work, all
blended in picturesque confusion—that disorder
which is an effect of art, as Tasso says—
though in this case there was, I am convinced,
no art in the question; it was merely the un-
studied result of the elegant occupations of the
divinity that inhabited the temple.

And what a divinity she seemed! Seen
through the dim twilight of the blinds, she ap-
peared like some beautiful cameo, as her deli-
cate features stood out in relief from the dark
background of the further end of the room.

It was but a glimpse, however, for I dared not
pause; but certainly the beautiful, when indis-
tinctly seen, borrows an additional charm from
that indistinctness, as the imagination fills up
the rest at its own sweet will.

Thus I had not the least idea of the color of
her hair—to me she remained the lovely
cameo, independently of the hues of life, and I
instinctively took out my sketch-book to en-
deavor to trace a faint resemblance of her fault-
less profile.

I cannot say how long I wandered about after
this, but I must have gone over a good deal of
ground, and performed a number of turnings
and twistings, like a meandering stream, for it
was only late in the afternoon that I finished by
reaching my uncle's.

He received me very cordially, complimented
me on my success, and though not exactly caring
to own that I was justified in having followed my
choice of a profession, he showed he entertained
no ill-will on that score, as he offered me the
use of a room in his house, which I might con-
vert into a studio, and come and spend as many
weeks with him during the summer as I might
deem convenient or agreeable.

I accepted his offer with a degree of readiness
that evidently pleased my uncle, who—poor man—
laid it all to the score of my dutifulness, while
I most honestly confess that the beautiful
"cameo" was running in my head; and I
thought it a most fortunate hit that I should have
an opportunity of taking up my abode in her
very neighborhood.

In my eagerness to ascertain who she was, and
concluding my uncle knew all the inhabitants
of the place, yet not of course, choosing to ask
any direct question, I inquired whether he had
many acquaintances amongst his neighbors.

"Hardly any," replied he; "but you need
not fear being dull here, for my friends are con-
tinually coming to see me from Paris, and you
may bring whom you like."

I scarcely took time to thank my uncle, before
I went on to say, "What a pretty house that is
with the green blinds—who does it belong to?"

And my heart beat as I uttered the words.

"As there are several scores of houses with
green blinds hereabouts," said my uncle, "you
must be more explicit. Was there a pigeon-
house near it?"

"Yes, to be sure," said I at random.

"Why, that belongs to the old Countess de
la Roche, who is now at law about—"

"No, no, no, uncle," interrupted I, not wish-
ing to embark on the troubled waters of a law-
suit. "I remember there was no pigeon-house,"

then suddenly recollecting that the old dowager
might have a lovely daughter or grand-daugh-
ter, or even niece, I exclaimed, "What family
has the Countess?"

"How random the boy talks!" said my uncle.
"The Countess has no children, or else the
law-suit would not be necessary for—"

"I see—I see!" said I. Of course it would
not.

"I don't think you even see straight before
you, Adrian, by the foolish manner in which you
talk," resumed my uncle. "What is it you do
mean?"

"Nothing," said I: "only I'm mistaken
about the Countess and the pigeon-house, but
there were green blinds, that's all I remember."

"And some water in front of the house!" said
my uncle, trying to come to an understanding.

"No—trees at the back of it," replied I.

My uncle declared that my data were too
vague—because, if as aforesaid, so many houses
had green blinds, still more had trees in their
vicinity.

Perhaps I could tell how far the house I
meant might be from his own? But I had not
the faintest idea of the distance—all had been
like a dream since I had seen the beautiful vi-
sion, and for aught I knew, I might have gone
over the same ground two or three times.

However, once domiciled in the neighborhood,
I should be able to reconnoitre without any-
body's assistance; therefore I asked no further
questions for the present, but let the subject
drop.

The week following saw me domiciled at my
uncle's villa, whither I had transferred my
easel and all the paraphernalia of my art.

But though my studio commanded a charm-
ing view of the gardens, and I could enjoy all
the quiet and retirement a painter could wish
for, I felt less inclined to study than to roam
about.

"Why don't you keep to your work more
steadily?" said my uncle, one day, on finding I
had scarcely touched a brush after a ten days'
residence at his villa. "How do you expect to

make a fortune if you are always strolling, in-
stead of minding your brush."

"I stroll," said I, "in search of the pictur-
esque."

"Have you found it?" said my positive un-
cle.

"Sometimes I think I have," answered I;
"and then again it seems to elude my grasp."

For the truth was, not all my wanderings had
been able to bring me back to the house with
the green Venetian blinds.

I fancy that either what the phrenologists call
the organ of locality must be very small in my
head, since wishing so ardently to retrace my
steps to that same spot, I was unable to do so;
or else, that having paid no attention to neces-
sary details, and having only adverted to the
blinds as being a hindrance—the plurality of
green blinds, as my uncle hinted, might render
it well-nigh impossible to pitch upon the iden-
tical house again.

Certain it was that in vain I listened at every
window for that ravishing voice; it seemed to
have returned to its native skies, to resume its
place amongst the celestial choir, for I heard it
no more.

Perhaps I looked dreamy as I thought of my
disappointment, for my uncle shook his head,
and observed, "I hope, boy, you have not mis-
taken your vocation, after all."

"No," said I, "but perhaps I strive after
an ideal perfection that I may never reach."

This had a double meaning, one for myself,
and one for my uncle.

"Pshaw!" said the latter: "your ideal is al-
ways the enemy of the real. Do the best you
can; perfection was not made for man."

To satisfy my uncle, I resumed my pallet
with fresh vigor, but my thoughts would play
truant in spite of myself; and one day that he
entered unperceived into my studio, he found
me, pencil in hand, gazing at the blank canvas.

"I'll tell you what it is, my boy," said he;
"you are one of those who only work by fits
and starts; and, therefore, if you'll be guided
by advice, I'll show you how you may follow
your caprices, and yet become rich."

"I should like to hear, uncle," said I, won-
dering whether he meant to offer me half his
fortune.

"Can't you guess, you young rogue?" said he,
trying to look arch; "why, by marrying an
heiress."

"An heiress would object to a poor artist."

"Perhaps not," said my uncle: "if you can
offer her a name, and she brings you money,
the bargain would be pretty nearly equal. But
what would you say if such a match were offered
you?"

"I should decline it, with all due respect for
the young lady," replied I.

"Decline it?" echoed my uncle, the pleased
expression fading away from his face, and giving
way almost to an angry one. "Indeed, you
shall do no such thing!"

"Then there is an heiress, I suppose, ready
and willing to marry me?" said I, shrugging my
shoulders.

"There is, my young philosopher! Ha! ha!
you thought I was only joking, did you?" said
my uncle, rubbing his hands.

"Joking or not, sir, I am quite serious in
what I said," replied I, "and I have no intention
of marrying for the present."

"And so you refuse a young, beautiful, and
rich bride, do you, sir?" said my uncle, whose
anger was gradually simmering, ready to boil
over.

"I do," said I.

"And pray why? I insist on a reason," said
my uncle.

"Why, because though I have no doubt she
is young and rich, as you say, yet, in point of
beauty, I depend on no one's judgment but my
own."

"Vastly well, sir," said he, "you think your
old uncle has neither taste, nor sense, nor judg-
ment. Well, then, sir, I insist on your see-
ing Mademoiselle Anselme Dampierre, and you
will be convinced to the contrary."

"I must beg to be excused," said I.

"I will not excuse anything of the kind,"

said he, getting into a regular passion. "Does
the puppy think he'll break the girl's heart, if
she should not obtain the honor of his hand?"

"No, uncle," I replied, with a degree of quiet
respect that seemed to provoke him still more;
"but not wishing to be ungracious or malignant,
it is much simpler not to see the young lady,
than to refuse her after seeing her, which I
should do any way."

"This boy has sworn to drive me mad, I
think," cried my uncle. "But suppose all the
preliminaries are arranged, and the match al-
most made, how can I call off?"

"Simply because you had no right to dispose
of me without consulting my inclinations," said
I. "Do you think I am going to be battered
and sold like a piece of gold?"

"My old friend Dampierre, formerly captain
of a privateer, will never put up with such an
affront being offered to his daughter," cried my
uncle, in a rage.

"I shall be happy to give him satisfaction;
moreover, I am an excellent shot," I replied.

There is no saying how long the conversation
might not have continued on the same footing,
had not the arrival of a visitor necessarily put
a stop to it.

My uncle went to the sitting-room to receive
his friend, while I went to pack up my port-
manteau, and that same day I returned to Paris,
on pretense of having some business to transact,
but in reality to escape being persecuted about a
distasteful subject.