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BY JOHN A. BACKHOUSE.

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TERMS.

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POETRY.

THE FIRST MILD DAY OF MARCH.

It is the first mild day of March;
Each minute sweeter than before,
The red-breast sings from the tall larch
That stands beside our door.

There is a blessing in the air,
Which seems a sense of joy to yield
To the bare trees, and mountains bare,
And grass in the green field.

My sister! (tis a wish of mine)
Now that our morning meal is done,
Make haste your morning task resign,
Come forth and feel the sun.

Edward will come with you, and pray,
Put on with speed your woodland dress;
And bring no book: for this one day
We'll give to idleness.

No joyless forms shall regulate
Our living calendar:
We from to-day, my friend, will date
The opening of the year.

Love, now an universal birth,
From heart to heart is stealing,
From earth to man, from man to earth,
It is the hour of feeling.

One moment now may give us more
Than fifty years of reason;
Our minds shall drink at every pore
The spirit of the season.

Some silent laws our hearts will make,
Which they shall long obey:
We for the year to come, may take
Our temper from to-day.

And from the blessed power that rolls
About, below, above,
We'll frame the measure of our souls:
They shall be tuned to love.

Then come, my sister! come, I pray,
With speed put on your woodland dress;
And bring no book: for this one day
We'll give to idleness.

WORDSWORTH.

Alice and Berenger.

Translated for the Newbern Sentinel, from the French of De la Motte.

In the narrative of my voyage to Pontoise, I have spoken of a certain "Fountain of Love," which for a long time, was called the "Fountain of Ash-trees;" I said that the unfortunate fate of two lovers had occasioned the change of name, and I feel myself in a manner bound to share with my readers, the pleasure which I enjoyed in the discovery of the manuscript from which the following story is extracted. If I were treating with a publisher for the sale of this old *romant*, and found it absolutely necessary to make a volume, I would not fail under pretence of proving its authenticity, but in fact to multiply its pages, to enter into the most minute details of the circumstances which rendered me the possessor of the manuscript, and would conclude according to the usage, with a proposition to deposit it with a notary; but since it is well known that such essays prove nothing, convince nobody, and are usually quite tiresome, I am not at all sorry for the obligation under which I find myself, to suppress every sort of preface, and to say in a few words, that among a quantity of loose manuscripts which were committed to my care, I found some leaves of parchment enclosed in a tin case; that by the first glance at its contents, I perceived that they contained the history of a recluse of the abbey of Mauduisson, written in such old French, that I succeeded with the greatest difficulty in deciphering the manuscript, of which the following is a faithful copy.

In 1374, under the reign of Charles the fifth, so justly surnamed the wise, at the period when letters and chivalry flourished together, Berenger de Presles son of a brave gentleman attached to the court of the King, was born in a castle on the banks of the Seine a short distance from St. Germain. It was in the midst of public rejoicings for the late peace, that the ceremony of baptism was performed for the infant, to whom the King in remembrance of the services of his father, assigned as god-father, John, Lord of Neuville, one of the most renowned captains and chevaliers of this brilliant epoch. Berenger was yet in the cradle when his father died. When he had attained his twelfth year, the lady, his mother, after having instructed him under her own eyes in the first principles of a military education, sent him to his illustrious god-father, there to commence his career in the quality of *poursuivant*, a species of apprenticeship, during which the youth carried a lance and helmet, learned to manage the horse and was instructed in the three passages of arms. On the morning of his departure, the youth entered the chamber of his mother to receive her benediction, where she caused to be read for him the poem of *Hugh de Tabaris* upon the order of chivalry, passed round his neck a little chain, to which was appended a flint stone which one of his ancestors had brought from the banks of the Jordan and on which were engraved the words, "God, France, and Honour." The lady after embracing her son and bathing him with her tears, confided him to the care of an old servant, and ascended to the tower of the castle to follow him with her eyes as far as possible.

Berenger did not, until the next day, reach Neuville castle, the warlike appearance of which soon fixed his attention. The battlemented walls, the loop-holed towers, the spacious fosses, the double draw-bridges, the high donjon, the chapel bell which, at the moment of his arrival, was tolling for vespers, and indeed every object so different from the peaceful appearance of Presles, inspired him with astonishment, mingled with fear from which he had not entirely recovered when he was ushered into the presence of the lord of Neuville. The nobleman embraced him, promised to be his father and conducted him to the Countess, who received him in the most affectionate manner. The little Alice, his daughter, a year younger than Berenger whose grace and beauty outstripped her age, was seated upon the same sofa by the side of her mother who was teaching her to work tapestry.

The next day, the pupil of the Count, was installed in his new functions, and submitted to the discipline of the military life to which he was destined. The smallest mistakes were punished with a severity which frequently caused the good little Alice to shed tears; but Berenger consoled himself with the reflection it was that by such means that the lord of Neuville had acquired the great renown which he enjoyed. As military exercises did not occupy all the time of Berenger, he consecrated some hours of every day to the study of poesy, which he passionately loved, and in which the Prior of Rieux, great-uncle of the countess, gave him lessons. This prior had two incurable maladies: the gout, and a passion for writing satires against the most prominent personages of the court. Like all the libellers of the age, whose secret ought to have been buried with them, the malignant abbe took great care in shooting his shafts, to protect himself, under an anonymous covert. Out of abundant caution, he contrived to have his verses copied by his young pupil, who intended no harm, and who felt happy in learning, at the price of a compliance of which he did not suspect the danger, the rules of the roundelay, the madrigal and the ballad. Berenger loved none but this kind of poetry, and soon began to write it with ease and grace, without perceiving that the name of Alice would insensibly glide into his verses to complete the measure, and sometimes even at the expense of their rhythm.

The castle of Neuville was built upon a declivity and commanded the river Oise. At the extremity of the park, on the top of a little eminence the crest of which was crowned by some rocks, a fountain of limpid water escaped in a cascade and wandered through a thicket of ash-trees. At this spot where the eye ranged over an extensive plain, the Count usually started upon the chase, and there too in fine weather, the Countess and her daughter went to watch the *esturgeon*. Berenger, who always the first whom Alice perceived, and before the lord Neuville could perceive the donjon of his castle, Berenger could inform him that Alice was at the rendezvous. The habit of seeking and expecting each other at the same place, had inspired each of them with a very vivid attachment for the Fountain of the ash-trees, before they suspected that which they entertained for each other. The youth had been about two years in the castle, where each one seemed to strive to love him most, when the Count determined to make him an Esquire. Berenger was only fifteen years old, yet no one managed the war-horse with more address, carried the helmet with better grace upon the pommel of the saddle, or understood better how to put on armour, to lace a cuirass or rivet a breast-plate. In many perilous encounters which he had met in company with his noble master, he had displayed intelligence and valor far above his years. The chief topic at the Court of Charles, was the gentle esquire of the lord of Neuville. Esteemed by his illustrious protector, cherished by his companions, secretly adored by the charming Alice, the object of her timid vows, he seemed to enter life under the happiest auspices,—but a morning so beautiful, announced only a day of storm. For a long time, satires of the most odious kind had been inundating the court and town, and their author, in the recess of the obscurity in which he concealed himself, escaped the resentment of those whom he outraged with so much virulence and licentiousness. The young Berenger, as yet a stranger to the world with its passions and its intrigues, was all the time the unconscious instrument of the vengeance of the Prior.

About this time a historical event of great importance, furnished the Abbe of Rieux a new occasion for exercising his satirical pen,—he did not permit it to escape. The Duke de Berri, happened by want of foresight, to fail in a military expedition which had been ably planned. The Abbe composed on this subject a number of verses, in which the delay which the Duke had caused in executing the orders of the King, was treated in a style most injurious to the honor of the Prince.

Berenger had finished copying the verses and still had them about him, when the Count employed him in a mission, the object of which was to deliver certain despatches to the King in person. He immediately started for Paris. His majesty was at Vincennes, and would return the same evening to the hotel St. Pol, which he then inhabited. Berenger waited there for him, the next day he executed his mission, received orders to present himself at Fontainebleau where the Queen then was. He remained there four days and did not return to Neuville until after a week's absence. Berenger had been well received at court, and returned a satisfactory response to the despatches with which he had been entrusted. He was about to return to Alice after so long a separation. We may judge with what sentiments his heart was filled, with what ardor he spurred his rapid courser. Already he discovers on the banks of the Oise, the towers of the castle; he discerns the tops of the boughs at the

Fountain of the Ash-trees, illuminated by the last beams of the sun: he recognizes the chapel by the brilliant reflection of its painted windows. Rising in his stirrups, with eyes directed towards the fountain, he thinks he sees, he does see the young Alice; she waves her handkerchief in the air; the horse of Berenger no longer runs, he leaps along, and bounding over hedges and ditches, in a moment he carries the impatient youth to the foot of the hill. Alice, followed by the eldest of her waiting-women, flies toward him, and with a voice choked with sobs, exclaims "Fly, fly, Berenger; you have every thing to fear if you appear at the castle!" It is not possible to describe the terrible disorder which these words and the tears of Alice inflicted on the unfortunate young man. He scarcely had strength to ask the cause of the lamentable misfortune which had befallen him; Alice is ignorant of it; but she has witnessed the anger of her father, and apprehends from it the most dreadful effects. Berenger recovers his spirits; his conscience reproaches him for nothing, and honor imposes on him the duty of justifying himself in the estimation of his benefactor. Alice urges him in vain to absent himself, at least for some days; he resists. During this painful debate, the day was nearly closing, the cry of the night-bird began to mingle with the distant sound of the laborer. Dame Bertha who had accompanied Alice, remarked to her that the horn had resounded three times and that the gates of the castle were about being closed. Alice returned by the way of the Park, of which she had the key, and Berenger remounting his horse, crossed the drawbridge at the moment it began to tremble. No varlet appeared before the steps to take his horse, which he left loose in the court—he advanced without any person's announcing him to the hall of arms, where he found the Count, who was conversing with the Prior of Rieux, and who received him with a terrible look. Without permitting him to speak a word, he showed him the satire written with his own hand, and which had fallen by accident from the pocket of his doublet, in the chamber which he had occupied at the hotel St. Pol. The Duke de Berri had himself sent it to the lord of Neuville, leaving it to his discretion to punish the guilty. On beholding his writing, the guilt and importance of which revealed themselves to him in a moment, the unfortunate young man turned pale and blushed, and turning his eyes filled with tears toward the Prior who tried to shun his glance, he did nothing, but protest his innocence. What could so simple denial avail against the written proofs? The Count after addressing to him the most bitter reproaches, ordered him to quit the castle immediately and never to reappear there. Prostrated by this last blow, Berenger fell down at the feet of the Abbe de Rieux, and only said, "Oh dear Prior!" The latter had the means to keep the silence which his victim had the noble courage not to break. It was in vain that the Countess, frightened by the grief of her daughter, interceded in favor of the young esquire. The Count was inexorable and the gates of the castle were opened at midnight for the exile of this amiable and innocent creature.

The clock of the castle struck twelve, and the moon in all her splendor spread her sweet light over the country. Berenger, with despair and death in his soul, stopped a few paces from the foss, and leaning against his horse, gazed upon the walls from which he was banished, whilst burning tears poured from his eyes. He held them fixed on the window of the chamber where the tender Alice was passing the night in grief. The sentinel, who was walking on the inner parapet, perceived him and forced him to depart. Uncertain of what road he should take, Berenger wandered at random for some time, and finally took the road toward the castle of Presles, where he might find by the side of his mother, those consolations which his heart so much needed, but the hope of which his presentiments repelled.

Berenger who left the banks of the Oise with so much regret, did not arrive at the manor of Presles until sunset the next day. The emotion which he felt on revisiting the places where the happy years of his infancy had passed, in thinking that he was about to embrace his mother after a separation of four years, insensibly overwhelmed his whole soul. In approaching the castle, he followed a path which he recollected to have travelled the first time he mounted a horse; this path conducted him to the first court, where he saw collected a large number of peasants; their mournful and silent countenances could but excite his surprise;—but he felt distressed when he saw the old Raymond in tears, distributing alms to a crowd of the poor by whom he was surrounded. Berenger leaped from his horse and called him. Raymond recognized his young master, uttered a shrill cry and ran to throw himself at his feet. Snuffing, he raised him, enquiring of him "O mournful news!—the unfortunate no longer has a mother! she has expired after an illness of two days, with which she had been afflicted from her youth. His extreme grief does not afflict, it breaks his heart. At the sorrowful news, Berenger lost the use of his senses, and during a lethargy of eight days, from which he was never roused but by paroxysms of delirium, the names of Alice and his mother were the only words he pronounced. The care bestowed on him was not without success; his life, at the moment it seemed departing, was reanimated. After he had recovered some strength, he made them conduct him to the tomb of his mother; she reposed near her husband in the choir of the church,—there he spent a whole day in meditation and tears. This duty being fulfilled, Berenger committed to the chaplain of the castle, the care of all his property, charged him to endow in his name, four of the most virtuous girls in the village, whose first children should take the names of Alice and Berenger, and prepared to leave a

second time his parental roof. The morning of his departure, he shut himself up in the oratory, where he wrote a letter to Alice, which he commanded Raymond to carry to her, instructing him to repair to Neuville, to wait an occasion for delivering it in the thicket of Ash trees, and to carry him the answer to Dijon, where he intended to pass some time at the court of Burgundy.

During the visit which the Duke of Burgundy had paid to the lord of Neuville, the young Berenger had fixed his attention and merited his good wishes. The ideas of grandeur and ambition were very far from his mind; but he saw in glory the only means of approaching Alice, and he hoped to find at the Court of Philip an occasion for distinguishing himself and obtaining the rank of chevalier. It was with this hope that he directed his steps towards Dijon. One day, it was the eighth since his departure from the chateau of Presles, he crossed a forest some leagues from Auxerre; the heat was excessive, he and his horse had need of some moments of repose; he alighted and with the bridle of his war-horse passed under his arm, he sat at the foot of a tree, and abandoning himself to reflections in which the memory of Alice mingled with pleasant hopes, his eyes gradually closed, and without changing their object, his thoughts became dreams; he slept profoundly, when the noise of arms and clashing of swords roused him suddenly. The first movement of the young esquire was to leap upon his horse, and hasten toward the place from which proceeded the noise of arms which had interrupted his sleep. Three men were attacking a fourth, who had nearly fallen beneath their blows. Berenger flew to his succor; his sudden appearance, the vigor of his attack, spread terror among the assailants, who dispersed and finally sought refuge in the depths of the forest. The chevalier to whom the youth had rendered this service, was the marshal de Loigny, surprised in the environs of his castle by some of those brigands by which France was then covered. Berenger had determined to conceal his name, but the marshal compelled him to stay with him a few days. This noble warrior, who had retired from court since the death of Charles the fifth, enjoyed in his glorious retreat the happiness of private life, to which his love of letters added a new charm. His chateau was a sort of rendezvous for troubadours, who every day exhibited there a new *fete*. These pleasures, to which Berenger would, at any other time, have abandoned himself with the utmost ardor, could not now withdraw his thoughts from the recollection of his own disgrace, the loss of his mother, and the adored image of Alice. Such profound melancholy at so tender an age, caused the marshal to desire to ascertain the cause; his entreaties to the young stranger became so pressing and affectionate that he was obliged to yield. Whatever may have been the artifice he employed in his narrative, for the purpose of not compromising the Prior of Rieux, the marshal nevertheless was convinced of his innocence, and offered to conduct him to the court himself, to justify him in the regard of the Prince. Berenger refused, declaring to his illustrious benefactor that honor imposed silence on him; and the morning of the fourth day after his arrival at Loigny, full of impatience to meet his faithful servant at Dijon, he took leave of the marshal, who, on bidding him fare well, gave evidence of the most lively attachment.

He arrives at Dijon. Raymond had been waiting there two days; he presented him a leaf from the tablets of Alice, on which the amiable child had written some words in haste. "The anger of my father is still violent against you," she said, "but he will not fail to forego it, after the glory which you are about to gain. Adieu—I shall love you till death." What mysteries does the heart of a lover contain! These two lines, which changed in no respect the destiny of Berenger, gave him inexpressible joy, and all at once restored him to courage and hope. He suspended by the chain which his mother had given him and which he carried round his neck, a love talisman upon which he wrote these lines,

Sweet friend of fair and lovely form,
Pearl of the world—my only charm;
Nor rose of May, nor lily fair,
With my loved Alice can compare.

He loaded Raymond with presents and sent him back to the castle of Presles, commanding him to find an occasion to deliver to Alice a billet on which he was content to write, "No more shall you see, no more shall you hear of me, until I become worthy of you." The next day he presented himself at the castle of Burgundy; entrance was forbidden to simple esquires; it was impossible to approach the Prince. At the end of eight days, more humiliated than fatigued by the efforts which he made without success, as he was preparing to leave Dijon, he learned that they were levying troops to march against the Duke of Gueldres, and he immediately enlisted as a simple volunteer in the army which the King commanded in person. This war was long but bloody; Berenger covered himself with glory, and many brilliant exploits would have procured for him honorable distinctions if the presence of the Duke of Berri in the camp of the King, had not obliged him to conceal his name.

The Duke of Gueldres concluded the war by doing homage to the King of France; and Berenger, whom the desire of speedy renown tormented, resolved to make his appearance at the floral games, which were about to take place before an immense crowd with great splendor. These games, lately instituted upon a new basis by Clemence Isaute, then fixed the attention of the whole nation, and the names of the victors were proclaimed throughout France. Berenger excelled in a species of poem entitled the royal song; he celebrated in that verse, the happy commencement of the new reign, and his production being presented before the assembly, was judged superior to those of Castel and La Fontaine, the most cele-

brated poets of the time; the golden amaranth was awarded to him with general consent. It was at the castle of Loigny that he was informed of his success, to which the good marshal wished to add a consummation, by arming him as a chevalier. Alice and this dignity! Berenger sought no other happiness on earth. The chapel of the castle was prepared for the august ceremony; many of the marshal's companions in arms were invited and came, armed at all points. After divine worship, the chaplain having blessed the arms of the neophyte, the marshal gave him successively the spurs, the halbert, the cuirass, and the gannet; being thus dubbed, he girded a sword round him, saying, "Berenger, I present you with this sword, and place it in your hands, and pray the Lord that he may give you such a career and make you as good a chevalier as ever was your father of valorous memory." Then giving him the accolade and striking him three times upon the neck with his sword, he added, "In the name of God, St. Michael and St. George, I make thee a chevalier—be true, bold and loyal." The rest of the day was a long festival.

The new chevalier was too proud of his new dignity, not to seek an opportunity to do honor to his illustrious god-father. The celebrations which were preparing at St. Denis, in honor of Louis the second, king of Sicily and brother of king Charles, offered him a brilliant opportunity; the tournaments were announced, the flower of the French and foreign nobility was admitted. Berenger repaired thither, and was rendered no less remarkable by his youth and grace, than by the extreme simplicity of his armor. His shield, without ornament, carried only the simple device composed of the letters A. and B. and surrounded by a branch of the ash-tree. The tournament was appointed to open after the service which the King caused to be performed in honor of the grand constable. Berenger took a seat in the church from which he might distinctly hear the funeral oration pronounced by the Bishop of Auxerre over Bertrand de Guesclin—an honor which had never before been conferred in France. We may judge of his surprise and his happiness when he perceived Alice, the charming Alice, at the foot of the Queen's throne with her eyes fixed upon his shield. As he sat fronting her, he raised his visor and held it half elevated. Alice recognized him; all the tender emotions of which the human heart is susceptible, were exhibited at once on her angelic form.

The next day, Berenger who had inscribed his name among the number of combatants, presented himself at the barrier of a tournament the most brilliant of the age. All the court was present, and by a chance which a lover only can appreciate, Alice was chosen by the Queen to crown the victor. Who but Berenger could obtain that prize! Four times he entered the lists, four times he remained master of them, four times his triumph was proclaimed. The King desired to know the young knight, and was no less pleased than surprised when he ascertained that he was the same troubadour who had composed the royal song. Berenger approached to receive the destined scarf from the hands of the trembling Alice; while passing it round his neck, she whispered in a low voice, "In three days, at eight o'clock in the evening, at the fountain of the ash-trees."

The Duke de Berri, the witness of the triumph of Berenger, could not, without hatred, hear proclaimed a name which was associated in his mind with insult. His position near the King, whose dislike he had incurred, and the little favor which he enjoyed in the public opinion, did not permit him to pursue vengeance openly, but he did not conceal his plans in the presence of Amaury, lord of Beaume, one of the most powerful nobles of the Court, to whom the King had partially promised the hand of Alice.

How long did these three days of expectation appear to Berenger! At last the third day is nearly closed; it is seven o'clock, the day has almost vanished; Alice's lover advances, trembling with love, fear and hope, towards the banks of the Oise, where every step awakes some recollection in his soul. He stops a moment beneath the walls of the Abbey of Mauduisson at some distance from the castle of Neuville, to await the precise moment of appointment; eight o'clock strikes from the horologe of the Abbey—he runs, he flies through the thicket which covers the foot of the hill; he arrives at the fountain, quenches his thirst in its waters, kisses every tree where he finds his initial engraved by a dear hand—he trembles, looks, palpitates at the least rustling of the trees—some one approaches—'tis she—Berenger is at the feet of Alice. Her emotion exhausts her strength—she totters—she sustains her—she presses her within his arms. What a moment in life—or rather what a life in such a moment! After some moments of silence, whose charm no words can express, Alice in a few words relates to lover the misfortune which had threatened them for a year. "My father," she said, "from whom the King himself demanded it, has promised my hand to the lord of Beaume; but he is yet ignorant of the secret which honors you, which will restore you all his esteem, all his affection; a secret, in a word which the dying Prior has just revealed to my mother. Your valor, your merit, have made the King acquainted with you; I will confess before him if necessary, the love which I entertain for you, and he will not condemn me to the misery of disappointment; for I here make the vow, Berenger, that I will live for you or for God." Such a promise, in the face of heaven, in a place which had been the mysterious witness of so many sighs and tears, between two young lovers, united from infancy, was doubtless already half fulfilled. I hasten to the conclusion of my story.

Some days after the interview in the grove, Berenger at the request of Alice and with the