The Durham Recorder.

LET HIM WHO HATH NO NERVE FOR THE FIGHT, DEPART.

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OLD MOTHER SAVAGE

SHE WAS A CURIOUS SIGHT.

Never More Would She Embrace Her Child.

Transat' atic.

I had not been at Virelogne for fifteen years. I went back there to hunt in the autumn with my friend Serval, who had built another cottage there, his first one having been destroyed by the Prussians.

I loved that part of the country infinitely. There are delightful corners of the world that exercise a seusual charm over the eyes. We love th m with a physical love. We whom the earth seduces preserve tender memories of certain springs, certain fields, certain ponds, certain hills, which we have often seen and which have moved us as we are moved by happy events. Sometimes even the mind turns back to a corner of a forest, or a river-bank, or a garden full of flowers, which we have only seen once at some merry hour, and which has remained in our heart like those images of women we meet in the street, on a spring morning, in a clear, transparent costume, leaving soul and body filled with an unsatisfied and enduring desire, a sense of momentary contact with happiness.

At Virelogne I loved the whole country, dotted with bits of forest, and traversed by streams which ran through the soil like veins, carrying blood to the earth. They fished in them for crabs, trout, and eels. Divine happiness! There were places where one could bathe, and snipe were often to be found in the high grass growing on the banks of these narrow water-courses.

I went on, light as a goat, watching my two dogs foraging ahead of me. Serval a hundred yards away on my right, was beating a field of lucern. I turned aside the bushes that formed the limit of the forest of Saudres, and I saw a cottage in ruins. Suddenly I remembered it as I had last seen it in 1869, clean, vineclad, with chickens before the door. What sadder sight than a dead house with its standing skeleton, dilapidated and forbidding?

I remembered also that a good woman had made me drink a glass of wine within, one day when I was very tired, and that Serval had then told me the story of the inhabitants. The father, an old poacher, had been killed by the gendarmes. The son, whom I saw at the time, was a tall, bony fellow, who passed likewise for a ferocious destroyer of game. They were called the Savages. Was that a real name or a nickname? I nailed Serval. He came up with his long stride.

"What has become of the people who lived here?" I asked him. And he told me this story: When war was declared, the son, then thirty-three years old, enlisted, leaving the mother alone in the house. The old woman did not receive too much sympathy, because she was known to have money.

So she stayed alone in this isolated house, far from the village, on the outskirts of the wood. But she was not afraid, for she belonged to the same race as her husband and son, a rough old woman, tall and thin, who did not often laugh, and with whom no one ever joked. Women who work in the fields seldom laugh, for that matter. Laughing is for the men. The women have dreary and restricted souls, living dull and gloomy lives. The man learns to indulge in a little noisy gayety at the wine shop, but his companion remains serious, with a countenance constantly severe. The muscles of her face have not learned how to laugh.

Mother Savage continued her every-day life in her cottage, which was soon covered with snow. She visited the village once a week to get some bread and a little meat; then she returned to her hut. As there were rumors of wolves, she carried a gun on her back, her son's gun; it was rusty, and the stock worn from constant handling. She was a curious sight, this tall Mother Savage, a little bent, going with slow strides through the snow, the gun-barrel projecting above the black cap which so effectually impaisoned her white hairs that no one had ever seen them.

One day the Prussians came. They were distributed among the inhabitants, according to the fortune and resources of each. With the old woman, who was known to be rich they placed four.

They were four big, light-haired, blue-eyed fellows, who had kept their flesh in spite of the fatigue which they had endured, and their good nature, although in a conquered country. Alone at this aged woman's house, they were very thoughtful of her, saving her all the satigue and expense that they could. All four were to be seen making their toilets around the well, in the morning, in their shirt sleeves, wetting their pink-white flesh characteristic of men of the North with an abundance of water, in the raw, snowy air, while Mother Savage came and went, preparing the soup. Then they were seen cleaning the kitchen, scouring the floors, chopping wood, peeling potatoes, washing linen, fulfilling all the household duties, like four good sons around their mother.

But the old woman thought continually of her own boy, with his tall, thin figure, hooked nose, brown eyes, and big mous ache. Every day she asked each of the soldiers installed at her fireside:

"Do you know which way the Twenty-Third French Regiment went? My boy belongs to it."

They answered: "No, not at all." And understanding her pain and anxiety, because they had mothers of their own, they bestowed upon her a thousand little cares. Besides she was very fond of her four enemies; for peasants seldom feel the patriotic hatred; that is monopolized by the upper classes. The humble, those who pay the most because they are the poorest and whom every new burden overwhelms; those who are killed in masses, forming because of their numbers real food for cannon; those, in short, who suffer the most cruelly from the atrocious miseries of war, because they are the weakest and least able to resist, seldom understand the belicose ardor, the excitable feeling of honor, and the pretended political combinations which in six months exhaust two nations, the victors as well as the vanquished. The neighbors said, speaking of Mother Savage's Germans:

"There are four who have found a home." But one morning, while the old woman was alone in her cottage, she saw at a distance over the plains a man coming toward her dwelling. Soon she recognized him as the letter-carrier. He handed her a folded paper, and she drew from their case the spectacles which she used in sewing; then she read:

MADAM SAVAGE.—This brings you sad news. Your boy Victor was killed yesterday by a cannon ball that cut him in two. I was standing near, for we marched side by side in the company and he had asked me to notify you in case any misfortune should befall him. I have taken possession of his watch in order to restore it to you at the end of the war. I salute you as a friend. CESAR RIVOT,

Soldier of the 3d class in the 25d of the line.

The letter bore date of three weeks before. She did not weep. She remained motionless, so struck and stupified that as yet she did not even suffer. She thought: "There's Victor killed now." Then gradually the tears rose to her eyes, and grief invaded her heart. One by one ideas came to her, frightening and torturing her. Never more would she embrace her child, her big boy, never more! The gendarmes had killed the father, the Prussians had killed the son. He had been cut in two by a cannon-ball. And it seemed to her that she saw the horrible sight—the head falling, the eyes open, while he bit the corner of his big moustache, as he had been wont to do when angry.

But what had they done with his body? If they had only restored her her child, as they had restored her her husband with the bullet in the middle of his forehead! But she heard the sound of voices. It was the Prussians returning from the village. She quickly hid the letter in her pocket, and received them tranquily with her usual face having had time to wipe her eyes.

All four laughing with delight, for they brought with them a fine rabit, stolen doubtless, and they made signs to the old woman that they were going to have a feast. She began directly the preparation of the breakfast; but when it came to the killing of the rabbit, her heart failed her. Yet it was not the first! One of the soldiers hit it a blow behind the ears with his fist. Once the animal was dead, she succeeded in skinning the red body; but the sight of the blood that she felt cooling and clotting, made her tremble from head to foot; and always she saw her big boy cut in two, his body red also, like that of this still palpitating animal.

She sat down at the table with her Prussians, but she could not eat a single monthful. They did not heed, but devoured the rabbit. She looked at them sidewise, saying not a word, maturing an idea, her face so expressionless that they noticed nothing.

Suddenly she asked: "Here we have lived a month together, and I do not even know your names." They understood, not without difficulty, what she wanted, and told their names. That did not satisfy her; she made them write them on a piece of paper, with the addresses of their families, then, resting her spectacles on her big nose, she considered this unknown writing, after which she folded the paper and put it in her pocket, on top of the letter which told of her son's death. When the meal was over she said to the men: "I am going to work for you."

And she began to carry hay into the garret where they slept. They were astonished at this work; she explained to them that they would not be so cold; and they helped her. They piled up the bundles till they touched the thatched roof; and thus they made a sort of large chamber with four grass walls, warm and perfumed, in which they would sleep marvellously well.

At dinner time one of them became anxious on seeing that Mother Savage still ate nothing. She declared that she had cramps. Then she lighted a good fire to warm herself, and the four Germans went up to their lodging by the ladder which they used every night. As soon as the trap door was closed, the old woman took away the ladder, then noiselessly opened the outside door, and went to get some bundles of straw, with which she filled her kitchen. She went barefooted in the snow, so softly that they heard nothing. From time to time she listened to the unequal snoring of the four sleeping soldiers.

When she judged her preparations sufficient, she threw one of the bundles into the fire, and when it was well aflamed, she scattered it over the others, went out, and watched. In a few seconds the entire interior of the cottage was illuminated with a raging light; then it became a frightful bed of coals, a gigantic glowing oven, from which gleams shot through the narrow window and threw dazzling rays upon the snow. Then a loud cry came from the top of the house, followed by a chorus of human shrieks, heartrending appeals of anguish and fear. Then, having burned through the trap-door, a whirlwind of fire burst into the attic, pierced the thatched roof, and rose to the skies like an immense torch; and the whole cottage was wrapped in flame.

Nothing more was heard within but the cracking of the fire and the crumbling of the beams. The roof suddenly fell in, and the cottage's glowing carcass shot a great shower of sparks into the air, amid a cloud of smoke. The fields, lighted by the fire, shone like a sheet of silver tinted with red. A bell in the distance began to ring. Old Mother Savage remained standing before her destroyed dwelling, armed with her gun, her son's gun, for fear that one of the men might escape. When she saw that all was over, she threw her weapone into the embers. A loud report rang out. People came hurrying up—peasants, Prussians. They found the woman sitting on a tree-trunk, tranquil and satisfied. A German officer who spoke like a son of France, asked her:

"Where are your soldiers?"

She stretched out her thin arm toward the red mass of dying fire, and answered in a strong voice:

"In there."

They pressed around her. The Prussian ashed:

"How did it take fire?"

She answered:

"I set it on fire:"

They did not believe her. They thought that the disaster had suddenly made her crazy. Then, as all surrounded and listened to her, she told the story from one end to the other, from the arrival of the letter to the last cry of the men burned up with her house. She did not forget a single detail of what she had felt or of what she had done. When she had finished, she took from her pocket two papers, and, in order to distinguish them by the dying gleams of the fire, she again adjusted her spectacles, and then said, pointing to one of them: "That is the death of Victor." Pointing to the other, she added, at the same time designating the red ruins with an inclination of her head: "These are their names, that their relatives may be informed." She quietly handed the white sheet of paper to the officer, who took her by the shoulders, and she continued:

"You will write them how it happened, and you will say to the parents that I did it. Victore Simon, the Savage! Don't forget."

The officer shouted some orders in German. They seized her and hurled her against the still hot walls of her dwelling. Then twelve men arranged themselves in front of her at a distance of twenty yards. She did not budge. She had understood; she waited. An order rang out, followed immediately by a long report. One tardy shot was heard alone, after the others. The old woman did not fall. She sank, as if her legs had been mowed from under her. The Prussian officer approached. She was almost cut in two, and in her clenched hand she held her letter, bathed in blood.

SEASONABLE REFLECTIONS BY HENRY BLOUNT.

As He Sits Dreaming in The Old Year's Deeping Twilight.

Wilson Mirror.

The old year is dying, and in a few days it will be gone forever. It is time for reviewing the past, and reflecting upon the lessons it taught. And we are in a frame of mind at the blessed season of joy and good cheer to be fair and just and honest and impartial and charitable in our judgments, and write down nothing in malice against our fellow beings. The soothing and lulling and peace breathing carolings of "good will to all mankind" now fall upon us like a sweet, preciously tuned far off melody, and it quiets the aching brow of anxiety and soothes the feverish pulse of care and makes us feel the kinship of humanity. Yes the "good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people" have not yet lost their virtue by any means. The demands of a highly complicated system of society, the pretensions of a highly aggressive methods of scientific inquiry, may seem to dim the lustre of the news which came to simple men in a burst of glory and of gladness so many centuries ago. But the tired spirit turns from both to find in the angel's message a support in the present and a promise in the future which the highest flights of scientific speculation and the choicest rewards of social distinction alike fail to yield. The glorious message, announced on the plains of Bethlehem, carries with it possibilities of refreshing for the jaded, spiritual elevation for the self-seeking, and satisfaction for the reverent seeker after truth. It has adapted itself to every condition of humanity; it has been the nurse of civilization and the herald of progress. It is old, as we call age; it is young, measured by the days of the everlasting. But young or old, its progress will not be stayed nor its mission ended, till the kingdoms, of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ.

But now we are thinking of the old year that must soon fall from the embattlements of Time and pass out into the ocean of the eternal Gone. It is a season for reflection and for tears. It is a time for prayer and self-communion. The dying year teaches us that we too must die, and that we are one mile post nearer the grave and that awful Bar of Judgment before which we must one day stand and give an account of the deeds done in the body. God grant that we may so live by the light of the experience we have had during the year that now is dying and by the solemn warning of these solemn hours, that our record for the next year will be a brighter, happier, nobler, purer one.

Self-Righteousness.

Dangers of the darkest kind
Rise in mists of flattering praise,
Dwarfed conditions of the mind,
Stunted growth and stunted ways!

Imperfect is the human race,
And every one may sometimes err;
There is no name, nor is there place
Where wrongs may not some times occur.

Self may sit enthroned on high,
May rule in robes of saintly grace,
Self may pray, and purr, and sigh,
O'er all the sins of all the race!

Honeyed words may flow like oil.
Bible precepts fill the air—
Self for self will onward toil,
Self for self will do and dare!

Self may stab with righteous word,
Self may stain a righteous cause—
May strike at truth—and then the Lord
Strikes back, through His eternal laws.

Self may rise, but self will fail,
Shattered aims about will lie;
But the freedom gained for all
Leads the human hosts on high!

—*Sunday Inter-Ocean.*

It is our duty to be happy, because happiness lies in contentment with all the Divine will concerning us.

Ninety-nine per cent. of ambition to try, and one per cent. of talent, is all that is necessary to success in whatever we undertake.

Books, like proverbs, receive their chief value from the stamp and esteem of ages through which they have passed.

However we may labor for our own deception, truth, though unwelcome, will sometimes intrude upon the mind.

One of the most effectual ways of pleasing and of making one's self loved is to be cheerful. Joy softens more hearts than tears.

Every day is a leaf in life. When the dawns it is a blank. There is inscribed thereon our thoughts, words and actions.

Physicians and Surgeons.

Drs. A. G. Carr, L. W. Battle, J.F. Cain, W. J. H. Durham, N. M. Johnson, J. M. Manning, J. D. Roberts, J. A. Smith, J. J. Thaxton, L. T Smith, Thos. Vickers and A. M. Moore, colored.

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Justices of the Peace in Durham County.

DURHAM TOWNSHIP.

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OAK GROVE TOWNSHIP.

John T. Nichols, Thos. J. Holloway, John Hall, W. J. Suit and Thos. Ashly.

MANGUM TOWNSHIP.

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LEBANON TOWNSHIP.

Kinchen Holloway, S. W. Holeman, Gilman Latta, W. G. Gates and Thos Lipscomb.