

## LITERATURE, &amp;c.

## THE RUSSIAN SPY.

This is the title of one of the original contributions to the Continental Annual; it is at the same time one of the most interesting. The Author describes himself as a surgeon and a native of Dresden, in which city he passed the memorable year 1813, and beheld the calamities that were brought upon it by the arrival of the French armies under Davoust and St. Cyr. Among the persons who resided in the same house with him, occupying one of the attics, were an aged man, who earned a miserable livelihood by fishing in the river, and his daughter Meta, whose appearance indicated mental imbecility; and who, out of charity, was employed by the landlord to attend the lodgers. They had been but a few months in Dresden, where they were little known, and it was understood that they had formerly been in better circumstances. The author thus became acquainted with her, and soon discovered beneath her coarse attire and beautiful formed figure, a musical voice, an accomplished mind, though veiled for the present from some mysterious circumstances. The old man concealed also a fine person in the ample garments of a fisherman; he was dumb, or pretended to be so, and went by the name Old Peter. The charms of Meta insensibly won upon the author; her gratitude was excited by some professional services which he rendered to her father, and her heart was engaged by the solicitude which he appeared to feel for herself. Matters were in this state, when, on the evening of the 5th of November, six days before their capitulation, the French determined on a sortie, hoping to take their Russian besiegers by surprise. The writer proceeds:

"Too much excited to sleep, I determined to remain within a prudent distance of head-quarters, and await the event. I had not long to linger in suspense. Soon after the church clocks had struck twelve, I heard a low rumbling sound reverberating through the deep silence of the deserted streets, and from the dark angle in which I was placed, I beheld several pieces of artillery, with powder waggons, the wheels of which carefully covered with straw, pass slowly by towards the bridge. Taking a shorter road through narrow passages, and favoured by the darkness, I gained the centre of the bridge, where an arch, blown up in the spring by Davoust, had been replaced by strong oak planks, flanked on each side by lofty palisades. Drawing my coat tightly around me, I extended myself on the pavement within one of the recesses, to escape observation. While thus waiting the arrival of the artillery, I suddenly heard some ponderous body strike the palisades, and distinguished the sound of voices beneath the bridge. The intense darkness of a November night, and the loud rush of a north-wester through the battlements, prevented me from discovering the cause of these strange occurrences; but when the artillery, already on the bridge, had passed, and the deep rumbling of the cannon had ceased to distract my attention, I looked and listened attentively for a recurrence of the mysterious sounds beneath the planking, and was no little surprised and alarmed when I saw one of the oak planks close to me slowly raised. At this moment, the storm having somewhat dispersed the heavy clouds, the pale rays of a new moon, piercing through the drift, fell upon the spot, and with amazement I beheld rising, as through a trap-door, the tall figure of my fellow-lodger, the father of the interesting Meta.

"Soon as he had gained the surface of the wood-work some one beneath handed to him a long white pole or fishing-rod, which, after carefully replacing the plank, he extended over the parapet, and stood motionless in the attitude of a person fishing with rod and line. At this moment my listening ear distinguished the heavy and measured tread of a body of armed men at the city end of the bridge, and the flickering moonlight flashed upon the arms of the French van-guard. Shrouded by a dark-blue cloak and the deep shadow beneath the parapet, I gazed with a beating heart upon a battalion which passed me in profound silence. When the front rank reached the planking, the old man began to sing in his dumb fashion, and held out his cap with one hand as if for alms, while the other supported his fishing-rod.

"Ah, voila St. Pierre qui veut pecher!" exclaimed a grenadier. Another in the following rank, halting for a second, said, "Ah ca! mon ami! Je t'aiderai a pecher! Tenez!" and threw a coin into the cap of the old man, who thanked him in tones which resembled the howling of a wolf rather than a human voice. Several officers, and many soldiers, as they passed, threw their contributions into the cap, and each donation was acknowledged in the same unintelligible howl. At length, a well-mounted officer of rank, in whom I re-

cognized the Count de Loban, approached so near the ancient beggar, that I expected every moment to see him trampled under the hoofs of the fiery charger. Fixing his hat more firmly on his head, the count turned hastily to an aide-de-camp, and in a stern voice, exclaimed, "Who is that man, Larive?"

"The group of mounted officers behind him reigned in their impatient steeds, and I began to tremble for my own safety, as well as for that of my fellow-lodger, when, to my inexpressible relief, a black-bearded veteran sapper, marching with shouldered axe out of the ranks, carelessly answered, 'Tis only a poor dumb maniac, well known in Dresden. They call him St. Peter the Fisherman.'

"The marshal and his suit proceeded, and the battalions continued to defile over the bridge, not, however, with the bounding step and gaiete de cœur displayed by the French soldiery in the brighter days of Napoleon, but in unbroken silence and evident discouragement.

"The passage of about 10,000 infantry, 1,000 cavalry, and 200 baggage-waggons, necessarily occupied a considerable time; at length, however, the last of the rear guard quitted the bridge, the heavy tread of men and horses died away in the distance, and my attention was again solely occupied by the old fisherman, who suddenly leaning his rod against the parapet, withdrew a wooden peg which secured the planking, and hastily removed the same plank he had raised before. Kneeling down, and applying his face to the aperture, the dumb man exclaimed, to my infinite amazement, in good Russian,—"Katinka! Katinka! is all ready?"

"Yes, grandfather! there is a fish on every hook," answered a shrill voice from beneath, in the same language. Starting up, the old man seized and raised his fishing-rod, which by the increasing moonlight I now saw was no rod, but a stout pole of great length. Instead, however, of fish, I observed three small, but well-lighted lanterns, attached to as many cords of different lengths, forming, when the pole was placed by the fisherman in a perpendicular position, a signal or beacon of three equi-distant lights. Supporting the end of the pole on the parapet, he remained motionless until he saw a brilliant rocket rush into the air from an elevation at some distance beyond the Elbe. This rejoinder was followed by numerous rockets and fire-beacons, which blazed up in rapid succession along the hills of Meissen, filling the atmosphere with vivid coruscations, which were reflected in long and flaming lines on the ruffled waters of the Elbe. Starting on my feet at the extraordinary spectacle, I saw the old man some paces beyond the planking, whirling, in apparent ecstasy, his heavy pole and its pendant lamps above his head, until the lights were extinguished by the rapid motion. Availing myself of his absence, I approached the aperture, when I stopped short in breathless surprise, as I beheld, slowly emerging from the trap, the head, arms, and figure of a woman, from whose dripping hair and apparel the water streamed upon the boards, while her wet clothes, clinging closely to her person, betrayed the contours of an exquisitely-proportioned figure.

"The storm was now fast subsiding, and the moon, shining brightly in an unclouded quarter of the sky, enabled me to discern her features. Gracious Heavens! it was my lovely and mysterious Meta, whom I beheld in this strange condition. "In the name of wonder, Meta!" I exclaimed, "what brings you here?" Without uttering a word in reply, she abruptly seized my arm, and with incredible force dragged me some distance along the bridge towards the city.

"Pour l'amour de Jesus! Wolmar!" she whispered in pure French, and with energetic intonation, "Utter not a word, and quit the bridge, or you are lost,—see, see, dear Wolmar! my best and only friend! the fierce old man is replacing the plank; away! away! begone, or he will murder thee!"

"Had she been a stranger to me, I could not have resolved to leave this shivering girl in such a pitiable condition; and I now, for the first time, felt all the force of my attachment to her. Taking off my cloak, I threw it around her; meanwhile the fisherman was still watching the rockets thrown up by the besiegers, on the hills beyond Grossenhayn. "There they go!" he shouted, "eight—nine—ten—eleven thousand of those incarnate devils, those murderous incendiaries! Rush down upon them, my valiant countrymen! Lay on, and spare not! Avenge the fires of Moscow! Avenge the cruel massacre of my son, and my son's son—my wife and daughters! Lay on, lay on, and spare not, in the name of God, and St. Andrew!"

"Tossing his lanterns into the river, he now strode towards us with a speed and vigour wonderful at his advanced age; when, suddenly perceiving me, he angrily exclaimed in Russian,—"Katinka! unhappy girl! who is that man? Why speak to him! We shall be betrayed, and shot before noon. But hold," he continued, through his clenched teeth, "there is yet a way and a will."

"Raising his heavy pole, he darted forward, and, with all his great bodily strength, levelled a blow at me, which would assuredly have fractured my skull, had not his grand-daughter sprung forward, and by a sudden push against his arm given another direction to the ponderous weapon, which was broken to pieces on the pavement, while he who wielded it was thrown upon his knees.

"Allons! Allons!" was now heard from numerous voices near the other end of the bridge, along with the tramp of cavalry, and the loud rolling of gun-carriages. It was the detachment of Count de Loban, defeated on the Drachenberg, and returning, after the discovery that the Russians were on the alert, and had occupied all the mountain passes. It was the next day rumoured in Dresden, that the besiegers were apprised of the intended sortie by Russian spies, secreted in the city. To return, however, to my own critical situation. I saw there was not a moment to lose. The courageous girl, who had thus saved my life, exhausted by the effort, and by long exposure in a boat to the wet and cold of a stormy November night, had fallen senseless at my feet. Taking up the precious burthen in my arms, I told the old man to fly for his life, and hastened towards the city with a speed which would not allow me to observe whether he had followed my advice, but which soon placed me and my beloved Meta in security. Avoiding every sentinel, and passing through unfrequented streets, I reached the retired house of a maternal aunt, who had often been a resource to me in hours of need. With ready kindness the old lady surrendered her warm bed to the still unconscious maiden. I prescribed what was needful to restore her, and anxiously watched her recovery; but it would have required more than human skill to prevent the fever which followed the excitement and bodily fatigue of that memorable night.

"Returning the following noon to my lodgings, I found my worthy landlord pale and trembling in his parlour. With a voice interrupted by strong emotion, he told me that Meta had disappeared, and that he had seen her aged parent leave the palace of Marshal St. Cyr, escorted by a numerous guard, which conducted him to the bridge. Thither he had followed and seen the poor dumb creature.

"Further details were checked by a gush of tears, but I could too well infer the sad catastrophe.

"Happily, I succeeded in concealing the untimely end of her only surviving relative from the lovely orphan, until she had been some weeks my wife.

"Since the auspicious day which made her mine for life, many years have gone by; but never has she for a moment given me cause to regret, that I confided my honour and my happiness to the keeping of a RUSSIAN SPY."

GOOD THINGS.—The attention of a superior is too flattering to our vanity not to call it forth.—A great change in life is like a cold bath in winter—we all hesitate at the first plunge.—Marriage is like money—seem to want it and you never get it.—Alas for the vanity of human enjoyment! we grow weary even of our own perfection.—What a foundation mortified vanity is for philosophy!—Attention is always pleasant in acquaintance till we tire of them. The ridiculous is memory's most adhesive plaster.—An apt quotation is like a lamp which flings its light over the whole sentence.—The history of most lives may be briefly comprehended under three heads—our follies, our faults, and our misfortunes.—There is nothing so easy as to be wise for others; a species of prodigality, by-the-bye—for such wisdom is wholly wasted.—Always be as witty as you can with your parting bow—your last speech is the one remembered. Nothing appears to me so absurd as placing our happiness in the opinion others entertain of our enjoyments, not in our own sense of them. The fear of being thought vulgar, is the most moral hydrophobia of the day; our weaknesses cost us a thousand times more regret and shame than our faults. Nothing circulates so rapidly as a secret.—What a pity that one forgets one's childish thoughts; their originality would produce such an effect if properly managed! It is curious to observe, that by far the most useful part of our knowledge is acquired unconsciously. We remember learning to read and write; but we do not remember how we learned to talk, to distinguish colours, &c. The first thought that a child wilfully conceals is an epoch—one of life's most important—and yet who can recall it?—Knowledge, when only the possession of a few, has always been turned to iniquitous purposes.—Imagination is to love what gas is to the balloon—that which raises it from earth.—Love is followed by disappointment, admiration by mortification and obligation by ingratitude.—Inclination never wants an excuse; and, if one won't do, there are a dozen others soon found.—Like the cards which form a child's plaything palace, our pleasures are nicely balanced upon the other. The bitterest cup has its one drop of