

LITERATURE, &c.

The British Magazines.

From the London People's Journal.

A STORY FROM FLANDERS.

BY ELIZABETH O'HARA.

A recent writer has beautifully described the forest of Ardenne, whose rurality and primitive haunts are so fast disappearing before the *chemin de fer*, that foe to rusticity, and its hordes of invading tourists. However inveterately *bete*, even a Flaming may be, steam must give him ideas, he is insensibly civilized by the new order of things. Iron has ever been a civilising agent, first as the sword—for the conqueror, like all permitted evils, has its antidote—even war, that fearful scourge, has brought its blessing in the arts and sciences that follow in its train; then as the medium of communication between man and man. And now that the iron band draws us nearer to each other, and in a manner annihilates time and space, may we not hope that it will not again be moulded to a destroying weapon, but that the chain of brotherhood will daily lengthen, that each in his turn will add a new link to it, that 'Othello's occupation' is indeed, gone?

But I must tell my story without further digression. Here I am in the beautiful forest of Ardenne, and now I must tell what we saw there. Of course, on arriving we were primed with Shakespeare—full of Rosalind, Touchstone, and the melancholy Jacques; but though we saw no lack of Andreys, all the other characters were wanting. In fact I began to fear we should go 'there and back' without the shadow of an adventure; but, lo! the difference between 'eyes and no eyes.' Opposite to our road side inn stood a little bench, and on it was seated a venerable-looking old, very old man, with an air of bygone gentility about him. His anxious looks seemed to strain along the road, as if in expectation of some person or thing, and I heard him frequently ask when the diligence would arrive.

Presently, presently, papa Becker, was the reiterated answer, given in the same tone as one would use to a fretful child; and the old man would sigh wearily, and again re-seat himself.

At length the diligence rolled heavily up, and he advanced as if to take his place.

'No room to-day, *mon bon monsieur*,' cried the conductor.

He walked quietly away, as if his day's work were over, and the other watched him with a pitying smile. There was plenty of room in the diligence—what did all this mean? A vacant but care-laden expression in the old man's face told of grief living thro' madness—surviving the dread shock which had crushed the mind. It would be hard to tell if he knew all his misery, but it was but too evident that a sense of grief was there; that feeling alone remained to him—just as in our sick bed slumbers the presence of pain haunts our dreams. My interest was excited, and a few words elicited the following anecdote:

Years ago—in 1807—when France and the frontier countries were still trembling and disorganized by the recent events which had torn the continent, Monsieur Becker was a wealthy man, in the prime of life, a widower, and the father of one only child, a daughter. He had married very early, and the solitary trial of his career had been the death of an idolized wife. The fierce struggles which had rent entire nations passed unheeded by him, as he devoted his thoughts to the welfare of his little Elisa and the cultivation of his estates. He was but too indolent to mix in politics, too simple in heart and tastes to be ostentatious; and thus was allowed to vegetate in safe retirement, while less wealthy neighbors had already paid the penalty of their riches in a prison or on a scaffold: they perished, and Becker pursued the even tenor of his way, while his farm prospered and his child daily became more beautiful. Nor when order was partly restored—and, as Madame d'Abrantes says, '*il nous fut permis de de mettre de linge propre*,'—when a clean shirt was no longer a sign of *incivisme*, did he alter his style of living. People, however began to look about them—to see whose heads were still on their shoulders, and who had wherewithal to fill their mouths and it was then discovered that Elisa was a charming girl and would eventually have a good property.—Beaux swarmed around her when she appeared at the different *Kermesses* or revels, and she was unanimously declared to be the best catch in Ardenne. The country lads, however, were not quite suited to her taste. Her father had spent some of his earlier days in Paris, and there acquired that inimitable manner of the French gentlemen of the last century which is now so rapidly wearing away. He had remained there only long enough to gain that exquisite polish; he had left ere his young mind could be vitiated by the detestable vices which drove an oppressed nation to frenzy; while his retired life and devotion to his daughter had given an almost chivalrous tone to his demeanour. With such a father Elisa was hard to please; her ruddy-faced suitors seemed bores unworthy of notice, and were speedily dismissed; while their homage had given her a sense of her own consequence, and taught her to think on a subject never entirely absent from a young girl's fancy. The heroic devotion evinced by wives and lovers, and timid women, in the reign of terror, and the impassioned writings of the new school, had taught her that she had a heart; she felt that where she

gave her love it would be entirely and for ever; that, deeply, fondly as she loved her father, there was yet a more passionate feeling; and she longed to inspire to bestow it.

Monsieur Becker did not quite share his daughter's opinions, and was inclined to be angry at these repeated rejections. Celibacy is so disgraceful in a foreigner's eye, that they cannot believe it voluntary in any woman, unless sanctified by religious vows; and Elisa's remaining unmarried at eighteen was a source of great annoyance to her father.

They were strolling along the high road one day, and he was remonstrating with her on the subject, when they were suddenly interrupted by a young man on horseback, who looking very earnestly, almost rudely at Elisa, requested to be directed to the neighboring bourg of Tuerveeren. After receiving proper instructions he made them a polite bow and rode on, still occasionally turning for another glance. M. Becker was remarking on his cultivated tone and accent, so different from the neighboring *proprietaires*, and rallying Elisa on her conquest, when the horse shying, threw his rider with great violence to the ground. They flew to the ground, but he was senseless, if not dead, and his forehead was fearfully cut.

'Have you courage to remain here, Elisa,' asked her father, 'while I run to the *farme*? The men shall bring up a mattress and a door to carry him on. Poor fellow! we must have him up to the house, and see what we can do for him.'

'Go, go, dear father,' she answered; 'I will try to staunch this horrid blood; never mind me.'

Monsieur Becker hastened on to procure assistance, while Elisa remained with the stranger. She knelt down by his side, and gently raised the heavy curls, already matted with gore; even then she was struck by his handsome features, and the extreme silliness of his beautiful black hair. In moments like these each minute seemed an age; and rapidly as her father returned she mentally accused him of tardiness, while her interest in the sufferer increased with each movement, with every care and fear he excited. He was carried to their house, and there they discovered that his wounds, though severe, were not dangerous; but his prolonged insensibility had already excited Elisa's feelings in his behalf. Who has watched by the sick bed, even of a stranger, without finding all their sympathies awakened, and that the patient becomes daily more dear? He who gives loves more than he who receives; as the mother loves more fervently than the child, so do we as nurses feel a tenderer affection than even the sick person we tend can experience for us. How sweet to watch the languid smile, to trace each day's recovery, to hear the weak voice murmur our name in grateful tones, to feel the feeble pressure of the hand which would express thanks, to know that for the time we are all in all to our charge. In health they may forget these emotions, which disappear before more stirring interests; but we who have witnessed and aided in the struggle with death, can never entirely obliterate its memory. Coldness, estrangement may intervene, but our hearts soften as we recall the hours we spent by the sick bed.

Is it wonderful then that Elisa, while fostering the stranger thus romantically introduced to her, should prove that 'pity is akin to love?' or that he, receiving the many nameless attentions woman alone can pay in such a situation, and from a young and lovely girl, should wish to cement their sudden friendship by a warmer tie? His story was soon told. Arnold Vanbraer had lately come to reside at Tuerveeren, where he intended practising as an *avocat*. He was an orphan, having lost almost all his family in the late horrors, but had recovered a handsome portion of their large property. Such a marriage more than met Monsieur Becker's most ambitious views for Elisa; his consent was soon gained, and long ere Arnold's entire recovery they were affianced.

Elisa's arm was her lover's support when he first ventured from his couch; and more than once on that memorable day he pleaded fatigue, that he might lie on the turf by her side, while her little hand wandered almost unconsciously through his raven tresses. It was her fondest caress. Is there one among us who has not once loved? who cannot recall the time when speech was insufficient for thought, when a look a touch, could almost swell the heart to bursting? Yes, love is a holy, a glorious thing; those who have not loved have not lived. The timid endearment, the mute though speaking answer, the thousand, call them not follies, the oft repeated name sacred to all but you, say is it not music in your ears? Are not these pleasures beyond all others of the earth, when love is present gilding all, and passion yet slumbers.

Elisa was very, very happy; her heart had not been frittered away in a series of attachments; she was no ball room flutrer, with a stock of love on hand ready for the first comer; but an ardent, faithful woman pouring out her soul's treasures now and forever, lavishing that priceless gift, her heart, worshipping, perhaps, a mere idol. And Arnold,—who could be fonder than he?—he urged his suit with all the vehemence of his fiery nature, and the wedding day was fixed upon ere he left the Beckers to arrange his property.

It is an indisputable fact that matrimony and new clothes are synonymous, or at all events as closely connected as a knife and fork; no one thinks of one without the other; and Elisa was no exception to this general rule. The *trousseau* was indispensable; and, therefore, in Arnold's absence, she decided on going to Tuerveeren to make her necessary

purchases. On returning their heavily laden *carrole* broke down about half way, very near the inn where I gleaned my story. It was the depth of winter—the cold, piercing frost penetrated even through the travellers' furs and abundant wrappings; and so long a time elapsed ere the damage could be repaired, that Monsieur Becker decided on passing the night at the inn. He was strengthened in his determination by many reasons; the roads were almost impassable from a heavy fall of snow, and it would be dangerously late ere they could reach their home—dangerously so, because the neighborhood was infested by a band of daring banditti, who even ventured to attack the farm houses, though each with its offices and farm-laborers made a kind of citadel. The country was still too unsettled for the laws to be respected, and these robbers would have been formidable to braver persons than the pacific Flamands. Elisa was much opposed to this arrangement; Arnold was to return on the morrow, and had promised to be with her even before he proceeded to Tuerveeren; she could not bear the idea of being from home on his arrival; and it was just possible there might be room in the diligence, she made her father agree to return if they could. They even walked along the road to meet it and secure their seats; but uselessly, no diligence appeared. It was evident that the snow had prevented its arrival; yet it was not till a late hour that the anxious girl gave up all hopes of proceeding that night.

The accommodation afforded by a wayside inn is seldom very good, and the Beckers considered themselves fortunate in securing a bedroom with an inside closet where Elisa could sleep. Her marriage was so near, father and daughter had so much to say, that they sat far into the night, weaving plans for the future. All seemed bright before them, there was no separation to cast a gloom over their prospects. Arnold had agreed to reside with his father-in-law; to Monsieur Becker it was but taking another child—a son—to his heart.

Even happiness must yield to the body's claims; and Eliza at length sought her bed to carry on in her dreams the bright visions of her waking hours.

Her father had scarcely closed his eyes ere, summoned by a cautious knocking at his door, he opened it, and the host entered, pale, but with no coward's look.

'Eh! what's the matter, Schmidt?' asked Becker.

'Hush! hush! listen Monsieur; you know I'm no *blame bec* to start a mouse; but as sure as heaven's above us those thieving devils are trying the strength of our back door.'

'Good heavens, what must we do?' cried Becker.

'What will you do! I have more money than I care to lose, and I'm afraid they know it; and yet I drew out those two thousand francs—to get a substitute for Pierre, our only boy, you know—as cautiously as I could; however, here it is, and more besides; so Pierre and I mean to fight for it; there's the women too, you know.'

'Elisa, my poor child!—have you a gun or something for me?'

'To be sure I have. I knew you didn't want courage though you are so quiet. Don't disturb ma'am'selle Elisa—screams can do no good; but we are three, and the hostler and your man—he is good?'

'True as steel; but hasten.'

'Not a bit of it; they must break in the court-yard gate; then Neptune and Cæsar will be at 'em—hark how they growl. And while they are confusing them we five will let fly, and waste no shot; my wife will reload the guns while we handle our pistols; I only hope we may not touch the poor dear dogs; I loosed 'em before I came to you.—The fools think we're asleep; *sacre nom!* when a man's money is in the house he's apt to be wide awake. Come unshod me, as I am.'

Schmidt's excellent plan was adopted, and met the success it deserved; but the brigands were so numerous that this vigorous resistance, instead of repelling, only aroused their angry passions, and stimulated them to further exertions. True, their adversaries were under cover; but how could five men hope to overcome an armed horde? It was with those indeed a fight for life; they could not expect quarter, and they combated with the courage of despair. Becker had already incautiously exposed himself, and been severely wounded; the firing was incessant; even the women now joined in the fray—all but Elisa. Her father had turned the key on her ere leaving his room, lest she should incur danger while endeavoring to join him; she could hear the noise, but the window looked out to the side of the house where she could see nothing. She rushed from the door to the window, from the window to the door wildly, calling on her father; but her cries long remained unanswered.

The banditti again were vigorously repulsed, and the besieged could see them clustering together at a cautious distance, as if holding a council of war.

'As long as our ammunition lasts, I don't care a straw for them,' cried Schmidt, 'they can't get at us—but what fools they are not to think of the woodhouse; if they were to set that on fire they'd do for us for ever—*nom d'un boulet!* but they mean to do it; see that scoundrel sneaking off there. I'll pick him off, though—*sacre bleu!* his hash is settled.'

He fired, the man fell; again there was a long consultation, and then a large body of their assailants renewed the attack in the fatal direction. Those within resolved to sell their lives dearly. The wood was luckily ve-

ry green, and old Schmidt boldly ventured on the roof, whence he could pour water on the stacks, whilst the others kept up the firing on the robbers. Suddenly great agitation was evinced among them; they slackened their endeavors, hesitated, wavered, and finally made off, leaving four or five dead or dying men in the field; and were scarcely out of sight when the cause of their alarm was discovered by the appearance of a body of gendarmes, who galloped rapidly up. Schmidt first feared that this might be a *ruse* of the brigands, and would not admit the few who remained to protect them while the others rode on in pursuit, until he had recognised their commander. Then, and not till then, did Monsieur Becker leave his post; he was assisted to his room. The factitious energy of the fight being over, he felt the pain of his wound; but on summoning Elisa the call was unanswered. The poor father again conquered his bodily agony, and darted to his daughter's side. What a sight met his eye! a man had attempted to effect an entrance by that unguarded window; he had partly succeeded: his head had been forced through the small aperture, while Elisa had resisted.—There she stood, her hands, buried in those silken jetty locks, had with supernatural force the strength of horror, drawn the head over the window sill; the burglar, standing on the top-most round of a ladder could not use his arms, while the choking breath uttered in his throat he was dying. Elisa spoke not, stired not: her hands were firmly clasped; they could scarcely withdraw her grasp; her glassy eyes, her fixed, changeless look of fear and agony, all evinced her fate—catalepsy. She never recognised her father, but existed without food, speech, motion, life, till the day that should have seen her a bride. Then the sound of a neighboring church bell broke the spell. She gave a piercing shriek, '*Mon Dieu, mon Dieu!* it is his hair' she cried, and breathed her last.

It was indeed true; Arnold had joined the banditti and was noted among them; by the laws of their association he could not withdraw himself from the band without incurring great danger; though from memoranda discovered among his papers he appears to have contemplated doing so, and emigrating with his wife and father-in-law. He had not the least idea that the Beckers were in the inn; but knowing the plan of its rooms, had scaled the little closet expecting to effect an undisputed entry, and then with some others to surprise the garrison. Death spared him the ignominy of a trial and execution, death by the hand of her whom he truly loved.

These heavy and awful trials prostrated Monsieur Becker's mind; his body long survived the wreck, and lived on, as if to show how strong the animal powers are. The gentle, inoffensive old man dragged on a weary existence, the employment of his days being to wait for the diligence, in order that Elisa might return home. Rain or shine, he took his station on the bench where I saw him; if asked to go into the inn, he would refuse, lest he should lose their places; but he would tell you his daughter was within by the fire, and would recount the purchase they had made and invite you to the wedding.

His pilgrimage must now be ended. I can only hope that the veil which mercifully shrouded the full perception of his fate from him was never raised. He waited for the diligence—what is human life but one long expectation, closed only in the tomb? nay not even then, since we all wait for 'another and a better world.'

From Pulsky's Traditions.

AN HUNGARIAN ROBBER.

Prince Frederic Schwarzenberg, the son of the celebrated Field-Marshal Schwarzenberg, used often to relate his encounter with the notorious robber Haburak. The prince once accompanied a lady from Hungary to Vienna. They journeyed on the mountain roads between the counties of Gomor and Torma. Heavy showers had greatly damaged the roads; evening approached; the tired horses had reached the ridge of the woolly height, but could not be urged on further; and the travellers were thus compelled to seek shelter for the night in the inn of Aggtelek, a hiding place of ill note for robbers. The carriage halted before the house, and the servant inquired whether room could be afforded. The publican replied that there was one room for the lady, but that the gentleman could not be accommodated, the largest guest room being over-filled. After some visible reluctance, he owned that the gang of Haburak was drinking there. The lady became terrified, and entreated the prince not to remain; but it had grown dark, the rain was pouring down, the horses were worn out, and the steep ascent of the road was so dangerous, that it was most hazardous to proceed. The prince tried to reassure the lady, so she locked herself up in the room assigned to her. Her companion wrapped in his white officer's cloak, under which he kept his pistols in readiness, stepped into the apartment where the robbers were assembled, and sat down at the table, facing the window, while his servant likewise armed, kept watch outside of the house, close to the window, in case his master should want any aid. The company consisted of about ten or twelve men. Their rifles leaned against the wall; their axes lay upon the board on which stood the wine jug. They drank, sang, and talked over their adventures, and did not take any notice of the newly arrived guest. The prince mixed in their conversation, took wine with them, and listened to their conversation until it had grown late. Suddenly he rose, called the publican, threw a golden coin on the table,