



LITERATURE.

LOOK FORWARD, AGE!

Thy youth hath long been passed—
The verdure and the flowerage faded long;
Life's sunny smiles, amassed
In pleasant places, amidst dance and song,
Lave but in memories, that make them look
Like dried leaves in a book.

Pain, more than pleasure, dwells
Within such memories: therefore seek not thou
To dive within the cells
O'er which their sickly scent dead lilies throw;
Nor ransack records, mid whose mildewed leaves
Its net the spider weaves!

Canst thou thy youth restore,
By seeking at its dried-up fount the draught
Which may not ever more,
How'er so great thy thirst, by thee be quaffed?
The waters gone to waste, no longer run
All sparkling in the sun.

The gray hairs on thy brow,
Turn them to plenteous guburn, as thy thoughts
Are with the Long-ago,
Creeping on the mist that vaguely floats
Over the past, through which all things appear
More bright, because less clear!

And number grow thy feet,
As thou in thought retracest paths once trod,
Undreaming that deceit
Followed thy footsteps o'er the daisied sod?
Pansie ere thou thy youth's dance with limbs that tell
How years may vigour quell!

Then gaze not on the past
As on a picture, whence true joys may rise,
Or thou wilt find at last
The bitterness of lying vanities;
And like the reed that shakes to every wind,
Fall with thy fallen mind!

But to the Coming look—
Gaze to the eastward—to the rising sun!
See where the gushing brook
Doth from its source in vigorous brightness run;
Read Back no leaf, but turn the onward page,
And so look forward, Age!

THE QUEEN'S FOOTMAN.

A SKETCH IN THE HISTORY OF THE FIRST REVOLUTION.

Leaning upon the arm of her husband, who appeared to enjoy an extreme delight in the infantine gaiety of his companion, a young wife traversed the meanest streets of Versailles upon the morning of January 1, 1789. Several o'clock had struck, and the day was almost imperceptibly breaking, still the two pedestrians had already devoted a length of time to their excursion. Starting from the circles formerly occupied by the lesser apartments of the Chateau, they had prosecuted their promenade, attended by a single domestic—a footman, laden with an ample panier. The weight of this panier, which, at the commencement, appeared insupportable, diminished by degrees; a result arising from the frequent visits indulged in by these early promenaders at each poverty-stricken dwelling they encountered along their path. This basket contained a host of cakes, candies and toys, which the youthful lady placed upon the tables within these humble habitations, to the great astonishment and delight of their younger inhabitants. While the mysterious fairy amused herself by watching the emotions excited by her pretty presents, her husband slipped into the mother's hand a roll of silver money; and then the couple would disappear, amidst the heart-felt benedictions uttered by the poor folk, to whom their visit was a source of inexpressible joy and gladness.

They had completed the full extent of their charitable excursion; the young wife's panier exhausted of its contents, and every coin had vanished from her spouse's pockets. "Now, Marie, we can quietly retire to rest!"

"Not as yet, for I perceive yonder a poor wretch, who, despite the cold, is sleeping with no other bed than a stone bench. 'Tis but right he should enjoy his share in the New Year festivities."

"My purse is empty," rejoined the husband, with a sigh. "Francois has, doubtless, some money; we must borrow of him."

The footman hastened to present his purse, which the young woman thrust, uncounted, into the poor fellow's hand, and turned to go, when the sleeper awoke. He gazed first upon the purse, then upon his benefactress, and tears glistened in his eyes.

"You have saved my life, good Madame. Thanks, thanks, for my life is precious to my wife—to my child."

The lady, who ever turned a deaf ear to all expressions of gratitude from the unfortunates she benefited, on catching the last words, retraced her footsteps.

"A wife!—a child!"—she repeated, with accents of compassion.

"Alas! I have, Madame; the small trade I carried on in my mercer's shop, Rue de Cinq Diamans, served to support my family. I have sustained losses, I have been afflicted by disease, and yesterday the bailiffs have driven me from my shop door. I came to Versailles, trusting to find a situation as clerk with one of my relatives; but, alas! he would not even listen to me, but shut the door in my face, and they now await my return in perfect agony."

The youthful lady wiped away a tear, and her husband shared her emotions.

"Well, well! don't despair, my friend, but return to Paris and encourage your wife and child. They are henceforth protected against misery. Is there no vacant situation at the Chateau?" she asked of the domestic who accompanied her. "None Madame."

"Then we must create a vacancy, we will have an additional footman. Will that employment suit you my friend?" "Night and day I will bless the hand that bestowed it upon me."

"Well! then it will be yours, eh, Louis?" rejoined the lady, requesting her husband's consent. "Return to Paris and come here to-morrow, to enter upon your duties.—Adieu." "To whom do I owe this kindness?" exclaimed the half-frantic fellow. "Oh! do not conceal your name!"

"To Her Majesty, the Queen," quoth the footman, in a low tone of voice.

The next day the former mercer arrived at the Chateau with his family; the superintendent had received his orders and furnished the new footman, whose name was Virlet, with neat, small apartments for his family dwelling. The Queen had, moreover, desired the wife and daughter to be employed at needlework, and by these arrangements the Virlet family found themselves transplanted from profound misery into comparative affluence.—The conduct of the females was beyond all praise as they showed themselves both grateful and industrious; such, however, was not the case with the ex-mercier. He oftentimes failed in the performance of his duty, however trifling the task allotted to him; he laid himself open to severe, deserved reprimands, and once or twice he was on the point of being dismissed the service. However, as these chastisements fell more heavily upon his wife and daughter than upon him, the Queen who weighed all these considerations, objected to this final punishment, and consequently Virlet was left in the Chateau to act at his own free pleasure.

Nine years rolled along, bringing with them many bitter changes in the destiny of Marie Antoinette—no longer did she sally forth upon the New Year's eve, to sow the seeds of joy; to reap a harvest of benedictions—for she no longer dared to set foot outside the Chateau-walls.—Day by day, evil tidings spread terror among the few devoted friends still to be found near the King. On the 27th of October, Mme. Swenbourne had warned Mme. la Marchese de Beauveau that the populace intended, on the following Monday, to seek the King, and bring him back to Paris; this appalling intelligence was confirmed upon all sides. His Majesty was unwilling to believe that that audacity could be carried to such an extent, and started out for the chase. Scarcely were the stag-hounds unkenelled when the King was compelled to return precipitately to Versailles. The insurgents had taken possession of the Place d'Armes, and had commenced an attack upon the Chateau. It is far from my desire to repeat the details of that too famous day, when assassins demanded the Queen's head, after trampling under foot the mangled corpses of her murdered body-guards.

During the height of the excitement, of pillage, of massacre, Virlet, the footman, still wearing a portion of the royal livery, was perceived by the mob. Surrounded, he was first interrogated, then commanded to cry out "Down with the tyrant!" He gave the cry, and did every thing they desired.

"'Tis no odds!" exclaimed one of the wretches who held him fast; "thou hast acted well, spoken well, still I don't believe a word of all thou hast said!" and he brandished a sabre which gleamed in his hand.

Virlet turned pale; the villain was stricken by fear. "Am I not a patriot?" he uttered, with trepidation.—"Do I not hate the tyrant?" "No! since you wear his livery!" "Down with the sham patriot!" growled the mob, furiously. Then the miscreant, like Judas, thought of purchasing his own safety by selling that of his master.

"You don't believe in me? Well, I'll give you proofs to convince you of your error. Follow!"

He made a detour, and reached a small secret doorway, which opened upon the most private apartments of the Chateau; this he opened, and introduced the brigands who accompanied him with stealthy tread. In like manner they penetrated from court to court, from corridor to corridor, and from chamber to chamber, until they were stayed at the entrance of an alcove.

"An axe!" murmured Virlet in a low voice. "There will you find the wife of the tyrant!"

In an instant the door was broken in; female shrieks were heard as the assassins precipitated themselves into the Queen's sleeping apartment. Virlet, pike in hand, struck upon the bed without perceiving that Marie-Antoinette had sought safety in flight. "She is no longer here!" he yelled in rage, "but I know the way to track her."

He made every arrangement to force in another door, when he discovered himself face to face with his daughter. This heroic girl barred with extended arms the open passage. Virlet hesitated, and recoiled a step.

"Jane! away, away from hence!" "Father, you can only approach the Queen by trampling upon my corpse!"

Virlet wished to thrust his daughter aside; one of his new companions rushed to his aid, and struck her down with his sabre. She fell to the earth, and the crowd entering in a whirlwind, forced Virlet along with them, trampling, in common with the others, upon the body of his expiring heroic girl. A few paces farther two body guards blocked the passages against the factious. Virlet, whilst the attentions of these devoted servants were engaged in front, gained their rear by a secret door, and then brutally assassinated them.

"Am I not now of your party?" he exclaimed, stamping upon the still breathing bodies. Thence onward he went in the same path of assassination; of destruction.

In a short while, none could be found to defend the Royal Family. The people triumphed, and Louis XVI, and his family were conducted back, amid wild bursts of approbation, to Paris.

As this frightful cortege was wending its way along, two men appeared, and swelled its ranks. One was recognized as The Man with the Long Beard, the most famous cut-throat of Paris; the other was Virlet. Each held in his hand a pike, upon whose end balanced the head of a body guard. The Queen had sufficient courage to gaze upon these horrible trophies. In them she recognized two of her most faithful defenders, Meseieurs de Mismandre and de Varincourt. A tear trickled down a cheek which grew not pallid in the face of death, and she convulsively clasped to her breast the Dauphin, who was seated upon her knees. Virlet cried, in a stentorian voice, "Down with the tyrants!"

Intoxicated with fear, carnage, and drink, the ex-footman advanced the most inhuman propositions to ingratiate himself with the populace, and strove to gain the good opinion of the bandits by an exhibition of the most heartless levity. Encouraged by the plaudits bestowed upon him for the manner in which he waved aloft the bleeding head of M. de Varincourt, he stalked bravely onward until, near the village of Sevres, he perceived the gilded sign of a hair-dresser. At once he commanded a halt, and planting his pike directly by the side of the Royal chariot, he forcibly opened the door of the shop, which the barber, in terror, had fastened as securely as he could. Then he commanded the unfortunate man to bring the implements of his trade with him into the street. Whilst every one was convulsed with laughter at the trembling figure of the barber, who with difficulty sustained himself upon his legs, Virlet cried out in a harsh tone—

"Here, Sir, are two customers for thee; thou shalt shave and dress the hair of these two gentlemen in the best style." Thus speaking, he took down the head of the two body guards, and placing them before the half-dead artist, compelled the unwilling performer to lather and powder the bleeding remains. He watched carefully over the operation, compelled the few entangled curls to be arranged with studious nicety, and then commanded the razors to be passed over what little beard was left them. During the agonizing work of the poor barber, Virlet eat heartily, he courteously offered bread to the two heads, placed fragments of sausage between their teeth and finally concluded the disgusting ceremony by washing their faces with wine and cream. Then, turning to the Long Beard, he spoke—

"Here's what will floor thee in public estimation; is it not so? The nation will give me greater applause than thee, citizen. The Long Beard replied not. He contented himself with smiling; a smile which paralyzed all beholders. Onward moved the cortege. That evening, when the Queen had re-entered her apartments at the Tuilleries, a domestic presented himself to serve her; that man was Virlet. Marie-Antoinette started up with horror, and, with an imperious gesture commanded the wretch to quit her presence for ever. Virlet sneered. "Be it so, I shall have a sennecure, but fat with perquisites."

In truth, Virlet remained at the Chateau, and shortly became its terror. He drank from morning until night, was ever in a state of intoxication, and a regular frequenter of the Clubs. Of course he ill-treated his wife worse than ever, for the poor woman mourned her murdered daughter, and cursed her indirect assassin.

In a short while, the consequence of this life of riot and debauchery, in the turmoil of which Virlet doubtlessly sought to drown all remembrance of his crimes, was a violent malady and confinement to his bed. His wife evinced a Christian resignation in watching at the bolster of him whose hands were still reeking with a daughter's blood, and as the 10th of August approached, Virlet grew convalescent. On that day the people took possession of the Palace; discharges of fire-arms took place in its innermost apartments; suddenly a blow from a strong foot burst open the door of the chamber, where lay Virlet, half dead with fear. At the sight of the murderers, he exclaimed—"Long live the nation! my friends! Down with the tyrant! You know how I gave you a helping hand at Versailles, and had not this internal illness visited me here, I should have partaken of your victory!"

"He lies! he's but a spy!" interrupted a harsh voice.

The Man with the Long Beard appeared, and continued his speech—"He is a spy!—he pretends to serve the people, and betrays us. Death to the traitor!"

"Death to the traitor!" resounded on all sides; nothing but "Death to the traitor!" "Hold, here's his wife. Give her to you, finish her. As for me, I will take charge of him. Tell me, Virlet, think'st thou that this turn will compare with thine at Sevres?" he added, leaning upon the bed where the footman lay extended. "I am a true patriot," rejoined the pallid wretch—"help! help!"

"Is there a barber among ye?" coolly inquired Long Beard. "Yes, that's my calling," replied some one from the crowd. "Advance to the order! Shave and dress the hair of this fellow. Let the gentleman's toilet be strictly *comme il faut*." The barber obeyed, and Virlet quietly resigned himself to the operation, amidst the sarcasms of the brigands, while his wretched wife uttered a few dying lamentations; her eyes soon closed in death.

"Now, can any one lend me a pike?" inquired Long Beard. "Yes, take mine," quoth one of the populace.

"Look ye, Virlet gaze upon the pike, for upon the end of that weapon your head will soon be balanced, as neatly as that of Mismandre, the body guard."

With these words, a blow from his sabre severed the head of Virlet from his shoulders.

Within half an hour the head of the ex-footman to the Queen was hawked about the streets of Paris, surmounting a pike, borne by the Man with the Long Beard, amid cries of "Long live the Nation!"

Youth is not like a new garment which we can keep fresh and fair by wearing sparingly. Youth, while we have it, we must wear daily, and it will fast wear away.