

A SOLDIER'S JOKE.

BY DAVID KER.

NEARLY a hundred years ago when the French Directory was just beginning to establish some sort of order in France after the dreadful overturn of the Revolution, a line of soldiers stood ranged with levelled muskets right across one of the narrower streets of Paris, behind two small brass guns, as if expecting to be attacked.

This was just what they were expecting, and with very good reason.

Fighting and killing just as they pleased for two or three years together, the hosts of thieves, burglars, cutthroats, and other rascals of every kind who swarmed in the dens of the great city were not at all pleased at the thought of seeing order restored, the streets again made secure by the police, and their own knavish tricks punished and put an end to. So these worthy people had been getting up a series of formidable riots against the new Government, one of the most violent of which had broken out that very morning in the Faubourg St. Antoine, at that time the most lawless and ruffianly district in all Paris.

It was already known that the mob intended to march straight upon the town-hall to destroy it and all those who were within it, and the only way of checking them seemed to be to occupy with soldiers and cannon this narrow street through which the rioters must pass, and where they might more easily be kept at bay by a few.

At best, however, it was a perilous post. The rioters were sure to outnumber them by at least twenty to one; they were even said to have cannon of their own; and they undoubtedly had hundreds of muskets and thousands of pikes. But every man of these soldiers had faced death many a time before, and there was no sign of flinching either in them or in their commander.

That commander, however, was certainly the very last man whom a stranger would have thought fit for so dangerous a charge. Instead of a tall, scarred, sunburned, hardy-looking veteran, he was a pale, sickly young man of twenty-four, barely five feet high, and so thin that he was little more than a walking skeleton. But there was something in that worn, hollow face which impressed all who saw it in spite of themselves; and the glances of reverent awe cast at him by his men as he paced slowly up and down in front of their line—with his hands behind his back, and a dreamy, far off look in his deep gray eyes—showed that they, at least, held him in as high respect as if he had been the biggest man of them all, small and slight though he was.

All at once there came rolling through the dead hush of expectation a distant clamour of trampling feet, and hoarse shouts (or rather yells), at which the little officer's face changed so suddenly and startlingly that his men whispered to each other with smiles of grim approval:

'See how the "Little One" brightens up at the first sound of fight! He's a born soldier, if ever there was one.'

And then came surging round the street corner a great wave of wild figures and hideous faces—bare armed butchers smeared with grease and blood, armed with cleavers and chopping-knives, sooty smiths brandishing huge hammers, tattered rag-pickers with their long steel hooks, thieves, coiners, burglars, and all the worst rabble of the quarter.

But at sight of the levelled muskets and pointed guns, the rabble stopped short. This was more than they had bargained for, and a pause of rather sheepish hesitation followed, amid which the young leader stepped forward and said, firmly:

'Good people, you had much better go quietly home again, ere worse comes of it. We do not wish to take your lives unless you force us to it, but we have orders from the Government not to let you pass, and we mean to obey them. These guns are well loaded with grape, and will kill fifty of you with each shot; and after *them* we have our muskets. Take my advice, and be off at once!'

But just then a huge, grumpy, bloated, fierce-eyed fish-woman from the great market, elbowed her way through the crowd right in front of the speaker, and stopped short with a volley of foul abuse:

'Hold your lying tongue, you little sparrow! she screamed at the full pitch of a voice as harsh as a steam-whistle. "Much you care for our lives! Do you think I don't know that you and your idle rogues of soldiers are fattening on government pay while we honest folks are starving for want of work!'

'Fattening!' echoed the little officer with a meaning smile, as he brought his own dwarfish and skeleton figure close to the vast, unwieldy bulk of the bloated scold. 'You say I've been fattening while you've been starving, do you? Now, citizens (and he took off his cap to the mob), I appeal to you to decide for you selves— which of us looks most like being starved, this good lady or I!'

The roar of laughter that ensued made the very air tremble; and the mob, thus put in a good humor in spite of themselves, began to melt away at once, their shouts of derision over the young soldier's telling joke being still audible even after the last of the grim swarm had passed out of sight.

'That young man will go far,' said the General in command, when he heard the story; and he was right, for that young man was Napoleon Bonaparte.

Little Bessie had been given some sugar to stop her hic-coughs. After a little she went to her mother and said, 'Please give me a lot more sugar. I keep hicking up just the same when I have only a little.'

AFTER VACATION.

WHAT a pleasant sound is that,
Pit-a-pat, a-pat, a-pat!
Little folks are skipping by!
Don't you know the reason why?
Pit-a-pat, a-pat, a-pat!

Listen! Now the school bells ring,
Ting-a-ling, a-ling, a-ling!
'Come,' they say, 'vacation's done,
Play is over, work's begun,'
Ting-a-ling, a-ling, a-ling!

'MAN OVERBOARD.'

It is a startling thing to hear this cry in mid-ocean—to see a companion vanish suddenly from one's side, to appear again only as a mere speck on the bosom of the great deep, tossed about like a plaything by the hungry waves, and struggling for his life. Several times this experience has been mine, and the horror of it has not been lessened by repetition.

Vividly, as if the event were of yesterday, I recall the first accident of this kind I witnessed. It occurred in 1852, on my voyage to Australia in the sailing ship Revenue, which left New York July 3rd, with some one hundred and eighty passengers, bound for the new land of gold.

One day, while the vessel was running free at the rate of eight or nine knots an hour, with a lively breeze on the starboard quarter, a young man named L—, in attempting to seat himself on the taffrail, fell backwards into the sea.

'A man overboard!' 'A man overboard!' came the cry instantly, and all was commotion.

'Hard up with the helm! Let go the main-sheet! Let go all!' shouted the captain; and the vessel came slowly round into the wind. Meantime life-preservers and buoys were thrown out by the passengers, but L— was already far astern, and although manfully swimming, did not see or could not reach the buoys.

Again Captain Cromwell's orders rang on: 'Break out, lower away and man the yawl! Quick, men, quick for your lives!'

The first mate and his crew sprang to obey; but 'quick' they could not be, for a few days previously we had passed through a fearful storm off the Cape of Good Hope, and the boats had all been taken off the davits and firmly lashed amidship.

It was fully twenty minutes before the yawl was launched and manned, with the first mate in command. The ship had been brought with her head to the wind, and the solitary swimmer was now off the starboard bow, and was quite half a mile distant.

Though there was not much sea on, the light waves were several feet high, and it was only when our comrade rose on the crest of one of these that we could see him. He had ceased swimming even before the boat left the ship, but was still floating; and, very strangely, apparently face downward, with legs and arms entirely submerged.

He appeared to have lost consciousness, for he rose and fell like a log. We had, nevertheless, great hopes that he still lived, since every time he passed over the summit of a wave his face was clear of the water for a moment.

When the rescuing crew were at last ready to start, it was found that, owing to their low level, they could not see the young man at all. So the captain climbed into the rigging and directed their course by signals.

It would be quite impossible to describe the emotion and anxiety of the passengers during all this time, which seemed an age to us. Among our whole number, I am sure there was not one who more earnestly prayed for the rescue of this young, whole-souled fellow than did I. There was an especial reason why I should desire his rescue.

Although one of the most kindhearted of human beings, and generous to a fault, L— had, like most high-spirited young men, a very quick temper; and a few minutes before he fell overboard, he and I had been engaged in a rather warm discussion on some trivial matter. He became quite angry over it, and, in the heat of argument, applied to me a very unjust epithet, of which I took no notice.

I could not now bear to think that he should die with this unkind feeling rankling in his mind, or that I should not have the opportunity of showing him that I felt no resentment.

The anxious passengers, crowded upon bulwarks and rigging, could see that the inert body still floated. Moreover, we could tell from the now straight course and quickened stroke of the crew that the body was as last seen by the steersman.

Would they reach it in time? Scores of men quite unconsciously shouted: 'Oh! pull, boys, pull! Pull just this once as you never pulled before.'

And pull, indeed, the brave fellows did. The tough oars

bent and strained under their mighty strokes, and the boat cut through the crests of opposing waves.

The suspense is awful. We cannot bear it in silence. Like men bereft of reason, one and another, in uncontrollable excitement, shout to the boat's crew, far out of hearing:—'One more stroke, boys! Push her through!'

But hush! The mate drops his oar and stands up in the bow. He leans far over, stoops to the water's edge, grasps an inanimate form and lifts it tenderly into the boat.

Then, indeed, our pent-up feelings found vent. Some wept, shouted, sang, and even danced in their exuberant joy, shook hands with and embraced every one within reach and otherwise disported themselves like crazy creatures. But these trifling demonstrations were quickly swallowed up in a wild volume of ringing cheers, led by the captain himself.

The rescuing boat approached, and in ominous silence the crew passed up the body into waiting hands. The ship's physician hastily examined it, turned to the anxious crowd, and said: 'Steady now, men. No noise; our friend still lives.'

It was wonderfully welcome assurance, but no word was spoken.

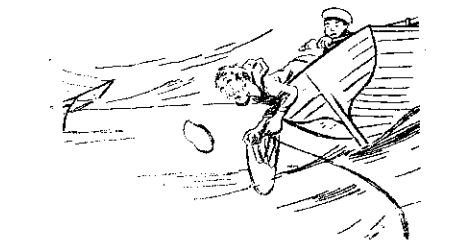
L— was quickly placed in his berth, with bottles of hot water at his hands and at his feet, and covered with well-warmed blankets, while the doctor did all else in his power to restore suspended animation.

In the course of half an hour, to the infinite relief of all on board, these efforts were crowned with success. I was sitting by his bedside, when L— regained consciousness, and was greatly surprised and affected by his first words: 'Where is Thomson? I want to see him.'

I understood at once his train of half-awakened thought, and in a cheerful tone replied, 'I am here, old fellow; right by your side.'

Then, in his low weak voice he said: 'Thomson, I'm sorry. Are we friends?'

This was almost too much for my composure, but I managed to answer: 'My dear boy, all is peace between us,



now and always; and I earnestly thank God for your recovery.'

He faintly pressed my hand, and with a smile of deep content, dropped off to sleep quietly as an infant. The next day he was on deck again, bright and cheerful as ever, but with an underlying vein of seriousness which well became him.

Almost thirty-eight years have passed since that time, but L— and I are still fast friends. He passed unharmed through the perils and vicissitudes of a life on the 'diggings' for several years. Then he returned to his home in Canada, studied law, and was finally appointed judge of his county, which honourable position he still holds.

W. THOMSON.

THE PRINCES AND THE CRUSH HAT.

A CALLER one day showed to the children of the present Emperor of Germany his crush hat, which was of the French pattern, and shut up to go into a small space for packing, and to be out of the way, as at the opera. Soon afterward another caller upon their father left his hat in the ante-room. The children found it, and undertook to shut it up. It was found, however, not to be of the crush pattern, but an ordinary high silk hat. At last one little Prince, growing impatient, said to his brother, 'Sit on it, Fritzchen!' Fritz obeyed; there followed a loud crack. The Emperor sent out to ask the cause of the noise. Pointing to the smothered hat, the young Crown Prince replied, with a military salute, 'The obstinate thing wouldn't shut at first, but among us we managed to make it change its mind.' The ruined hat was replaced by a new one, but the owner insisted upon keeping the 'crushed' one as a royal souvenir.

AN ADVERTISEMENT.

I HAVE never used feathers in my nest. I have always had to make straw do. I think I will try a feather-bed just to see how it seems. Will any birds having feathers to sell please write (stating price) to

FIELD MOUSE!

Nellie, who is a little over three years old, was watching with great interest her mamma making pies; and when the upper crust was being placed in position, she called to her little brother, 'O Roy, Roy, come quick, and see mamma put a roof on her pie!'

PIESSE & LUBIN
PERFUMERY FACTORS
From every flower that breathes a fragrance
SWEET SCENTS
LOXOTIS OPOPONAX
FRANGIPANNI BORONIA
May be obtained of any Chemist or Perfumer.
25, Broad Street, London.

Beware of Imitations.
THE GENUINE IS SIGNED