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Select Poetry.

NEVER DESPAIR.

I fail would impress on
The weary and sad
The truths of a lesson
In metaphor clad.

Still in life's journey the
Bravest do best—
Still on life's journey we
Hanker for rest.

Innocent merriment
Shortens the mile;
Try the experiment
Once in a while.

Face your foes fearlessly,
"Never say die!"—
Trials tak'n carelessly,
Lightsomely lie.

Our teardrops are lenses
That magnify ills;
They cozen our senses
Till hillocks seem hills.

And faces grow wrinkled,
While tresses with gray
Grow speedily sprinkled
When woe has her way.

Horrors may haunt you, but
Foul may grow fair;
Dangers may daunt you, but
"Never despair."

Verily, verily,
Judge as you may,
He who toils merrily
Carries the day.

Prudence Strong's Secret.

A Story of The Revolution Never Before Told.

THE old war office in Lebanon, Conn., of Gov. Trumbull—Washington's Brother Jonathan—has lately received a new roof. This means that the little building which sheltered Washington, Rochambeau, and Lafayette, which was the meeting place of the "Council of Safety," and the halting place of the messengers who bore important despatches between Philadelphia and Boston, is not yet to be torn down. It also means that the mysterious document which Mistress Prudence Strong once hid there, in defiance of Gov. Trumbull and the Count de Rochambeau, will still longer remain in its hiding place—for years ago, even before Gov. Trumbull was gathered to his fathers, the villagers said that the papers would never be found until the building was taken down, and every rafter and every crevice between the stones of the large chimney was examined.

From the papers and letters that Judge Hebard collected, many of them coming into his hands when settling an estate of the husband of one of Gov. Trumbull's daughters, from the information that Judge Hebard gained from members of the Trumbull family whom he knew, and from various other sources, the story of the secret of Prudence Strong—a secret which it is firmly believed would have been exposed had the office been torn down—is gathered.

The Count de Rochambeau, with his battalion of allies, in the winter of 1780 rested in Lebanon. The soldiers pitched their tents and built their huts on the slope of a hill, at the bottom of which ran a stream of water to the mill pond. Stream and pond and sloping hillside have not been changed since then by either nature or art.

The Count de Rochambeau sat eating his dinner of succotash and a juicy piece of beef one stormy afternoon. He had just received a despatch from Washington which pleased him greatly, and had sent a messenger to notify Gov. Trumbull that the Count de Rochambeau would do himself the honor of passing an hour or so of the evening with the Governor at the war office.

An unusual bustle in the camp attracted Rochambeau's attention. "What

does this mean? Those fellows are unusually noisy to-night," he said to an aide-de-camp who dined with him.

"If I mistake not the sentry have captured a deserter," said the aid, rising and going to the window. He stood there peering through the glass, which was so imperfect as to make big men look very little, and small men look very large, besides gracing one body with four or even six pairs of legs.

"It is as I mistrusted, sire. They have caught a deserter, and, if my eyes do not deceive me it is Francois Duplan."

"No, not he," the Count said, rising. "Why, he is a gentleman. He cannot conceal that even from you, if he is a common soldier. He has the air of a grand mystery, and he is withal exceeding serviceable at the oven."

"It is he, nevertheless, sire, and you will pardon me if I recall to your memory the order that has issued by the Count de Rochambeau when the deserter was captured the other day and forgiven."

"Death at the next sunrise," said the Count, sinking into his chair.

"Death at the next sunrise," said the aid quietly.

"Methinks had I known that this fellow would be the next, I would have waited till the next after he, for there is something about him that passes my comprehension greatly."

"You will—"

"No, I will not. The order was given, it must be followed. See that I am not awakened until after the sentence is executed."

A count martial was speedily convened, and Francois Duplan stood before it charged with having been captured by the pickets far beyond bounds, and making as it were his intention to pass thro' the north woods, out upon the Hartford turnpike.

"I cannot deny this," he said, "but I affirm that it was my intention to return before roll call and at once admit that I had disobeyed the rules."

"That is an apology easily framed after capture," suggested the Judge Advocate; "but if you can say what your purpose was in thus going beyond the lines, if it seems to us good and consistent with your return, it may make the difference between life and death with you, Francois Duplan."

"Alas, I cannot tell my purpose. I can say that it was a good one; that had it been accomplished, results of much concern to me and to another—yes, many others—might have come of it. As it is unaccomplished, my purpose would be laughed at and another made an object of ridicule."

"That must be a singular purpose, indeed, which you would prefer to lose your life rather than part with."

"If it must be so, then it came. I hoped to lose my life when I came to America, but not thus. However, what difference is it?"

They found him guilty and sentenced him to death. He was to be shot by six of his comrades at the next sunrise. Yet they pitied him. He was, by all accounts, a tall, handsome, brave fellow, a soldier whose ease of manner and whose habits indicated that his early life was passed in circles with which none of his companions were familiar. He was a stranger to them all when he joined them, and it had not escaped notice that the Count de Rochambeau, with his ever observant eye, had marked this common soldier, Francois, and had even once said, in the hearing of the sentry who paced in front of the door: "I mean to find out why this gentleman serves as a common soldier and who he is."

With all his reserve and hours of meditation, Francois was a favorite with his comrades, for which they felt that he was above them in refinement, in polish and experience, they knew that he made no effort to have them feel thus, but rather endeavored to repress all trials and emotions not shared in common by a private soldier. Yet he could not repress all. There was a method, a way, a mannerism of which he was unconscious.

He had nursed the sick, done double duty to save some tired-out comrade, and there was a gloom throughout the camp when it went forth that Comrade Duplan was to be shot at sunrise. They went by twos and threes and scores to the Count de Rochambeau to beg for

mercy, and they returned heavy-hearted, not getting what they sought.

Duplan himself, so it was afterward said, was the most composed and seemingly least troubled soldier in the camp. Once, when the guard, with tears streaming down his cheeks, said:

"Too bad! Too bad!" Duplan replied: "It is well." And then he added: "I have lived these five years in the shadow of death. To-day, yesterday, for a few weeks I have seen a little ray of sunlight breaking through the clouds. I knew to-day, when I stepped over the line, that, ere I returned, either the sun would once more shine for me, or that night would come forever."

"That seems to be the strange part of it all. There is not a soldier in camp who thinks you intended to desert."

"Nor did I. Had I succeeded, I should have returned, welcomed by the Count de Rochambeau, and not as Francois Duplan."

"Then you are not serving under your right name?"

"No. I once had—known a servant of that name."

Later in the evening Count de Rochambeau's aid brought a message to the sergeant in command. It was to the effect that any requests of Francois Duplan consistent with the execution of the sentence were to be granted. Good writing materials, companions for the night, the choice of the comrades who were to execute the sentence—any wishes he might have were to be strictly carried out. Duplan at first said that he had none, but suddenly, with an air of great earnestness, and yet timidly, he asked if a comrade might be detailed to escort from the village and home again one whom he would like to see.

"And who is this one?"

"Mistress Prudence Strong."

The aid looked at Duplan curiously for an instant.

"And why do you wish to see Mistress Prudence on such a night as this?" he asked.

"Did the Count de Rochambeau instruct you that I must give you the reasons for any wish I might desire granted?" was Duplan's answer.

The aid smiled significantly, but Duplan did not see that.

"Let it be then as he wishes," said the aide to the sergeant.

A soldier was detailed to go up into the village and escort Mistress Prudence to the camp. "Peradventure she will not come," he said to his comrades as he buttoned his great coat about him; "and yet I think she will. Have you not seen her at the oven when Duplan and the rest of us were baking bread? Did she not visit us one evening with some of the other maid's and bring us cider and apples?"

As the soldier passed the guard house, Duplan called him. "I pray you," said the prisoner, "not to reveal to Mistress Prudence my trouble. It is my last request to you, comrade."

Half an hour later the soldier returned. The flicker of the lantern that he carried revealed, as they passed the sentry, a slender female form, enwrapped from head to foot with cloak. She preceded her escort a few steps. The snow was beginning to fall. Some of the flakes fell upon the tresses of her hair that escaped from the top of her hood where it encircled the face. She was shown the guard house. Duplan, standing, received her, waving his hand slightly, as if to warn her against any undue emotion.

The guard, with a delicacy for which Duplan subsequently thanked him, turned his back to them, and paced slowly before the door. He heard voices. He did not hear, nor try to, what was said. He heard sobs, also. At the end of half an hour Duplan said distinctly: "Now, go. You will come to see me in the morning at the oven, will you not?" And then the guard knew that he had not told her what his sentence was, and that she did not know that she never would hear him speak again. As she quitted the guard house he put some papers that he took from his breast into her hand.

"Will you go with me to the War Office," she said to her escort, "and wait there until I have seen Mr. Trumbull? Then when we got to my father's house my father will make for you a hot punch I'll warrant. Yes, I know, the punch will be all ready, because Mr. Rudd, our

minister, is in the kitchen this evening with father, and they always take a warm one when they are together."

The snow, as they passed to the highway, began to fall so thickly that even the light of the lantern was dimmed, but the comrade who was acting as her escort thought her an extremely fearless girl, and wonderfully handsome withal. The walk to the War Office was a short one. Within ten minutes they were at the door.

"Halt!" said the sentinel, and he was so muffled up that it was the tone rather than articulation that checked Mistress Prudence, who would otherwise have opened the door and gone in unannounced.

"Oh oh! It is you, is it, Mistress; and what do you here on such a night as this?" the sentinel said, after peering into the maiden's face.

"I would see Mr. Trumbull; truly I desire overmuch to speak to him. Will you admit me?"

The sentinel tapped at the door. It was opened. A ruddy glow burst from within, and by it two despatch bearers could be seen sitting on the counter—before the war the office was a country shop—driving their spurs into the woodwork as their legs dangled a foot or more from the floor. The marks of the spurs of these and other messengers are to be seen in the woodwork even to this day. Mistress Prudence and her escort passed in to this room.—The despatch bearers, who were evidently in the midst of some rollicking story, and were plainly feeling the merrier for the mulled cider they had taken, eyed the female figure curiously at first; but when she threw her cloak and hood off and they saw the large gray eyes, now seeming very dark by the firelight, and that her features were exceeding fair and her manner gracious, they thought for certain that they were in the presence of the Governor's daughter, and became at once greatly courteous.

One took her cloak and shook the snow from it, then put it before the fire. The other opened the door to the room in the rear where he knew the Governor was passing an hour with the Count de Rochambeau. Thus announced Mistress Prudence came into the Governor's presence.

He sat at his oaken desk, but seemed for the moment to be more occupied over a certain discussion that he was having with Rochambeau than with his papers. The French nobleman stood easily before the fire-place, the flames from the burning log burnishing the gilt of his scabbard. The Governor arose and the Count bowed. Both were exceeding tall, and Mistress Prudence seemed by contrast woefully small, but not less fearless than the men she confronted.

"Why, Mistress Prudence, what has brought you here? Do you come from your worthy father, the Esquire?"

"Ahem!" this in the slightest and yet most suggestive of tones from the Count.

"Pardon me," said the Governor.—"Let me, I beg, present Mistress Prudence Strong to the Count de Rochambeau. A worthy daughter of an exceeding worthy father, sir."

"Truly, that would almost go without the saying of it, your Excellency." And the Count with much grace took Mistress Prudence's brown but sharply hand and bent over it. "Did I not have the pleasure of leading the maid at the reel in the tavern dining room?" he asked.

"Indeed you did, sir," replied Mistress Prudence, curtseying. "But, Mr. Trumbull, will you tell me what Mr. Duplan, the tall French soldier, has done, and what is to be his punishment?"

The Governor, who had taken advantage of the colloquy between the maid and the Count to draw on his outer garment of plain brown homespun for the room was sultry and he had removed it—turned with a look of surprise.

"I know nothing of any French soldier, Mistress Prudence, and prithe why should you visit me on such a night as this for such a matter?" he said.

"Because he is a good man and a brave soldier, and because he has done nothing to merit punishment."

"But why does Mistress Prudence be-

come his intercessor, eh? Count, perhaps you know something of this. What does the maid mean, for I see that she is greatly exercised, and I know her to be not disturbed by trifles."

The Count de Rochambeau was very grave. He looked at the maid strangely, but not suspiciously. At length he said: "He is a deserter; there is much of mystery about him; but of all the mysteries there is none so very strange as this that has now come to my ears. Tell me," and he took the girl's hand, "what reason is there that you should thus intercede?"

"I cannot tell that now, sir," replied the mistress a little demurely, "but it is a good one."

Here the Count de Rochambeau looked very grave, but the Governor at once said: "I'd plight my honor, sire, the girl tells the truth. Tell me, Mistress Prudence, how came you to know this soldier?"

"I have often seen him at the oven, over there, and in passing have chatted with him, as have the other maidens, for he speaks the English tongue as well as you or I."

"Was that entirely seemly?" said the Count gravely.

Mistress Prudence looked at the tall, gracious Frenchman wonderingly for an instant, and then slowly and instinctively catching his meaning, said while her gray eyes sparkled and the blood mounted to her cheeks:

"There are none but brave and true women in Lebanon, sir."

The Count bowed low, with his hand over his heart, and humbly begged the maid's forgiveness.

"At the oven, you say," continued the Governor; "surely there could be no harm in that, for is not the oven on the common, at the rear of the meeting house?"

[The brick oven still remains on the common, sadly broken in and gone to decay, but there nevertheless.]

"I came to ask you to cause him to be released, on my word that he has done nothing wrong. It is unseemly to shut such a man up as a prisoner for the space of one hour."

The Governor and the Count exchanged glances, and the quick eye of Mistress Prudence saw it. With the most dignified courtesy to the Count she turned her back upon him, and, going to the Governor, said: "Mr. Trumbull, you knew me when I was a child, before this war. Did you not see me lead the other maids to the school house, when the messenger from Lexington to Norwich stopped to tell us that blood had been shed, and did I not suggest to the maids that we even take our petticoats to make the implements of war with? Do you remember my ride to Hartford, alone through the forests, that I must carry to you the special despatches that were waiting you here from Gen. Washington?"

"In truth I remember all this, and to your credit."

"Then have I not the right to ask a slight favor?"

"But, Mistress Prudence, I cannot do what you would seek. My authority extends not to the battalion of the Count de Rochambeau."

"But you can plead with him."

"I see, Mistress Prudence, little you comprehend these matters, and in truth I wot my pleadings would not avail the half yours would."

The Count listened gravely to all this. Suddenly he said, but with infinite respect, "Tell me, do you love this man?"

"What has that to do with it?" she answered, straightening up and her gray eyes flashing indignation. "If he deserves punishment I might love him and still suffer him to be punished.—But he does not. I beg you to release him, for he has done nothing wrong."

The Count de Rochambeau said nothing.

"Will you not release him?" she pleaded tenderly, placing her hand on the Count de Rochambeau's arm. He turned his face away, but shook his head.

"Will you beg for me?" [This to the Governor, who stood with one hand on his oaken desk and looking very stern, as much as to say, "I like this not at all."]

"I cannot, Mistress Prudence."
"I know not what his punishment