

THE TRAITOR

The hills were growing dark, and the forests of the Valley of Auvagne merged into the greater purple shadows behind them, when a man came running heavily from the pass that leads from Liesse. Scarcely looking to right or left, he kept on till he reached the fringe of the little wood of St. Anne, and passing into the first shade of the larch trees he threw himself face downward panting upon the ground.

He was a big-limbed, powerful man of forty, made for feats of strength rather than fleetness of foot. A short, rough beard hid, one felt instinctively, a stern, strong chin, but under their roof of bushy brows the brown eyes wore a puzzled look, as though they gazed upon strange things that the dense brain behind failed utterly to understand.

Presently his breathing grew easier. He rolled over and stared up through the trees. Two hours past sunset! He had come those twelve miles quickly, but five hours' absence from Auvagne was too long just now. Some of the Hussars who rode in would have been quartered on his farm four hours ago—and the master away! He leapt to his feet, brushed the white dust from his trousers, and wiped his heated face and neck with his blue blouse sleeve. A few paces deeper into the wood a large hollow, leaf-covered, was formed between two great roots, and from this he drew a pair of sabots and a cap. Into one of the former he thrust for safety a torn, grimy paper, and putting the shoes on made his way through the trees to the village that lay beyond.

As he drew near he heard movement and voices—the cries and noises of men feeding and grooming horses, and now and then the clank of arms and the staccato tones of an officer giving an order.

One or two looked up from their work as he passed and a sergeant eyed him closely, but he crossed the farmyard unchallenged. He was merely a peasant-farmer of Auvagne, and not even the sharpest-eyed Hussar could see the Prussian passport in the toe of his wooden shoe.

By the doorway he stood for a moment and watched. Whoever was quartered on his farm, Pierre Fouquier thought sourly, would get bad fare to-night. The third regiment in the village in ten days, the cattle driven, and the fields and orchards wrecked. War is ruin to a farmer, unless he can turn it to account. One must do something to live.

He strode into the kitchen, and the white boards of the table were laid with plates and mugs and scanty, coarse food. It gave him a twinge of conscience, for the French peasant is hospitable and a guest is sacred. But he flung his cap on a chair and swore sullenly. "They come like locusts and take the bread and meat from our mouths. They must take what else comes, too."

"—died like brave soldiers. So Marshal Bazaine falls back on Metz, you see, my mother and cousin, here; and the Prussians are—" A voice from the inner room rose clearly through a lull in the noises of the yard and fell again to an indistinct murmur.

Fouquier's heart leapt at the sound and then sank like the voice.

It was his brother Eugene, drawn in the conscription of '63, of whom they had heard nothing since the war began. That he should be here of all places on this night!

The voice murmured on, with within the room Eugene sat between his mother and cousin, Mariette, explaining the course of the war as he knew it. Even his enthusiasm could not claim great deeds for the many Army Corps that France had so confidently massed upon the Prussian frontier, and though he suppressed the many rumors of disaster to MacMahon and Bazaine, yet his cousin saw, beneath his optimism, glimpses of an ominous history when it should come to be told in its entirety.

But the mother was content in having her son—one to be proud of; not so tall or sinewy as his brother her elder, yet well set up, trained to a gallant carriage, with a tongue loosened by his intercourse with men. His news was lost in the personality of the teller; great men were moving through the story, but the greatest was her son, who only told of them.

This was the group Pierre saw when he at length pushed open the door, and as he entered there was a rush to him.

"Pierre, my brother!"

"Pierre, my son, Eugene has come home."

But Mariette stood by the table and looked troubled.

The farmer sat down heavily on a chair. "But why are you here, Eugene?" he asked.

"We are on the march to join General Ladmirault at Diedenhofen," replied his brother.

"Why ask, since he is here?" cried the mother. "Ah! if he could only stay for ever!"

Eugene threw his arm round her and kissed her. "Would you have me desert then, mother?" he laughed.

"Ah, no, I could not wish that, Gene; but oh! what if you never came back to me!"

"Nonsense, aunt," Mariette cried, coming to her; "you are giving way

because you've seen your boy. Now sit down and talk and laugh while Pierre has his meal. He's hungry—but I'm afraid there isn't much for you, cousin," she added, turning to him with a little grimace.

She bustled everyone into place and set Mere Fouquier to cut bread and meat, while the farmer, who said no word, drew a plate to himself and ate.

The soldiers had trooped into the long kitchen, and presently the women went out to see if anything was needed. Then at last Pierre spoke, slowly and hesitatingly.

"This is a dangerous place, Eugene," he said.

The young man looked up and laughed.

"I thought you were never going to speak, Pierre. Why, you've not said you are glad to see me yet. You always were silent, but now—!"

His brother smiled uneasily.

"It's this," he said, almost apologetically, nodding to the door. "One can welcome one's own, but the soldiers—they leave little behind them for the mother and cousin. Our own soldiers too; while the Prussians pay with gold. One makes thin soup of patriotism."

"The Prussians! They have not—"

"But one hears," rejoined the elder hastily—"but one hears. They pay for all services, it is said. It is different from our soldiers, and it is hard on us, Eugene. One has to turn to other things than farming to feed those two now."

The Hussar looked grave. Secure of rations, however scanty, in camp and barracks, he had not thought of the fight for existence in his own home.

"It is dangerous here," Pierre repeated, returning to his first thought.

"But they seem well cared for, brother; and as there is something for my comrades, my mother and cousin cannot have starved."

"Starved! No, I see to that," Pierre cried, fiercely.

"Yes, you see to it, whilst I— You are a good son, and will make a good husband to Mariette." The young man's tone grew deeper, and the light carelessness gave place to a depth of feeling he seldom showed.

"No wonder they love you, and that our mother speaks of you almost with reverence. You have the hardest part, to stay here and battle with poverty for their sakes. I once fancied Mariette would love me as I— But you are stronger and better than your wild brother. Yes, you will see to them, and Heaven will see they never lose you."

"Umph! one cannot tell what will come down the stream. But one cannot talk about it and smile, or love France or the army over much."

And they were both silent. The elder spoke first, like a child reiterating a lesson.

"It is a dangerous place for soldiers, this."

"How do you mean, Pierre?"

"The hills and passes. It would be easy for the Prussians to surprise the village. I do not know but it seems, almost, this place is between the hills—like a trap."

"Leave that to our colonel; he knows. He fought in Algiers," he said.

"Still, it might be if they came from—Liesse, say—from that pass and down by the river from the east—it seems you would be caught between two fires." He leaned forward, looking into his brother's eyes as if eager to impress him with a sense of danger of which he dared not speak openly. "I only need a regiment of Uhlans over that hill and a dark night such as we shall get."

Eugene laughed indulgently. "But is there a regiment of Uhlans over that hill?" he asked, carelessly.

Pierre opened his mouth to speak hastily and then checked himself. His clenched fist ground upon the table and his brows met. And then his mother and cousin returned.

"Pierre has been trying to frighten me, mother," laughed Eugene, turning in his chair as they entered, "by showing me how Auvagne is situated if there were a regiment of Prussians at Liesse."

"Prussians? Good heavens!" cried Mere Fouquier, with startled eyes.

"It was nothing," the elder muttered. "I know the place," he added lamely, marking long runs in the table with his thumbnail, "and a word from one who knows it as I do is not amiss. But he is—"

A bugle-call interrupted him and the Hussar caught up his sword. "I shall return in a little while, mother," he said, kissing her as she accompanied him to the door.

Mariette laid her hand upon Pierre's shoulder. "Are there Prussians there?" she whispered.

He started. If he said "Yes," the next question would be, "How do you know?" and he could give no reason for being in Liesse that day and keeping the news secret. So he made a pretence to laugh.

"Not that I know," he answered; "though there may be, since Eugene says they've entered France. But I know nothing. How should I—I, who never go beyond our fields and river?"

"How should you?" she echoed. "But you made me suspect. Ah! think how terrible it should happen that in his own home, when duty brings him back for a few hours to his mother and—and all of us—Oh! I know it is foolish, but you made me think of it, and—"

Her incoherent speech was broken by choking sobs. The emotions and fatigue of the day had unreminded her, and she was white and trembling.

Her lover sprang to his feet. "Calm yourself, my dear; Eugene is

safe. Would I not give my life for him—for all of you? Be brave; go quickly and compose yourself, and don't think such foolish things."

But with a very clouded brow he passed his mother as she returned, and made his way to the stillness of the little wood.

When he returned the soldiers were already stretched in their blankets in the out-houses and sheds, and the place had grown silent.

Eugene, alone in the little room, rose and stretched herself.

"We march at daybreak," he remarked, as his brother entered. "If I get no rest I shall fall asleep in the saddle."

Pierre looked away and said, stammeringly, "There is something I must show you before you go, Gene."

He took down the candle from the high mantel-shelf and, crossing, opened a small oaken door on the opposite side of the room.

"Goodness! What is in the cellars, then? It seems there is some mystery. But don't keep me from my sleep long; I'm too tired to be curious."

And emitting a huge yawn Eugene followed the farmer down the flight of stone steps.

The candle was scarcely needed. Both men knew the cellars well. They ran beneath the big kitchen, their arched brick roofs supporting the stone flags above. They were three in number, with the remains of doors still hanging on the narrow openings between them. The mustiness and damp of disuse pervaded the place, and lumber of all sorts was lying about in disorder.

Pierre led the way to the innermost and smallest cellar, and putting the candlestick upon a pile of timber faced his brother awkwardly.

Eugene broke the silence. "Well; and now for the great secret."

Pierre wetted his dry lips and tried to speak. It was harder than he had thought. Had his brother worn a peasant blouse—but the Hussar uniform! It was the soldier stood before him; one of the regiment he had betrayed.

But Eugene divined nothing of his feelings; he only looked in wonder. "Come," he cried, impatiently, "you said you had something to show me."

Then the farmer stopped and, taking off his sabot, drew from it a torn and grimy paper. He thrust it almost defiantly into the soldier's hand and turned away.

It seemed an hour as he waited for some word—some sign. For the first time he felt the shame of treachery. And the silence was unbroken.

Suddenly Eugene strode forward and laid his hand heavily upon Pierre's shoulder, holding out the paper to him.

"What is this?" he cried, hoarsely, his face white in the faint glimmer. "What is your name doing on a Prussian passport?"

The plunge had been made. Pierre Fouquier drew a deep breath and looked his brother in the face.

"It means," he said, slowly, "that our mother and Mariette did not want for food."

Eugene stood for a moment dazed, and when he spoke it was as one doubting his senses.

"You—fed them—with Prussian gold? You—the son of our honest mother!"

"Yes, I! What would you have? You are a soldier and think of France and duty to the Emperor. I also have a duty. I told you to-night what you could not see. And when the pedlar came through the village and offered me money to carry news to the Prussians—well, as I said to you, one had to turn to other things to live."

"A traitor! A spy!"

"The name matters nothing. I care nothing for French or Prussians. I make no wars. I feed my own, and if France comes in my way France is my enemy. I suppose a soldier and a peasant cannot understand each other; it is not right they should. But you are a son, Eugene, also."

"With a spy for a brother. For generations our fathers have been true men; there has been no taint in our blood till now."

"Then since you reproach me—what would you have done?"

"Done? Choked the life out of the scoundrel who would tempt me to sell France."

"And our mother and Mariette? What would you have done for them?"

The rage died from the soldier's face and he stood dumb. At last he realized it. He stood in his brother's place. He saw his loved ones growing pale and thin—drooping day by day. What could he have done? And he turned away sick at heart.

Presently: "They—they do not know?" he asked.

"No," answered Pierre, "and they must never know. It would break our mother's heart; it would be worse than all."

Eugene's face was pitifully white and drawn. "Brother, why have you told me this?" he said, sadly.

"Because there is more to come. The pedlar bought me, and so when they called me to-day I went across the hill to Liesse to earn my wages. But I went too soon; before I knew you were among the men I had betrayed."

A cry rang through the cellars. The two men turned as through the archway a girl stumbled, with dilated eyes and ghastly face, her arms outstretched in horror before her.

"Mariette!"

Both sprang to her, but she struck the elder fiercely. "Cain!" she cried, and staggering to Eugene burst into sobs.

He caught her in his arms, and felt the slender body shake and quiver against him and the frightened heart beat wildly. Tighter he held her, as if to compel the throbbing to cease. Pierre was forgotten, and all the dangers that threatened. He clasped in his embrace the woman he loved, and she clung to him as to a lover.

For a moment only—till recollection of the peril came to her, and with a supreme effort she controlled herself.

"Is it true? Is it true?" she implored.

Pierre, with despairing eyes, looked at them in each other's arms. "It is true," he said hoarsely.

"Prussians at Liesse; my comrades in a trap! When is the attack?" cried Eugene.

"An hour before daybreak."

"Then there is time," and he sprang to the archway. But his brother was before him.

"No, not that. Hear me, Eugene. I have thought of it all. That is why I brought you here. You must stay here—"

"Here!"

"Do with me as you like after, but listen. Nothing can stay the Uhlans now, I dare not have your blood upon my head. You must remain here in safety till all is over."

The soldier gazed at him in bewilderment, scarce comprehending.

"For our mother's sake! Will you tell her her son is a traitor?"

"But my comrades—my duty! You would make me a traitor, too!"

"It is she—or the soldiers, who are nothing to me."

Mariette, against the wall in the shadows, breathed quicker as Eugene hesitated. His whole attitude reflected the mental struggle he was enduring. The result—what would it be?

The answer came quickly. He leapt forward and grappled with Pierre, straining every nerve to swing him from his path. A fury of despair and rage was upon him. How dare his brother so entrap him between filial love and soldierly duty—set him to find a way out of the dilemma in which treachery had placed him? But his course was plain. His comrades must not be massacred if he could save them.

But Pierre standing like an oak, scarcely moved beneath the wild onslaught, and slowly the strong peasant arms tightened—irresistible as Fate—and forced the soldier back.

Mariette seized him by the wrist, in a vain endeavor to release the hold.

"Pierre! Pierre! he is your brother," she cried, bitterly. "Would you kill him before the Prussians come?"

The farmer loosened his grip and Eugene staggered back.

"He is right; you know he is right," she said.

Before he could answer they heard a clatter of spurs on the stone steps and saw the gleam of a lantern piercing the darkness at the entrance to the cellars—a gleam that crossed and quivered on a drawn sabre.

"Who goes there?" cried the sentry.

"Pierre Fouquier, farmer, of Auvagne. Take me to your colonel. I have news for him—of the Prussians."

The Uhlans rode silently through the pass and down by the river to the east. At each place, when half their force gained open ground, the French Hussars swept upon them and rolled up the squadrons into disordered tangle of men and horses.

Pierre Fouquier was the first to fall with a bullet in his brain. But the colonel kept terms even with a traitor, for the farmer was buried in a patriot's grave.

PUMPING THE CAPTAIN.

The captain was an eccentric of the first water, and numbered among his peculiarities the fact that he never gave the desired answer to a direct question.

One morning four of his friends who were aware of this trait in his character observed the captain going to market, and after some bantering entered into a bet as to the practicability of learning from him the price he paid for his purchase. They accordingly settled the preliminaries, and stationing themselves at different points along the street which he had to pass on his way home, awaited his coming.

Very soon the bluff old salt made his appearance with several pigeons dangling from his hand. As he approached, the first questioner accosted him with—

"Good morning, captain. What did you give for your pigeons?"

"Money!" responded the captain, bluntly, as he continued his journey.

The second gentleman a little farther on addressed him. "How go pigeons this morning, captain?" he asked.

"They don't go at all—I carry 'em!" was the unsatisfactory reply.

Shortly after that the captain met the third questioner, who, having asked the time of day, casually inquired, "How much are pigeons a dozen, captain?"

"Didn't get a dozen—only bought half-a-dozen!" said the old gentleman, still plodding on his way.

Finally, the fourth and last of the conspirators attacked the wary old mariner by observing, in the blandest tones, "A fine lot of pigeons you have there, captain! What did you get them for?"

"To eat!" was the pertinent and emphatic rejoinder.

The captain reached home without further molestation.

He—"All great men smoke my dear." She—"But you're not great."

SOME LITERARY HEROES

GREAT FEATS WHICH THEY HAVE ACCOMPLISHED.

Many Famous Books Were Written While the Authors Suffered Torture.

There are few finer examples of the heroism of the study than that presented by the late Professor Finsen, the discoverer of the light-cure for lupus, who died so recently. For the last twenty years of his too short life he suffered from painful diseases of the heart and liver, to which dropsy was superadded, and it was only by daily self-denial and the strictest of dieting that he was able to live at all.

Yet for all these years, lived in the very shadow of death and in constant suffering, he stuck bravely to his great life-work, even studying his own diseases with the keenest attention and writing articles on them for medical journals. The last two or three years of his life were spent lying on his back, unable even to be carried to his beloved Institute a few yards away; and yet the lion-hearted scientist never relaxed for a single day his gallant fight for his fellow-men against disease.

The heroism of the Danish professor reminds one of a similar brave battle waged by an English professor, J. R. Green, the historian, against disease and pain. It was in 1869, when the disease which had assailed him for many years finally prostrated him and when the doctors gave him no hope of living more than six months, that Green set to work to write his famous "Short History of the English People." Day after day he toiled at his task, holding desperately on to life and in a

STATE OF CEASELESS PAIN

and exhaustion; and so brave was the man's spirit that he actually prolonged his life for five years. Even he was bound to confess, "I wonder how in those years of physical pain and despondency I could ever have written the book at all."

General Grant's "Autobiography," which brought his widow the enormous sum of \$500,000, was written under even more trying conditions than Green's "History." In 1864, the year before his death, the ex-President found himself bankrupt through the failure of a bank in which he was a partner, and face to face with the prospect of dying penniless and leaving his wife destitute. It was at this terrible crisis that he began to write the story of his stirring career for a firm of publishers. But the cup of his misfortune was not yet full. A cancer formed at the root of his tongue, and the gallant soldier, already doomed to death, was compelled to write day after day, suffering constant and severe agony. He completed his colossal task just four days before the merciful end came, having thus performed in his study, and in his bedroom an act of heroism which has never been eclipsed on any field of battle.

Mrs. Browning, too, one remembers wrote most of her beautiful poems "confined to a darkened chamber, to which only her own family and a few devoted friends could be admitted, in great weakness and almost unintermittent suffering, with her favorite spaniel as her companion."

THE GERMAN POET HEINE

was another martyr and hero of the study. The last seven years of his life were spent on his "mattress-grave," racked with such excruciating pain that he had to take doses of opium large enough to have killed several men in order to give him a few blessed hours of freedom from it. Through all these years of torture he not only bore himself with a noble resignation and cheerfulness, but produced many of his finest and most finished works, including his "Last Poems and Thoughts" and his "Confessions."

Sir Walter Scott's heroic struggle with misfortune and failing health during the closing years of his life is perhaps too well known to call for more than mention. After the commercial crash came which left him crushed with debt and with shattered health, he set to work "with wearied eyes and worn brain" and toiled for years, often as much as fourteen hours a day, until the end came, and with it the lifting of all burdens, including that of his debts, every penny of which his monumental toil had paid.

Who does not recall the patience and pluck which enabled Frank Smalley to write his books on a "bed of anguish"; how for years Edna Lyall literally kept at bay by her brave spirit and her busy pen; how Mr. Clark Russell has preserved a bright spirit and set a magnificent example of patience and industry while on "the daily rack of rheumatism"; and how much of Sir Arthur Sullivan's sweetest music was distilled from pain?—London Tit-Bits.

"I appreciate the fact that you have honored me with a proposal," said the dear girl; "but are you sure your love for me is the real thing?" "Perhaps not," replied the young grocer, "but it is less expensive and just as good."

"And do you really want to be my son?" asked the widow Mullins of young Spudds, who had asked for her daughter's hand. "I can't say that I do," replied the truthful suitor. "I want to be Helen's husband."