

THE SWISS MERCENARIES.

("Lorsque le regiment des hallebardiers.")

[Bk. XXXI.]

When the regiment of Halberdiers  
    Is proudly marching by,  
The eagle of the mountain screams  
    From out his stormy sky;  
Who speaketh to the precipice,  
    And to the chasm sheer;  
Who hovers o'er the thrones of kings,  
    And bids the caitiffs fear.  
King of the peak and glacier,  
    King of the cold, white scalps--  
He lifts his head, at that close tread,  
    The eagle of the Alps.

O shame! those men that march below--  
    O ignominy dire!  
Are the sons of my free mountains  
    Sold for imperial hire.  
Ah! the vilest in the dungeon!  
    Ah! the slave upon the seas--

Is great, is pure, is glorious,  
Is grand compared with these,  
Who, born amid my holy rocks,  
In solemn places high,  
Where the tall pines bend like rushes  
When the storm goes sweeping by;

Yet give the strength of foot they learned  
By perilous path and flood,  
And from their blue-eyed mothers won,  
The old, mysterious blood;  
The daring that the good south wind  
Into their nostrils blew,  
And the proud swelling of the heart  
With each pure breath they drew;  
The graces of the mountain glens,  
With flowers in summer gay;  
And all the glories of the hills  
To earn a lackey's pay.

Their country free and joyous--  
She of the rugged sides--  
She of the rough peaks arrogant  
Whereon the tempest rides:  
Mother of the unconquered thought  
And of the savage form,

Who brings out of her sturdy heart

The hero and the storm:

Who giveth freedom unto man,

And life unto the beast;

Who hears her silver torrents ring

Like joy-bells at a feast;

Who hath her caves for palaces,

And where her châteaux stand--

The proud, old archer of Altorf,

With his good bow in his hand.

Is she to suckle jailers?

Shall shame and glory rest,

Amid her lakes and glaciers,

Like twins upon her breast?

Shall the two-headed eagle,

Marked with her double blow,

Drink of her milk through all those hearts

Whose blood he bids to flow?

Say, was it pomp ye needed,

And all the proud array

Of courtly joust and high parade

Upon a gala day?

Look up; have not my valleys

Their torrents white with foam--

Their lines of silver bullion  
On the blue hillocks of home?  
Doth not sweet May embroider  
My rocks with pearls and flowers?  
Her fingers trace a richer lace  
Than yours in all my bowers.

Are not my old peaks gilded  
When the sun arises proud,  
And each one shakes a white mist plume  
Out of the thunder-cloud?  
O, neighbor of the golden sky--  
Sons of the mountain sod--  
Why wear a base king's colors  
For the livery of God?  
O shame! despair! to see my Alps  
Their giant shadows fling  
Into the very waiting-room  
Of tyrant and of king!

O thou deep heaven, unsullied yet,  
Into thy gulfs sublime--  
Up azure tracts of flaming light--  
Let my free pinion climb;  
Till from my sight, in that clear light,  
Earth and her crimes be gone--

The men who act the evil deeds--  
    The caitiffs who look on.  
Far, far into that space immense,  
    Beyond the vast white veil,  
Where distant stars come out and shine,  
    And the great sun grows pale.

BP. ALEXANDER