

Literature, &c.

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THE COUNTESS OF MONTFORD:

OR, THE RELIEF OF HENNEBON.

By Henry William Herbert.

I wish now to return to the Countess of Montford, who possessed the courage of a man and the heart of a lion.—
Froissart.

It was a little before noon on the 29th day of May, 1342, when the vanguard of that great host might be seen from the walls of Hennebon; and a beautiful sight it was to see them come; to behold the pennons and pennoncelles, the helmets and habergeons, the plumes and surcoats, flashing and shimmering in the sunshine, and waving in the light airs; and such numbers of men-at-arms, that the eye might not compass them; all marshaled fairly beneath the square banners of their lordly and princely leaders, so that they seemed like a moving forest, so upright did they hold their lances. Then came the dense array, on foot of the Genoese cross-bows, in their plate coats of Italian steel, with terrible aibalasts; and the unrivaled infantry of Spain, a solid column, bristling like the Greek phalanx of old, with serried lines of spears.

The earth shook under the thick thunder of their horse hoods; the air was alive with the clash and clang of their steel harness; and all the echoes rang with the shrill flourishes of their trumpets, and the stormy roar of their kettle-drums.

But no terror did such sights or sounds strike to the hearts of that undaunted garrison—the deafening clang of the alarm bells, the tremendous tocsin answered the kettle drums and clarions; and all within the city armed themselves in hot haste. The flower of the French and Spanish chivalry galloped up to skirmish at the barriers, and the iron bolts and quarrels the Genoese cross-bows fell like a hail storm, even within the ramparts.

But ere that storm had endured many minutes, up grated the portcullises, down rattled the drawbridges, and as the barriers were withdrawn—banners and spears, and barded destriers and knightly burgoanets poured out from all the city gates at once, and burst in full career upon the skirmishers of the besiegers; then many a knight was borne to earth, and the chivalry of France and Spain fared ill before the lances of the Bretons; for they could not bide the brunt, but scattered back, dismantled and discomfited to their main body; while the maces and two-handed glaives and battle axes of the men at arms did bloody execution on the Genoese, who were not armed to encounter the charge of steel-clad horse, and to whom no quarter was given, not only that they were foreigners and *Condottieri*, but that themselves sparing none, they neither looked for, nor received mercy.

At vesper-time, on both sides they retired; the French in great fury at their repulse, the garrison of Hennebon well content with themselves and with that they had done.

On the next day again with the first rays of the sun, the French made so very vigorous an attack on the barriers, that those within made a sally. Among them were some of their bravest, who continued the engagement till noon with great courage, so that the assailants retired a little to the rear, carrying with them numbers of their wounded, and leaving behind them a great many dead.

But not for that had they any respite or relaxation; for the lords of the French were so enraged at the dishonor which had thus twice betwixt their arms, that they ordered them up a third time to the attack, in greater numbers than before, swearing that they would win the walls ere the sun should set; but for all their swearing they did not win that day, not for all their fighting; for those of the town were earnest to make a handsome defence, combating under the eyes of their heroic chatelaine; and so stoutly held they out, that the assailants sent still to the host for succors till their last men were in the field, and none were left, with the baggage and the tents, but a sort of horseboys, scallions, and such rascals.

And still from the hot noontide, till the evening breeze began to blow in cool from the sea, the din of arms, and shouts, and war cries, and the clamor of the wounded, rose from the barricades; and many gallant deeds of arms were done on that day on both sides, and many doughty blows given and received; but still the Lord Charles and his men made no way, but lost more than they gained.

And in the end the loss and glory of the day, for the most daring deed, rested with a woman.

For the countess on that day had clothed herself *cap-a-pie* in armor, and mounted on a war-horse; though even till that day she had been tender and delicate among women, of slender symmetry and rare soft beauty, with large blue eyes and a complexion of snow and golden tresses; and she galloped up and down the streets encouraging the inhabitants to defend themselves honorably—for she had no thought yet but to comfort them and kindle their spirit by her show of example; nor as yet did she know her own courage, or the strength that resides in the heart of a true woman.

'She had already,' to quote old Froissart, whose account is here so spirited and graphic in his own words, that I prefer giving the narration in that old quaint language, to add any thing, or expanding the striking re-

lation of facts, too strong to bear expansion 'she had already ordered the ladies and other women to cut short their kirtles, carry the stones to the ramparts, and throw them on their enemies. She had pots of quicklime brought to her for the same purpose. That same day the countess performed a very gallant deed: she ascended a high tower, to see how her people behaved; and, having observed that all the lords and others of the army had quitted their tents, and were come to the assault, she immediately descended, mounted her horse, armed as she was, collected three hundred horsemen, sallied out at their head by another gate that was not attacked, and galloping up to the tents of her enemies, cut them down, and set them on fire, without any loss, for there were only servants and boys, who fled upon her approach. As soon as the French saw their camp on fire, and heard the cries, they immediately hastened thither, bawling out 'Treason! Treason!' so that none remained at the assault. The countess seeing this, got her men together, and finding that she could not re-enter Hennebon without great risk, took another road, leading to the castle of Brest, which is situated near the Lord Lewis of Spain, who was marshal of the army, had gone to his tents, which were on fire; and, seeing the countess and her company galloping off as fast as they could, he immediately pursued them with a large body of men-at-arms. He gained so fast upon them, that he came up to them, and wounded or slew all that were not well mounted; but the countess, and part of her company, made such speed that they arrived at the castle of Brest, where they were received with great joy.

On the morrow, the lords of France, who had lost their tents and provisions, took council, if they could not make huts of the branches and leaves of trees near to the town, and were thunder struck when they heard that the countess herself had planned and executed this enterprise; while those of the town, not knowing what was become of her, were very uneasy; for they were full five days without gaining any intelligence of her. The countess, in the meanwhile, was so abtative that she assembled from five to six hundred men, well armed and mounted, and with them set out, about midnight, from Brest, and came straight to Hennebon about sunrise, riding along one side of the enemy's host, until she came to the gates of the castle, which were opened to her: she entered with great triumph and sounds of trumpets and other warlike instruments, to the astonishment of the French, who began arming themselves to make another assault, while those within mounted the walls to defend it. This attack was very severe, and lasted till past noon. The French lost more than their opponents: and then the lords of France put a stop to it, for their men were killed and wounded to no purpose. They next retreated, and held a council whether the Lord Charles should not go to besiege the castle of Aurai, which King Arthur had built and inclosed. It was determined that he should march thither, accompanied by the Duke of Bourbon, the Earl of Blois, Sir Robert Bertrand, Marshal of France; and that Sir Herve de Leon was to remain before Hennebon, with a part of the Genoese and Spaniards. They sent for twelve large machines which they had left at Rennes, to cast stones and annoy the castle of Hennebon: for they perceived why they did not gain any grounds by their assaults. The French divided their army into two parts: one remained before Hennebon, and the other marched to besiege Aurai. The Lord Charles of Blois went to this last place, and quartered all his division in the neighborhood.

With the Count Charles de Blois we have naught to do, save in so much of his doings or sufferings have to do absolutely with the Countess de Montfort; I shall leave him, therefore, to win or lose the castle of Aurai, under the fortunes of war, while I shall follow the chances of that noble chatelaine, the countess, who remained, as we shall see, not only beset by enemies without, but by traitors within the walls of Hennebon.

It may be as well to state here, however, that the Count Charles of Blois, did not take Aurai, whether it was built by King Arthur or no—which, despite Dom Froissart, is rather more than doubtful—any more than the Lord Lewis d'Espagne took Hennebon, which he came perilous nigh to doing, yet he had to depart frustrate.

So soon as the French host had divided itself into two parts, after the taste it had received of the quality of the Breton garrison within the walls of Hennebon, and of the noble character of its heroic chatelaine, they made no attempt any more to skirmish at the barriers, or to assault the walls, for in good sooth they dared not, but day and night they plyed these dreadful engines, hurling in mighty beams of wood, steel-headed, and ponderous iron bars and vast blocks of stone, shaking the walls and ramparts, wheresoever they struck them, so that the defenders knew not at what moment they would be breached, and the city laid open to the pitiless foe.

And now the hearts of all, save that delicate and youthful lady, failed them; and if she had set them before, a fair example of chivalric daring, she set them now a fairer of constancy, more heroic than any action; of feminine endurance, and fortitude and faith, grander than any daring.

The false bishop, Guy de Leon, contrived to leave the town, on some false pretext, and hold a parley with his traitor kinsman, Herve de Leon—but for whose villainy that bright young dame never had cased her gentle form in steel, nor wielded the mortal sword in warfare. Where traitors are on both sides

treason is wont to win; and so it well nigh proved in this instance; for the bishop returned with offers of free pardon to the garrison and passports to go whither they would with their effects, unhurt, so they would yield the town to Sir Herve.

And, though the countess perceived what was on the wind, and besought the lords of Brittany with tears and sighs, that made her but more lovely, 'for the love of herself, and of her son; friendless but for them; for the love of God himself, to have pity on her, and faith in heaven, that they should receive succor within three days,' it seemed that she could not prevail.

Nor was there not cause for apprehension; since it was clear to all that the ramparts could not stand one more day's breaching; and those once battered down, Hennebon and all within it were at the mercy of the merciles.

The Bishop was eloquent, and fear and hope more eloquent yet; and ere, long after midnight, the council closed, all minds but those of three, Sir Yves de Tresquidi, Sir Waleran de Landreman, and the governor of Guinecamp, were won over to yield up the city to Sir Herve; and even those three doubted. None so hopeful but to trust that to-morrow's conference would be final; none so strong in courage as to dare support one other day's assault.

All passed the night in doubt and fear; the countess alone in brave hope, and earnest prayer.

The day dawned, and—as men crowded to the ramparts, gazing toward the camp and the plain where Sir Herve might be seen approaching with his Genoese, closing up to the town to receive possession—the countess arose from her knees, and she alone, of all in Hennebon, turned her eyes toward the sea; for she alone, of all in Hennebon, had faith in her God.

The sea! the sea! it was white with sails, from the mouth almost of the haven, to the dark line of the horizon, flashing to the new-risen sun with lance-heads and clear armor, fluttering with pennoncolles and banners, blazing with embroidered surcoats and emblazoned shields.

And the lady flung her casement wide, and gazed out on her people, in the market place, along the ramparts, in the tumultuous streets with disheveled hair, and disordered raiment and clasped hands and flushed cheeks, and eyes streaming with tears of joy—'God and St. George!' she cried, in tones that rang to every heart like the notes of a silver trumpet—'God and St. George! an English fleet! an English fleet! It is the aid of God!

And, as the people crowded to the seaward bastions, and saw the great ships rushing in before a leading wind, with their sails all emblazoned with Edward's triple leopards; and the banners and shields of the English Manny, and of their own Amuri de Clisson, displayed from the yard arms, and the immortal red cross blazing, above all, on its argent field, they, too, took up the cry.

'God and St. George! God and St. George! It is the aid of England! it is the aid of God!

'Thereafter,' adds my author, whom I quote once more, for the last time, 'when the Governor of Guinecamp, Sir Yves de Tresquidi, Sir Waleran de Landreman, and the other knights, perceived this succor coming to them, they told the bishop that he might break up his conference, for they were not inclined to follow his advice. The bishop, Sir Guy de Leon, replied: 'My lords, then our company shall separate; for I will go to him who seems to me to have the clearest sight.' Upon which he sent his defiance to the lady, and to all her party, and left the town to inform Sir Herve de Leon how matters stood. Sir Herve was much vexed at it, and immediately ordered the largest machine that was with the army to be placed as near the castle as possible, strictly commanding that it should never cease working day nor night. He then presented his uncle to the Lord Lewis of Spain, and to the Lord Charles of Blois, who both received him most courteously. The countess, in the meantime, prepared, and hung with tapestry, halls and chambers, to lodge handsomely the lords and barons of England whom she saw coming, and sent out a noble company to meet them. When they were landed, she went herself to give them welcome, respectfully thanking each knight and squire, and led them into the town and castle, that they might have convenient lodging: on the morrow she gave them a magnificent entertainment. All that night and the following day, the large machine never ceased from casting stones into the town.

After the entertainment, Sir Walter Manny, who was captain of the English, inquired of the countess the state of the town and of the enemy's army. Upon looking out of the window, he said, he had a great inclination to destroy the large machine which was placed so near, and much annoyed them, if any one would second him. Sir Yves de Tresquidi replied, that he would not fail him, in this his first expedition; as did also the Lord of Landreman. They went to arm themselves, and sallied quietly out of one of the gates, taking with them three hundred archers; who shot so well, that those who guarded the machine fled; and the men-at-arms who followed the archers, falling upon them, slew the greater part, and broke down and cut in pieces this large machine. They then dashed in among the tents and huts, set fire to them, and killed and wounded many of their enemies before their army was in motion. After this, they made a handsome retreat. When the enemy were mounted and armed, they galloped after them like madmen. Sir Walter Manny, seeing this, exclaimed, 'May I never be embraced by my mistress and dear

friend, if I enter castle or fortress before I have unhorsed one of these gallopers.' He then turned round, and pointed his spear toward the enemy, as did the two brothers of Lande-Haille, le Haze de Brabant, Sir Yves de Tresquidi, Sir Waleran de Landreman, and many others, and spitted the first couriers. Many legs were made to kick the air.

Some of their own party were also unhorsed. The conflict became very serious, for reinforcements were perpetually coming from the camp; and the English were obliged to retreat toward the castle, which they did in good order until they came to the castle ditch; there the knights made a stand, until all their men were safely returned. Many brilliant actions, captures, and rescues might have been seen. Those of the town who had not been of the party to destroy the large machine now issued forth, and, ranging themselves upon the banks of the ditch, made such good use of their bows, that they forced the enemy to withdraw, killing many men and horses. The chiefs of the army, perceiving they had the worst of it, and that they were losing men to no purpose, sounded a retreat, and made their men retire to the camp. As soon as they were gone, the townsmen re-entered, and went each to his quarters. The Countess of Montfort came down from the castle to meet them, and with a most cheerful countenance, kissed Sir Walter Manny, and all his companions, one after the other, like a noble and valiant dame.

Such was the heroism of that true lady. And so was her heroism and her faith rewarded. Hennebon was relieved; and the Count Charles de Blois soon died, but died not Duke of Brittany.

From Godey's Philadelphia Lady's Magazine. INFLUENCE OF EXTERNAL NATURE ON MAN.

BY J. J. BAKER.

In casting our eyes over the earth, our attention is first arrested by the great variety of scenery, and the different degrees of fertility that characterize its surface. The contrasts are remarkable and striking. In the polar regions, we have an aspect of perpetual desolation; while, in tropical countries, sunshine and verdure everywhere greet our eyes. The poet of the 'Seasons' thus describes the former regions—

'For relentless months, continual night Holds o'er the glittering waste her stony reign.

There, through the prison of unbounded wilds, Barred by the hand of Nature from escape, Wide roams the Russian exile. Naught around

Strikes his sad eye but deserts lost in snow, And heavy loaded groves; and solid floods That stretch athwart the solitary waste, Their icy horrors to the frozen main.'

Such is a truthful and beautiful description of those regions of the earth roamed by the Laplander, the Siberian, the northern Russian and Greenlanders.

Now let us turn to the shores of the Mediterranean, and the islands of the Grecian Archipelago, and refresh our vision among the scenes celebrated in classic verse. Here, the mantle of snow gives place to robes of green, decorated with Nature's most gorgeous colors; here, all is radiant with light, where bird and beast find a congenial home, and mankind, sympathizing with the scenes around them, exult in universal happiness. The same contrasts may be observed in a single country, as in Switzerland, or in two contiguous countries, as in England and Scotland. In the former case, one part of the population live 'embowered in vales where the happy Grisons dwell'; while another part force the stubborn soil of the mountain for bread: one part are shepherds reposing in the grateful climate of the valleys, while another part are clad in furs, and shod with snowshoes, adapted to their cold, bleak, mountain home. Equally diversified are the scenes of the two contiguous countries referred to, but too familiar to need a description.

We may consider the various aspects of the earth as so many changes in the countenance of great Nature, with which we are affected as with the smiles and tears, joys and sorrows of a dear friend. In her mountains and hills, she assumes the pomp and majesty of a king, aweing us into silence and admiration; from the beetling cliff, rugged and barren in its aspect, she frowns upon us with the eye of a despot, sending a thrill of horror through all our frame; along the sunny vale, she assumes a sprightly air, her eyes beaming joy, and her face wrinkled with laughter; on the quiet lake, embowered among hills, a placid, serene smile sits upon her countenance, tranquillizing our thoughts and hushing our passion into peace. Again, we behold her in the heaving and swelling ocean, when the tempest goes forth upon its bosom, agitated, as it were, by some monster passion, foaming with rage and uttering a wrathful voice; and anon she sits on the desert, desolate and sad, with the dishevelled lock, the weeping eye, an accent of woe.

These remarks have been made with a view to introduce the question as to how far human character is modified and moulded by the aspects of external nature. Without intending a full discussion of the subject, we shall produce a few illustrations showing this influence to be undoubtedly great. In reference to English character, a favourite poet thus writes:—

'They take, perhaps, a well-directed aim, Who seek it in his climate and his frame. Liberal in all things else, yet Nature here, With stern severity, deals out the year. Winter invades the Spring, and often pours