

L'ANNÉE TERRIBLE.

TO LITTLE JEANNE.

("Vous eûtes donc hier un an.")

[September, 1870.]

You've lived a year, then, yesterday, sweet child,
Prattling thus happily! So fledglings wild,
New-hatched in warmer nest 'neath sheltering bough,
Chirp merrily to feel their feathers grow.
Your mouth's a rose, Jeanne! In these volumes grand
Whose pictures please you--while I trembling stand
To see their big leaves tattered by your hand--
Are noble lines; but nothing half your worth,
When all your tiny frame rustles with mirth
To welcome me. No work of author wise
Can match the thought half springing to your eyes,
And your dim reveries, unfettered, strange,

Regarding man with all the boundless range
Of angel innocence. Methinks, 'tis clear
That God's not far, Jeanne, when I see you here.

Ah! twelve months old: 'tis quite an age, and brings
Grave moments, though your soul to rapture clings,
You're at that hour of life most like to heaven,
When present joy no cares, no sorrows leaven
When man no shadow feels: if fond caress
Round parent twines, children the world possess.
Your waking hopes, your dreams of mirth and love
From Charles to Alice, father to mother, rove;
No wider range of view your heart can take
Than what her nursing and his bright smiles make;
They two alone on this your opening hour
Can gleams of tenderness and gladness pour:
They two--none else, Jeanne! Yet 'tis just, and I,
Poor grandsire, dare but to stand humbly by.
You come--I go: though gloom alone my right,
Blest be the destiny which gives you light.

Your fair-haired brother George and you beside
Me play--in watching you is all my pride;
And all I ask--by countless sorrows tried--
The grave; o'er which in shadowy form may show
Your cradles gilded by the morning's glow.

Pure new-born wonderer! your infant life
Strange welcome found, Jeanne, in this time of strife.
Like wild-bee humming through the woods your play,
And baby smiles have dared a world at bay:
Your tiny accents lisp their gentle charms
To mighty Paris clashing mighty arms.
Ah! when I see you, child, and when I hear
You sing, or try, with low voice whispering near,
And touch of fingers soft, my grief to cheer,
I dream this darkness, where the tempests groan,
Trembles, and passes with half-uttered moan.
For though these hundred towers of Paris bend,
Though close as foundering ship her glory's end,
Though rocks the universe, which we defend;
Still to great cannon on our ramparts piled,
God sends His blessing by a little child.

MARWOOD TUCKER.

TO A SICK CHILD DURING THE SIEGE OF PARIS.

("Si vous continuez toute pâle.")

[November, 1870.]

If you continue thus so wan and white;

 If I, one day, behold

You pass from out our dull air to the light,

 You, infant--I, so old:

If I the thread of our two lives must see

 Thus blent to human view,

I who would fain know death was near to me,

 And far away for you;

If your small hands remain such fragile things;

 If, in your cradle stirred,

You have the mien of waiting there for wings,

 Like to some new-fledged bird;

Not rooted to our earth you seem to be.

 If still, beneath the skies,

You turn, O Jeanne, on our mystery

 Soft, discontented eyes!

If I behold you, gay and strong no more;

 If you mope sadly thus;

If you behind you have not shut the door,

Through which you came to us;
If you no more like some fair dame I see
Laugh, walk, be well and gay;
If like a little soul you seem to me
That fain would fly away--
I'll deem that to this world, where oft are blent
The pall and swaddling-band,
You came but to depart--an angel sent
To bear me from the land.

LUCY H. HOOPER.

THE CARRIER PIGEON.

("Oh! qu'est-ce que c'est donc que l'Inconnu.")

[January, 1871.]

Who then--oh, who, is like our God so great,
Who makes the seed expand beneath the mountain's weight;
Who for a swallow's nest leaves one old castle wall,
Who lets for famished beetles savory apples fall,
Who bids a pigmy win where Titans fail, in yoke,

And, in what we deem fruitless roar and smoke,
Makes Etna, Chimborazo, still His praises sing,
And saves a city by a word lapped 'neath a pigeon's wing!

TOYS AND TRAGEDY.

("Enfants, on vous dira plus tard.")

[January, 1871.]

In later years, they'll tell you grandpapa
Adored his little darlings; for them did
His utmost just to pleasure them and mar
No moments with a frown or growl amid
Their rosy rompings; that he loved them so
(Though men have called him bitter, cold, and stern,)
That in the famous winter when the snow
Covered poor Paris, he went, old and worn,
To buy them dolls, despite the falling shells,
At which laughed Punch, and they, and shook his bells.

MOURNING.

("Charle! ô mon fils!")

[March, 1871.]

Charles, Charles, my son! hast thou, then, quitted me?

Must all fade, naught endure?

Hast vanished in that radiance, clear for thee,

But still for us obscure?

My sunset lingers, boy, thy morn declines!

Sweet mutual love we've known;

For man, alas! plans, dreams, and smiling twines

With others' souls his own.

He cries, "This has no end!" pursues his way:

He soon is downward bound:

He lives, he suffers; in his grasp one day

Mere dust and ashes found.

I've wandered twenty years, in distant lands,

With sore heart forced to stay:

Why fell the blow Fate only understands!

God took my home away.

To-day one daughter and one son remain

Of all my goodly show:

Wellnigh in solitude my dark hours wane;

God takes my children now.

Linger, ye two still left me! though decays

Our nest, our hearts remain;

In gloom of death your mother silent prays,

I in this life of pain.

Martyr of Sion! holding Thee in sight,

I'll drain this cup of gall,

And scale with step resolved that dangerous height,

Which rather seems a fall.

Truth is sufficient guide; no more man needs

Than end so nobly shown.

Mourning, but brave, I march; where duty leads,

I seek the vast unknown.

MARWOOD TUCKER.

THE LESSON OF THE PATRIOT DEAD.

("O caresse sublime.")

[April, 1871.]

Upon the grave's cold mouth there ever have caresses clung
For those who died ideally good and grand and pure and young;
Under the scorn of all who clamor: "There is nothing just!"
And bow to dread inquisitor and worship lords of dust;
Let sophists give the lie, hearts droop, and courtiers play the worm,
Our martyrs of Democracy the Truth sublime affirm!
And when all seems inert upon this seething, troublous round,
And when the rashest knows not best to flee or stand his ground,
When not a single war-cry from the sombre mass will rush,
When o'er the universe is spread by Doubting utter hush,
Then he who searches well within the walls that close immure
Our teachers, leaders, heroes slain because they lived too pure,
May glue his ear upon the ground where few else came to grieve,
And ask the austere shadows: "Ho! and must one still believe?
Read yet the orders: 'Forward, march!' and 'charge!'" Then from the lime,
Which burnt the bones but left the soul (Oh! tyrants' useless crime!)
Will rise reply: "Yes!" "yes!" and "yes!" the thousand, thousandth time!

H.L.W.