

THE CUP ON THE BATTLE-FIELD.

("Mon père, ce héros au sourire.")

[Bk. XLIX. iv.]

My sire, the hero with the smile so soft,
And a tall trooper, his companion oft,
Whom he loved greatly for his courage high
And strength and stature, as the night drew nigh
Rode out together. The battle was done;
The dead strewed the field; long sunk was the sun.
It seemed in the darkness a sound they heard,--
Was it feeble moaning or uttered word?
'Twas a Spaniard left from the force in flight,
Who had crawled to the roadside after fight;
Shattered and livid, less live than dead,
Rattled his throat as hoarsely he said:
"Water, water to drink, for pity's sake!
Oh, a drop of water this thirst to slake!"
My father, moved at his speech heart-wrung,
Handed the orderly, downward leapt,
The flask of rum at the holster kept.
"Let him have some!" cried my father, as ran
The trooper o'er to the wounded man,--

A sort of Moor, swart, bloody and grim;
But just as the trooper was nearing him,
He lifted a pistol, with eye of flame,
And covered my father with murd'rous aim.
The hurtling slug grazed the very head,
And the helmet fell, pierced, streaked with red,
And the steed reared up; but in steady tone:
"Give him the whole!" said my father, "and on!"

TORU DUTT

HOW GOOD ARE THE POOR.

("Il est nuit. La cabane est pauvre.")

[Bk. LII. iii.]

'Tis night--within the close stout cabin door,
The room is wrapped in shade save where there fall
Some twilight rays that creep along the floor,
And show the fisher's nets upon the wall.

In the dim corner, from the oaken chest,
A few white dishes glimmer; through the shade
Stands a tall bed with dusky curtains dressed,
And a rough mattress at its side is laid.

Five children on the long low mattress lie--
A nest of little souls, it heaves with dreams;
In the high chimney the last embers die,
And redden the dark room with crimson gleams.

The mother kneels and thinks, and pale with fear,
She prays alone, hearing the billows shout:
While to wild winds, to rocks, to midnight drear,
The ominous old ocean sobs without.

Poor wives of fishers! Ah! 'tis sad to say,
Our sons, our husbands, all that we love best,
Our hearts, our souls, are on those waves away,
Those ravening wolves that know not ruth, nor rest.

Think how they sport with these beloved forms;
And how the clarion-blowing wind unties
Above their heads the tresses of the storms:
Perchance even now the child, the husband, dies.

For we can never tell where they may be
Who, to make head against the tide and gale,
Between them and the starless, soulless sea
Have but one bit of plank, with one poor sail.

Terrible fear! We seek the pebbly shore,
Cry to the rising billows, "Bring them home."
Alas! what answer gives their troubled roar,
To the dark thought that haunts us as we roam.

Janet is sad: her husband is alone,
Wrapped in the black shroud of this bitter night:

His children are so little, there is none
To give him aid. "Were they but old, they might."
Ah, mother! when they too are on the main,

How wilt thou weep: "Would they were young again!"

She takes his lantern--'tis his hour at last

She will go forth, and see if the day breaks,

And if his signal-fire be at the mast;

Ah, no--not yet--no breath of morning wakes.

No line of light o'er the dark water lies;

It rains, it rains, how black is rain at morn:

The day comes trembling, and the young dawn cries--

Cries like a baby fearing to be born.

Sudden her humane eyes that peer and watch

Through the deep shade, a mouldering dwelling find,

No light within--the thin door shakes--the thatch

O'er the green walls is twisted of the wind,

Yellow, and dirty, as a swollen rill,

"Ah, me," she saith, "here does that widow dwell;

Few days ago my good man left her ill:

I will go in and see if all be well."

She strikes the door, she listens, none replies,

And Janet shudders. "Husbandless, alone,

And with two children--they have scant supplies.

Good neighbor! She sleeps heavy as a stone."

She calls again, she knocks, 'tis silence still;
No sound--no answer--suddenly the door,
As if the senseless creature felt some thrill
Of pity, turned--and open lay before.

She entered, and her lantern lighted all
The house so still, but for the rude waves' din.
Through the thin roof the plashing rain-drops fall,
But something terrible is couched within.

* * * * *

"So, for the kisses that delight the flesh,
For mother's worship, and for children's bloom,
For song, for smile, for love so fair and fresh,
For laugh, for dance, there is one goal--the tomb."

And why does Janet pass so fast away?
What hath she done within that house of dread?
What foldeth she beneath her mantle gray?
And hurries home, and hides it in her bed:
With half-averted face, and nervous tread,
What hath she stolen from the awful dead?

The dawn was whitening over the sea's verge

As she sat pensive, touching broken chords
Of half-remorseful thought, while the hoarse surge
Howled a sad concert to her broken words.

"Ah, my poor husband! we had five before,
Already so much care, so much to find,
For he must work for all. I give him more.
What was that noise? His step! Ah, no! the wind.

"That I should be afraid of him I love!
I have done ill. If he should beat me now,
I would not blame him. Did not the door move?
Not yet, poor man." She sits with careful brow
Wrapped in her inward grief; nor hears the roar
Of winds and waves that dash against his prow,
Nor the black cormorant shrieking on the shore.

Sudden the door flies open wide, and lets
Noisily in the dawn-light scarcely clear,
And the good fisher, dragging his damp nets,
Stands on the threshold, with a joyous cheer.

"'Tis thou!" she cries, and, eager as a lover,
Leaps up and holds her husband to her breast;
Her greeting kisses all his vesture cover;
"'Tis I, good wife!" and his broad face expressed

How gay his heart that Janet's love made light.

"What weather was it?" "Hard." "Your fishing?" "Bad.

The sea was like a nest of thieves to-night;

But I embrace thee, and my heart is glad.

"There was a devil in the wind that blew;

I tore my net, caught nothing, broke my line,

And once I thought the bark was broken too;

What did you all the night long, Janet mine?"

She, trembling in the darkness, answered, "I!

Oh, naught--I sew'd, I watch'd, I was afraid,

The waves were loud as thunders from the sky;

But it is over." Shyly then she said--

"Our neighbor died last night; it must have been

When you were gone. She left two little ones,

So small, so frail--William and Madeline;

The one just lisps, the other scarcely runs."

The man looked grave, and in the corner cast

His old fur bonnet, wet with rain and sea,

Muttered awhile, and scratched his head,--at last

"We have five children, this makes seven," said he.

"Already in bad weather we must sleep
Sometimes without our supper. Now! Ah, well--
'Tis not my fault. These accidents are deep;
It was the good God's will. I cannot tell.

"Why did He take the mother from those scraps,
No bigger than my fist. 'Tis hard to read;
A learned man might understand, perhaps--
So little, they can neither work nor need.

"Go fetch them, wife; they will be frightened sore,
If with the dead alone they waken thus.
That was the mother knocking at our door,
And we must take the children home to us.

"Brother and sister shall they be to ours,
And they will learn to climb my knee at even;
When He shall see these strangers in our bowers,
More fish, more food, will give the God of Heaven.

"I will work harder; I will drink no wine--
Go fetch them. Wherefore dost thou linger, dear?
Not thus were wont to move those feet of thine."
She drew the curtain, saying, "They are here!"

BP. ALEXANDER

LA VOIX DE GUERNESEY.

MENTANA. [1]

(VICTOR HUGO TO GARIBALDI.)

("Ces jeunes gens, combien étaient-ils.")

[LA VOIX DE GUERNESEY, December, 1868.]

I.

Young soldiers of the noble Latin blood,
How many are ye--Boys? Four thousand odd.
How many are there dead? Six hundred: count!
Their limbs lie strewn about the fatal mount,
Blackened and torn, eyes gummed with blood, hearts rolled
Out from their ribs, to give the wolves of the wold
A red feast; nothing of them left but these

Pierced relics, underneath the olive trees,
Show where the gin was sprung--the scoundrel-trap
Which brought those hero-lads their foul mishap.
See how they fell in swathes--like barley-ears!
Their crime? to claim Rome and her glories theirs;
To fight for Right and Honor;--foolish names!
Come--Mothers of the soil! Italian dames!
Turn the dead over!--try your battle luck!
(Bearded or smooth, to her that gave him suck
The man is always child)--Stay, here's a brow
Split by the Zouaves' bullets! This one, now,
With the bright curly hair soaked so in blood,
Was yours, ma donna!--sweet and fair and good.

The spirit sat upon his fearless face
Before they murdered it, in all the grace
Of manhood's dawn. Sisters, here's yours! his lips,
Over whose bloom the bloody death-foam slips,
Lisped house-songs after you, and said your name
In loving prattle once. That hand, the same
Which lies so cold over the eyelids shut,
Was once a small pink baby-fist, and wet
With milk beads from thy yearning breasts.

Take thou

Thine eldest,--thou, thy youngest born. Oh, flow

Of tears never to cease! Oh, Hope quite gone,
Dead like the dead!--Yet could they live alone--
Without their Tiber and their Rome? and be
Young and Italian--and not also free?
They longed to see the ancient eagle try
His lordly pinions in a modern sky.
They bore--each on himself--the insults laid
On the dear foster-land: of naught afraid,
Save of not finding foes enough to dare
For Italy. Ah; gallant, free, and rare
Young martyrs of a sacred cause,--Adieu!
No more of life--no more of love--for you!
No sweet long-straying in the star-lit glades
At Ave-Mary, with the Italian maids;
No welcome home!

II.

This Garibaldi now, the Italian boys
Go mad to hear him--take to dying--take
To passion for "the pure and high";--God's sake!
It's monstrous, horrible! One sees quite clear
Society--our charge--must shake with fear,
And shriek for help, and call on us to act
When there's a hero, taken in the fact.
If Light shines in the dark, there's guilt in that!

What's viler than a lantern to a bat?

III.

Your Garibaldi missed the mark! You see
The end of life's to cheat, and not to be
Cheated: The knave is nobler than the fool!
Get all you can and keep it! Life's a pool,
The best luck wins; if Virtue starves in rags,
I laugh at Virtue; here's my money-bags!
Here's righteous metal! We have kings, I say,
To keep cash going, and the game at play;
There's why a king wants money--he'd be missed
Without a fertilizing civil list.

Do but try

The question with a steady moral eye!
The colonel strives to be a brigadier,
The marshal, constable. Call the game fair,
And pay your winners! Show the trump, I say!
A renegade's a rascal--till the day
They make him Pasha: is he rascal then?
What with these sequins? Bah! you speak to Men,
And Men want money--power--luck--life's joy--
Those take who can: we could, and fobbed Savoy;
For those who live content with honest state,
They're public pests; knock we 'em on the pate!

They set a vile example! Quick--arrest
That Fool, who ruled and failed to line his nest.
Just hit a bell, you'll see the clapper shake--
Meddle with Priests, you'll find the barrack wake--
Ah! Princes know the People's a tight boot,
March 'em sometimes to be shot and to shoot,
Then they'll wear easier. So let them preach
The righteousness of howitzers; and teach
At the fag end of prayer: "Now, slit their throats!
My holy Zouaves! my good yellow-coats!"
We like to see the Holy Father send
Powder and steel and lead without an end,
To feed Death fat; and broken battles mend.
So they!

IV.

But thou, our Hero, baffled, foiled,
The Glorious Chief who vainly bled and toiled.
The trust of all the Peoples--Freedom's Knight!
The Paladin unstained--the Sword of Right!
What wilt thou do, whose land finds thee but jails!
The banished claim the banished! deign to cheer
The refuge of the homeless--enter here,
And light upon our households dark will fall
Even as thou enterest. Oh, Brother, all,

Each one of us--hurt with thy sorrows' proof,
Will make a country for thee of his roof.
Come, sit with those who live as exiles learn:
Come! Thou whom kings could conquer but not yet turn.
We'll talk of "Palermo"[2]--"the Thousand" true,
Will tell the tears of blood of France to you;
Then by his own great Sea we'll read, together,
Old Homer in the quiet summer weather,
And after, thou shalt go to thy desire
While that faint star of Justice grows to fire.[3]

V.

Oh, Italy! hail your Deliverer,
Oh, Nations! almost he gave Rome to her!
Strong-arm and prophet-heart had all but come
To win the city, and to make it "Rome."
Calm, of the antique grandeur, ripe to be
Named with the noblest of her history.
He would have Romanized your Rome--controlled
Her glory, lordships, Gods, in a new mould.
Her spirits' fervor would have melted in
The hundred cities with her; made a twin
Vesuvius and the Capitol; and blended
Strong Juvenal's with the soul, tender and splendid,
Of Dante--smelted old with new alloy--

Stormed at the Titans' road full of bold joy
Whereby men storm Olympus. Italy,
Weep!--This man could have made one Rome of thee!

VI.

But the crime's wrought! Who wrought it?

Honest Man--

Priest Pius? No! Each does but what he can.
Yonder's the criminal! The warlike wight
Who hides behind the ranks of France to fight,
Greek Sinon's blood crossed thick with Judas-Jew's,
The Traitor who with smile which true men woos,
Lip mouthing pledges--hand grasping the knife--
Waylaid French Liberty, and took her life.
Kings, he is of you! fit companion! one
Whom day by day the lightning looks upon
Keen; while the sentenced man triples his guard
And trembles; for his hour approaches hard.
Ye ask me "when?" I say soon! Hear ye not
Yon muttering in the skies above the spot?
Mark ye no coming shadow, Kings? the shroud
Of a great storm driving the thunder-cloud?
Hark! like the thief-catcher who pulls the pin,
God's thunder asks to speak to one within!

VII.

And meanwhile this death-odor--this corpse-scent
Which makes the priestly incense redolent
Of rotting men, and the Te Deums stink--
Reeks through the forests--past the river's brink,
O'er wood and plain and mountain, till it fouls
Fair Paris in her pleasures; then it prowls,
A deadly stench, to Crete, to Mexico,
To Poland--wheresoe'er kings' armies go:
And Earth one Upas-tree of bitter sadness,
Opening vast blossoms of a bloody madness.
Throats cut by thousands--slain men by the ton!
Earth quite corpse-cumbered, though the half not done!
They lie, stretched out, where the blood-puddles soak,
Their black lips gaping with the last cry spoke.
"Stretched;" nay! sown broadcast; yes, the word is "sown."
The fallows Liberty--the harsh wind blown
Over the furrows, Fate: and these stark dead
Are grain sublime, from Death's cold fingers shed
To make the Abyss conceive: the Future bear
More noble Heroes! Swell, oh, Corpses dear!
Rot quick to the green blade of Freedom! Death!
Do thy kind will with them! They without breath,
Stripped, scattered, ragged, festering, slashed and blue,
Dangle towards God the arms French shot tore through

And wait in meekness, Death! for Him and You!

VIII.

Oh, France! oh, People! sleeping unabashed!
Liest thou like a hound when it was lashed?
Thou liest! thine own blood fouling both thy hands,
And on thy limbs the rust of iron bands,
And round thy wrists the cut where cords went deep.
Say did they numb thy soul, that thou didst sleep?
Alas! sad France is grown a cave for sleeping,
Which a worse night than Midnight holds in keeping,
Thou sleepest sottish--lost to life and fame--
While the stars stare on thee, and pale for shame.
Stir! rouse thee! Sit! if thou know'st not to rise;
Sit up, thou tortured sluggard! ope thine eyes!
Stretch thy brawn, Giant! Sleep is foul and vile!
Art fagged, art deaf, art dumb? art blind this while?
They lie who say so! Thou dost know and feel
The things they do to thee and thine. The heel
That scratched thy neck in passing--whose? Canst say?
Yes, yes, 'twas his, and this is his fête-day.
Oh, thou that wert of humankind--couched so--
A beast of burden on this dunghill! oh!
Bray to them, Mule! Oh, Bullock! bellow then!
Since they have made thee blind, grope in thy den!

Do something, Outcast One, that wast so grand!
Who knows if thou putt'st forth thy poor maimed hand,
There may be venging weapon within reach!
Feel with both hands--with both huge arms go stretch
Along the black wall of thy cellar. Nay,
There may be some odd thing hidden away?
Who knows--there may! Those great hands might so come
In course of ghastly fumble through the gloom,
Upon a sword--a sword! The hands once clasp
Its hilt, must wield it with a Victor's grasp.

EDWIN ARNOLD, C.S.I.

[Footnote 1: The Battle of Mentana, so named from a village by Rome, was fought between the allied French and Papal Armies and the Volunteer Forces of Garibaldi, Nov. 3, 1867.]

[Footnote 2: Palermo was taken immediately after the Garibaldian volunteers, 1000 strong, landed at Marsala to inaugurate the rising which made Italy free.]

[Footnote 3: Both poet and his idol lived to see the French Republic for the fourth time proclaimed. When Hugo rose in the Senate, on the first occasion after his return to Paris after the expulsion of the Napoleons, and his white head was seen above that of Rouher, ex-Prime Minister of the Empire, all the house shuddered, and in a nearly unanimous voice shouted:

"The judgment of God! expiation!"]

LES CHANSONS DES RUES ET DES BOIS.

LOVE OF THE WOODLAND.

("Orphée au bois du Caystre.")

[Bk. I. ii.]

Orpheus, through the hellward wood
Hurried, ere the eve-star glowed,
For the fauns' lugubrious hoots
Followed, hollow, from crookèd roots;
Aeschylus, where Aetna smoked,
Gods of Sicily evoked
With the flute, till sulphur taint
Dulled and lulled the echoes faint;
Pliny, soon his style mislaid,
Dogged Miletus' merry maid,

As she showed eburnean limbs
All-multiplied by brooklet brims;
Plautus, see! like Plutus, hold
Bosomfuls of orchard-gold,
Learns he why that mystic core
Was sweet Venus' meed of yore?
Dante dreamt (while spirits pass
As in wizard's jetty glass)
Each black-bossed Briarian trunk
Waved live arms like furies drunk;
Winsome Will, 'neath Windsor Oak,
Eyed each elf that cracked a joke
At poor panting grease-hart fast--
Obese, roguish Jack harassed;
At Versailles, Molière did court
Cues from Pan (in heron port,
Half in ooze, half treeward raised),
"Words so witty, that Boileau's 'mazed!"

Foliage! fondly you attract!
Dian's faith I keep intact,
And declare that thy dryads dance
Still, and will, in thy green expanse!

SHOOTING STARS.

[FOR MY LITTLE CHILD ONLY.]

("Tas de feux tombants.")

[Bk. III. vii.]

See the scintillating shower!

Like a burst from golden mine--

Incandescent coals that pour

From the incense-bowl divine,

And around us dewdrops, shaken,

Mirror each a twinkling ray

'Twixt the flowers that awaken

In this glory great as day.

Mists and fogs all vanish fleetly;

And the birds begin to sing,

Whilst the rain is murm'ring sweetly

As if angels echoing.

And, methinks, to show she's grateful

For this seed from heaven come,

Earth is holding up a plateful

Of the birds and buds a-bloom!