

LITERATURE, &c.

The British Magazines.

From Hogg's Instructor.

FORTY EIGHT HOURS OF GARRISON LIFE IN MONTREAL.

BY ABEL LOG.

CHAPTER IV.

'Captain de Lisle,' said Lieutenant Farley, rising from a lounging chair as Ernest entered the room, 'I have been anxiously awaiting your arrival. I have sought you upon a rather unpleasant errand. I am the bearer—'

'To the point, sir, at once,' cried Ernest. 'Time and place if you please.'

'You are somewhat abrupt, sir, replied Lieutenant Farley, plucking at one of his whiskers, and frowning. 'I was about to request you to favor me with the name of some friend who could negotiate these little preliminary matters for you; but as you appear to like words to be few, and fierce, allow me briefly to add—Mount Royal, near Macavish's monument. Time 12 o'clock.'

'I will be there,' said Ernest.

'I have the pleasure of wishing you good evening, sir.'

'And I of being relieved of your society.'

'Captain De Lisle,' gasped Farley, suddenly. 'I cannot permit—'

Ernest sprang to the window, and threw it open.

'Do you see that, sir,' cried he to the startled Lieutenant, 'say but another word, and I will drop you upon the bayonet of the sentry beneath.'

Lieutenant Farley violently slammed the door, and descended the staircase at two bounds and a slide.

'Let me see,' said Ernest, reclosing the window with great despatch, to prevent the ingress of the myriads of mosquitoes that instantly beset it; 'there is a moon. Very good, I like it better than the grey uncertain light of early morning. Now to poor Therese Lamontagne!'

He left the room as he spoke, despatched his black servant into the neighborhood of the mountain, and strolled down Notre Dame Street, in the direction of the Rue Saint Gabriel.

'Therese,' said Ernest, on entering the house, 'I am about to place myself in a position of some danger; and in the event of my not being able to accomplish the object I have in view, you may meet no more. Should you not see or hear from me again, before to-morrow night, avail yourself of the contents of this purse (nay, it is all your own, for I saw that Villiers was addicted to play, and had the fortune to borrow from him a large portion of the sums he had at different periods borrowed from you), as soon as you are able to leave Montreal, deliver this letter into the hands of the person to whom it is addressed. I earnestly hope, however, there will be no necessity for any such procedure. And now, farewell; I am about to meet Villiers.'

'To meet him!' exclaimed Therese, much agitated; 'oh, for what is this meeting—it can never be in friendship!'

'I fear not,' replied Ernest; 'men do not make engagements to wait upon each other in the dead of the night, for friendship's sake.'

'Oh spare his life,' implored Therese, in agony; 'spare him as you have saved me, my friend, my benefactor, my brother! He has betrayed me—ruined me—but spare him De Lisle, for many kind words of his rise to my remembrance, and I love him still.'

Ernest turned away his face. 'It is then as I hoped and believed,' muttered he. 'Therese, he shall not die by my hand.'

Therese Lamontagne gazed her gratitude, then suddenly regarding Ernest again, exclaimed, 'Though he may not die by your hand, not you by his?'

'It is possible,' said De Lisle, 'and for that reason I give you this letter; but let us look to the brighter side of things. Again, farewell! Before Therese could reply, Ernest had gained the door, and was gone.'

CHAPTER V.

Ernest De Lisle returned to his room, and was roused from a long fit of reverie by a knocking at the door. Immediately afterwards a tall stately figure entered, enveloped in the very eyes in a huge rough buffalo coat, with a long square parcel tucked under its left arm.

'What have we here?' cried Ernest, laughing at the ludicrous appearance before him, 'a man or a bison?'

'The former at present, with a dash of the latter on occasion,' replied Colonel Seaburn, disclosing his well known features to the gaze of Ernest. 'Bahl! it is very hot; and my old enemies the mosquitoes, I see, confound their impudence, have followed me all the way up stairs. Come, Ernest, it wants but ten minutes to twelve. I have been detained half an hour in polishing up these pistols, which are growing rusty for want of use. Are you ready?'

'In one moment my dear Colonel,' said Ernest, thrusting a miniature into his bosom, snatching up some papers, putting them hurriedly into his desk, and delivering them to Colonel Seaburn, who deposited it gravely in a capacious side pocket.

'Do you approve of this disguise, boy?' inquired the Colonel, who was of Irish extraction, and had a positive relish for all such affairs as the one in which they were about to engage.

'I would defy May herself to identify you,' said Ernest. 'Were I to meet you thus arrayed in one of my forest rambles, I should mistaking you for a fine bear, and let fly both barrels of my piece at once. I am quite at your service.'

Colonel Seaburn, who never entertained a very favorable opinion of the man who would give way to anything like despondency when the moment for action was at hand, offered Ernest one arm, tucked the pistol-case gaily under the other, and away they went.

The full moon was sailing in silent majesty over the blue serene of heaven, and, as she won a way through the fleecy clouds that gathered around her, looked like some gallant ship, with all her canvas spread, gliding amid the cold ice mountains of the northern main. Colonel Seaburn gazed on the earth on which he trod, for there was a still small voice whispering at his heart that he was not engaged in a proceeding which heaven and its angels could sanction. Ernest De Lisle gazed straight into the azure eternity above him, for his conscience was at rest, and he harbored no evil thought against any living creature.

'I see no one at present,' said Colonel Seaburn, who was the first to break a long interval of silence. 'I hope we are not going to be disappointed. Ah, I observe something moving under the trees yonder. Hem!'

Three figures sprang into the moonlight, and a few grim bows were exchanged.

'I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance, sir,' said Lieutenant Farley, fixing a glance of some curiosity upon the buffalo coat.

'My friend has the misfortune to be rather hard of hearing,' said Ernest, who was sadly apprehensive that the Colonel was about to discover himself. 'I think we shall be able to arrange all necessary matters without his interference.'

'I see no reason, sir, why the usual etiquette should not be observed on this occasion as well as on any other,' replied Lieutenant Farley with a sneer; 'however, it happens to be a matter of no vital importance. I presume twelve paces will suit you?'

'I believe I am the challenged party,' submitted Ernest.

'I think Captain De Lisle is stating a fact, Captain Villiers, is he not?' inquired the Lieutenant.

'Yes,' replied Villiers, 'I give the challenge. Then in continuation of a conversation the question had been interrupted—and pray sir did he hit it?'

'He drove it up to the very head in the wall at twenty paces,' returned the assistant surgeon, 'for Crawford was present at the time.'

'I am somewhat of a novice, gentlemen, in affairs of this nature,' said Ernest stepping forward, but what I have to propose is this, that we stand at the usual distance of twelve paces, and that one of us (we can settle whether Captain Villiers or myself) deliver his fire first; after which—providing such shots do not prove fatal—that the party fired upon be privileged to advance six paces and—'

'I can accede to no such extraordinary proposition,' said Farley; 'it would be deliberate murder.'

'Unless I have the first shot,' said Captain Villiers.

'In that case I could have no objection,' replied Farley.

'By all means,' returned a gruff voice from the interior of the coat; 'let him have it, let him have it.'

'Then we will place our men sir if you please,' said the small and important Lieutenant Farley to the last speaker. 'I fear your deafness is not quite so deep seated as your friend is inclined to suppose. I had almost mistaken you for a bear.'

'Take care the bear does not give you a squeeze, sir,' growled Colonel Seaburn, somewhat incensed at the little man's impertinence.

'Are you ready, gentlemen?'

Villiers cocked his pistol, and turned up the cuff of his right coat sleeve.

'Fire,' cried Farley.

Villiers raised his weapon slowly to the mark, depressed the muzzle a little, and did not pull the trigger till upwards of twenty seconds after the order was given. A dark perpendicular streak was apparent upon Ernest's left cheek. The bullet had slightly grazed it.

'Pray who is the murderer now, gentlemen?' said Colonel Seaburn, angrily. 'I can call you all to witness that Captain Villiers was nearly half a minute in adjusting his aim. My friend shall be permitted a similar indulgence.'

There was a momentary murmur. The brow of captain Villiers broke out into a deathly dew, and his cheeks and lips grew of one color with the moonbeam that played over him. Ernest De Lisle advanced six paces, and pointing his pistol direct at the craven's heart, said, 'One motion of my finger, and you are a corpse. If you stir hand or foot, saving it be to drop upon your knees, I will pull the trigger at once.'

'Am I to be slaughtered thus like some miserable dog?' whined Captain Villiers, casting an imploring glance around him.

'Most assuredly,' replied Colonel Seaburn, in sepulchral tones, 'and the man who offers a dissenting voice dies by my hand.' He drew an empty pistol from his breast as he spoke, and presented it at Lieutenant Farley's head. Lieutenant Farley, as though he would ask him a question, got to the other side of the assistant surgeon.

'Your life is in my hands,' said Ernest De Lisle, 'but I will spare it on one condition.'

'And what is that?' inquired Villiers, recovering a little.

'That you swear an oath.'

'This is child's-play,' said Villiers, much relieved.

'I am sorry you think so, for your own sake. I have done. Lieutenant Farley, be good enough to stand back,' said Ernest, levelling the pistol again.

'Hold!' shrieked Villiers, absolutely shivering with fright. 'Farley, what do you advise me to do?'

'Die!' said Farley, taking a pinch of snuff and sneezing. 'Death before dishonor, sir, always. Ah, this is very powerful snuff to be sure.'

Villiers cursed him in his heart, and turned to the assistant surgeon.

'Templemore advise me; oh, what shall I do?'

'I am inclined to agree with Farley here,' replied Templemore, accepting a quiet pinch from the Lieutenant's box.

'I would remind you that I am tired of waiting,' said Ernest. 'These pistols have hair triggers, and I am slightly nervous.'

He levelled the instrument of destruction a third time.

'Stay, stay,' cried Captain Villiers, 'I will swear.'

'Then listen,' said De Lisle, 'and be obliging enough to answer me a few questions. Do you know an unfortunate young girl named Therese Lamontagne?'

'I do.'

'Did you induce her to forego the smiles and endearments of father, mother, brother, sister, friends, home, and leave all for you; at the same time binding yourself by a most solemn and sacred engagement to—'

'Captain De Lisle, I—'

'Ah, will you prevaricate? Answer, yes or no.'

'Yes, then, if it must be so.'

'And at length, as a fit and generous return for the sacrifice she in an unguarded moment—'

'I have already satisfied you upon that point,' interposed Captain Villiers, 'and beg that you will proceed.'

'I am happy to perceive that you are not altogether so devoid of feeling as your late conduct led me to suppose,' said Ernest, 'and will now gladly spare you any unnecessary pain. Therese Lamontagne is at present under my protection, and in this city. Swear in the presence of myself and your brother officers to make her your wife to-morrow, and you are free; refuse, and in one moment this bullet enters your brain.'

'I swear it,' said Captain Villiers.

'On your knees, sir, if you please; I will be obeyed.'

'Ay, upon your marrowbones,' said the colonel slapping his right temple with his palm, to effect the dislodgment of a gigantic mosquito.

Villiers put himself in the required posture, and Ernest continued—

'By all you hold dear in this world, and by your every hope and prospect of happiness in the next.'

Villiers repeated the words, and Ernest resigned his pistol.

'Why it has neither cap nor ball,' said Colonel Seaburn, surveying the implement with much disgust.

'The other had both, I think,' said Ernest, applying his hand for the first time to his bleeding cheek.

'Captain De Lisle,' said the assistant surgeon advancing, 'may I have the pleasure of shaking you by the hand?' He seized it as he spoke, and then bowed pleasantly to the gentleman in the buffalo coat, while Lieutenant Farley shrugged his shoulders, and walked off by himself with the air of the ghost of Hamlet—saying that the highly respectable apparition alluded to was not addicted to taking snuff. Captain Villiers remained leaning his arm and head dejectedly against a tree. Ernest laid his hand kindly upon his shoulder, and said, 'Captain Villiers.'

The humbled and degraded man turned round, and cast upon him a bloodshot glance.

'Are you not returning?'

'Where?' was the gloomy reply. 'I have no friend and no home henceforth but the grave.'

'You are mistaken; go with us,' added Ernest.

Captain Villiers obeyed with an abject air; but ere he had proceeded half the distance to the city, he staggered against Ernest, and fell down in a fit. It was many hours before he recovered his senses, and then he saw Therese Lamontagne watching over him, and weeping. He clasped her hand, and Therese fell upon his neck.

CHAPTER VI.

Captain Villiers threw up his commission on the morrow; and a few days afterwards left the city of Montreal for ever. He penetrated far into the backwoods of some of the western lakes, and Therese was the companion of his way, the sharer of his sorrows, and his comfort in every trial and affliction. By her unremitting love and gentleness she had won back the affections of her betrayer, and to him, now, an hour passed without the sunshine of her smile was always a dull and a wretched one. Months elapsed before Ernest could receive a letter from her, but at length, one morning, a friendly Indian (who had left his home in the wild for the purpose of visiting his Canada father—as he termed the governor of the province) brought one, and it conveyed to De Lisle the pleasing assurance that Therese was contented with her lot, and she even ventured to add—happy.

THE PRESENT AGE.

ITS CHARACTERISTICS AND REACTIVE TENDENCIES.

The remaining topic—Some of the evils which are rife in the present age, and closely connected with its characteristics, have in part been anticipated. The first remark which we will hazard is, that

Literature is not in a healthy state. To the superficiality of general knowledge allusion has been made. Men are so busy and so impatient that in the pursuit of knowledge they will not go wisely and carefully to work. A royal road to learning is eagerly sought; little handbooks or manuals supply the place of

grammars or elaborate treatises. The problem which every writer is required to solve is this—the greatest amount of popular knowledge, knowledge divested of its difficulties and technicalities, that can be comprised in the smallest compass. If he would obtain a hearing, he must be clear, brief, and yet not too concise; the pathway along which he guides must be levelled; stimulus is required, this he must furnish; instead of setting his readers to think, he must think for them; not only provide mental food, but chew it. If a book is to be read, it must be attractive in form and outward appearance, illustrated, and cheap. The present age is an age of twelvemonths; the folio and quarto of our fathers are out of date; the writings which those folios contain are neglected, and the great masters of our language—men who wrote in a nervous and racy style—whose thoughts were sinewy, and whose English had that large proportion of the Saxon which tells upon the native ear and heart—these are discarded for popular writers, who will so beat out a thought that it shall spread over pages, and so dilute an idea that its strength evaporates in mere words. In this particular there might with advantage be reaction. We must go back to the pure wells of English undefiled; we must not eat and drink a book because it is written quaintly, or because its sentences do not fall with measured cadence upon our ear, or because its author is occasionally obscure. Already may this reaction be observed in the reprint of valuable and standard works, and gradually will a more correct taste, a more healthy tone of literature, be found. It is so in poetry; that of the last half century has dwelt too much in feverish and passionate excitement. The public would not read any but that which exhibited the stormier passions, or ministered to a sentimental or moody melancholy. Byron was all the rage; his imitators were countless, and his readers contracted a distaste for whatever was more simple. But there is a change for the better; there is a return to the writings of our older and more natural poets, and we listen with interest to those who have more sympathy with universal man. Chaucer has his readers; Spenser leads many a quiet and imaginative spirit into the realms of fairyland; Shakespeare is studied for his intuitive perception of motive and profound acquaintance with the hidden fountain of feeling; Milton is not only talked about but read; his prose writings, some of which roll on the ear like the rich swell of an old cathedral anthem, are republished, and thus the evil adverted to will, as we confidently hope, lessen, until it finally disappears.

A much more serious evil is to be found in the existence of exaggerated notions as to the self-improving powers of man. Probably some who have gone along with us hitherto will now join issue, and regard us as verging upon illiberality and prejudice; but the importance of clear and intelligible views on this topic is paramount. It is too much the fashion to speak, and write, and act as if education, science, attention to natural laws, and the forth-putting of philanthropic efforts for the elevation of humanity, would do everything; and just as the lovers of the past look back upon an imaginary age, when every man was brave, and every woman was beautiful, when the groves were tuneful with shepherd's music, and unsophisticated innocence prevailed; so others are anticipating an age in which man, by his unassisted efforts, will be happy, and crime, being proved to be foolish, will be unknown. As it is indubitable that circumstances modify the character, it is taken for granted that if circumstances were wholly favorable the character would be so too. We cannot too much admire the praiseworthy efforts which are made by those who, diving into the dens of vice and wretchedness, seek there for pearls which, extricated and washed from filth, will adorn humanity. All honor to such noble and self-denying efforts! Let no hand which is kindly put forth to raise the fallen be ridiculed; but let us clearly understand that while these efforts are useful, they alone will not regenerate our race. Beautiful in idea may be the superstructure, but there is a flaw in the foundation which will endanger the whole. Unless we are to discard the teaching of the Holy Scriptures and explain away their statements as we please, man is a fallen creature, his powers are warped, and a fatal taint of depravity, which no mere education can remove, no lights of science, of literature, of ethical philosophy, can counteract, and which, under all circumstances, will develop itself, will remain until subdued by the direct agency of the Most High. Far be it from us to underrate the value of science, of education, or of philanthropic efforts for the general well-being of society. Let these be promoted more zealously than ever; let us cultivate literary taste as highly as possible, storing our minds with thoughts of magic and images of beauty; let us aim at the performance of all our social duties in all the relations of life; but let us not think that these, separately or combined will enable us to dispense with assistance from above.