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The Stricken South to the North.

[Dedicated to Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes.]

"We are thinking a great deal about the poor fever-stricken cities of the South, and all contributing according to our means for their relief."

"Every morning, as the paper comes, the first question is, 'What is the latest account from Memphis, Grenada and New Orleans?'"

—Extract from a private letter of Dr. Holmes.

I.

When "rhubarb" Time the South's memorial place—

Her heroes' graves—had wreathed in grass and flowers—

When Peace, ethereal crowned by all her graces, Returned to make more bright the summer hours—

When doubtful hearts revived, and hopes grew stronger—

When old sore cankered wounds that pierced and stung,

Throbbled with their first, mad, feverous pain no longer,

While the fair future spake with flattering tongue—

When once, once more she felt her pulses beating

To rhythms of healthful joy and brave desire,

Lo! round her doomed horizon darkly meeting,

A pall of bi-colored vapors veined with fire!

II.

Oh! ghastly portent of fast-coming sorrows—

Of doom that blasts the blood and brights the breath,

Robe youth and manhood of all golden morrows—

And life's clear goblet brims with wine of death!

Oh! swift fulfillment of this portent dreary!

Oh! nightmare rule of ruin, racked by fears,

Heart-broken wail, and solemn misery,

Imperious anguish, and soul-melting tears!

Oh! Faith, thrust downward from celestial splendours!

Oh! grief-bound, with palely-murmurous mouth!

Oh! agonized by life's supreme surrenders—

Behold her now—the scorned and suffering South!

III.

No balm in Gilead; nay, but while her forehead

Palld and drooping, lies in fondest dust,

There steals across the desolate spaces torrid

A voice of manifold cheer, and heavenly trust,

A land redeeming breaks the frozen starkness

Of palsied nerve, and dull, despondent brain:

Rolls back the curtains of malignant darkness

And shows the eternal blue of heaven again—

Revealing there, of old worlds convulsed and shaken—

That face whose mystic tenderness enticed

To hope new-born earth's lost, bereaved, forsaken!

Ah! still beyond the tempest smiles the Christ!

IV.

Whose voice? Whose hand? O, thanks, divinest Master,

Thanks for those grand emotions, which impart

Grace to the North to feel the South's disaster,

The South to bow with touched and cordial heart!

Now, now at last the links which war had broken

Are welded fast, at mercy's charmed commands:

Now, now at last the magic words are spoken

Which blends in one two long divided lands:

Oh, North! you came with warrior strife and clangor,

You left our South one gory burial ground:

But love, more potent than the haughtiest anger,

Subdues the souls which hate could only wound!

—Paul H. Hayne.

A MAN OF NERVE.

While Murat was in Madrid, he was

anxious to communicate with Junot in

Portugal; but all the roads to Lisbon

swarmed with guerrillas, and with the

troops composing Castanos' army.

Murat mentioned his embarrassment

to Baron Stroganoff, the Russian em-

bassador to Spain.

Russia, as is well known, was at that

time not only the ally, but the friend of

France. M. De Stroganoff told Murat

that it was the easiest thing in the

world. "The Russian Admiral Sin-

avin," said he, "is in the port at Lis-

bon; give me the most intelligent of

your Polish lancers; I will dress him

up in a Russian uniform, and intrust

him with the dispatches for the admiral

—all will go well, even if he should be

taken prisoner a dozen times between

this and Lisbon, for the insurgent army

is so anxious to obtain our neutrality

that it will be careful not to furnish a

pretext for rupture."

Murat was delighted with this inge-

nious scheme. He asked Kranski, the

commandant of the lancers, to find him

a brave and intelligent young man. Two

days afterward the commandant brought

the prince a young man of his corps,

for whom he pledged his life; his name

was Leekinski, and he was but eighteen

years old.

Murat was moved at seeing so young

a man court so imminent a danger; for,

if he were detected, his doom was sealed.

Murat could not help remarking

to the Pole the risk he was about to

run. The youth smiled. "Let your

imperial highness give me my instru-

ments," answered he, respectfully, "and

I will give a good account of the mis-

sion I have been honored with. I thank

his highness for having chosen me from

my comrades, for all of them would

have courted this distinction."

The prince argued favorably from the

young man's modest resolution. The

Russian ambassador gave him his dis-

patches, he put on a Russian uniform,

and set out for Portugal.

The first two days passed over quietly,

but on the afternoon of the third, Leek-

inski was surrounded by a body of

Spaniards, who disarmed him, and

dragged him before the commanding

officer. Luckily for the gallant youth,

it was Castanos himself.

Leekinski was aware that he was lost

if he were discovered to be a French-

man, consequently he determined, on

the instant, not to let a single word of

French escape him, and to speak Russian

and German, which he did with equal

fluency. The cries of rage of his cap-

tors announced the fate which awaited

him, and the horrible murder of Gen-

eral Rene, who had perished in the

most dreadful tortures but a few weeks

before, as he was going to join Junot,

were sufficient to freeze the very blood.

"Who are you?" said Castanos, in

French, which language he spoke per-

fectly well, having been educated in

France.

Leekinski looked at the questioner,

saw a sign, and answered in German:

"I do not understand you."

Castanos spoke German, but he did

not wish to appear personally in the

matter, and summoned one of the officers

of his staff, who went on with the ex-

amination. The young Pole answered

in Russian or German, but never let a

syllable of French escape him. He

might, however, easily have forgotten

himself, surrounded as he was by a

crowd eager for his blood, and who wait-

ed with savage impatience to have him

declared guilty, that is a Frenchman,

to fall upon him and murder him.

But their fury was raised to a height

which the general himself could not

control, by an incident which seemed to

cut off the unhappy prisoner from every

hope of escape. One of Castanos' aides-

le-camp, one of the fanatical patriots

who were so numerous in this war, and

who from the first had denounced Leek-

inski as a French spy, burst into the

room, dragging with him a man wearing

the brown jacket, tall hat and red plume

of a Spanish peasant.

The officer confronted him with the

Pole, and said:

"Look at this man, and then say if it

is true that he is a German or Russian.

He is a spy, I swear by my soul."

The peasant, meanwhile, was eyeing

the prisoner closely. Presently his dark

eyes lighted up with the fire of hatred.

"*Es Frances*, he is a Frenchman!"

exclaimed he, clapping his hands. And

he stated that having been in Madrid a

few weeks before, he had been put in

requisition to carry forage to the French

barrack; "and," said he, "I recollect

that this man took my load of forage

and gave me a receipt. I was near

him an hour, and recollect him. When

we caught him, I told my comrade, this

is the French officer I delivered my for-

age to."

This was correct. Castanos probably

discovered the true state of the case, but

he was a generous foe. He proposed to

let him pursue his journey, for Leek-

inski still insisted he was a Russian, and

he could not be made to understand a

word of French. But the moment he

ventured a hint of that kind, a thousand

threatening voices were raised against

him, and he saw that clemency was im-

possible.

"But," said he, "will you then risk

a quarrel with Russia, whose neutrality

we are so anxiously asking for?"

"No," said the officer, "but let us

try this man."

Leekinski understood all, for he was

acquainted with Spanish. He was re-

moved and thrown into a room worthy

to have been one of the dungeons of the

inquisition in its worst days.

When the Spaniards took him prison-

er, he had eaten nothing since the previ-

ous evening, and when his dungeon

door was closed on him he had fasted

eighteen hours; no wonder, then, what

with exhaustion, fatigue, anxiety, and

the agony of his dreadful situation, that

the unhappy prisoner fell almost sense-

less on his hard couch. Night soon

closed in, and left him to realize, in his

gloom, the full horror of his hopeless

situation. He was brave, of course; but

to die at eighteen—so suddenly! But

youth and fatigue finally yielded to the

approach of sleep, and he was soon

buried in profound slumber.

He had slept perhaps two hours, when

the door of his dungeon opened slowly,

and some one entered with cautious

steps, hiding with his hand the light of

a lamp; the visitor bent over the pris-

oner's couch, the hand that shaded the

lamp touched him on the shoulder, and

a sweet and silvery voice, a woman's

voice, asked him:

"Do you want to eat?"

The young Pole, awakened suddenly

by the glare of the lamp, by the touch

and words of the female, rose up on his

quand, and with his eyes only half

opened, said in German, "What do you

want?"

"Give the man something to eat at

once," said Castanos, when he heard the

result of the first experiment, "and let

him go. He is not a Frenchman. How

could he have been so far master of him-

self? The thing is impossible."

But though Leekinski was supplied

with food he was detained a prisoner.

The next morning he was taken to a spot

where he could see the mutilated corpse

of the Frenchman who had been cruelly

massacred by the peasantry of Truxillo,

and he was threatened with the same

death. But the noble youth had prom-

ised not to fail, and not a word, not an

accent, not a gesture or look betrayed

him.

Leekinski, when taken back to the

prison, hailed it with a shout of joy; for

twelve hours he had nothing but gibbets

and death, in its most horrid forms, be-

fore his eyes, exhibited to him by men

with the looks and the passions of de-

mons. He slept, however, after the

harrowing excitement of the day, and

soundly, too; when in the midst of his

deep and death-like slumbers, the door

opened gently, some one drew near his

couch, and the same voice whispered in

his ear:

"Arise and come with me. We wish

to save your life. Your horse is ready."

And the brave young man hastily

awakened by the words, "We wish to

save your life, come," answered still in

German: "What do you want?"

Castanos, when he heard of this ex-

periment and its result, said the Russian

was a noble young man; he saw the true

state of the case.

The next morning, early, four men

came to take him before a sort of coun-

cil, composed of officers of Casta-

nos' staff. During the walk, they ut-

tered most horrible threats against

him; but true to his determination, he

pretended not to understand them.

When he came before his judges, he

seemed to gather what was going on from

the arrangements of the tribunal, and

not from what he heard said around him,

and he asked in German where his in-

terpreter was. He was sent for, and