



LITERATURE.

IF I WERE A VOICE.

BY C. MACKAY.

If I were a voice, a persuasive voice,
That could travel the wide world through,
I would fly on the beams of the morning light,
And speak to men with a gentle might,
And tell them to be true.
I'd fly, I'd fly, o'er land and sea,
Wherever a human heart might be,
Telling a tale, or singing a song,
In praise of the right—in blame of the wrong.

If I were a voice, a consoling voice,
I'd fly on the wings of air,
The homes of sorrow and guilt I'd seek,
And calm and truthful words I'd speak
To save them from despair.
I'd fly, I'd fly, o'er the crowded town,
And drop, like the happy sunlight, down
Into the hearts of suffering men,
And teach them to rejoice again.

If I were a voice, a convincing voice,
I'd travel with the wind,
And whenever I saw the nations torn
By warfare, jealousy, or scorn,
Or hatred of their kind,
I'd fly, I'd fly, on the thunder crash,
And into their blinded bosoms flash;
And all their evil thoughts subdued,
I'd teach them Christian brotherhood.

If I were a voice, a pervading voice,
I'd seek the kings of earth;
I'd find them alone on their beds at night,
And whisper words that should guide them right—
Lessons of priceless worth;
I'd fly more swift than the swiftest bird,
And tell them things they never heard—
Truths which the ages for aye repeat—
Unknown to the statesmen at their feet.

If I were a voice, an immortal voice,
I'd speak in the people's ear;
And whenever they shouted "Liberty,"
Without deserving to be free,
I'd make their error clear.
I'd fly, I'd fly, on the wings of day,
Rebuking wrong on my world-wide way,
And making all the world rejoice—
If I were a voice—an immortal voice.

THE GENERAL'S NIECE;
OR A GUN-BRIG ADVENTURE.

A TALE OF HAVANA—By J. H. Ingraham.

It was just at dusk on a summer's evening in Havana, as I left my lodgings to pass an hour or two at a friend's house. The protective administration of Tacon had not then commenced, and I was therefore well armed to protect myself; for I well knew that the streets were quite unsafe, and one or two recent experiences had convinced me of the utility of a good pair of pistols and a short cutlass, the latter the gift of a chivalrous young Pole with whom I travelled many hundred miles.

Wrapping my roquelaure around me, as well to shield my person from the heavy dews as to hide my weapon, I issued from the gran puerta of my mansion, and directed my steps towards the Governor's square, across which my way lay. I had to pass through a long and narrow street without side-walks, keeping in the centre, and only driven to the wall when a *volante*, drawn by a pair of mules and guided by a fantastic looking postilion mounted on one of them, came dashing towards me, bearing some dark-eyed senora to the theatre.

I had pursued my way without interruption for a quarter of a mile up this long, close street, which was lined on either hand by Moorish-looking edifices, stuccoed, and formidable with tall grated windows, when, as I came under the dark and gloomy walls of a Romish Church, I was startled by the sounds of a struggle directly around the corner before me, and not ten paces distant. The spot was quite in obscurity and secluded, and I knew that it had the reputation of being a famous "stand" for the street *ladrones* to waylay passengers; and, with this recollection, I had pulled the belt containing my pistols round so as to have a ready grasp, and had loosened my cloak and taken a firmer hold of my trusty sabre. I had hardly done so when I was startled by the noise of the struggle I have just mentioned. There was a two-fold impulse that at once seized my mind; one to retreat and keep out of harm's way, the other to rush forward to see if I could not aid some unlucky stranger. The sound of swords clashing, mingled with deep Spanish oaths, above which rose a clear rich voice in French, with the tones of a warrior hurling defiance in battle, induced me press forward and ascertain what was going on, and if I could aid any one in peril, to do so; for I was satisfied that some passenger had been set upon by picaroons. I was the next moment in sight of the parties, who were in a nook or recess formed by a tower of the church and its front wall or facade; a nice, snug place to conceal an assassin till he could pounce out, like a wolf from his lair, upon his prey.

It was light enough, for the moon was just then showing her silvery shield in the east, for me to see at a glance that three persons were setting upon one, who, with his back against a pilaster, was bravely defending himself with a sword, using his cloak wrapped round his left arm as a shield. I perceived at once, from his appearance, that he was a gentleman, and that his assailants were a trio of villainous blackguards. They were armed with the short sharp, curved knives peculiar to the assassin of the Havana, and were doing their best to murder him. They danced round him, now this side, now that, aiming their knives at his heart, and always foiled by his skillful weapon. They could not take him behind, for the wall against which he stood. They reminded me, as they leaped upon him with a growling oath, and then drew back again to spring to better advantage, of three blood-hounds set upon a tiger; for the stranger fought like one in comparison.

As I came up, the backs of two of them were towards me. The third man and the stranger saw me at the same time.

"Monsieur! Senor! *Par amour de Dieu!* give me a hand to route these villains!" he cried in Spanish, with a French accent. "The rogues are too many for me, and have cut my sword hand through."

I did not wait for a second appeal, and drawing a pistol, I fired at one of them as he was lifting his murderous knife to spring again upon his victim. He leaped into the air and fell with a loud cry, but the next instant rose to his feet and fled. I followed this advantage by the discharge of a second pistol directly in the face of one of the assassins who was bounding upon me with his naked knife flashing in the moon-beams. I missed him, but the report repelled him, and he retreated. We now set upon them and dispersed them, following them for a square, till we lost sight of them in some of the dark windings of those regions.

"Monsieur," said the stranger to me as we both stopped at the head of the street to take breath, "I am in your debt for my life; for, by the mass! it was my life, not my money, they wanted. I know two of the villains, and know that it was revenge that set them upon me.—If they had had pistols they would have finished me; but they feared to use them lest the alarm they give should endanger their own safety." He gave his name as "Adolphe Jean Boncour," and said he had been an officer in the French marine, but was now in command of a vessel of his own. His address was the "Cafe Don Pedro, Calle San T—." He was a good-looking, pleasant Frenchman, compactly built, with a free, daring expression, and about the height and shape of Napoleon; a favorite model of dimensions to all Frenchmen. Napoleon, be it said in passing, has dignified all small-sized men, as Wellington, by his huge nose, keeps in countenance all men of enormous probosces.

After repeating to me his thanks in the manly, frank way of a brave man, we parted, and I pursued my way towards my place of destination without further adventure.

Three days afterwards, I was seated in a coffee-house on the Plaza with a young New Yorker, a thriving merchant at Havana, taking coffee and toast, and listening between whiles to his account of a very great disappointment in a certain love affair. It seems he had come passenger from New York a few weeks before in the same ship with a General—and his niece, a very charming girl, but without fortune, and as the General was not very well off, without any expectations. My friend, whose name was Charles Effingham, fell irrevocably in love with the beautiful niece, and was so happy as to inspire in her bosom a kindred sentiment in reference to himself. Before the ship reached Havana they secretly engaged themselves. On shore, the General put up at a house opposite the lodgings of Effingham, and by this means he had an opportunity of frequently seeing her. At length, one morning, finding her sad and weeping, he learned from her that her uncle had that day made known to her, "in confidence," as he said, that he had come to Havana not so much for his own health, as for the purpose of marrying her to some one of the rich Spanish nobles, who at this season frequented this city; and he told her farther, that he had three already in view, one of whom it was his command she should choose as her future husband, and use all the power of her charms to captivate him.

"Now," said my friend Charles to me, as he was giving me this account over our coffee, and in a little louder tone than became the place we were in, (for only a thin partition separated the box in which we sat from those adjoining,) "now, when I heard this, you may judge my emotions. We immediately resolved to make known our engagement to the General, and so put an end to this matrimonial gambling speculation of his. Well, Mary divulged the affair to him; and he flew into a passion so dreadful that she told me she feared he would lay violent hands upon her. He at length quit her and sought me. Our interview, you may be assured, was not the most agreeable. He treated me with abuse, which I bore and forgave for her sake. He forbade me the house; but we met still, which he discovering, has resolved to put an end to the whole matter, by leaving for New Orleans. I have just received a note from her in which she tells me—but read it for yourself.

I read as follows in a neat but tremulous hand: "DEAREST CHARLES:—My uncle has just told me to have my trunks ready to leave Havana this afternoon.—He says he has taken passage in the English ship 'Bristol-Haven,' and we must be on board by 4, P. M. This is painful intelligence for me to communicate to you.—What is to be done? If we could see each other to consult for a moment! I must go with uncle. I cannot resist his commands. If we do not meet again—but—I will not say 'farewell' for my heart tells me we shall yet be happy. Try and see me if possible!"

"Your attached and grief-stricken M." "P. S. One of the young Spanish nobles is going in the same ship, I learn!"

"She is truly devoted to you, Charles," I said. "Poor

girl! Why don't you steal her away and be married in one of the city churches?"

"It is too late, I fear. He will not leave her for a moment. It will be impossible for her to get away, even if I should write to her to this effect. I don't know what to do unless I take passage in the ship also. This, I can't leave my business to do, as you know I am young and just starting in life, and an absence of this kind would go against me. I don't know what to do. This nobleman, too, is going passenger! It is all a plan of the General's against dear Mary's happiness. I wish, in mercy, you would advise me. You have had some skill in getting lovers out of perplexities. Imagine us to be the hero and heroine of a romance, and set your brain to work for our benefit."

"Monsieur, I am happy to see you again," said, in French, my fighting friend M. Adolphe Jean Boncour, coming out of the next box and taking me by the hand. "You will pardon me for intruding upon you, Messieurs, but I owe a debt of gratitude to Monsieur, and would repay it. I have, by chance, overheard your friend's relation of his interesting *affaire d'amour*, and I have come to offer him my services, which will be the same as serving you, and so I wish to consider it. If you will allow me, I will tell you my plan."

I invited him to be seated, and he then said:—"I command a fast-sailing brig, the 'Diane.' She is now light, waiting for freight. I can get her ready for sea in half an hour. I have fifteen men in all on board. I am armed with four guns, two sixes and two eighteens, besides small arms, in the cabin. The Bristol-Haven sails at 4 P. M. Come on board and dine with me, and bring with you a priest, any one you can trust to serve you.—Will you drive with me?" he asked with a smile.

An idea of the plan flashed at once upon my mind, though not by any means so fully as he went on to explain it after we had consented.

"After dinner we will quietly smoke our cigars until the Bristol-Haven gets under weigh. We will weigh at the same time and follow her. Before twelve hours pass, if you say so, gentlemen, I shall have the honour of celebrating a wedding on board the *Diane*."

We remained silent with surprise. At length I spoke, and said:

"Do you mean to pursue and board the ship?"

"Yes, without question, and take the lady out!"

"It will be piracy."

"N'importe! Leave that to me. C'est mon affaire," he replied, laughing and slightly shrugging his shoulders.

By some means, an hour afterwards Charles succeeded in getting a note, of which the following is a copy, into the hands of the General's niece:

"DEAR MARY:—Take courage. A friend in command of a brig is to pursue the ship and board her soon after leaving port. She will pretend to be a buccaneer. You will not be alarmed, therefore, on finding your ship pursued. The General and yourself will be the only passengers taken out. When I say I take a priest (the Rev. Father Deblasse, whom you know,) with me in the pursuing brig, you will know we are very soon happily to triumph over the destiny that seems now to threaten us with separation."

"Your devoted CHARLES." When Mary received and read this, her eyes sparkled, she kissed it and concealed it in her bosom, and all was hope and happiness before her.

We dined with M. Boncour; we smoked our cigars afterwards, and while smoking saw the passengers set off on board the Bristol-Haven, and among them the General and his lovely niece. In half an hour she weighed anchor, loosed and sheeted home her top-sails, and sailed majestically out of the harbor. We imitated her motions, and in half an hour's time we were both in the open sea, standing with a six-knot breeze from the south towards the west. As the sun set, we increased our spread of canvas, and rapidly overhauled the ship; but as Captain Boncour did not wish to board until after the moon rose, the better to deceive her, he took in sail again, satisfied of his ability to come up with her whenever he chose. At length the sun set, twilight fell upon the sea, and veiled the distant hills of Cuba from the eye. This was the signal for crowding sail. We soon made out the ship about half a mile ahead, and in another hour we were abreast, and to windward, not a quarter of a mile distant.

"Fire!" cried Mr. Boncour to a man who had been stationed at the starboard eighteen-pounder.

The roar of the gun shook the brig, and the shot we saw plough up the dark water in a long phosphorescent line, a half cable's length across her bows. At the same time, our helm was put up and we run down upon her. The ship well understood the meaning of the gun, and we distinctly heard the captain give the order to place the maintop-sail to the mast. As we approached, she was hove to and stationary.

"Ship ahoy!" hailed M. Boncour.

"Ahoy!"

"What ship is that?"

"The 'Bristol-Haven,' bound for New Orleans. What brig is that?"

"The Spanish man-of-war brig 'El Hercule,'" answered M. Boncour, readily; and turning to us added with a laugh, "I believe I won't play the buccaneer this time, if I can get along without it."

"Are General—and his niece on board your ship as passengers?"

An answer came in the affirmative. "Send them on board my brig without delay, and you will be suffered to proceed. I have run out from Havana to overtake you for this object. Be quick, and see that all their baggage is placed in the boat with them!"

In ten minutes afterwards the happy lover assisted his fair bride-elect and conducted her into the cabin, where, no doubt, he passed three very blissful moments before the rest of us followed, accompanied by the perplexed General—who believed he had been pursued and detained for some high treason against the Spanish government. His surprise on beholding Charles seated by his niece, her hand in his, cannot be depicted in words.