

NAPOLEON III AT WILHELMSHOHE.*

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

(SEE PRECEDING PAGE.)

The autumn moon ne'er looked on fairer scene
Than Wilhelmshe; never poet's dream
Of all the circumstance of happiness,
Was brighter than its proud reality.
Nature and Art (with royal smiles elate)
Made it a masterpiece of loveliness
For Kings to dwell in, far from court and camp,
And all the sleep-expelling cares of state.

There everlasting hills lift up their heads,
Like giants of the awful early world,
Unto the face of Heaven, not in disdain,
But gratitude, and Heaven smiles on them,
Till the great Rhine takes to his swelling heart,
The image of their gladness, and is glad
For Wilhelmshe is the Rhine's sweet child—
Fairest of many children.

Who would deem
That sorrow, guilty sorrow, e'er should make
Its home in such a bosom? Yet within
The cincture of its marvellous loveliness,
Within the splendour of those noble walls,
There sits a mourner, mourning for the past—
The cold, dead past—his past—which chills and kills.

To him the autumn moon shews no fair scene;
If aught,—the sinuous passage of the leaf
To its unstable grave.

Some months ago—
A little while it seems—the pretty buds
Peeped from pre-natal darkness at the world,
And won unasked-for blessings for the hopes
Their presence gave. And then gay summer came.
Now all the trees will soon be stark and bare.
How like our life! How like thy spring-tide hopes.
Sad prisoner of Wilhelmshe! Now,
Like those thin leaves, they've fallen, one by one.

And with those hopes, ah, God! how many hearts
Have bleeding bowed unto the bloody dust!
Thou art but one, whatever thy sorrows be.
But think of all the sunny fields of France
Made desolate; of happy homes bereft
Of love's best treasures; of the widow's pride,
The young wife's darling, the fond father's joy,
Slain in the strength and beauty of their days;
Of burning villages, and ancient towns
Battered to ruins; of the desperate wail
Of women with their babes and little ones,
Houseless and hungry; of the innocent souls,
Countless, whom thy fierce thirst of power has doomed
To the dark horrors of a causeless war!

Thou hast escaped the sword; but vulture thoughts
Fix in thy heart a thousand ravenous beaks
Until it writhes in anguish. Faces pale
And mocking haunt thee in thy waking dreams.
Whichever way thou turnest, they are there—
The awful faces of the ruthless dead.

The Boulevards! Ah! that was long ago:
And flattering acclaims had hushed the voice
That rose from Paris in that winter night.
Then fell and made its grave within thy soul.
Now the grave opens and the dead comes forth,
And conscience hears again that awful cry.

Did some one whisper Maximilian's name?
Or was it but the wailing of the wind?
Oh! "Poor Carlotta"—rich in deathless love
And stainless purity, behold him now
Who wrought thy darling's downfall, in his doom
Of pitiless retribution! Those sweet lips
That murmur plaintively need never curse
A form so bowed as *that*. Leave him alone:
In his own heart he bears his punishment.

Sweet pity, touch him in his hour of woe
With soothing hand! Sleep, give him gentle dreams!
Religion, bring him solace! Heaven, forgive!
The good that he has done be hundredfold
Increased, and may the evil end in good!

JOHN READE.

* Pronounced Vil-helms-hoo-eh.

THE BABY BRIGADE.

(SEE LAST PAGE.)

Three cheers, three cheers,
For the little Volunteers!
Oh what a merry sight it is to see them pass.
Knee deep in butter cups, and ankle deep in grass—
Tramp, tramp, tramp, as onward they go,
Four jolly riflemen all in a row—
Sunbonnet, felt hat, and tattered hat of straw,
The funniest shakos that ever you saw!

Three cheers, three cheers,
For the merry Volunteers!

The flaxen curly Colonel gives the word of command.
To the stout little Corporal who can scarcely stand—
And when the bugle sounds, and they march upon their foes,
The poor little fellow tumbles down on his nose—
And what with the laughter and the cackling of the geese,
We're obliged to interfere to keep the Queen's peace—

And we've smiles, and tears,
From our gallant Volunteers—

And smiling over all is the toil-worn face
Of the kindly old veteran that hangs about the place—
Basking in the sunshine, or resting in the shade
He dearly loves to drill his Baby Brigade,
Fondly encouraging the soldier-plays,
That call to remembrance his own field-days—

And he gives three cheers
For his little Volunteers!

L. W. T.

BLUCHER'S JUDGMENT.

Few were the youths throughout the kingdom of Prussia that
ere allowed to stay at home in the eventful year of 1813. A
war, more terrible, more vindictive than any one that had ever
visited the continent of Europe, was raging through the land,
and the country could spare none of its defenders. Also the
king had called his people to arms by means of that famous
proclamation which will be considered for evermore as one
of the noblest documents in German history. They were
true to the call—old and young; they left their homes, rushed
to the colours, took up arms, and never laid them down till
they had driven the enemy under the very walls of Paris.

The inhabitants of Silesia, well-known for their loyalty and
patriotism, had not stood behind amidst the general enthu-
siasm. There was not a family in the province that had not
contributed its contingent to the national affair; and many a
heart was throbbing painfully whenever a new intelligence
was spread of another of those dreadful battles which, by rid-
ding the country from an odious enemy, threw sorrow and
affliction upon many a quiet and peaceful home.

On a sultry summer evening, in the year before mentioned,
an old woman was sitting before her humble cottage in the
little Silesian village of Burnheim. She had put the distaff
aside, and was reading the Bible, which lay opened on her

knees. Whilst she was repeating the holy words in an under-
tone to herself, her ears caught the sound of quick footsteps,
and a long shadow emerged from behind the cottage. The
old woman trembled violently: the moment afterwards, her
uplifted eyes fell upon the figure of a handsome and well-made
lad, in a military attire.

"How are you, mother?"

She rose, and threw her trembling arms round his neck.
"God be thanked, my boy, that I see thee again! But how
pale and haggard thou lookest." She went on, after a
pause: "To be sure, thou must be very tired, and very hungry
too!"

She led him in the room to the old arm-chair, and urged
him to sit down and repose himself a little, when she herself
would prepare him some supper.

"What did he like best? Should she make him an omelet,
or roast a chicken? Oh, it was no trouble at all! Dear me,
how could he talk of trouble? she was but too glad to do any-
thing for her own dear boy. Yes, she would go and get him
a chicken."

The old woman, all bustle and activity, left the room.

The youth did not betray so much pleasure at this hearty
reception from his aged parent, as might have been expected.
He was restless, and ill at ease; it seemed as if something
was heavily weighing upon his heart; and when his wander-
ing eye fell upon the portrait of his deceased father, which
was hanging right over the chimney-piece, presenting that
worthy gentleman in the stiff uniform worn by the king's
garde du corps half a century ago, he felt as if the old sergeant
was looking at him with a grim frown upon his honest coun-
tenance; just as if he experienced a hearty inclination to step
out of his worm-eaten, rosewood frame, to seize the old knot-
ted hazel-stick in the corner, with the brass knob at top, and
to apply it to the back of his offspring for half an hour or so;
as, in fact, he had been in the habit of doing, many a day in
his lifetime, some eight or ten years ago. His restless son
felt so much overcome by this latter reflection that, when the
old woman came bustling in again, after the lapse of some
minutes, with the chicken under her apron, she found her own
dear boy with his head in his hands, leaning listlessly upon
the table.

He sat up when she came in, but did not look at her. The
old woman became attentive. In the joy of her heart, she
had never thought yet of asking him any questions except
those concerning his appetite. Now, it began to strike her
that the present period was rather a strange time for a soldier
to be on leave of absence.

"Charles!"—No answer.

The old woman trembled violently. She dropped her bur-
den, and walked straight up to him. Her honest, wrinkled
countenance was full of anxiety and apprehension. Looking
him full in the face, and clapping her hands together, she
cried out in an agony: "So help me God, Charles, you are a
deserter!"

"I couldn't stand it any longer, mother," uttered her
wretched son, in a broken voice, by way of apology.

"You couldn't stand it!" said the old woman, exasperated
beyond all measure; "you couldn't stand it! and hundreds
of thousands of your brethren do! Fy, for shame!" and with
her old, honest, trembling hand, she gave him a smack on the
face.

"Mother!" exclaimed the young man starting up, with the
blood rushing to his face.

"Fy, for shame!" she went on, without heeding him in the
least, "to bring such a disgrace upon the whole village!
What would he say?"—she pointed to where the old warrior
was hanging over the chimney-piece, whose stern counten-
ance, illuminated by the rays of the evening sun, seemed in-
deed to assume an unusual expression of solemn indignation.
"Sit down, sit down, I say! you—deserter! It shall not be
said that your dear father's house, in the village of Burnheim,
is a place of refuge for runaways, whilst the whole country is
up in arms! Don't you stir, sir! I'll be back in a minute;"
and with this the brave old woman left the room, locking the
door after her.

She was not alone when she came back about half an hour
afterwards; the country parson, the schoolmaster, the country
judge, and half a dozen more of the dignitaries of the village
were with her. The little room was quite full when all
these distinguished visitors had entered it. Charles sat in the
old arm-chair, quite motionless, his face covered with both his
hands.

The honest villagers had made up their minds at once what
to do with the deserter; they looked upon his crime as an
ignominy, by which he had not only disgraced himself, but
also their community at large, and they were not the men to
put up with such an affront. The schoolmaster, who was a
politician, and subscribed to a newspaper, having informed
them that the head-quarters of the commander-in-chief of the
army were but about two days' march from the village, they
had resolved at once to escort him thither. The judge pro-
claimed the young man a prisoner in the name of his majesty
the king, and called upon him to follow him to a place of
security for the night, as on the following morning they would
in a body convey him to his excellency the field-marshal,
General Blucher. He rose, and followed them without oppo-
sition. When they were all gone, the old woman took up
the Holy Scriptures once more; but it was in vain that she
strove to read; her eyes grew dim, and the letters were all
swimming confusedly before them, so she put it down again,
and wept bitterly.

Early on the following morning a strange procession was
seen emerging from the little village of Burnheim—four old
peasants escorting one young soldier. The country judge,
with grave airs, marched ahead of them, whilst the school-
master, who had obstinately insisted upon accompanying the
expedition, brought up the rear. The prisoner, with down-
cast eyes and fallen countenance, was walking between the
two other patriots; and as he had pledged his word not to
make any attempt at flight, they had consented to leave his
hands untied. When the expedition, after a day's march, put
up for the night in a small hamlet, they were told that all the
villages around were crammed full with Frenchmen, so they
were obliged to make a long roundabout way; and it was not
before the morning of the fifth day after their departure that
they reached head-quarters.

"Where is the residence of the commander-in-chief?" asked
they of one of the ordnance-officers, who were galloping through
the streets in every direction.

"Why, in the château, to be sure, where the two hussars
were mounting guard on horseback."

When they had entered the yard, they were not in the least

discouraged at the sight of whole scores of adjutants, and or-
derly-officers of every rank and arm, all of whom seemed to
have some urgent business with the commander-in-chief; for
no sooner had any of them been despatched, than he was seen
mounting again, and tearing away with his horse's belly to
ground. It never entered their heads for one moment that
the general might consider their own business to be of a some-
what smaller importance, although the schoolmaster argued
from what he saw that something of consequence was going
on just now. The worthy man was right so far; the com-
mander-in-chief was about to give battle on the following day.
When they had been waiting patiently for a couple of hours,
and began to feel somewhat tired and hungry, the country
judge, conscious of the importance of his mission, ventured at
last to accost one of the officers of the general's staff who was
passing by with a packet of sealed letters in his hand; but
that hasty functionary did not even stop to give ear to the
address of the head man of the rural deputation, but merely
grumbled something about the propriety of their going to
Jericho—or further.

Our worthy inhabitants of Burnheim, however, were not the
men to give way so soon and renewed the charge accordingly.
This time it was a middle-aged man with a benevolent coun-
tenance, whom they made acquainted with their request to
see the field-marshal on most urgent business.

"Why, they had chosen their time rather badly, indeed;
the general was extremely busy. Couldn't one of the secre-
taries do as well?"

"By no means; they must see the general himself."

"Was it an information concerning the enemy which they
wanted to deliver?"

"O no; something much more important—from Burnheim,"
added the schoolmaster.

The middle-aged officer with the benevolent countenance
laughed, and said he would try. After the lapse of about half
an hour, he came back, and beckoned to them to follow. They
were ushered into an ante-room, and directed to wait for his
excellency.

The door opened after another half-hour's waiting, and an
old man with gray hairs, iron-cut features, and bright eyes,
entered the room; it was the commander-in-chief, *Old Father
Blucher*, as the soldiers called him. The country judge step-
ped forward, and bowing very low, delivered the speech about
which he had been pondering ever since they had left their
native place, and which, of course, he thought to be very elo-
quent. He stated all that has been told already in the course
of this narrative: how the deserter's own mother had given
information of her son's crime; how they had resolved at once
to bring him back to head-quarters; and concluded his ad-
dress with a hope that his excellency would not be induced to
think worse of their village because of one that had rendered
himself unworthy of the name of a Prussian. The tears came
trickling down his honest cheeks.

The general looked very grave indeed. Those large bright
eyes of his roamed for an instant over his rural audience with
a strange expression. He knew at a glance what sort of men
they were he had to deal with; then his looks rested for a
while on the bent figure of the young man, who, with down-
cast eyes and care-worn face, appeared the very image of
misery and dejection. He knew his case to be a hopeless one;
deserting colours in time of war is a capital crime, and Father
Blucher, with his iron will, was the last man in the world to
be trifled with.

On a sudden, the features of the old hero assumed an ex-
pression of harshness. Turning round towards the speaker of
this singular deputation, he said in a rough voice and in a
very abrupt manner: "Mr. Judge, you are an ass."

The villagers started as if they had been stung. After all
the anxiety and trouble they had undergone for the cause
which they considered to be a just one, they had expected a
somewhat more cordial reception.

"But your excellency"—remonstrated the amazed
dignitary.

"Hold your tongue, I say; you are an ass. I know better;
in Burnheim there are no runaways. And you, my son," he went
on with his iron features relenting a little, and with that same
strange expression in his large bright eyes, "you will show
them to-morrow, on the battle-field, what a Burnheim-man can
do; will you not?"

The young man dropped down on his knees, and was stam-
mering a few broken words, which the general did not hear,
however, for when the lad rose again with high flushed cheeks
and sparkling eyes—a far different man—Blucher had already
left the room.

The worthy peasants, whose perceptive faculties were by
no means equal to their honesty, began at last to get a glimpse
of the general's real meaning. The country judge was the
first to throw his cap high into the air, and to give three hearty
cheers for Father Blucher; who, with one single word, had
extinguished what they considered a stain upon their beloved
village, comforted the broken heart of a mother, and preserved
a pair of arms for the defence of the country—arms that could
not fail to do their duty now.

When they had given vent to their enthusiasm after their
hearts' content, and taken leave of the young man, who was
carried away by an aid-de-camp of the general's staff, they
made up their minds to buy some provisions in the place, and
to return again to the village. They had, however, scarcely
reached the yard, when they were overtaken by the same
middle-aged officer who had announced them to the com-
mander-in-chief, and asked them what in Heaven's name they
were going to do now.

"Why, going back again, to be sure. To Burnheim, you
know!" elucidated the schoolmaster.

And did they think that his excellency would allow any-
body to leave head-quarters without having had a dinner first?
He had already given orders to that effect, and they had but
to follow this non-commissioned officer here, who would shew
them the way.

They needed not to be told twice, we may be sure; and
when they were shewn into a kitchen-room, where dinner was
served up for them, with a bottle of wine standing before each
cover, they felt very grateful to his excellency, and very proud
at the same time because of the honour shewn to the repre-
sentatives of their village. But when each of them found a
double Frederick d'or under his plate, their enthusiasm burst
out afresh, and many were the healths drunk to the welfare of
Old Father Blucher.

When they had all eaten and drunk their fill, and were
about to take their leave, they fell in once more with their
friend the middle-aged officer, who gave them some advice
concerning the best way of reaching their village without run-