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## A RUINED GARDEN.

All my roses are dead in my garden—  
What shall I do?  
Winds in the night, without pity or pardon,  
Came there and slew.  
All my song birds are dead in their bushes—  
Woe for such things!  
Robins and linnets and blackbirds and thrushes  
Dead, with stiff wings.  
Oh, my garden! rilled and flowerless,  
Waste now and drear;  
Oh, my garden! barren and loveless,  
Through all the year.  
Oh, my dead birds! each in his nest there,  
So cold and stark;  
What was the horrible death that pressed there  
When skies were dark?  
What shall I do for my roses' sweetness  
The summer round—  
For all my garden's divine completeness  
Of scent and sound?  
I will leave my garden for winds to harry;  
Where once was peace,  
Let the bramble vine and the wild briar marry,  
And greatly increase.  
But I will go to a land men know not—  
A far, still land,  
Where no birds come, and where roses blow not  
And no trees stand—  
Where no fruit grows, where no spring makes  
riot,  
But, row on row,  
Heavy, and red, and pregnant with quiet,  
The popples blow.  
And there shall the mead, whole of sorrow,  
Have no more use—  
No bitter thought of the coming morrow,  
Or days that were.

## SPIKING THE GUNS.

The regiment will be annihilated," observed the Adjutant coolly. And then, in the same impassive tones, he asked some one to pass him a biscuit.  
"Curse you," shouted the Colonel. "Do you think I don't know that? Do you imagine I fear getting killed to-morrow? Do you suppose I want to live on after what has happened? It's the eternal disgrace of the thing that's cutting me."  
"Once comfortably shot," remarked the senior Major with easy philosophy, "it doesn't much matter to me personally where, or why, I go down. Not a soul will be left behind to care."  
This last remark added tinder to the blaze. The Major was a peasant's son who had hacked and thrust his way up from the ranks by sheer hard fighting. His commanding officer was a noble of the old regime. He had hoped, and reasonably expected, that the previous day's engagement would give him a brigade, and so the fiasco had fallen all the more bitterly.  
It seemed as though the very stars in their courses had been battling against us. Everything had gone wrong. The blame was not ours; but this, in an army where want of luck was the greatest crime, told nothing in our favor. Many men had fallen, and panic had seized the heels of the rest.  
Which of us initiated the run cannot be said; but in the rush of some, all had been carried along, few (except, perhaps, one or two of the older officers) resisting very strenuously. The Colonel, burning with shame, had gone in to report. What precisely had been said to him we did not know; but we guessed with some accuracy, although he did not repeat the detail. The gist of his interview was that the regiment was to attack again on the morrow; and, if unsuccessful, then, once more on the day after, and so on till the bridge was taken.  
Yesterday the thing had been barely possible. Yet to-day it was far different. During the night the defenses had been more than trebled. The Austrians swarmed. Enough artillery was mounted there now to have demolished an entire army corps advancing against it from the open.  
The deduction was clear. The bravest men will turn tail sometimes; and in our army, which was the bravest in the world, there had, during the latter part of the campaign, been more than one case of wavering. An example accordingly was to be made. Our corps had been singled out for the condign punishment. We were doomed to march on the morrow to our annihilation.  
Of course, the matter had not been put so at headquarters. There the words ran: "Most important strategic point. Must be taken at whatever cost. Your regiment will again have the honor, Colonel," and so on. But, summed up bluntly, it was neither more nor less than I have said. We all understood the order to the letter, and there was not a man in the regiment who would hesitate a moment in carrying out his share. Each private soldier, each officer, would march with firm determination to march if it was his last. That gives the case in a nutshell.  
But the secure knowledge that there would be no skulkers along this road to execution did not pacify the Colonel. If anything, it increased his bitterness. It would make his ungrateful memory last the longer. He sat at the table end of that inn room where we had messed, with folded arms and nervous fingers kneading at his muscles. By a singular irony we were lodged in comfort there—we, who had got to go out and die on the morrow, and he must needs taunt us with it, as though it were shame for such as we to have so tolerable a billet.  
Myself, I was stretched out on a sofa away by the far wall, and lay there mutely, having but little taste for the worldly savageries which were

being so freely dealt about. And the night grew older without my being disturbed. But the angry man at the end of the table singled me out at last, perhaps because my outward calm and listlessness jarred upon him.  
"Tired, Eugene?" he asked.  
"A little, sir."  
"Ah, I can understand it. I noted your activity to-day. You have mistaken your vocation, mon cher. You should not have come into the army. You should have been a professional runner."  
An answer burned on my tongue. But I kept it there, gave a shrug and said nothing. What use could further wrangling be? But the silence was an ill move. It only angered him further, and he threw at me an insult which was more than human man could endure.  
"Do you think you will again feel inclined to use those powers of yours to-morrow, Eugene? Or had I better have you handcuffed to some steady old soldier?"  
A dozen of the other officers sprang to their feet at this ghastly taunt, for when such a thing as this was said to one of their number, it touched all. The old Major was their spokesman.  
"Colonel, we make all allowances, but you are going too far with the youngster."  
The Colonel scowled round tight lipped for a minute, and then said:  
"I am quite capable of commanding this regiment of lost sheep without un-asked-for advice from subordinates, Major. Lieutenant Ramard, you heard my question, I presume? Please have the civility to answer."  
During the minute's respite I had been thinking and acting—that is, writing I got up and handed the Colonel a slip of paper. On it were the words:  
I acknowledge that I, E. Ramard, Lieutenant of the Twenty-second, am a coward.  
(Signed) EUGENE RAMARD.  
He read it.  
"There, sir," I said, "kindly add the date, as I have forgotten what it is, and please leave that behind with the baggage when we march to-morrow. If I do not do better work for France than any man in the regiment it is my wish that this paper be published." The Colonel nodded grimly and then frowned.  
"Have I your permission now, sir, to withdraw from this room?"  
A refusal was framing itself I could see, but the lowering faces around made him curb his passion, and he nodded again, but reluctantly.  
II.  
In the dark, wet air outside, and not before, did I realize fully what I had done. The screech on the slip of paper had been the spasm of the instant. It seemed to me now the outcome of a moment's insanity. I had had no plan, no trace of scheme in my head while I was scribbling. The words and the pledge were an empty boast, made in the wild hope that I could hold them good. But how could such a thing be done? The most furious, desperate courage, by itself, would avail nothing. There would be 1,000 men around, each to the full as brave as I—for no one can do "better work for France" than any of them! Ah, no, the thing was impossible. With them I should fall, and among all of them I alone should be branded infamous. The paper would be brought to light; the curt, bald confession would be read with no explanation of how or why it was written; and men would form their own opinions—all hostile, all against me.  
To leave behind nothing but the name of a self-avowed coward! Oh, agony, bitter agony!  
I wandered wherever my blind feet led me, wrenched by torments that God alone knew the strength of, and from which there seemed no human means of escape. The heavy rain squalls moaned down the village streets. The place, with its armed tenantry, slept. Only the dripping sentries were open eyed. These, taking me for an officer on ordinary rounds, saluted with silent respect. No soul interfered with me. Not even a dog barked.  
The thought came. You die only to gain a wreath of craven plumes. Why not pass away from here—escape—desert—vanish—be known no more—and yet live? No one withholds from you new life and new country. France alone of all the world is utterly hopeless for you.  
The thought gained. I say it freely now, for the dead, dull blackness of my prospect then showed no spot of relief. In my walkings to and fro I gradually verged nearer and nearer to the outer cordon. As an officer I new the wards for the night, sign and countersign both. I could pass the pickets.  
Farther and farther toward the scattered outskirts of the hamlet did my doubtful feet lead me. In one more patrol up and down I think my mind would have been made up, and after that whatever deluge the Fates desired. But a sound fell on my ears, faint and not unmusical. I was dully conscious of some new scheme beginning to frame itself. I changed my path and walked faster.  
Presently the cause of the sound disclosed itself. A field forge, an anvil and a couple of grimy farriers, and half a dozen troopers with horses

The cavalrymen were resting on the ground, watering their horses, and waiting their turns. The smiths were slaving, sweating, swearing, doing the work of thrice their number. It was a queer enough group, and I gazed at it for many minutes, still unable to frame the gauzy idea that had reared mated me. Then one of the farriers, who had been fitting a blissing shoe on to a hind hoof, chilled the hot iron in a rain puddle and humped up the horse's fetlock on to his apron again.  
I started.  
The fellow picked up a hammer, took a nail from his mouth and drove the nail first gently and then smartly home. "There, vicious one," swore he, "I put that spike through the vent in a matter of seconds, but with these four others beside it, thou'lt not rid thyself of it in as many weeks."  
I strode forward.  
"Five louis for that hammer and a score of nails!"  
The military smith dropped the hoof from his lap, came to attention and saluted. But he looked at me queerly, and answered nothing. I could see he thought me mad. Very likely excitement had made me look so.  
"Ten louis. There is the money in gold."  
"My officer, the things are yours."  
Steel spikes, brittle rods that would snap off short would have been better. But time was growing narrow, and I must take what offered. These soft bent nails would serve my purpose. And now for the river. The current was swift and I could not swim a stroke. I must go up stream and trust to find some tree trunk or wooden balk that would aid me in floating down.  
Of the matters that happened after this I cannot speak with any minuteness. To think back at, the whole time seems like a blurred dream, broken by snatches of dead sleep. I know I gained my point on the river bank, some miles above the village, and entered the water shore, finding it chill as ice. I think it was a small fence gate that aided my chinking passage.  
I can only recollect clearly that the thing I clung to was terribly unstable; and that on being landed by a chance eddy on a strip of shoal I lay there for fully half an hour listening to a sentry plodding past and past through the mud ten yards away, unable to move a limb. Then I gathered strength, and crawling, not only from caution, but through sheer helplessness, made my stealthy way still further along the shore.  
Four batteries commanded the approaches to the bridge. Two were on either flank to deliver a converging fire; two, one above the other, were in a direct line with it, so that the causeway could be swept from end to end.  
It was in the lower of these last that I found myself—by what route come, I cannot say. Only then my senses seemed to return to me. I was lying in an embrasure. Overhead was the round, black chase of a sixty-pounder. I crawled further and looked down the line. Six more guns loomed through the night, making seven in all.  
The rain was coming down in torrents, sending up spurts of mud. There were men within a dozen yards, wakeful men; and then, and not before, did it flash upon me that my farrier's hammer was a useless weapon. Fool that I was to bring it. Idiot I must have been to forget that the first clink would awaken the redoubt. My life?  
"No, pah! I didn't count that. But it would mean only one gun spiked effectually, if so much. I drew back into the embrasure and knitted my forehead afresh. The right thought was tardy, but it came. I drew off my boot. It was new and it was heavy—badinage had been poured out by my comrades over its heaviness. The strong sewn heel would drive like a caulk's mallet.  
Then I go to work. The guns were loaded and primed. The locks were covered with leather aprons. I used infinite caution; crawling like a cat, crouching in deepest shadows, stopping, making detours; not for mere life's sake, be it understood, but because life was wanted for work yet undone.  
The seven guns were put out of action, and still the night was dark and the Austrians were ignorant behind the curtain of pelting rain.  
And then on to the upper battery.  
Two, four, eight guns!  
Three I spiked and the night began to gray. Three more, and men were stirring. I got reckless and sprang openly at another. The air filling with shouts, and stinking powder smoke, and crashes, and the red flash of cannon.  
The French were advancing to the storm in the wet, gray dawn. Both flanking batteries, fully manned, had opened upon them; but of the guns which had direct command of the bridge, only one spoke.  
Into the roar of artillery the wind brought up yells and oaths and bubbling shrieks. And then the eagles came through the smoke. There was no stopping that rush.  
Somehow I found myself among comrades, fighting with a claw backed farrier's hammer, knowing nothing of order, or reason, or how these things came to pass; but heated only

by an insane desire to kill, and kill, and kill! And then I grappled with a man who was struggling off with a flag, and wrestled with him in a grim slough, and choked him down into it, while heavily shod feet trampled on both of us. And afterward there was more shouting and cheering, and mighty handclaps between my shoulder blades, and the old Major, who had given me cognac out of a silver flask—cognac which seemed to have been sadly overwatered.  
And that is all I remembered till I woke up in the afternoon from the sofa in that village inn. Reveille had sounded. We mustered under arms and the roll was called. Many did not answer.  
And then: "Stand out, Lieutenant Ramard," said the Colonel.  
I advanced and saluted.  
"You will consider yourself under arrest, sir, for desertion before the enemy. Presently you will surrender your sword and report yourself at headquarters."  
The Colonel turned and exchanged some words with a little, pale man near him who sat awkwardly on a white stallion.  
He resumed: "The Emperor has considered your case, sir, confirms the arrest and orders you to be reduced to the ranks." The Colonel paused and continued: "But as a reward for your gallantry, your commission of Captain will be made out with promotion to the first vacant majority, and you will also receive a decoration."  
And then I was ordered to advance again, and the Emperor transferred a cross of the legion from his own breast to mine.  
"Captain of the Twenty-second," he said, "thou art my brother."  
I never asked for the Colonel's apology.—Strand Magazine.  
Annoying Traveller.  
One of the most humorous phases of passing through the custom-house is connected with the fact that its officials often seem to reserve their gravest displeasure for the very honest people. A writer in the Outlook says that she had bought a dress pattern of loden, a sort of woolen goods, made only in the Tyrol, and packed in the top of her trunk, ready for the inspection of the Italian officials. One after another, the trunks were unlocked and closed again, until nothing was left but an unpretending little straw one that had been overlooked.  
"You have nothing in it, nothing, signora?" asked the officer.  
"Yes, I have," was my unexpected reply. "It is just here on top."  
I opened the trunk and displayed my neat goods. The train whistled, officials grunted, people jostled past us, and he glared at me. I knew he wanted to say, "Why did you bother me by declaring it?"  
He wrenched the loden out of the trunk and started toward an inner office, bidding me follow. There I was greeted by another official in these words, spoken with excitement and much gesticulation:  
"How is this? Just now at the last moment, and the train ready to go! How is this?"  
One man was weighing the goods, another pointing a pen in his hand, and half a dozen looking on.  
"Why is this?" repeated the chief officer. "Why do you declare this at the very last moment?"  
"Perhaps it would have been better if I had not declared it at all!" I said, in my suavest tones.  
"But to come at the last moment!"  
"Surely it is not for my pleasure, Mr. Officer, that you ransack my trunks!" I reminded him.  
Then he looked at me with the air of childlike helplessness so characteristic of Italians.  
"But there is no time now to look over your baggage and see what else you have!"  
I laughed.  
"I put this on top and declared it," I said. "There is nothing else, I assure you. But be tranquil; next time I pass the frontier I will smuggle everything and declare nothing. I promise never to put you to so much trouble again."  
A quiver of a smile crossed his lips, but he growled.  
"But the train is waiting!"  
"Yes," I replied, "and it must still wait until you are pleased to return my goods and allow me to relock my trunk."  
The end of it all was that I was bowed out of the office after paying one dollar duty on a four-dollar piece of goods.  
Had an Extensive Circulation.  
"Jack" McCorty is a character up in Hazleton, where he runs the daily paper. His advertising methods are original, as well as effectual. He was anxious to get business from a firm that advertised in his field, and wrote soliciting an order for his paper. The reply came:  
"Where does your paper go?"  
With promptness, Jack answered: "To North and South America, Europe, Asia and Africa, and it is all I can do to keep it from going to h—"  
He got the contract.—New York Dispatch.  
Not even a woman is strong enough to keep good if she has lots of idle time on her hands.

--THE--

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