

A Bachelor's Soliloquy on the Conscript Act.

To be,
Or not to be a conscript! is the question,
Whether 'tis nobler in a man to marry—
An able-bodied man of six-and-thirty—
And enter upon the dread uncertainty
Of matrimonial life, with all its accidents,
Perchance a fretful wife, a numerous family,
And bills interminable of grocer, baker,
Butcher, and doctor, (for such things will follow
As surely as the night succeeds the day,)
Or take up arms against a sea of traitors,
And, by opposing, end them all?—To marry—
To sleep—no more. And by that sleep to end
The heartache and the thousand natural fears
That flesh is heir to, or on the field of battle—
The bursting bombshell and the whistling bullet—
The bayonet charge:—it were a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To marry:—to sleep:—
To sleep! perchance to dream:—ay, there's the rub:
For in that sleep what horrible dreams may come—
A country murdered through my negligence—
What terrible lectures may assail me there
By her who hath a legal right to "Caudle" me,
When thus by marrying, I have "weped the Draft,
Must give me pause: There's the respect
That makes calamity of such a life.
For who would bear the whips and scorn of time,
Be pointed at through all the years to come:—
"There goes a sneak who, when his country called him
To bravely battle in the glorious cause
Of Freedom and the Hope of all the world,
Hid, like a treacherous Copperhead, behind
A petticoat!—Who, when he might have been
A hero in the final victory
Where Right and Union vanquished Wrong and Treason,
Hid his quietus make with a—bare woman!"
But that the dread of something in the South,
That dark, rebellious country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns—puzzles the will.
Thus marrying does make coward of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of fear,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn away,
And lose the name of action.

Soft you know!
My country calls. She of whom all I know
Most worthy to be loved, is whispering—"Go!"
I go; nor will I press the nuptial bed
Till she, who loves me, with a warrior wed.

LOYALIST'S REVENGE.

A STORY OF THE WAR.

We met in the beginning of the action, I and my enemy, Richard Withers—he a rebel, I a federalist—he on foot, I mounted. It matters not now why I hated him with the fiercest wrath of nature. "The heart knoweth its bitterness," and the details, while most painful to me, would be of trifling interest to you. Suffice it that our feud was not a political one. For ten years we were the closest intimates that the same studies, the same tastes and the same aim could make us. I was the elder of the two, and the stronger, physically; comparatively friendless, as the world takes it, and had no near relatives.—Young, solitary and visionary, as we were, it is hard to make you understand what we were to each other. Up to the period of our estrangement, working together, eating together, sleeping together, I can safely say that we had not a joy or grief, not a pleasure or a vexation that we did not share with an almost boyish single heartedness. But one day changed all.

We arose in the morning dear friends, and at night lay down bitter foes. I was a man of strong extremes; I either loved or hated with the whole strength of heart. The past was forgotten in the present.—Ten years of kindness, of congeniality, of almost womanly tenderness were erased, as with a sponge. We looked each other in the face with angry, searching eyes—said but very few words, (our rage was too deep to be demonstrative) and parted. Then in my solitude I dashed my clutched hand upon the bible and vowed passionately.

"I may wait ten years, Richard Withers! I may wait twenty, thirty, if you will, but sooner or later I swear I shall have my revenge!"

And this was the way we met. I wonder if he thought of the day when he laid his hand on my bridal-rein and looked up at me with his treacherous blue eyes. I scarcely think he did, or he could not have given me that look. He was beautiful as a girl. Indeed, the contrast of his fair, aristocratic face, with its regular outline and red curving lips, to my own rough, dark exterior, might have been partly the secret of my former attraction to him. But the loveliness of an angel, if it had been his, would not have saved him from me then. There was a pistol in his hand, but before he had time to discharge it, I cut at him with my sword, and as the line swept on, like a gathering wave, I saw him stagger under the blow, throw up his arms and go down in the press. Bitterly as I hated him, the vision of his ghastly face haunted me the long day through.

You will remember how it was at Fredericksburg. How we crossed the river at the wrong point, and under the raking

fire of the enemy were so disastrously repulsed. It was a sad mistake, and fatal to many a brave heart. When night fell I lay upon the field among the dead and wounded. I was comparatively helpless. A ball had shivered the cap on my knee, and my shoulder was laid open with a sabre cut. The latter bled profusely, but by dint of knotting my handkerchief tightly about it, I managed to staunch it in a measure. For my knee I could do nothing. Consciousness did not forsake me, and the pain was intense; but from the moans and wails of those about me, I judged that others had fared worse than I. Poor fellows! There was many a mother's darling suffering there—many of my comrades, lads of eighteen and twenty, who had never been a night from home until they joined the army, spoiled pets of fortune, manly enough at heart, but children in years and constitution, who had been used to have every little ache and scratch compassionated with an almost extravagant sympathy—there they lay, crippled and gashed and bleeding, crushed and dying, huddled together—some where they had fallen, some where they had feebly crawled upon their hands and knees—and never a woman's touch to bind up their wounds, or a woman's voice to whisper gentle consolation.

It was pitchy dark, and a cold, miserable rain was falling upon us. The very heavens weeping over our miseries. Then through the darkness and the drizzling rain, through the groans and prayers of the fallen men about me, I heard a voice close by my side:

"Water! water! water! I am dying with thirst—if it be but a mouthful—water! For God's sake, give me water!"

I recoiled in dismay. It was the voice of Richard Withers. They were once those mellow tones; the pleasant music I cared to hear. Do you think they so softened me now? You are mistaken.—I am candid about it. My blood boiled in my veins when I heard him, when I knew he lay so close to me, and I, powerless to withdraw from his detested neighborhood. There was water in my canteen. I had filled it before the last ball came. By stretching out my hand I could have given him water to drink, but I did not raise a finger. Vengeance was sweet. I smiled grimly to myself, and said down in my secret heart, "not a drop shall cross his lips, though he perish. I shall have my revenge."

"Do you recoil with horror? Listen, how merciful God was to me."

There was a poor little drummer on the other side, a merry, manly, boy of twelve or thirteen, the pet and plaything of the regiment. There was something of the German in him; he had been with us from the first, and was reckoned as one of the ablest drummers in the army. But we would never march to the tap of Charley's drum again. He had got a ball in his lungs; and the exposure and fatigue together with the wound had made him light headed. Poor little child! he crept close to me in the darkness and layed his cheek upon my breast. Maybe he thought it was his own pillow at home; maybe he thought it, poor darling, his mother's bosom, God alone knows what he thought; but with his hot arms about my neck, and curly head pressed close to my wicked heart, even then swelling with the bitter hatred of my enemy, he began in his delirium to murmur, "Our Father who art in Heaven."

I was a rough, bearded man. I had been an orphan for many a long year; but not too many or too long to forget the simple-hearted prayer of my childhood—the dim vision of that mother's face over which the grass had grown for twenty changing summers. Something tender stirred within my hardened heart. It was too dark to see the little face, but the young lips went on brokenly:

"And forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us—"

It went through me like a knife—sharper than a sabre cut, keener than the ball. God was merciful to me—and this young child was the channel of his mercy.

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us!"

I had never understood the words before. If an angel had spoken it could scarcely have been more of a revelation. For the first time the thought that I might be mortally wounded, that death might be nearer than I dreamed, struck me with awe and horror. The text of a long forgotten sermon was in my ears:—"It is appointed for all men once to die; and after death, the judgement."

Worse and worse. What means of mercy could I expect, if the same was to be meted that I meted unto my enemy?

The tears welled into my eyes and trickled down my cheeks; the first I had shed since boyhood. I felt subdued and strangely moved.

The rain was falling still; but the head upon my breast was gone. He had crept

away silently in the darkness. His unconconscious mission was fulfilled; he would not return at my call.

Then I lifted myself with great effort. The old bitterness was crushed, but not altogether dead.

"Water—water!" moaned Richard in his agony.

I dragged myself close to him. "God be praised!" I said with a solemn heart "Dick, old boy, enemy no longer. God be praised! I am willing and able to help you. Drink and be friends."

It had been growing lighter and lighter in the east, and now it was day Day within and without. In the first gray glimmer of dawn we looked into each others' ghastly faces for a moment, and then the canteen was at Richard's mouth, and he drank as the fevered only can drink. I watched him with moistened eyes, leaning upon one elbow and forgetting the bandaged shoulder. He grasped me with both hands.

Blood-stained and palid as it was, his face was ingenuous and beautiful as a child's.

"Now let me speak," he said, panting. "You have misjudged me Rufus. It was all a mistake; I found it out after we parted. I meant to have spoken this morning when I grasped your rein, but—but"

His generosity spared me the rest. The wound my hand had inflicted was yet bleeding in his head; but for the blind passion of the blow, it must have been mortal. Was vengeance so sweet after all? I felt something warm trickling down from my shoulder. The daylight was gone again—how dark it was!

"Forgive me, Dick," I murmured, groping about for him with my hands.

Then I was blind—then I was as cold as ice—then I stumbled down an abyss, and everything was blank.

"The crisis is past—he will recover," said a strange voice.

"Thank God! thank God!" cried a familiar one.

I opened my eyes. Where was I? How odd everything was. Rows of beds stretched down a long, narrow hall, bright with sunshine; women wearing white caps and peculiar dresses, flitting to and fro with a noiseless activity, which, in my fearful weakness, it tried me to watch.—My hand lay outside the covers; it was shadowy as a skeleton's. What had become of my flesh? Was I a child or man? A body or a spirit?—So light and fraillid I feel, I began to think I was done with material things altogether, had been subjected to some refining process, and but now awakened by a new existence. But did they have beds in the other world? I was looking lazily at the opposite one, when some one took my hand. A face was bending over me. I looked up into it with a beating heart. The golden sunshine was on it—on his fair regular features, and the kindly blue eyes.

"Dick?" I gasped, "where have you been all these years?"

"Weeks, you mean, said Richard, with the old smile. "But never mind now, you are better, dear Rufus—you will live—we shall be happy together again."

It was more a woman's speech than a man's, but Dick had a tender heart.

"Where am I?" I asked, still hazy.—"What is the matter?"

"Hospital in the first place," said Richard. "Typhus in the second. You were taken after the night at Fredericksburg."

It broke upon me at once. I remembered that awful night—I could never, never forget it again. Weak as a child, I covered my face and burst into tears.—Richard was on his knees by my side at once.

"I was a brute to recall it," he whispered, remorsefully; "do not think of it old boy—you must not excite yourself.—It is all forgotten and forgiven."

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us?" I prayed from my inmost heart.

"Those words have been in my mouth night and day, ever since you were taken," said my friend.

I lay silent, cogitating. "Tell me one thing, Dick," I asked; "are we in the North or South?"

"North—in Philadelphia."

"Then you are a prisoner?" I said, mournfully, recalling his principles.

"Not a bit of it."

"What do you mean?"

Richard laughed. "I have seen the error of my ways. I have taken the oath of allegiance.—When you get strong enough again, we will fight side by side."

"And the wound in your head?" I asked with emotion, looking up at his bright, handsome face.

"Don't mention it. It healed up long ago."

"And the little drummer?"

Richard bowed his head upon his hand.

"He was found dead upon the field.—Heaven bless him! they say he died pray-

ing, with his mother's name upon his lips!"

"Revere him as an angel!" I whispered, grasping him by the hand. "But for his dying prayer we had yet been enemies.—Oh, Richard! God's grace is with the simple and pure of heart!"

TOBACCO A FOE TO MATRIMONY.—One of our exchanges inquires, with much alarm, how is it that there are so many nice young girls in our cities unmarried, and likely to remain so? Our answer is comprised in one word—tobacco. In old times, when you could approach a young man, within whispering distance, without being nauseated by his breath, he used, when his day's work was over, to spend his evenings with some good girl or girls, either around the family hearth, or in pleasant walks, or at some innocent place of amusement. The young man of the present day takes his solitary pipe, and puffs away all his vitality, till he is as stupid as an oyster, and then goes to some saloon to quench his thirst, created by smoking; and sheds crocodile tears, every time his stockings are out at the toes, that "the girls now-a-days are so extravagant a fellow can't afford to get married."

Nine young men out of ten deliberately give up respectable female society to indulge the solitary enervating habit of smoking, until their broken down constitutions clamor for careful nursing, then they coolly ask some nice young girl to exchange her health, strength, and beauty, and unimpaired intellect for their sallow face, tainted blood, and breath, irritable temper, and mental imbecility. Women may well hate smoking and smokers. We have known the most gentle and refined men grow harsh in temper and uncleanly in their personal habits under the thralldom of a tyranny which they had not love nor respect enough for women to break through.

A Detroit paper tells a good story at the expense of a Canadian billiard player who was unlucky enough to be the "champion of the cue" in his vicinity. Fully appreciating his own abilities he went to Detroit to try his hand with Seereiter. On "banking" for the first shot Seereiter won, took his cue, counted, and continued to count until the game was finished, the astonished Canadian looking on with mingled admiration and wonder. At the conclusion of the game the foreign gentleman was about leaving the room, crest-fallen, and the conceit entirely taken out of him, when the boy who tends the tables politely informed him that he had a small account to settle for the game just played. The fellow was taken somewhat by surprise, but soon collected his scattered senses, and with the remark that he hadn't played any billiards, and consequently wouldn't pay, left the room, amid the uproarious laughter of those present.

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