

# Democrat and Sentinel.

THE BLESSINGS OF GOVERNMENT, LIKE THE DEWS OF HEAVEN, SHOULD BE DISTRIBUTED ALIKE UPON THE HIGH AND THE LOW, THE RICH AND THE POOR.

NEW SERIES.

EBENSBURG, SEPTEMBER 8, 1858.

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## Choice Poetry.

### MY BIRTHDAY.

My birthday! Oh! what myriad memories  
Of joy and sorrow wake at their return,  
Stealing the chords that have been silent long  
And they are breathing such rich melody  
That tears and smiles are blended in my heart  
As to the notes I list. They're coming now  
In all the splendor of childhood's glow  
And now, as a child's shadow intervenes,  
The music sweet is hushed in mournfulness.  
Thus, this in life is ever mingled with  
And sadness, light and gloom.

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## Select Tale.

### THE MIDNIGHT ASSASSIN.

BY GIACOMO S. CAMPANA.

WHEN I was a much younger man than I am now, I saw no inconsiderable portion of Europe, with a knapsack on my shoulders. France particularly, I traversed, in its length and breadth, on foot. It is the only mode of travelling that was ever satisfactory to me. Above all things, I like to be free, untrammelled and independent; and travelling with a knapsack is the only way in which I ever could secure those requisites in anything like perfection.

The knapsack, to be sure, must not be too large or too heavy; and to keep it from becoming so, it is indispensably necessary to send the weighty articles ahead, establishing certain depots, or head-quarters, along the route, and putting upon your back only a few changes of linen, for present use.

But I am neither writing a eulogy on pedestrianism nor a hand-book for the practice of it. Enough of this, therefore. "Once upon a time," in the early fall season, just as the vineyards were beginning to blush with the ripening of the grapes, I was trudging along a solitary mountain path leading from Louis-le-Saint to the village of St. Amour, in the Department of Jura. It was a wildly picturesque and romantic region. My way, for the most part, lay along a beautiful stream, a tributary of the Ain; and the attractions of the scenery had given me so many excuses for loitering, that it was becoming every moment more and more evident that it would be impossible for me to reach St. Amour that night.

As the sun left me, I was descending into a much more level country, but still a wild and uninvited one, offering no sign of human habitation. The twilight passed away, the shades of night descended, and the stars came out, one by one, and looked as though they were winking and blinking at me, in mockery at my vain attempt to find a place of shelter.

For more than an hour I groped along the uncertain path, inwardly berating myself for the lazy, loitering, lounging disposition which had led me into such an extremely disagreeable scrape.

At last I sat down upon a wayside boulder, and resting my chin upon the palm of my right hand, I began to reflect seriously upon what was the best course for me to pursue. I felt that I might walk on half the night without finding a shelter, and I was therefore not long in coming to a conclusion that I could not do a better thing than to take the boulder for a bolster, the knapsack for a pillow, and all out-of-doors in general for a bed to lie upon till next morning.

While making the few arrangements necessary for the disposal of my person in this eminently primitive and unnecessarily arid bed-chamber, my ears were saluted by the welcome sound of the barking of a dog. Hastily picking up my pillow and the rest of my bed-furniture (bolster excepted) in one hand, I started off in the direction of the noise, "travelling by the bark," as the backwoodsman do, when they distinguish the north from the south side of the trees by the noise growing upon them.

The bark did not last long enough to be of much use to me, and of itself, but led me to make an important discovery, namely, a light shining in the same direction, which had previously been concealed by a patch of swampy ground covered with a growth of stunted trees and briars.

Of that I felt persuaded already, but I had not the slightest idea of refusing his invitation; and lest he might take a notion to repent of it, I shot through the door with all possible expedition.

Inside was a tall, dark-browed woman, built very much after the same pattern as the man, and evidently his wife. Both of them looked to be over sixty years of age. The woman nodded, without saying a word, and then pointed to a rickety old chair, in which I was glad enough to seat myself.

The house and furniture were much like those of the French peasants generally; but the poor-looking, taciturn occupants of the place were as unlike the jolly, good-natured, talkative rustics I had been in the habit of seeing in my travels, as could well be imagined. Hoping that their reserve would wear off, I rattled away upon all sorts of topics, and did my best to arouse their curiosity;—an undertaking in which I had never yet failed in the cot of a French peasant—but all in vain.

The longer I stayed the worse I was satisfied with the place and the people, and I began to have serious doubts whether it would not have been better to have trusted myself to the tender mercies of the open heath. It would have been unpleasant enough to have been cooped up anywhere with two such hang-dog looking mortals; but in this wild, solitary spot, many miles away from any human habitation, the unpleasantness might well be excused for degenerating into absolute anxiety.

It turned out, however, that the supper which they set before me was by no means a bad one, and its discussion had a decided tendency to raise my spirits, though I felt several times a vague disposition to ask myself the question whether the supper, under the circumstances, was not rather too good to be altogether an honest one.

When one's gastric apparatus is highly strung by exercise, a really good meal has a wonderfully fortifying effect. I found it so in this instance. My misgivings disappeared one by one, and by the time I was ready for bed I was ready to laugh to scorn all my foolish suspicions, as mere baseless notions, engendered by irritated nerves, aching legs, and an empty stomach.

I was shown up a dilapidated staircase into a bedroom over that in which I supposed, it contained two beds, one of which was already occupied, apparently by a traveler who had preceded me. The beds were placed, with their heads towards each other, near the wall furthest from the door. With this unexpected room-mate I would willingly have dispensed, but there was no help for it, so I wisely determined to think no more about him, and go to sleep as soon as possible.

But resolutions of this kind are sometimes not quite so easily kept as made. Weary as I was, I found it impossible to put such a rather upon my thoughts as would serve to keep them in decent subjection to my will. They would wander away, like curiously children, running into all sorts of out-of-the-way nooks and corners, in spite of my exertions to prevent them. By-and-by I began to grow nervous, to a ridiculous extent, and to be annoyed by the most trifling noises, so that even the loud breathing of my somewhat companion was a torment to me.

While lying in this condition, I heard a noise at the door of the cottage, which was soon afterwards opened, giving admission to several persons—men, doubtless—the noise of whose wooden shoes was distinctly audible. Presently, too, I heard their voices, though in suppressed tones, and soon afterwards I could see a light streaming through the many cracks and crevices of the floor; for they were in the same room where we had supped, directly below.

either of them is to have his throat cut, the little one will do best; and I'll tell you another reason why I think—"

With my teeth chattering and my hair actually bristling with horror, I rose and stole softly to the bedside of my sleeping companion, to see whether he or I was the "big one" thus coolly doomed to destruction.

The room was quite dark, but there was, nevertheless, light enough to verify the fact, the fatal fact, that the man in the other bed was decidedly below the middle size, while I was six feet in my stockings, with a proportionate degree of latitude. I had expected nothing better, it is true, for, in a casual comparison of this sort, I knew it would be altogether unreasonable for me to aspire to the hope of turning out to be a "little one." Yet it was with a more tottering step, and a still further sinking of the heart, that I resumed my post of observation.

Feeling a desire to see as well as hear, I searched out a still larger hole, and put my eye to it. I found that I could get a view of the greater part of the room below, and hear, at the same time, nearly as well as before.

Besides the old people, there were now five or six young men, stout, strong, stalwart, strapping fellows; all debating the question whether the "big one" or the "little one" should have his throat cut. While looking at them my attention was attracted by a harsh grating sound in one corner. Ugh! it was one of the tall young men whetting one of the most unwholesome-looking knives my eyes had ever rested upon. Even when lying quietly in a knife-bag, such an instrument, with a "pokerish" look, but just imagine it undergoing the process of sharpening preparatory to making acquaintance with your own jugulars and carotids—I tell you what, now, it is not a thing to joke about, at all!

Human nature could stand no more! I jumped up, and, as hastily as I possibly could, without making a noise, I slipped on my other garment, took the rest of my effects in my hand, and went to the window, determined to make a jump for it.

Just as I was beginning cautiously to open the window, my proceedings were suddenly brought to a stand still by a glimpse of one of the tall young men, standing like a sentinel directly beneath the place where I was. Still determined to get out, if possible, I crossed to the window on the opposite side, which was in front of the house. But escape in that quarter was still less practicable, for the door was open, and some one of the people on the inside was every now and then coming to the threshold, if not quite out of doors.

Like a hunted beast, I knew not which way to turn; but at all events escape, for the present at least, was impracticable. I retreated to the hole in the floor. The very tallest, and the ugliest, too, of the whole batch, was taking off his sabots—his wooden shoes—with one hand, while he held that horrible knife with the other. After the shoes were removed, he felt the edge of the knife, and with diabolical complacency exclaimed:—"I'll cut his throat with that, and do it so slick that he'll never know it!"

If you had been in my place, dear reader, I dare say you would have acted very bravely, and I dare say you will feel a great deal of contempt for me because I was not more courageous; but I must tell the truth and shame the devil, though I am sorely afraid that it will look more like shaming myself than Satan.

what nature I could not for some time determine.

While I sat with my eyes and ears both intent upon catching something from the quarter whence the sound appeared to proceed, I saw a light shining from without upon the window opposite my bed, and presently a human hand, with that terrible knife in it, was produced from behind a curtain which hung before the window.

I knew there was a broken pane of glass behind the curtain. The curtain itself was fastened at each of the four corners, by bits of tape, to nails driven in the wall. There was something unearthly in the look of that bony hand, brandishing the long, glittering knife, and no visible body connected with it.

With just light enough thrown upon it to direct its motions, the armless hand plied the knife until the two lower tapes were cut; it then proceeded to turn the button, and carefully and noiselessly to open the sash, which was fixed upon hinges. Now the whole arm made its appearance, then the right shoulder, then the head, and finally the entire raw-boned long-limbed body.

Though tall and spare, the intruder was very muscular, and perhaps my superior in strength. My only hope was in my weapons, or rather in my pistols. He carried a small dark-lantern, and suffered just light enough to escape to direct him to his object. His first act, after he had fairly entered, was to turn the light first upon my face, and then upon that of my companion. This was done with a great deal of care and caution, and as one of us was sleeping soundly, and the other pretending to do so, his scrutiny, no doubt, terminated in a perfectly satisfactory manner.

With the stealthy step of a prowling tiger, the fellow approached my bedside, with the lantern in one hand and that fearful knife in the other. His gaze was now fastened upon me, and my eyelids were open just enough to enable me to see what he was doing, without his being aware of it.

He paused. Slowly and carefully I disengaged from the bedclothes the muzzle of my right hand pistol, and levelled it at his heart. His next step I was resolved should be his last. His right foot moved forward, I pressed my forehead upon the trigger, and gradually increased the pressure, so as to make the discharge of the weapon simultaneous with the next forward movement. He moved—but it was to turn upon his heel and walk away towards the bed of my companion. The "little one" then was to be the victim, after all. Astonishment for an instant almost paralyzed me, but then came the thought, can I lie quietly here while that poor fellow is murdered within a few feet of me? Humanity forbid! I should feel like an accomplice in the crime.

Still grasping the pistol, I raised myself quietly with my other arm, and beheld—the young peasant very quietly removing, from a little pen between the two beds, a rabbit!

There were two of them, a "big one" and a "little one," and it was the former of course, that the "midnight assassin" was after, with the fixed resolution to cut his throat that night, and have him ready for our early breakfast next morning, at all hazards.

## What it is to be a Belle.

BY A BELLE.

It isn't enough to be pretty and modest to be a belle. Good manners are not in the secret, neither is great beauty alone, though that comes nearer than anything else. But don't you know what people call *tone* in pictures? It isn't the color nor the drawing only—it is a sort of something not to be described; at least, I have asked a great many of the long-haired, bad hatted gentry who paint pictures, and they never agreed what it was. It is a sort of mellow complexion over the whole thing, and is as different from color as the bloom upon a ripe grape or plum is from the crude positive blue of the unripe fruit—or did you never notice the difference? No? Well, then, come to Nahaat, and you can study every variety of blush and bloom upon the ripening fruit in Mr. Tudor's gardens, behind those thick paled fences, that strain these rough sea winds into soft zephyrs before they touch his trees, very much as a fine tooth-comb would transform the rummy breath of any old sailor on the coast into a kind of music before it polluted a baby's lungs.

All this means tact. To be a belle it is necessary to be handsome, well made, of great good manners, and of consummate tact. Now, any girl can have almost anything but the chief thing. If you are not positively squint-eyed or of deformed resolution, and Madame—well, the freshest French woman will make you handsome and of good figure. Manners you must manage for yourself. I have found the best rule perfect kindness—I mean, of course, kindness of manner. Most men are a little bashful with women. Young men get over it by bravado—older men with a kind of silent, superior, condescending air. Now, if you study never to take advantage of this shyness, which makes men doubly sensitive—so that many a clever man is conscious of being a perfect fool with women—if you never wound them by look, or word, or intonation, or implication, and never seem to league with any one man against any other—why a little ludicrous flattery of manner only, not of words, does the whole business—the man is yours.

Have you never noticed that very "smart" women are never belles? There are, of course, what may be called "loud" young ladies from some western cities, and from New York, sometimes, who smoke and drink sherry-cobblers at night, and call the gentlemen by their christian names, and are always very conspicuous; but there is the same difference between such people and belles that there is between notoriety and fame.

The difficulty is that tact is not to be taught. It is the sublimest sympathy constantly on the alert. Its aim is to please—positively, by saying and doing what is agreeable; and negatively, by omitting all allusions that are not so. "Never speak of help to a man whose father was hanged," is the negative way of stating fact. "All things to all men," is the positive way. There is no need of asking me about the morality of this. I am treating of belles and manners, not of saints and moral philosophers.

One thing, however, I am free to say to you in strict confidence; and that is, that good manners are not always indicative of good morals. I mean, of course, using the word manners in the usual sense. If you see a man or woman every day, you would naturally presently discover their sympathies and tastes. They would betray them involuntarily. For instance, if a man cared nothing for children—if he were impatient or ill-tempered—he could conceal it for some time, but not for a long time, unless he had some very desirable end to serve by playing a huge and difficult game.

But for all that, if the great God should ever come to Nahaat, or Newport, or Saratoga, which, of course, he never does—for where could he stay, or what could he do?—and, entering his name upon the book as the Rev. Mr. Lamb, should mingle in the charming groups that swarm along the piazza, or sit so amiably in the parlor, I think the manners of the reverend gentleman would be so winning and entertaining that the young men would view him without jealousy and the old without enmity. The young women would consider disparity of years as nothing where hearts were truly united; and the old ladies would seriously ponder how much they might reduce the necessary figures for their daughters, in consideration of certain personal advantages in the husband. Old and young would go to bed charmed with the manners of their new acquaintance; nor, among the other dreams of the night would the fancy intrude itself that, when the Rev. Mr. Lamb went off, he disappeared in smoke, and that the gentlemanly companion of an evening could such an awful "tale unfold."

On the other hand, I suppose Dr. Johnson's morals were good, but his manners were certainly offensive.

You are surprised that I speak of Dr. Johnson? You have seen me whirling in the polka with Tom Dye at the hotel, or racing over the beach with him in his wagon? Very well, it is true, I am that young lady. I wear two brooches and ear-rings, and these very hoopy skirts. I bow, I dance, I dine, I flirt, I drive, I smile, I pick up, and I wander over the rocks in a broad brimmed hat and a very becoming morning dress, which the girls here will call *peignoir*, apparently not knowing that *peignoir* is the dressing-gown—mine is a short gown, in which we sit when the hair is being brushed. I am that same young lady—aged somewhere between seventeen and twenty-three, and I have spoken of Dr. Johnson—I know about him and about a good many others, and you are surprised. That is always the way with men. You profess to honor us—your mouths froth with compliments. Suddenly you show

Sixty deaths resulted from yellow fever in New Orleans on the 26th ult.