

FATE.

My foot are set in lowly ways.
Mine eyes on mighty hills,
Whose shining height but mock the
gloom
That my poor pathway fills.
Great aspirations, like a song,
Uplift my waiting heart;
The while my hands to mental deeds
A thankful grace impart.
Yet the denial that doth meet
The soul's needs, small or great,
A stern, unchanging tide bears—
The old, old name of fate!
—J. Gertrude Menard in Boston Budget.

THE RED RAVEN.

On the night of the Nativity a bloody crime was committed at Caperno. Mastro Lanza, a worthy man about fifty years old, who, two months before, had returned from America with a goodly heap of gold, was killed by an unknown hand. Profound consternation, aggravated by fantastic fear, reigned throughout the country. When would the assassin be discovered?

The gendarmes, after scouring the country for a week, grew weary of the useless labor—no trace, no clew.

The grave where Mastro Lanza lay buried was covered with a fall of snow, and the gravedigger, after planting over it a rough cross, had chanted this lugubrious antiphon, "Frozen is thy bed, poor Mastro; but the ruffian who cut thy throat in order to possess himself of thy dollars will pass the winter joyously before a hearth crowned with bottles!"

As the gravedigger turned his back on the cross and went his way out of the enclosure, a hoarse, guttural sound issued from the silent gloom of the twilight.

"The devil is laughing!" exclaimed the servant of the dead, closing the gate. "The gendarmes will lose their time."

From the peaks of Albena to the valleys of Sonna the earth was white—the streets were deserted. A few dimly lighted windows disclosed something of life in the human beings huddled together in frosty huts. The whiteness of the snow seemed dark as twilight poured over its luminous brightness.

A man wrapped from nose to knees in a thick cloak climbed the steep road that led from the valley of Sonna to Caperno. He was going to Opreno. The distance that still lay before him was long—night threatened to overtake him on his way. And this man—young, healthy, vigorous—was afraid of the night.

Coming from Pontida on his way home to his own mountainous country, he had taken the shortest route, which, besides being the shortest, also enabled him to avoid inhabited places. He climbed the steep hill with hurried steps, like a belated traveler who is in haste to reach his destination.

On, on he went. The hill overcome, he stopped an instant, as if at sight of an obstacle or at the sound of a threat. What had he seen? What heard?

He had seen the white wall of the cemetery—had heard the hoarse croak of the raven.

Oh, it is yet to be seen that Nardo dei Brizzi, the intrepid hunter of the valley, is afraid of the dead.

And the man in the cloak, shaking off his terror, took up his march with a quick step, that he might leave as quickly as possible a painful situation.

Arrived before the cemetery, he turned his face from it and drew back, skirting the wall at the left. As soon as he seemed sufficiently removed from the abode of the dead he stopped, wiped away the perspiration which rolled down his face, and casting a backward glance over the road already traversed, saw on the white carpet of snow—hopping after him, running directly toward him—a small body, whose form, outlined on the deep snow, appeared that of a raven with red plumage. "Another raven!" cried Brizzi, with chattering teeth. "Mastro's was black. Who ever saw one of these cursed birds with feathers the color of blood?"

The red raven had stopped in the middle of the road and seemed to be waiting for the man to take up his march again, in order that he might resume his play of running after him.

Il Brizzi threw aside his cloak, picked up a handful of snow from the ground, made it in a ball and taking aim threw it with an oath straight at the bird.

The bird jumped aside to avoid the projectile, croaked three times in a mocking tone, then, hopping along on its two straight nodulous claws, advanced toward the hunter with the petulant manner of one who has received a challenge.

"Why have I not my good gun with me?" thought the mountaineer, grinding his teeth. And, burrowing his head deep in the folds of his cloak, he went hastily on his way up the hill like a frightened child.

The raven followed him, beating his wings, and that noise of fluttering feathers, penetrating the big hood that enveloped the head of the fleeing man, pierced his ears and froze his blood.

In the dense obscurity of the night, damp with perspiration, Nardo Brizzi at last arrived at Opreno.

With convulsive haste he opened the door of an old hut, entered, closed it, then, having lighted a lantern, threw its rays through the little yard to make sure that the other had not entered.

The other! A tiny bird that in the excited mind of the mighty hunter had taken on the proportions of a gigantic soldier!

No; the raven had not entered. The

hunter breathed again and smiled, shaking his head. How did that filthy graveyard bird ever arouse such fear in Nardo Brizzi?

He opened a bottle, emptied it in a breath and went into the next room to lie down.

But scarcely had he laid himself on the bed, scarcely had he extinguished the candle which he had placed on a chair beside him—

"Chek! chek!"

"The devil!"

"Chek! chek! chek!"

And the pecking of a sharp beak on the window post made the miserable fellow, who had for the moment regained his courage with wine, burrow his head between the counterpane and the pillows.

"Again! Again! Him!"

The red raven was there, leaning against the window ledge—picking, picking at the frame, and every blow of that furious, biting beak pierced the very vitals of Nardo and inflicted a quivering wound.

That was a long night for the hunter of Opreno! How many times in order to make an end to his atrocious suffering did he think to bound from his bed, open the window, seize that accursed bird by the neck and strangle him!

Morning came. As the first glimmer of light penetrated the room he leaped from his bed—resolute, angry, feverish.

With a blow and a salvo of oaths he opened the window.

But the raven was no longer there. It had divined his intentions and had gone, taking refuge in a path of the garden.

"Ah! Do you think I cannot reach you, damned beast? Wait a moment and I will settle your account!"

He seized a gun, leaped down the stair, was in the garden.

Nardo took aim, fired, the ball sped.

The raven, in no wise frightened, hopping, peering, scolding, came up to him and stopped a few steps away from the gun that was still pointed at him.

The second charge exploded.

"I have finally blown you to atoms, oh, accursed bird!" howled Nardo, plunging eagerly into the smoke of the powder.

But the raven, from the branch of a tree where he had taken refuge, answered with a croak, and, coming close to the man who had twice tried to kill him, planted his claws in his eyes and pressed his face between his bleeding wings.

The man let fall his gun—fell—rolled howling in the snow.

The assassin of Mastro Lanza had attempted an impossibility—he had tried to kill the consciousness of his crime.—Translated from the Italian by Harriette Billings for Romance.

Mistaking the Uniform.

The dreamy young man jumped on the rear platform of a Broadway car last evening. He was on his way to make a call and his mind had wandered off to the home of his Margaret. Instinctively he shoved his hand down into his pocket, pulled out a coin and handed it toward a brass buttoned coat that his dreaming eyes had made out in the darkness. He was aroused from his dreaming by a gruff voice saying:

"I'm not the conductor. I don't want your money."

"Pardon me," exclaimed the embarrassed young dreamer, "I really did not notice that you were a fireman. I just saw the uniform, you know, and took you for the conductor."

"That's all right," answered the fireman. "No offense. We firemen have that happen to us every time we jump on a car. If we go inside to take a seat, some woman is sure to hand us a fare and ask us to let her off at some street or other, and if we stand outside, some absentminded man goes and sticks a coin in our hands. I don't know but it would be a pretty good scheme if we just accepted the situation and the money and said nothing."—New York Times.

Venetian Youth.

The Venetian youths, like their cousins in Rome, are fond of dogs, and the uglier and more forbidding the dog so much the more it seems to be admired. This has a very odd result. The gentlemen wear their boots long in the sole and curved upward, a mode which does not improve their personal appearance. When very exquisite indeed, they further attire themselves in tall silk hats, lemon colored kid gloves and collars that rise almost to their lips. Then, with a dapper case, and a poodle shaven so brutally clean that no lock of wool is left upon it, save at the tip of its tail, the gentleman considers himself completed for promenade.

Up and down he goes, bowing zealously to the right hand and the left, ever and anon stopping to caress the tips of the fingers of a lady, and ever and anon pausing to unwind the chain of his poodle from his elegant legs. He is an expert at expatiating; but the poodle is used to them, and bears without one whine of objection all the abuse it excites.—All the Year Round.

A Claim Set Aside.

Cawker—Your wife is nearsighted, isn't she, Bullwinkle?

Bullwinkle—She always claimed to be, but she spotted a black hair on my coat sleeve at 10 paces yesterday.—Brooklyn Life.

He Was Ready.

She—Oh, that I had wings!

He—Tell me just what kind you want, and I'll bring you some from the store to-morrow night. We are having a run on wings.—Detroit Tribune.

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