



LITERATURE.

THE SEASONS IN PASSING.

BY ROBERT STORY.

The seasons, in passing, one sweet moral bring,
And well—if he marked it—would man do;
Spread pleasure like me, is the language of Spring,
Make all hearts as glad as you can do!
What a world it would be if less mindful of self,
You esteemed every mourner a brother;
And if each while he did a bit good for himself,
Did a little bit too, for another!

The Summer but varies the lesson—' Make glad!
Treat all men with love and affection!
My sun shines alike on the good and the bad,
And shall you dare think of selection?
What a world it would be if less mindful of self,
You esteemed e'en a bad man a brother;
And if each, while he did a bit good for himself,
Did a little bit too, for another!

The Autumn proclaims—" Lo my steps are for all;
But should one in the scramble, get favour,
Let him share it with those to whom little may fall,
And what's left will have all the more savour!
What a world it would be if less mindful of self,
You esteemed the unlucky a brother;
And if each, while he did a bit good for himself,
Did a little bit too, for another!"

The winter affirms it, while shaking the door,
And binding the stream with his fetter—
Keep the cold that I bring from the hearths of the poor,
And your own will burn brighter and better!
What a world it would be, if less mindful of self,
You esteemed every poor man a brother;
And if each, while he did a bit good for himself,
Did a little bit too, for another!

[From the Lady's Album.]

THE DESERTER;

A WEST INDIAN SKETCH.

I had lingered on the Plaza long after the band had ceased playing, one evening in May;—the last volante had gone from its station outside the enclosure. The crowd of Spanish exquisites had already gone to their homes, or merely tarried at La Dominica's for refreshments, when I turned from gazing upon the glaring lights that lit up the princely mansion of the Governor General, and discovered a female seated on one of the benches near the base of the statue of Ferdinand. The tall graceful palms formed a shade about her, but I could see that her face was hidden in her lap, where also there seemed to be the form of an infant. Believing that she had fallen asleep, I approached to awake her as I passed out of the grounds, and laid my hand gently upon her shoulder, when she started up, looking me full in the face, with her eyes suffused with tears.

"I thought you were sleeping," I observed.

"Ah, señor, I am only weeping," she replied, sobbing as though her heart would break, while she pressed a little infant nervously to her breast.

She was very young and beautiful, scarcely eighteen I should say, yet with all those womanly developements that the tropical climate induces at a tender age, and in spite of myself I found that a deep interest had at once sprung up in my heart for the beautiful Creole. Still she sobbed pitifully.

"Why do you weep, my good girl?" I asked, soothingly.

"Ah, why should I tell you?—it will do no good. Poor, poor Juan, he will soon be gone from me,"—and again the breast of the young mother heaved with deep emotion.

"Perhaps I can alleviate in some degree your grief," said I, "if you will let me know its source, my good girl."

"I will tell you, señor; possibly you have some interest, and will exert it for us—will you not?" And as she spoke she bent her large dark eyes upon me with a helpless expression of entreaty, (so becoming in a woman,) that bound me at once to her interest. Be it as it might, I assured her of my willing assistance to remove the cause of the grief, and thus assured, she went on to tell me her story. It was very short.

Juan, her husband, had been ordered home to Spain with the regiment to which he belonged. In vain were his endeavours to be exchanged into some other corps, and thus remain on the station. He was a petty officer, had risen from the rank of his regiment, and therefore must follow it back to Spain. His Colonel was a cold, heartless man. What cared he for Juan's wife? He would grant no release, leaving only the alternation for the sergeant to leave his young wife and infant behind, or else to desert and run the risk of being shot. This was the purport of her simple but interesting story.

I have rarely seen a sweeter or more innocent face than that of the sergeant's wife, and coupled with the little infant she held in her arms, I have them at this moment pictured in my memory as I first saw them on the Plaza at Havana. She was a Creole by birth, and had married the Spanish soldier purely from love, and singular enough, (for it is rarely the case,) he was in every way worthy of her, and of the tender confidence she placed in him. Like her he was quite miserable at the prospect of

a separation, but he could devise no means to prevent it. After hearing her story, I suggested various modes of relief for the emergency, but all were met by some argument that showed their impracticability, until at last I said:

"Well, then, he must desert."

"'Tis a fearful expedient, señor."

"True, but you say he will dare any thing, rather than leave you."

"He will, indeed, even death."

"Can I see your husband?"

"In the morning, señor, to-night he is on duty, and has just gone off the Plaza with the guard, and thus I follow him every where, for I fear that it will not be long that I can see him at all."

"Where can I meet him alone?"

"Numero—calle del Ignacio."

"I will be there to-morrow noon."

"Addio, señor."

"Good night."

She pressed my hand with the warmth of feeling peculiar to her people, and with a look of confidence and gratitude that paid me in advance for all the trouble that I might experience in her behalf, she turned from the spot and directed her steps towards the Cathedral, whose time-worn and moss-grown towers were visible against the dark blue vault above us. I turned also towards my hotel, and entered its portals just as the watchman was sounding the hour of eleven in the long drawing Spanish style which was echoed by his comrades from every nook and corner of the great city.

Taking a volante the following day, I bid my calisero drive me to the Cathedral, where I dismissed him to avoid exciting suspicion, and walked from thence to the house where the sergeant lived. He had just been relieved from duty, and wore a sad countenance, for he had been witnessing the execution of a comrade who was shot for some trifling act of insubordination. The Spanish code of military law is strict, and most rigorously enforced in the island. Juan met me kindly, and his wife having prepared him for the interview, we at once came to an understanding. I saw that a soldier's pride as to obeying orders had not a little influence over him, and also that the fear of a deserter's fate bore him down, for he too looked upon this as being the only mode of release from the dilemma. But these I left him to weigh between his wife and himself, and not until he had fully resolved to desert, did I offer him my aid.

"It seemed to me, señor," said the sergeant, at length, "as though Heaven had answered my prayer, and sent you to direct how I shall release myself from the fate of separating from my dear Loise. I am decided, therefore, and will follow your direction implicitly—without a question."

"Not so," said I, "but rather let us consult together, and with our united judgments, added to the facilities I possess, we may no doubt be able to get yourself and wife away in safety."

"As you please, señor."

I had just freighted a little packet brig with sugar for New Orleans, and she was to sail on the following day. My plan was to get Juan and his wife on board undiscovered, and thus enable him to reach an American port, where he would be safe; but how to accomplish this was a puzzle which caused us no little trouble to solve. The key was always strictly guarded at every point, so that no one could get on board the shipping without being challenged by the sentinels on duty. Besides which could they ever succeed in getting on board, their passport would be demanded by the boarding officer before the vessel was permitted to sail. To surmount all these difficulties, was no trifling task. It was agreed that the attempt must be made at night; therefore, I arranged that the brig should clear as had at first been proposed, and make a good offing, but should return again with the evening tide, and lay off and on at such a distance from the shore as not to be recognized. Thus there could be nothing suspicious in her appearance, for no vessel is allowed to enter the harbour after the firing of the evening gun.

I now sat seriously to work, to manage in some way so as to get Juan, his wife and child, on board without being discovered by the guard. After examining the ground, I found that this would be impossible, unless I could accomplish it outside the walls of the city. So I directed Juan and his wife to disguise themselves, and meet me on the shore at a designated point without the walls, where I would have a boat in readiness to embark for the brig, which had been instructed to lay off the point referred to. The sergeant followed my plan to the letter, and we met at the appointed rendezvous without meeting with any untoward occurrence, though many risks were necessarily run by Juan, who was too well known among the guard not to fear being detected by them. We found that the shore even here was strictly guarded, and indeed that sentinels were posted within pistol shot of the very spot where my boat lay concealed from sight.

We could see the lights of the brig, arranged as I had directed, from where she lay, some two miles from the shore, but how to get on board we knew not, and nearly an hour was passed in fruitless attempts to get by the line of sentinels, until at last, when we were about to give up in despair, a friendly cloud obscured the moon. Another, and still a third followed, and soon it began to rain and to grow quite dark. This housed the sentinels and rendered all things quite obscure, and with thankful heart we hastened to improve these to us golden moments. The row boat was reached in safety, and hastily embarking, we were soon pulling towards the brig. Just as the objects upon the shore began to grow dim through the darkness, we heard minute guns firing, and soon after the roll of a drum, all of which told us that Juan's escape was discovered. We pulled the oars with all the strength in our power, for already could we see lights upon the shore, and we anticipated immediate pursuit. We soon reached the brig, and being recognized, Juan, his wife and child were received on board, and while I was left to make my way back to the shore, the brig spread her white wings and bore away up the Gulf towards the North West.

At this moment I saw a low, rakish craft round the mouth of the harbour of Havana, and shooting out from between Moro Castle and the opposite fort, lay her course in pursuit of the brig. I lay on my oars for a moment to watch the start of the cutter, for I soon found it to belong to the revenue service, and so near did it pass to me in the darkness, that I heard the voice of the officer of the deck ordering booms to be rigged out in order that every inch of canvass the schooner could carry might be brought into service in the chase. I knew very well that the brig had a reputation for speed, and also that she had a good three miles the start of the cutter; still I felt not a little anxiety at the state of matters, both for the sergeant and myself, as I had yet to make my landing without being discovered.

It had grown still darker, and after pulling for some time, I found that, although I was quite near the shore, I could scarcely discern objects at all on the land, but all this was greatly in my favour. I steered the boat between two of the guard stations, which I could easily discover by the lights, and with a little caution I managed to land without being discovered by the sentinel, whom I could hear, and whose lights I could see in every direction, examining the shore as if to find some clue to the deserter. I was obliged to crawl on my hands in passing another line of guard, and at last secreted myself in the ditch just outside the city gates, and on the following morning I was the first person who entered the walls. Hastening to my hotel, I threw off my disguise, and took a warm bath to relieve me from the bodily pain the night damp had given me in my exposed resting place.

Three days subsequent to this event I left Havana for St. Thomas, one of the leeward isles of the group, and before the return of the revenue cutter which had started in pursuit of the brig. Thus I was left in harrowing suspense as to the fate of my proteges, but it was unavoidable, and I was obliged to follow out the original plan of my business in the West Indies. I should have delayed my departure, had there been another opportunity of making a voyage to the island, but the chances were rare, and I was forced to go.

Three months since I was in the Crescent city. It was at the time of the earliest intelligence from the seat of war, when the city was fired with military enthusiasm, and the drum and fife were heard from morning until night, and volunteers were arriving from the up-river country. 'The Sultana' was to arrive with a company at five o'clock one fine afternoon, and I had taken a vehicle and driven down to the Levee to witness the landing of the men. In common with a large crowd of spectators, I was much interested, and watched intently for the boat, which at last hove in sight, and I took an advantageous situation to witness the mooring. My back was turned towards the city, and I sat facing the river. I did not therefore observe the preparations that were making to fire a salute on the occasion. This led to an accident that had nearly cost me my life.

Just as the boat rounded gracefully to in the river, and as she lay with her prow towards the city, the match was applied to the thirty-two pounder not far behind me, the report jarring the ground on which the vehicle was standing. My horse sprang forward, as though he had received an electrical shock, and became at once perfectly unmanageable, dashing furiously towards the river, but a few yards distant. In an instant more I should have been thrown into the river, horse, vehicle and all, which must inevitably have proved fatal to me and the horse too, for the river has a current of some ten miles to the hour opposite the spot where I had stopped, besides which there are many eddies and powerful undertows, that render escape to those who fall in by accident next to impossible. At the very instant that I had supposed myself about to be precipitated from the landing into the river, a powerful hand was laid upon my horses' bit, and the animal was thrown completely upon his haunches by an almost superhuman exertion of strength. I was safe.

Stepping from the vehicle, I sought to thank my deliverer, when lo! the person of Sergeant Juan was before me! I was dumb for a moment with surprise and gratification.

"You my preserver?" I exclaimed.

"Thank God, I was the one to serve you," he said warmly. "There is the hand of Providence in this," he said, devoutly raising his eyes, "and I am sure to prosper now that I have partially repaid my debt to you."

"You got safely here then, after all?" I asked.

"Yes, but not without a severe chase."

"Your wife and child?"

"Both are well, and bless you in their prayers."

"But I must see them."

"Will you come to our humble home?"

"Come? yes, with all my heart."

He informed me that he kept a segar store, having some experience in the manufacture of that article before. He was doing well in a pecuniary point of view, and had already begun to lay by something against old age. That night I took tea with Sergeant Juan and his smiling and happy faced Loise. Yes—they were happy, very happy, and I shall not soon forget the lesson I read there of contentment. The little son had already learned to walk, and to talk a little too, and the mother told me, with a blush, that they had named him M——, after myself.

A YARD OF PORK.—In a neighbouring town, in which they were building a railroad, a party of Irishmen who were employed there, went to the store of a real Yankee, and thinking they would show a specimen of Irish wit, one asked for a "yard of pork," whereupon the Yankee deliberately cut off three pigs feet, and handed them to the Irishman. Pat, not at first understanding the joke, asked—"And sure, and is that what you would be after calling a yard of pork?"

"Certainly," replied the Yankee, coolly; "don't you know that in this country three feet make a yard?"

The greatest of all fools is the proud fool,—who is at the mercy of every fool he meets.