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SCENES
FROM THE
BELGIAN REVOLUTION.

BY
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PREFACE.

IN bringing before the Public these fragments from a poem, written on the late unhappy occurrences in the Netherlands, the Author has no pretensions, further than to detail a few scenes that came under his personal observation, and which perhaps, from habit, may be more easy to render in verse than prose.

In the present era of Revolution—when the cause of liberty is confounded with the cause of the people, when *freedom* is too generally substituted for *anarchy*, and *liberal* for *revolutionist*—there are, I am aware, those who will call to a strict account any one who opposes, even by the reasoning of facts, the prejudices of the popular party. Of this I am aware, when I launch my little volume, boldly and fearlessly, on the fickle and uncertain sea of public opinion—convinced that if it founder, the fault is not in the sentiments with which she is freighted, but the way in which they are expressed. I have neither wished nor endeavoured to court popularity. I have strung a few imperfect lays from my inexperienced harp—perhaps to the wind,—to vindicate the conduct of an injured Sovereign and Nation; and there is reward enough in the satisfaction of knowing, that, however unworthy, there has been one pen in England to stand forward in the cause of Justice, when even in the fangs of her deadliest enemy—the opinion of the vulgar. I have only to regret that some of the names known in our literature, particularly one, who has an intimate knowledge of the country, has not stepped forward to

ensure success; but, "*faute de mieux*," weak as may be the arm to wield it, I have pointed my lance, and my hand has thrown down the gauntlet, strong in a cause whose goodness will be allowed on all sides, when the bitterness of party contention, which has poisoned the minds of the country, shall have died away, and long ere the contradictory accounts of contemporaries have assumed the serious stamp of history.

Little indulgence, I fear, will be granted by some of my readers, to the faults the following lines may contain—and I can hardly conceal from myself, that they are many. It must be, however, remembered, that to whatever side they may lean, they were written in a spirit of impartiality, to show the wrongs that have been suffered, with equal injustice, not only from the actions, but in the estimation of England, by Holland—once her old and faithful ally—and *by whom* and *for whom* that link, that bound them so long, was broken: let her answer, if she may. The French, who affect to despise the courage of the Dutch, and have too deeply inoculated a large part of the British public with their republican sentiments and prejudices, have given rise to a sort of contempt for the prowess of a nation of merchants and seamen. But they forget that the English themselves are termed, by the ridicule of the Gauls, a nation of shopkeepers,—a "*tas de boutiquiers*." They forget the long and fearful struggle they had with the Batavian republic, for superiority on the seas,—as if its memory were as easily to be effaced as the blood that so often tinged the ocean in the even contest they maintained for so many years,—and that it was a country no larger than one of her provinces, was the only enemy that ever disputed with her the empire of the seas;—above all, she forgets how powerfully the arm of Holland, when still in the cradle of her freedom, smote the Spanish armada that menaced her shores.

SCENES

FROM THE

BELGIAN REVOLUTION.

THE NIGHT OF THE ARRIVAL OF THE ROYAL ARMY BEFORE BRUSSELS.

ALL dark and silent Night came down
Upon the restless city: hushed
Was all in that revolted town,
As those last sunset-hues that flushed
Her sky were melted in the west.
Yet came not o'er those multitudes
With silence balmy sleep, for rest
Takes wing from where rebellion broods.

B

It was the throb that ceased to swell
Her pulse, an instant, as there spread
A feverish awe when darkness fell
On all except the ashes red
Of many a half-extinguished fire ;
For scarce a star, or moonbeam shed
Their silvery sheen on dome or spire
To lighten up that night of dread,
Or cast one ray to cheer the sky,
Save where embosomed in her shroud
The moon's pale disk arose on high,
Yet dimly struggling with the cloud—
And when that calm was broken on,
No sound of revel burst around
On listening ear—the hour is gone
When mirth her echoing peals might sound.
The brilliant ball—the crowded fête—
The concert bright—the carnival,
Where youth and beauty thronged, and met,
One week before—are silent all !

And lighted dome hath given way
To blackened wall and barricade,
And music's breath and minstrel's lay
To heavy strokes of axe and spade.
On gothic tower and palace lies
Alike that shroud of darkness deep—
Ah, would its veil might never rise
To let the gazer see, and weep !
And many a cottage now whose light
From lattice gleams, in humbler sphere,
Once held an inmate on whose sight
A scene of mirth might burst, to cheer
His toil when home with wearied brow
He came ; but on his startled ear
Ring muttered curse and murmur now—
This hour of gloominess and fear.

* * * * *

Her arched devices raised on high
Beneath each ancient lime tree placed,
Whose moss-grown trunk had seen go by,
Since severed from the forest waste,
Full many a race beside its root,
And many an hour's festivity,
And Austria's gilded court to boot
Come dancing to a moonlight sky
In merriment; yet never saw
So bright a scene of beauty glow
When e'en beneath Theresa's law
As burst around one week ago—
And might have deemed again the times
When troubadours in list might meet,
To strive with harps and flattering rhymes,
While round them birth and beauty's seat
Was ta'en, to listen to the sound
Of melody's disputing lay,
Until the auditors, spell-bound,
Would sigh to hear it die away.

For mid those old and massy trees,
That once the browsing wild-deer saw,
And heard the hounds bay on the breeze—
Though now like savages by law
Reclaimed, amid a park stood they—
Was heard of late as soft a note
Poured forth to beauty's bright array
Amid their leafy aisles to float,
But vanished now ! and all around
Was ruin dark : in ashes grey
Those dazzling arches spread the ground,
Their myriad lamps of colours gay
All dashed to fragments in the dust ;
And fallen house, and blackened beams,
To greet the eye ; and broken bust,
Such fearful scene too well beseems ;
While here and there the upraised mound,
The pavement torn, as if a shell
Had ploughed the stones and sand around,
The mob's wild barricades might tell.

Yes, better far for him who saw
In pride each now deserted street,
If night her shadows lengthened draw
Than such a scene his eye should greet.
Yet why that fated city rose
From peace, and happiness, and ease,
To plunge in misery from repose,
When wealth and freedom ceased to please,
Were hard to tell ; but through long years
She seemed, indeed, too darkly fated
To wake from sleep, or rise to tears
Herself had broken or created.
Whilst others sought to shun the doom
Whose brooding shade around was thrown,
She dug of all her hopes the tomb,
To live in sorrows all her own,
And as it were to court distress ;
Yet well if she had risen alone
And suffered : but her wretchedness—
Too quickly o'er that land hath flown,

Where plenty smiled and commerce flowed,
And earth saw many a harvest fair,
Ere with her scorching footsteps strode
Rebellion, wakened from her lair.
It was that feverish restlessness
That haunts the sick man's waking dreams,
That bade her fly from happiness
To seek a painted rainbow's beams,
And leave her crowded capital—
The high and beautiful and great,
With days and nights of festival—
The lone, and low, and desolate !
Her name a scorn, her deeds a jest ;
Whilst she will soon the prey have grown
Of striving kings, to be at best
The footstool of a foreign throne !
And awful silence reigned on all ;
There floated not upon the breeze
The echo of one footstep's fall,
One whispering zephyr through the trees.

The tumult of a stormy day,
With all its turbulence of change,
In that wild crowd had passed away,
To leave a calm as sad and strange
As in a city of the dead—
As still and voiceless as might seem
Those streets beneath the lava spread,
When flashed on first by daylight's beam.
It was the deep, the sullen pause,
When stands the guilty criminal
Condemned by unrelenting laws,
That thrilled her guilty capital,
And hushed her sounds of revelry;
Till rose again a sullen roar,
Like that which echoes from the sea
When rush her blue waves to the shore,
And shivering, dash o'er shell and stone—
Thus muttered curse and murmur rude,
With varying sound and altered tone,
Broke slowly from that multitude.

The captive wolf's ferocious howl
That sees the arm in act to strike
With gnashing teeth and stifled growl,
But dares not, though the brute would like
To spring and tear that upraised hand—
And thus the mob, when first arose
The dreaded rumour, silent stand
With rage and fear; then gathering close,
With darkened visages, in groups,
Which here and there are muttering low
The wild reports of WILLIAM's troops—
As if they knew too well the foe
Were there, to wake them from their dream
Of pillage they indulged too long
O'er trampled laws; and ye may deem
That such was held as bitter wrong,
When thus unchained, to see the prey
They had tasted of, and counted on,
So rudely seized and snatched away,
And visions sweet of plunder gone:

For long enough the monarch heard
The rebel's prayer, and then his threat ;
Though half indeed to anger stirred,
That mercy lurked within him yet
Which hath undone full many a throne—
Ah me ! that ever it should be
That arm of steel and heart of stone
Alone should know prosperity !
That there must be a ceaseless frown
On kingly brow—a coldness stern ;
For he who smiles beneath a crown
Must soon its fragile lightness learn.
So fell not Louis ! was he not
A martyr to his gentleness ?
So soon by all his realm forgot,
Who mocked e'en his unwillingness
To shed their guilty blood ;—his doom
Stands not alone to show the way
Betwixt the palace and the tomb,
When monarchs slacken in their sway.

* * * * *

And words of peace were poured to gain
That city to obedience back,
And soothe her feverish brow, in vain ;
Up others rose, and on her track
Too quickly followed—like a flame
Whose tongues are spreading to the blast,
Too fiery and too fierce to tame,
The spirit of Rebellion passed.
And Bruges, Liege, and Antwerp rose,
And reared, intoxicated, up
Their banner—little of its close
They recked, when drank they of that cup,
To reel awhile in drunkenness,
Then feel the weakness and the aches
Of him who to the bitterness
Of life from nightly orgie wakes :
Those words of peace were vainly spent,
He was but scoffed at—those who are
Upon their way too headstrong bent,
Their purpose is not light to mar.

The object that they sought, was *change*,
And that hath borne its punishment;
And thus determined, 't is not strange
That nought would sate them—till he sent
His first-born, William of Nassau !
In arms to that revolted land,
The broken, unnerved arm of law
To reinstate, the sword in hand—
And many a cheek grew deadly white,
And many a brow in terror bowed,
And conscious guilt, when burst with night
His startling summons o'er the crowd.

* * * * *

And all was haste and terror then,
That hour of riot and dismay,
When deemed each startled citizen
Already there the long array

Of royal troops beneath her wall,
And pale groups hurrying here and there
Through all the scene, too well recall
That haste and fury, half despair,
That marked her troublous days of old—
Of old, I said; who cannot tell
Those woes that all too well unfold!
What need they written chronicle
On Belgium's land—what better school
Hath been, to teach from age to age
The miseries of a broken rule?
Who hath not read her living page;
Who hath not witnessed to her fault?
For some imaginary wrong,
Of insurrection and revolt
Her tale hath been one tissue long!
And many a trembling whisper passed
Amid that mass, where messenger
On messenger came hurrying fast,
With heated steed and bloody spur,

For they had crossed the warrior's track,
And told how fatally and true
He came with thousands at his back,
To stifle in her birth anew
The form of Riot, as she gave
The dark brow to the glare of day—
And he was firm, though many a grave
Should cast its shadow on his way,
To conquer back his father's right,
All heedless what arose between :
And many thought, with morrow's light,
How chequered would that silent scene
With death and bloodshed be ! whilst some,
Worked up to frenzy, here and there
Were gathering to the civic drum,
Whose drowsy tones arose on air,
With solemn rolling, slow and deep ;
While some the piles of earth and stone
Were seen in mimicry to heap
Of war's defence, to them unknown.

An effort, and the last I ween—
For there was fear in every air,
But not that recklessness of mien
That marks the feeling of despair,
And urges men to desperate deeds.
Nay, makes the very craven brave,
When hope's last glimm'ring light recedes,
And nothing girds him but a grave—
And many a citizen was sent,
Amid his armed array, to seek
The Prince, and work in his intent
Some change; but vainly, as might speak
Each hopeless visage, as the task
Accomplished, pale, disconsolate,
With tidings none might need to ask,
Returned they to the city's gate.
Their prayer was vain—to-morrow's dawn
Shall see on her defenceless wall,
When bursts the earliest flush of morn,
The Orange banner shadowing fall.

DEPUTATIONS
TO THE PRINCE OF ORANGE.

**To-morrow at the break of day,
Shall brightly gleam a thousand brands,
As those shall find who dare essay
To stem their power in loyal hands—
All restless, pale, and void of hope,
Each burgher sought his cheerless couch,
None dreamed with that wide host to cope,
Beneath it all alike must crouch ;**

Except the lowest of the vile,
Whose aim was plunder—who could tell,
Even as the vulture, with a smile,
In scenes of blood and ruin well
Their own advantage. In the gloom
Of that dark hour, while still unbent
His purpose, still unchanged her doom,
When hope had fled, a noble went
To seek the Prince amid his camp,
And passed through each deserted street,
Where sounded even not the tramp
Of dull patrol, with echoing feet,
All slowly on their nightly round ;
And yet with leaves unwithered lay
The green tree felled, upon the ground,
With all its branches on his way ;
And high raised banks and trenches deep
Were there before the strengthened gate,
And palisades full high and steep—
But all around was desolate

As solitude could make it seem ;
For all was silent and alone
When cast the moon her silvery beam
On barricade and fence of stone.

* * * * *

The scion of a house well known
In Belgium's annals was the one
So warm an intercessor grown,
His prayer was heard, his end was won.
Though not at first ; as Coriolan
Of old, unmoved, relentless stood
The Prince when first his prayer began ;
“ Then, if it must be—if in blood
Be thy delight, then there to all
The love I bore thee is an end :
And mark me well ; In yonder wall,
Upon the bosom of thy friend
Thy hurrying footsteps first must tread,
If come thou dost in hostile guise ;
I speak not how if blood is shed,
Its crimson curse to heaven will rise,

Accusing thee alone. Thou art
Unmoved!—but when this form thy heel
In dust shall trample—then thy heart
May feel the pang that now I feel :
I speak not of the early ties
Of friendship, what are they to men ?
But when before thee bleeding lies
The corpse of many a citizen,
And mine on yon devoted wall,
That hour perchance may be a token,
May to thy memory then recall
By whom this sacred band was broken,
As now it is. How need I tell
Against my country's foe, that mine
Will be the readiest arm to quell,
In thine own blood, thine Orange line !”
Thus much he said ; nor matters how
Religiously he would have kept
To all he menaced in that vow ;
He before whom a friend hath wept

Will wonder less how, passion-tossed,
The Prince relented and gave way,
And Belgium's wide domain was lost,
And sunk in ruin from that day.

* * * * *

PREPARATIONS OF THE CITIZENS.

THE sun arose, and gathering saw
Those thousands that had been subdued
Before it set, and martial law
Inflicting there her lashes rude,
But for his mercy—He who tried
To soothe their brutal discontent.
The child may try to stem the tide,
Or straighten oak tree backwards bent
Less vainly, than to soften down
Their evil fury. Woe betide
To him who answers to their frown

With smiles ; for well our annals teach
The cannon's breath the only spell
That ever yet hath answered leech,
The fever of revolt to quell.
Those crowds, when deemed they danger nigh
The night before, with ashy face
One might have seen, and haggard eye,
Shrink slowly to their hiding place,
Now insolently stand around ;
Nor soars more high the writhing thing,
The worm we trample, from the ground
A paltry moth on painted wing—
The viper of the reptile throng,
That from their slime the sun rays bring—
The vilest thing that crawls along,
Hath deepest venom in its sting.

* * * * *

And many a one, when daylight's beam
Far from its airy prison broke,
Yet trembling, frightened from his dream,
To swell the civic ranks awoke ;
For early on that morn was heard
The burgher's drum—and hoarse, and slow,
To gather up their ranks, the word,
In discipline and martial show.
And mustered in their lines were they,
Though here and there a straggling group
Yet lagged behind the wide array ;
Certes, they were a motley group
As ever sun rays shone upon,
Or ever city saw await
In arms to meet a monarch's son,
And give him welcome to her gate.
One might have trembled to have seen
Those brows where treachery and mistrust
Were imaged on each swarthy mien,
And faces darkened by the dust ;

And musket here, and bayonet,
Nay, all that time expedient made,
In dusky rows before were set—
The paviour's axe—the sheathless blade—
And many a pike and halbert tall
Rose bristling up from either side,
And Brabant's banners over all
Were flapping there, full high and wide.
So mean and dusky to the sight
It seemed, she would, if she had dared,
Have worn the spotless ray of white,
Had not some sting of conscience soared ;
For there are those who do aver,
When darkly floating in the beam,
A stained and dirty tri-color
That flag, at least to them, did seem.
For let but slumbering Gaul uprear
That ancient emblem of her pride,
And man shall hate ; but hating, fear
That thing that hath been seen to ride

Through many a red and gory field
Upon the soaring wing of fame.
But, Belgium ! thine will never yield
Aught save the mockery of thy shame.
Those whom the hovering eagle's eye
And grasping talons scare away,
When soar his mighty wings on high,
Will heap derision on the jay.

* * * *

ENTRÉE OF THE PRINCE.

HARK ! hark ! the drum peals high and loud,—
And onward, fleetest and the first,
That flashed across that dusty cloud,
The Prince upon his charger burst—

There broke a wild and mingled cry
When rose that high and daring form
Full plain to every straining eye,
As gleams the rainbow through the storm,
Yet every burgher's trembling hand,
So deeply rooted were their fears,
Stole hurriedly to seek his brand;
As if that score of cavaliers
That followed him unarmed, could be,
Against the thousands gathered there,
Aught meant in guile or treachery.
He passed—the mob with sullen stare
Gazed on, while gratitude was dumb
To him, who, thousands at his back,
With less of danger might have come
To leave the dark and fiery track
Of War in her most fearful guise,
When with her red torch o'er the wall
Of cities, in her wrath she flies,
And blood is shed on hearth and hall—

For narrow streets and alleys long
Hide many a horrid tale, and yield
Such deeds, when rendered to the strong,
As never scowl on battle field.
Yet on, as fearless and as bold,
He dashed amid the double row
Of human faces, stern and cold,
Or glaring hatred from the brow
That bent to see the chieftain pass,
Where undisguised stood many a foe,
Amid that armed and lawless mass ;
The boldest might have quaked to go,
And trembled with a hundred lives.
Yet he who hath been seen to ride
Through battle—amid butchers' knives,
And pikes waved threatening by his side,
Where fancy might have thought to see
The streaming blood and gory head,
Now took his way as fearlessly,
As if mid forest branches spread ;

And only smiled when, menacing,
Their taunts and scorn around him grew,
As the vile rabble gathering
Come densely round him as he flew.
Perchance, indeed, that hour he thought
On the red plain of Waterloo ;
Where, bartered for his blood, he bought
The freedom of that thankless crew.
There was not an indignity
Forgotten, as the burghers tried
With insult and brutality
To crush and trample down his pride.
There was an escort ; but his steed
Soon left the panting troop behind,
Who tried to emulate his speed,
As onward dashed he like the wind.
They would, in his own capital,
Have made him seek the town-house gate
Through winding lane and gloomy wall,
For barricades his path await

Along the broad, defended street ;
Yet never tightened he the rein,
Nor dashed his charger's hoofs less fleet ;
Those wide and vaunting piles in vain,
In mockery on his path were reared,
For turned he not one foot aside—
One fearful leap, and all was cleared
As quick the startling spur he plied,
And left the dull crowd gazing on.
Alas, that o'er those barricades
That chieftain ever should have gone,
Save as a prince !—with thousand blades.

* * * * *

He stood amid the crowd at noon,
Beneath Saint Michael's lofty shade :
For 't was a sky, if not in June,
With all her fiery beams arrayed ;
And somewhat by the sultry sun,
And somewhat by the swiftness now
With which his restless steed had run
Distressed ; but still, in mein and brow

He stood unchanged—that bearing high
Had through the ordeal passed full well,
Though indignation from his eye
Perchance that flashing glance might tell
That he who came with mercy there,
And pardon, as if theirs had been
The clemency, and his to bear
The burthen of forgiven sin,
Should thus be led amid the scorn,
Which if unspoken was expressed
In every act, whose stamp was borne
From every lip and every breast.
He stood beneath that old grey hall,
Whose gothic spire had seen beneath
The shadow of its ancient wall,
The revels of dismay and death
Full many a time, in days of old.
Ah! could those black and sculptured stones
What they have treasured up unfold,
Rebellion's laugh, and then her groans,

The tyrant's victims, and then those
Who fall untimely by the laws
Of such who, Freedom's deadliest foes,
Yet deem they battle in her cause.
E'en there, by where the brazen Saint
His steel above the dragon rears,
Might fancy, tracing backwards, paint
Again the tale of vanished years ;
Thus standing on the very spot
Where the deep sand the blood-stream drank,
When ruthless Alva sealed their lot,
And Horn and Egmont headless sank.
And it was strange indeed to see,
Even in the wide square where they died,
Of one, of that confederacy
The son, borne forward on the tide
As if it were of human waves,
That heaved with an imprisoned swell,
Even where those early patriots' graves
Might bring to mind how NASSAU fell—

There was not of that line indeed
One who had not in battle bled,
Or for the land his fathers freed
A life of foreign exile led;
But rarely in impassioned hour,
Doth man judge rightly of the worth
Of those who wield the reins of power.
When, in their silent bed of earth—
The home alike of weak and strong—
Lies buried with them, private hate,
How deeply they have done them wrong,
Perhaps mankind may estimate.
Nor is it so with kings alone;
How many are there die away,
In life unheeded and unknown,
To want and misery a prey,
To whom the world, when they are gone,
Where all our honours are but dust,
Will raise the tribute of a stone—
A sculptured tomb and marble bust! —
And seldom judge we of the thing
Before us ;—do we ever prize

Our loveliest hours till on the wing,
Our brightest day until it flies !
And though on Belgium's dusky sky
The sun of ORANGE scarce has set,
And dawns to hope's desiring eye,
Already backwards with regret
They look to WILLIAM's happy reign—
And those bright days that they have darkened,
His sun may never light again !—
And suffering, wish that they had hearkened
To reason ; now that Passion's frown,
Regardless of the structure bright
That time had reared up, cast it down,
Like spring-buds withered in a night. ——
He stopped, and from his steed aloud
His Father's proclamation read ;
A faint, low murmur through the crowd
In partial approbation spread ;
That hour indeed did more unfold
Than years of danger and campaigns ;

How little had the spirit bold
Stagnated in his royal veins,
As there, unfriended and alone,
Even in that city's heart he stood,
That spirit which his sires had shown,
On battle-field, by fire and flood,
Since first their glorious race began,
When rose the Orange star in blood
With him who smote the African,
And bloomed the rose from that red bud.
He spoke,—they listened and were pleased;
Perhaps that hour they hated not—
The storm was soothed, but not appeased;
He passed—and all was then forgot. ——
And warned he had been ; yet was he
To shed their rebel blood too loath—
The victim of their perfidy,
He listened to their treacherous oath ;
Which he since then hath rued full well,
And evening's hour far distant saw
His host, when first her shadows fell,
Their lengthened line departing draw.

EVACUATION
BY THE ROYAL TROOPS.

THEY gazed exultingly the while
They saw the Prince and his array,
Along the noble streets defile
As flashed the sun's last setting ray.
For heavy toil and vigils long
Had paled the brow and sunk the eye
Of those rude warriors, as the throng
With mournful step went slowly by :
For watchings long by day and night,
The cold and restless bivouac,
Beneath the watch-fires' glaring light
Had deeply left their pallid track ;

Yet that fatigue seemed scarce expressed,
And every brow full dark became,
As the head sunken on the breast
They passed amid their martial shame—
For such they deemed it ;—they had been
In the night air and sultry sun,
For many a weary day within
Since first her inward strife begun,
Of mobs the jest, the rabble's scorn
And ceaseless mockery—those things
So hard to be by soldiers borne,
When plies a mob her thousand stings ;
And many a vengeful oath was made,
When standing in their squadrons dense,
With smothered rage, on sabre blade,
To cure them of their insolence,
If ever they, in combat's heat,
Should join those masses wide and large,
As soldiers ever hope to meet
With upraised steel, and word, to “charge;”

And sullenly they marched away,
Whilst all, except the drum, was mute,
For none indeed had wished to stay,
Though they were few, but resolute.
But to a soldier thus led out,
Amid the shouting rabble's smile,
Was little less indeed than rout—
They passed the latest of the file,
An instant lingered by the gate—
Oh ! it is sad to mark the frown
Of promised vengeance, shame and hate,
That tells the soldier's pride trod down.

THE
ATTACK ON BRUSSELS.

AND with the morn the cannon's thunder sounded,
Herald of death ! many a spirit brave,
Whose heart to hear thy deadly summons bounded,
At evening hour was silenced in the grave,
Which even not the tocsin's sound shall waken,
That rung to call the hurrying peasants' aid :
Yet others fought as firmly and unshaken ;
And rather roused by carnage than dismayed,

And many a ruin crumbling to the ground,
Joined in the crash of falling wall and rafter,
And then the wild, unbridled mob around
Rushed to the plunder with unhallowed laughter ;
Although anon, with mingled groan or yell,
As flew the weight of the avenging shot,
And shrieked the slaughtered wretches as they fell,
Roused as the adverse fires grew fast and hot.
They were but few of royal troops who tried,
With hopeless courage to have won their way
Into a city populous and wide,
'Gainst thrice the numbers of their own array,
For such they were, whatever fame may say ;
And never yet more falsely spoke renown
In Europe's ear than on the bloody day,
When might their chief have burned in ashes down,
And left one mass of ruin, every street
He won against their numbers ; but whence he
Was forced at last by numbers to retreat,
Though lured within by guile and treachery :

And had he left her roof, and dome, and fane,
Before his warriors reddening in the flame,
That deed I ween had left a lighter stain
Than that wherewith retreat hath dyed his name.
Yet was it long before that host would flinch—
Three days still hurried on the work of death,
And saw the earth disputed inch by inch;
Like broken waves, before the cannon's breath
The rabble died,—but vainly on the dead
Their forces fresh and fierce were seen to swell,
They struck, but vainly struck the Hydra's head,
For others rose behind them as they fell.
Deep and incessant rang the tocsin's peal,
Gathering her boors, by thousands, to the fray,
Fast as the corn before the mower's steel,
Upon their plains of Flanders ever lay.
And France hath cast the poison from her veins,
The youthful seed of her republic's root,
Even in the heart of those diseased domains,
To spring, and bear her red embittered fruit—

Her terrorists—the children of July !
Those who had learned e'en from their sires the tale
Of France's former days of infamy,
And smiled on deeds that turn the listener pale,
Were those who helped to bear her banner on
(Fresh from the murder of the royal Swiss)
Which fading tottered when the hour was gone,
And with it, foreign aid—through prejudice
It is not hard to win a false renown,
But withering time, that all doth analyse,
Will quickly cast the unsound fabric down :
The weed shall rot—the sapling only, rise,
Nor long her borrowed plumes the jackdaw wear ;
For even at best it was a sorry boast,
For Belgium, and not Brussels, battled there,
Thus to have driven from their gates a host
Who only held her blood-stained streets too long,
For lance and cuirass gleamed along each square,
Mowing the thousands of the rebel throng,
In spite of all the numbers that there were.

Till toil, and want, and hunger, and fatigue,
Less than the rebels' skill or mining hordes,
The wily Halen brought from many a league
To face their worn-out lines and wearied swords,
Forced back the royal army from her walls,
And it is known full well who dearest paid,
Despite the shelter of protecting halls,
Her foreign leader, and her foreign aid.

THE
DEATH OF VAN SPYK,
IN THE SCHELDT.

AN ! there is many a laurelled brow the world
Will mourn with marble's monumental urn,
And plumes and banners round his tomb unfurled,
And thousand lights and fragrant incense burn,
Nay, pour the grateful tribute of a tear—
That which so rarely follows when unbought—
The pallid form of grandeur to her bier,
And the deep vault that blots from sight and thought.

Ah ! there is many who might envy thee
Thy early glory, and thy early grave !—
Despite his bright and gaudy pageantry—
Thy silent home, young hero of the wave !
For long as roll those waters to the sea,
And long as lasts traditionary lore,
Thy bright and lasting monument shall be
The briny waste that spreads from shore to shore ;
And to the spot where fell the fiery shower,
Deep in the hissing element that gave
Her heaving bosom in that fearful hour
To hide the remnant of the mangled brave,
The wondering mariner through every age
Shall point, and there thy fearless spirit hail,
When all is smooth as rhymes on poet's page,
And flits the west wind from his drooping sail.
Nor shall thy name a passing praise command—
They are not few, though nameless, that have died
In storm or battle for ungrateful land ;
But thine in Holland's memory will abide,

'T was where the Scheldt with gentle murmurs flows,
'T wixt green and marshy banks on either side,
And rolling onwards, waters as she goes
Full many a fort, and town, and pasture wide,
With blue waves oft times curled back on her breast,
By the rude force of ocean's adverse tide,
And hurled on high in many a feathery crest,
As gushing winds upon her surface ride,
In that chill month when there is scarce a ray
Can pierce athwart the cold and frigid sky,
Or beaming thaw the frozen light of day,
For even there as in our clime, on high
A misty veil through spring and winter lies;
And the chill north hath half a year of night—
If we contrast our days with southern skies,
Where all is sunny, beautiful, and bright,
And earth a paradise, as if to show
How mankind bears the burden of his sin,
And fairy scenes in useless beauty glow,
When heaven cannot be round him, but within.

Still to himself the darkest, deadliest foe,
The fleeting hours of day seem lengthened but
To guide his steps to misery and woe,
And Edens which he flies were never shut.
It was beside that haven once the pride
Of Belgium, whereandwhence her commerce flowed,
Though now a fisher's boat will scarcely glide
Before that blackened wreck, to take its road,
And then the white sail of the home-bound bark,
Beneath the shade of eve uprears its form
All timidly upon that expanse dark—
Like birds upon the wing before the storm;
Upon that silent, solitary wave
Where Antwerp raised her ruined brow afar,
Her hope, her wealth, her glory in the grave!—
There rose athwart the night a wandering star,
Ere evening set or stormy gales arose,
There had been seen the bounding waters on,
Betwixt the adverse shores of friends and foes,
A vessel struggling like the ruffled swan,

Her canvass straining in the rising breeze,
For there do shoals and fearful quicksands lie,
Though not the stormy dangers of the seas
To break the mariner's security.
And other dangers here his path assail ;
For here the Indiaman hath traversed o'er
The waste of ocean, battled with the gale
And storm, to perish on his native shore.
And morning's hour beheld her stranded high
Upon the river's bank, while from her side
Where lashed the white spray as it hurried by,
Her iron teeth in rage seemed grinning wide.
As there she lay, a lost and shattered wreck,
No earthly power could move that helpless mass,
Whose pennant streaming gaily o'er her deck,
With wings unfurled, last eve was seen to pass,
And Holland's banner fluttering from her mast,
As from the deep she swept: and the dark clouds
Now urged the force of the impelling blast
Which whistled vainly through her idle shrouds.

And all was done that man or art could do ;
And stern and moodily was seen to brood
The youthful captain of that gallant crew,
When on the deck alone and pale he stood,
And watched the sinking wind from Antwerp blow,
Like white bears rushing to the stranded whale
Of Polar shores—the galleys of the foe
As come they dancing onward to the gale.
An orphan he had been for many a year,
At least was he of parentage unknown ;
There lies a mist which time perhaps may clear,
Around his birth and hidden lineage thrown ;
It matters little, for within him dwelt
That fiery spirit, how transmitted down
What heed we, so its light was seen and felt ?
Or who will scorn the fruit because 't is grown
From dust and darkness so its seeds unfold ?
His country had uprear'd him, and her breast
Suckled no viper ; he was of the mould
Of those who reared so oft Batavia's crest.

Whom ye may see on many a canvass old
Portrayed in dress grotesque, but such as bore
In earlier days—the boldest of the bold !—
Her naval flag, to earth's remotest shore ;
And he had breathed the spirit of those times
Before her ancient glory dim had grown,
And France with the infection of her crimes
Full many a happy realm had overthrown.—
And he had deemed his country's wrongs his own,
And thought that hour upon her darkened fame,
Where calumny her deepest dye had thrown ;
And thus to hearken to her slandered name,
Might well have raised her patriots from the dead,
And were the living mute to that appeal ?
Not so—her children have arisen, and bled,
To vindicate her honour with the steel
That flashed avenging on the Belgian's rear,
When scattering from the field her legions bold,
As reared Batavia up in wrath her spear,
Fled with their mushroom monarch Leopold ;

Yet he it said he was the last withdrew,
I am not such as willingly would steal
One laurel from a brow that boasts so few.

• • • • •

Yet lay that vessel there : her sunken keel
Deeply and fastly in the sand-bank set,
Whilst round her sides came many a hostile boat,
And rose her rebel foes' exulting threat
Upon the sailors' ear, with galling note.
" Have we not sworn with life's last breath to fight
For Holland's glory ? shall a sullied name,
Our country's curse, the stranger's mocking, light
On those whose only heritage is fame ?
And shall she say we unresisting gave
The yet untainted banner that we bore ?
Still may we perish though we cannot save !
She tells no tales of those that are no more ;
And we have often boldly stood to brave
The sting of death, and faced it brow to brow
Upon the deep—what is there but a grave
Before us spreading, shall we tremble now ?"

So spake that daring captain to his crew :
A moment's pause—there dwelt upon his ear
A single moment's pause—and then there grew
One wild and loud and long and desperate cheer.
“ I knew it well, there was not one so low,
Who would not rather we should fall than strike.
Back from our decks ! or into air I blow,
The stranded vessel and her foes alike ! ”
They heard his threat, and shouted as they heard
Their menaces who had been stamped by fame ;
As cravens, lightly deemed they of his word,
And onwards heedless as the spray they came.
And this—all that man will ever know
Of how that crew from earth, in thunder passed ;
Red flashed the torch amid her stores below,
And Antwerp quivered to the fearful blast
That swept her splintered timbers to the skies,
And gave an earthquake's shock from shore to shore,
While from their bed the frightened waters rise,
Then roll their blue waves onward as before !

And all was silent, save the seamew's shriek,
As thro' the smoke he soared with glancing wing,
To guide where human eye might vainly seek
The mangled fragments of one living thing;
And bending down with sharp and hungry beak,
Around their watery grave was seen to flit;
And Time with her unbroken voice shall speak
That Hero's praise, that I have only writ.

NOTES.

NOTE I.—p. 1.

“ All dark and silent Night came down
Upon the restless city: hushed
Was all in that revolted town.”

THE revolution, which has driven, at least for the present, the house of Nassau from the throne of Belgium, had commenced, or rather the riots of the mob had been proceeding for some days, when the Hereditary Prince came within a few miles of the metropolis.

The wild excitement of the day had died away with evening, the mob was spent and wearied, and there reigned an unnatural silence on all around. It was a clear and lovely night, although the moon had not yet risen. A more awful period than those hours, that rolled on heavily in silence to uncertainty, after the giddy bustle of day, can hardly be imagined. A sense of their real situation seemed for a moment to have pervaded the inhabitants of that city, and never certainly was a more strange infatuation than that which urged her to over-

throw her government and dynasty, to produce a change so lamentable, but to which indeed Europe cannot be indifferent, since with the destinies of these two countries are most probably indirectly bound up those of the civilized Continent.

They will not battle and fall alone without involving, sooner or later, the powers of Europe in the contest, however unwillingly; and Belgium, as she has been, will probably be again the battle-field of the contending nations, for which, by natural situation and cultivation, she is so admirably adapted. There is, I believe, among the Arabs, a proverb, that "armies and locusts thrive not in the desert," and her fertile plains have always been too sure to lure the invading armies of friend and foe to her soil; but it will be an evil, and not the least of those which her senseless revolution has drawn upon her, and for which she has exchanged her halcyon days of ease and plenty.

NOTE II.—p. 4.

"Her arched devices raised on high,
Beneath each ancient lime-tree placed,
Whose moss-grown trunk had seen go by,
Since severed from the forest waste—"

The park in Brussels, in the higher town, in the recollection of many of the inhabitants, formed part of the forest of Soignies, which has been cleared for about two miles to the south of the town, but still extends upwards of sixty miles, and anciently formed part of the Ardennes and that immense tract of wood that stretched from the Rhine to the sea; as the forest receded, houses and ramparts were built between the park to the country, and the spot where the wild deer ranged at liberty has become the public promenade.

NOTE III.—p. 4.

“ And Austria’s gilded court to boot
 Come dancing to a moonlight sky
 In merriment * * *
 * * * * *
 When e’en beneath Theresa’s law.”

Not far from the park, which originally belonged to it, is the archducal palace, which is now converted into the public museum. It has still, both in external and internal appearance, the air of a princely residence, although its long galleries only shew, on the withering canvass, here and there the portraiture of the splendour that once filled her halls; and the ape, amid others of his tribe, still “grins, as when he died,” on the stranger, usurping the place once held by the no less supple courtier. Here, in the golden days of these provinces, the Austrian court held her revels; and the writers of the times tell us, in spite of the cold formalities of etiquette, of many a nightly frolic of the noble dames and pages, and assure us, in their quaint language, that they lived “moult gaiement.” The brilliant courts of these days were certainly not quite like those of the nineteenth century, as the reader will readily admit, when he is informed that in the times of Isabella of Spain, about the year 1600, the sober and thinking part of the community were much shocked at an alteration in the dinner hour from nine in the morning (I presume in summer) to the more fashionable and dissipated one of eleven.

After the restoration of her Belgic states by the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, it was the residence of Maria Theresa, the young and heroic archduchess of Austria, who suffered so long the persecution of Frederic the Great and Louis XV., and in whose cause the celebrated battles of Fontenoy and Dettingen were fought by the allied Dutch and English.

Her memory is still idolised by the Belgians; and I have occasionally met with old people who perfectly recollected the youthful sovereign and her brilliant court. It is strange to hear the rapture with which they speak of the Austrian government, if we consider with what "archarnement" they were driven from the country; but, on a perusal of the history of these states, which nature has done every thing to make happy and man to render miserable, we shall find this fickleness an elemental feature in the national character.—Then, they tell us they had no taxes to pay, provisions were to be had for nothing, and, according to their enthusiastic descriptions, it was absolutely the land of promise, flowing with milk and honey; but even then they revolted, when the only complaint they could allege was the introduction of the liberal system of Joseph II. In short, as in the fable of the wolf and the lamb, when man is determined to quarrel, he is not long without a pretext for contention. In one country we find the people in arms to support the cause of bigotry—the Sultan strangled by his Janissaries; the Portuguese arrayed against their constitution; and the Belgians driving the Austrians from their soil, because they would have set a barrier to the exactions of priesthood and the progress of ignorance and bigotry!—whilst Ferdinand of Spain was shaken on his throne, Charles X. expelled alike from his power and kingdom, and there are countless other examples of similar effects produced by causes totally different. So full of incongruities is the history of nations and mankind.

NOTE IV.—p. 4.

" And might have deemed again the times
When troubadours in list might meet,
To strive with harps and flattering rhymes."

Belgium was never so prosperous as during the short period

(for if we compare it with her long annals of calamity it seems but a short reprieve) of her union with Holland. Commerce had poured her wealth into the very centre of the country, her towns were thronged with strangers, and her ports with vessels, to a degree hitherto unknown. A striking example of this was the difference between the preceding weeks of public rejoicing and festivity, and the days that followed her unexpected revolution. A singular musical exhibition, which was to have been repeated every third year, had also taken place, for the second time, amid an immense assemblage of auditors. It was called the "Concours d'Harmonie," and might, in some degree, be compared to the strife of the minstrels of old when they met in the list with harp and song, and contended for the reward of the wreath from the hands of the "ladie fair;" but in the present instance it was not the troubadour, light of heart as the sounds of his lyre, with the motto* of his profession borne before him, but the less romantic and more scientific bands of musicians, despatched by the various towns to meet in Brussels, and vie with each other for the prize of melody in the musical arena, before the listening ears of beauty, wealth, and fashion. The wooden decorations, the second or third day, were heaped in piles, and formed immense bonfires in the park; the flames rising nearly as high as the trees, whose trunks they seared and scorched, threatening

* This is said to have been contained in the following lines:—

A Dieu mon Ame,
Ma vie au Roi,
Mon cœur aux Dames
L'honneur pour moi.

" My Soul unto my God above,
My life to guard the throne,
My heart unto my body love,
Mine honour all mine own."

to set the whole place on fire—the crashing of the lamps, destined for the illumination, on which the mob vented their fury and trampled to pieces, was heard, during this scene of confusion, for several hours.

The revolution, which, even if it produce no other result, which is highly improbable, has at least separated two countries and added another king to the list of European sovereigns (for I can hardly term that a kingdom which is yet dependent for its immediate existence on the support and interference of surrounding nations) was commenced by about thirty or forty boys, glaziers' apprentices, printers' devils, fruit venders, &c.—to such trifling circumstances do the greatest political changes sometimes owe their origin. It is true that children are generally employed by the mob, in the same manner that the mob are by the disaffected party, to feel the way for them, and try how securely they can proceed to more daring outrages. But, had there been any competent authority, or any force, such, for instance, as the London police, they might have crushed the evil in the bud. Either the *Muette de Portici*, or *Guillaume Tell*, which had both been suspended since the revolution in Paris, at the repeated instances of the inhabitants, had been again performed at the little theatre. I need hardly explain that these pieces represent the revolutions of Switzerland and Naples: they were greeted with loud cheers, and cries in favour of liberty, by the audience, as soon as the doors were closed; whilst still in that state of excitement, a voice was heard to exclaim, "*Chez Libri Bagnano!*" "*To Libri Bagnanos!*" alluding to the editor of a very talented but scurrilous government paper, who had lately given particular offence to the liberals. They however did not attempt any act of violence until the juvenile part of the assemblage had long set them the example by shattering the windows; and, finding themselves unopposed,

the rabble, who then poured in from every quarter, proceeded to plunder, and absolutely gut (as the elegant phrase is) the unfortunate editor's dwelling; from thence they proceeded to the palace of Van Moonen, minister of justice, and the houses of several other unpopular individuals, which they served in the same manner; but no opposition was offered until eight o'clock the next morning, the magistrates and authorities appearing as completely paralysed as was lately the case at Bristol. The populace by this time were armed, having pillaged the gunsmiths' shops, and were attacking the troops, who remained perfectly passive, not having received any orders to act, but being drawn up in readiness to the amount of perhaps 500 men. At eight, however, when they were no longer able to stand the annoyance of the crowd, the commandant gave the order, and the *Sablon*, the square where they were stationed, was cleared in the space of a minute, most of the military firing over their heads by order of their officers: three of the unfortunate wretches were however shot, which proved for the moment a salutary example. They also fired on the Rue de la Magdelaine, killing several of them; and the soldiers, if they had then been allowed to proceed, could, with the greatest ease, have dispersed and disarmed the whole of the rioters, and restored the town to its former tranquillity; but the citizens and regency took upon themselves to arm, and restore order, saying, that a civic force was much more likely to prevent the effusion of blood, than if the military came in contact with the lower orders. The officers were, therefore, persuaded to confine the troops to guarding the palaces; and accordingly the citizens were allowed to arm, and form what they called the "Garde Bourgeois." It was this that lost the country: as their numbers increased, and they found themselves with arms in their hands, they began to make demands of their own. In two or three days they certainly did put down the rioters, but

the remedy was worse than the disease, and the soldiery would have done the same more effectually in half the time: but the government were so totally taken by surprise, that they had not even, as it appeared by the sequel, a person competent to take the lead in such a case, either in a civil or military capacity, or any thing prepared for the emergency;—indeed, they could hardly think that at the very height of her splendour, when yet filled with the strangers who were, of course, giving wealth and employment to the inhabitants, they would commit the folly of plunging even into a momentary disorder; but it is a fact, pretty well established by this time, that discontent springs alike from the excess of prosperity and the extreme of misery. In the former case, every class ascends step by step so much nearer to the one above it, that at last they wish the barrier that divides them altogether removed, and seek for this too often by overturning every thing, forgetful of the wretchedness it has before drawn upon them; for it is unfortunately the principle of the equalizing system of democracy to lower all mankind to their own level, rather than attempt to attain the height of those they envy.

NOTE V.—p. 6.

“ Yet why that fated city rose
From peace, and happiness, and ease,
To plunge in misery from repose,
When wealth and freedom ceased to please.”

Is indeed a mournful question, which those even who urged and fostered her revolution, would have some trouble in answering; although some of our newspapers, with their usual diffidence, would soon solve the difficulty. It may sound well in an ear totally unacquainted with the affairs of the Low

Countries, excepting through these unbiassed and veracious channels, to talk of the indignation of a liberal-minded people against tyranny and oppression, and assign as a cause for their rising, his partiality to the northern provinces. They are assertions, that one glance at the state of the country in the last months of her prosperity, which were the last of the Orange government, will fully refute. Like the criticism of the mass of self-styled critics, who will tell you that a book is bad without ever having even peeped into its pages, or detailing one iota of its faults: they pronounce on that into which they have never inquired, and maintain the opinion they have formed through party spirit, right or wrong, against the clear and incontestable evidence of facts.

The king of the Netherlands, it is agreed *nem. con.* among the Whig papers, was certainly a most arbitrary tyrant—why do they not bring the evidence of those merchants and manufacturers of Ghent (and they are in no small numbers) who, whenever they found themselves on the brink of ruin, applied to his majesty for pecuniary assistance, which was tendered them from his own private purse, and who lent them sums of money of his own for sometimes the period of nine or ten years without a sous of intérêt—let them now go and seek the same of their citizen king, or let even the French squeeze as much, if they can, out of the model after which he is avowedly formed: there are a hundred instances beside, *equally convincing*; even indeed after Ghent, for whom he had done every thing, was in open rebellion, and had driven his troops from the citadel, he allowed two vessels belonging to merchants of that city, which had been stopped in the Scheldt, and were prizes according to the laws both of war and equity, to proceed to the place of their destination, on the owners representing to him in a petition, that he would by retaining them reduce them and their families to beggary and ruin. So much

for the first charge. Partiality to his own country it is very natural he should have felt; and who could blame him for so doing, as long as he never expressed it in his actions to the prejudice of his new dominions? which he certainly never did: indeed Holland, there is little doubt, and it has been proved by recent events, was nearly ruined in her commerce by the influence which Belgium acquired by the free passage of her goods and vessels through the northern provinces; but which separately she can never enjoy. Antwerp, Ghent, and many other towns, were rapidly increasing in trade and opulence, whilst Amsterdam was as rapidly falling away. It is even said that the increase of trade at the latter place alone, since the bombardment and consequent cessation of that of Antwerp, is almost enough to defray the expenses of the war. As to his not employing latterly as many Belgians in public offices as he did Dutch, the obvious reason is, want of capacity, which he soon discovered on trial; for those few who were men of talent, he immediately gave diplomatic and other situations, even when in the time of the French they had been the most active partisans against his own family. Witness the Count de Celles and Baron de Staport, whose names are held in utter detestation in Holland to this day, from their behaviour in the time of Napoleon. Of this deficiency the Belgians are fully aware; and now that they are left to themselves, appear to place no more confidence in each other than the king of Holland, for every thing of importance is given to foreigners, if there are any to be found. To whom did they give the command, at the time of the attack on Brussels, but to Juan Van Halen, a Spaniard? What are their officers, at least, such as they would trust even a battalion to, but French? and lastly, what is their monarch? for whatever countryman he may call himself, he is decidedly not a Belgian. In short, the concluding proof is, that Belgium,

which at the time of the battle of Waterloo presented one wide scene of desolation and ruin—the population of her places thinned, and in misery, while the wretched inhabitants of her towns stalked in beggary about their grass-grown streets—had lately become the most prosperous country in Europe, and had reached a height she had never attained since the days of Charles the Fifth, and would daily have increased in wealth and importance in the scale of nations; yet from this she has of her own accord, sunk back into the slough from which it took so many years to extricate her. There seems, indeed, to be a fatality attending some spots of earth, or rather the races that inhabit them: it has always been the case with Poland, who may properly be termed the destroyer of her own peace, and as at last invariably follows, of her own independence, by her turbulent and ungovernable spirit; but in a nation who have naturally a restless passion for war, it is more explicable than in a country which has never had the memory of a national glory (whatever the feats and prowess of individual towns may have been), to excite a discontent of present circumstances, and whose inhabitants, generally speaking, at no period flourished as soldiers. Yet there is scarcely an inch of ground in that devoted land, that has not been moistened with blood; there is not a spot the traveller can pass through, but what it has been, in days remote or modern, the scene of some battle or skirmish; and this in a country, which from the disposition of its inhabitants, and the fertility of its soil, it is obvious must thrive in peace. We might pity her in the earlier ages of history, did we not see by the present times how completely the miseries she has endured have been drawn upon herself. In the time of the Austrian government, she sought for the French; after groaning for a few years under their despotism, she was eagerly watching the first opportunity of throwing off the yoke that weighed her to the earth, but another short

period of prosperity soon effaced that severe lesson. She has pushed her bark away from the shores of security, without any fixed determination; divided in her opinion, whether to become the property of France, Germany, or England, or to pursue a visionary scheme of independence, which she certainly has not, and was never further from realizing.

Is it likely that the Belgians of the present day will be able to effect that which their ancestors, for upwards of six centuries, have never been able to manage. There is a moral weakness in some countries, that prevents them from standing alone. It would be something like setting our domestic sheep at liberty, and withdrawing from them all protection, after they had learned to rely on man. They certainly did possess freedom originally, but from race to race have become more unfitted for its enjoyments. If we were to leave them now to the woods and forests, once their habitation, how soon would they be the victims of the intemperance of the storm, and the chill blast of winter. It may be objected, that Venice, Genoa, and other places, not the tenth part of the size of Belgium, or the third of her population, run a long and glorious career alone and unsupported; but they were commercial cities, to whom an accession of territory would have been little accession of power, and they were not surrounded by warlike and powerful nations. Middlesex might thrive alone; but is it to be supposed that Yorkshire or a dozen of our other counties would? There is sometimes the concentration of the resources of a nation into a single city; but the inhabitants of it can only preserve her independence by that worst of tyrannies, a republic, and at the expense of private liberty, and be nationally free but individually tyrannised—whilst Belgian was nationally dependent, but individually as free as any people on the face of the earth. She did not belong to, but formed part of Holland. She had a share in her own government; the

parliament, or meeting of the states-general, and the court, were held alternately in Holland and the southern provinces. Do even Scotland and Ireland boast these advantages? and had they ever been before enjoyed by this unhappy and much oppressed Belgium? But still, say the supporters of this sensible revolution, she was not independent: might not some of our shires, who differ as much in language from the rest of the country, as the Flemish did from Holland, bring forth the same thing.

NOTE VI.—p. 10.

“ Ah me, that ever it should be
That arm of steel, and heart of stone,
Alone should know prosperity !”

It is a melancholy truth, that those kings have reigned the most prosperously, and indeed too often left a scarcely sullied reputation to their posterity, who were the most tyrannical and blood-thirsty, and had least sympathies for the sufferings of mankind. Those of a violent and brutal disposition, have done the most arbitrary and cruel acts, without even a censure from their subjects, excepting on their memories. But those of a mild and humane character are invariably hurled from their eminence, on the slightest offence; and even when perfectly innocent, too often become the victims of their people. Henry the Eighth, the most disgusting that ever disgraced the pages of history with the recital of his crimes,*—if we except one or two of those monsters that darkened the later annals

* It is true he lived in a dark and barbarous age: but who does not look with admiration on the glorious era of Charlemagne? or who remembers his inhuman treatment of the revolted Saxons, or the thousands he massacred in cold blood after the battle of Sontal?

of the Roman empire,—reigned calmly and unopposed, and would have been as implicitly obeyed if he had held the reins in the time of the murdered Charles, whose “faux pas” cost him his crown and his life. Nor are there wanting instances, nearer to our own times: let us only take Louis the 16th and Buonaparte; his weakness, and that mistaken horror of shedding blood, brought one to the scaffold—whilst the other ruling the same country with a rod of iron, draining her to her last farthing, and her last drop of blood, had not so much as even a finger raised against his authority; and even when he fell in the gigantic contest he maintained against the world, they showed as much attachment to him as they were susceptible of feeling towards any ruler. Who will even hesitate a moment between the blood-thirsty Ferdinand of Spain and Charles the Tenth, bigoted though he may have been—yet one sits quietly on his throne, while the other is an exile at Holyrood! Mankind has been compared, and too justly, to the spaniel, which the more it is beaten will crouch and fawn with the more servility at the feet that spurn it.

NOTE VII.—p. 11.

“Too fiery and too fierce to tame,
The spirit of Rebellion passed,
And Bruges, Leige, and Antwerp rose.”

The intelligence of the riots in Brussels had no sooner spread to the other towns, than all, excepting Ghent, which in consequence of the strong military force remained quiet for a few days, became the scene of similar disorders, and a civic guard was established on the same principles. It is hard to tell, at this period, whether the revolution was a preconcerted plan, or the ebullition of a momentary excitement, which proceeded to the serious degree it at last attained, as circum-

stances presented themselves. Various opinions are entertained, but most probably the government alone are in possession of the truth on this subject. It was a singular occurrence, that the *Burger garde* should have been almost simultaneously established in the different places.

NOTE VIII.—p. 12.

“ His first-born, William of Nassau,
In arms to that revolted land.”

The Prince of Orange, on the night in question, had encamped with an army of some thousand men, between Villevorde and the race-course of Mont Plaisir ; this force, which proved afterwards very inefficient against the numbers that thronged the place, would then have met with very little resistance ; indeed any struggle at that period would have been entirely hopeless, and was hardly contemplated, even by the “ canaille.” The “ Garde Bourgeoise ” were yet scarcely armed, and certainly none of them disposed to fight. The barricades, too, which afterwards, when properly erected, formed a formidable defence, were then more calculated to have injured than protected those they were destined to defend, being formed of the paving-stones uncovered with earth, which the cannon shot would have shivered to splinters, and scattered about like so many pieces of a shell. It is hardly possible to conceive the scene of confusion in the lower part of the town that succeeded to the above I have endeavoured to depict, when they understood the Prince was so near the gates, and had proclaimed that he meant to enter next morning, repressing force by force—it baffles all description. The rabble were carrying up stones and rubbish to the house-tops, in hopes of some affray that might have given them the opportunity of pillage ; the shopkeepers, in the greatest alarm, lest

the rabble should commence any resistance, and the civic guard escaping in every direction. As soon as his intentions were made public, several deputations were sent out to try and alter his determination, representing to him all the horrors he must inflict on the innocent part of the population, if he persisted. It was late at night, that the Prince de Ligne, formerly the intimate friend of the Prince of Orange, was at last induced, by the repeated instances of his fellow-citizens, to try his influence after they had failed. The Prince, however, remained a long time inflexible, until he had painted the probable consequences in the most glowing and exaggerated colours, and declared that the first step he made into Brussels at the head of his troops, should be across the body of his friend; and that, much as he lamented this necessity, he would be one of the first to fire upon him. In consequence of these representations of the state of the town, he at last agreed to enter the next morning, alone and unattended, to receive the petition of the citizens, and exhort the populace to obedience. These tidings were of course received by all ranks with the greatest joy; and in proportion as the danger ceased, the insolence and self-confidence of the mob augmented.

NOTE IX.—p. 24.

“ And many a one, when day-light’s beam
Far from its airy prison broke,
Yet trembling, frightened, from his dream,
To swell the civic ranks awoke.
• • • • •

Certes, they were a motley group
As ever sun rays shone upon.”

Early on the morning that he was expected to enter, the drum beat to arms, and the citizens, to the number of seven or

ten thousand, assembled in the various squares, to escort him into the city; the officers of the guard had previously given their word that no harm should be done him, nor any treachery practised; but how were they to answer for what the rabble might do? and it must be admitted on all sides that it was a most gallant thing on the part of the Prince to venture among them. They were drawn up to receive him near the *Porte Guillaume*: part of them appeared decent men enough, but their array was terminated by a most disgusting set of wretches, armed with pikes, butchers' knives, and such instruments as are readiest to the hands of the lower orders in times of riot and anarchy, and which from that circumstance generally inspire us with a kind of horror. The better part even of these civic heroes yet cut but a very sorry figure in their military career, shuffling along in an attempt to march, and most of them bearing a musket for the first time in their lives. It must, however, be admitted that in a few days they formed a very respectable appearance; but with appearance I must say ended all their soldier-like qualities. National and burgher guards are the most ridiculous corps in existence! indeed with that natural aptitude of foreigners for imitation, they soon copy the gait and gestures of the military; but being principally drawn from the shopkeepers, a class of all others least habituated to those bodily privations and exercises which cause, or at least develope, physical courage. For service, they are generally useless, unless after long training, and the discipline of the regulars has obliterated their former habits. You will see, for instance, your tailor and shoemaker marching along with a most martial strut, every now and then glancing at their uniforms with a smile of complacency, and perhaps a greasy pork-butcher with a tremendous pair of mustachios (which he carefully wipes and puts in his pocket on going home) taking the command! These are men accustomed to a sedentary life,

and utterly ignorant at times even of the use of their *natural arms*, and very soon give way, unless with a good brick-wall between them and their antagonists. It is generally from the lower orders, labourers and peasants, accustomed to a laborious life, whose constitutions contain the elements of hardihood, that soldiers are formed; and amid the higher classes to which their officers commonly belong, there exists what might be termed a spirit of chivalry, and a habitude to such manly diversions as give an adroitness which supplies the want of physical strength; but of all these advantages the citizens, or at least the mass of them, are deprived. In times of popular commotion, as was the case in Paris, it was the rabble carried every thing; and at the attack of Brussels, those of the townspeople that did fight, were undeniably of that class; but the bourgeois, of course, having the journals to themselves, made their own version of the story, and reaped all the glory, or rather the name of having done that which most of them never even saw: they send on the mob to be butchered, and when the danger is nearly over, come in as the heroes of the day. We certainly hear, in the "good old times," of the deeds and prowess of the sturdy burgesses, in defeating and driving back the marauding knights and captains; but we forget that the chroniclers of these bold achievements were generally burghers themselves, and that the population of the towns enabled them to bring ten to one against their adversaries; and do we not also read in divers accounts of the chivalry of those days, that a knight fully accoutred on his steed was accounted fit to do battle against a score of these turbulent commons? I heard several ridiculous anecdotes relating to the Garde Bourgeoise, but which, although no panegyric on their bravery, are meant as no reflection on the courage of the Belgians at large. The night before the Prince of Orange made his *entrée*, there was a party left to guard the Louvain gate, who remained in

the toll-house. At one o'clock in the morning the Faubourg was alarmed by the report of a volley of musquetry, and on proceeding to the provisional guard-house to inquire whence it proceeded, they found it to their surprise quite deserted. After a time, however, one of the garde, observing great precaution, at last ventured back; sent like the dove from the ark to reconnoitre for his companions. He then explained to them, that amid the branches of one of the trees, which had been felled on the boulevards opposite, to form barricades, they had seen or heard something move; and their brains, filled with visions of fierce huzzars and bold dragoons, instantly transformed a dog passing in the branches, and the shadow of a lamp-post, into an *eclaireur* of the enemy; and not knowing, as they said, but what the whole of the army might be close upon them, the gallant defenders of one of the gates of the capital of Belgium discharged their pieces, and run away! There are several ridiculous stories of the same kind related of them, one in particular of their military discipline. An officer of distinction passing by one of their posts at Ostend, was surprised not to see the guard turn out, and present arms—to his surprise, they had all vanished; but he learned from an old woman he found knitting, that a flight of wild ducks having alighted within sight, they had hurried pell-mell to the ditches with their muskets to scare these northern invaders from their shores.

NOTE X.—p. 32.

“He stood beneath that old gray hall
Whose Gothic spire had seen beneath
The shadow of its ancient wall
The revels of dismay and death.”

The town-house stands on a large square in the lower part of the town, formerly inhabited by the nobility, but now the

market-place. It is a large Gothic building, with a steeple 300 feet high; on the top of which is a brass statue of St. Michael, eighteen feet in length, represented as slaying the dragon, from which it is called St. Michael's Tower; this has been the scene of many a popular tumult and act of barbarity. In the recollection of many of the inhabitants, in the time of the Austrian government, an unfortunate peasant, having given offence to the rabble by insulting a monk whilst in the procession, he was instantly seized; the clergy endeavoured to save him, under pretence of hearing his confession. He was accordingly taken to an abbey; they however pursued him into the sanctuary, tore him from his protectors, and hanged him, without further ceremony, to a lamp-post; but, the rope breaking, they forced a carpenter, who was passing with his tools, to saw off the head of their hapless victim, which was literally performed amid the acclamations of the patriots, as they styled themselves.

NOTE XI.—p. 33.

“Where the deep sand the blood-stream drank,
When ruthless Alva sealed their lot,
And Horn and Egmont headless sank.”

The Counts Horn* and Egmont were here beheaded on the 5th of June, 1568, being among the first that perished for the early independence of Holland. They were treacherously

* These nobles formed part of the confederation of William of Nassau, the liberator of Holland, and although they took a decided part with that great man, had, by their actions, done nothing that could render their death less than murder on the part of Alva and his tribunal. The latter was of the family of the heroic Charles of Egmont, duke of Guelders, whose independence he maintained so long, about the beginning of the sixteenth century.

made prisoners by Ferdinand Alvarez de Toledo, duke of Alva, and, after a trial before the tribunal of blood, condemned to be executed; they suffered death with a firmness worthy of the great cause in which they were engaged: there is still a stone balcony from which, in all probability, the remorseless Alva surveyed the execution, as recorded by the historians of the times. Before that very town-house gate, the descendant of William of Nassau, their celebrated associate, paused, and having refused to dismount, read his father's proclamation to that multitude, who were only restrained from offering him personal violence by the consciousness that his brother was at the head of an army within a few miles of them, and which the cannon, fired at intervals from Villevorde, seemed to remind them of. The Prince then rode up to his palace, and having had an interview with Hoogverst, the commandant of the Burgher Garde, and other of the citizens, was persuaded to withdraw the troops that still remained in the town;—the Prince promising to use his influence with his father to obtain their demands, and the citizens taking oath to guard his palaces and remain faithful to the Orange dynasty: the sequel showed how well their promise was fulfilled.

NOTE XII.—p. 34.

“There was not of that line indeed
One who had not in battle bled,
Or, for the land his fathers freed,
A life of foreign exile led.”

There is no royal, nor indeed noble family in Europe, whose annals show such a succession of heroes and warriors as that of the house of Nassau, even to the remotest times: we find a Prince of Orange defeating the Saracens; it was a Prince of Orange that captured and gave to pillage the holy walls of

Rome, after the death of the haughty Bourbon. And we are so accustomed to hear of its various members upholding the very existence of Holland in the infancy of her freedom, by the wisdom of their councils and the series of battles they won, by sea and land, against her foes, that it seems a name inseparably bound up with the destiny of these interesting states. There is hardly one indeed of that warlike race that have not bled or suffered in her cause;* and the devoted attachment of the Dutch to the family may well be accounted for, if we remember how often its different members have been the saviours of the country. In times of the most imminent danger, the name of Orange was always a palladium to which she recurred, and its princes the pilots that bore her safely and with glory through the most perilous storms that ever menaced her existence.

NOTE XIII.—p. 41.

“ And with the morn the cannon’s thunder sounded,
Herald of death ! many a spirit brave,
Whose heart to hear thy deadly summons, bounded.

• • • • •

Which even not the tocsin’s sound shall waken,
That rung to call the hurrying peasants’ aid.”

During the attack made on Brussels by the Prince Frederick, the tocsin, or alarum bell was rung, and heard for miles around, while the peasantry flocked by thousands from the villages to the defence of the town ; the effect of this, only

* Witness the assassination of the Prince William, by Balthusa Gerard, who struck the first blow for her independence, and the three brothers that died in battle for her cause, the Prince Maurice and his successor, who died of over-exertion in her wars, and the long exile of the present king.

sounded in times of public alarm and distress, is inconceivable.

NOTE XIV.—p. 42.

“ And never yet more falsely spake renown
In Europe’s ear ———

• • • • •

Though lured within by guile and treachery.”

Perhaps no action that has occurred in modern times has been more incorrectly represented than the late affair of Brussels. It has been magnified into a great victory obtained by undisciplined valour against an army, and held up as an example of the power of the people; but instead of intimidating governments, as they imagine, from using the argument of the bayonet, it will only be the cause of much greater severity being employed, since the examples they have given of the necessity of using energetic and forcible measures. The Prince Frederick entered with four thousand men into a town of 100,000 inhabitants; besides numbers of the most refractory of the French mob who had taken part in the revolution of July in Paris, and that their own authorities were glad to get rid of; Leige and the different towns had been pouring in their volunteers, and the country in the environs was almost emptied of its peasantry. Of course the royal army could never have attempted to enter when things were so disposed, without incurring an imputation of the greatest folly. But on the previous night, the merchants and bankers, and indeed the principal inhabitants of the city, sent a petition to which all their names were affixed, intreating of the Prince to come in and restore order, since they were in hourly danger of being pillaged by the mob; they could not openly take part, they said, with him until he had entered, but the gates once forced

they would willingly join his troops. The gates were forced accordingly, and the troops took possession of the upper part of the town; but instead of aiding them, those at whose instigation they had entered, alarmed by the rabble, either made common cause with them, or fled. This document the king of Holland had in his possession; and if in revenge for their treachery, he had chosen to publish it, could have had all those whose names were signed, almost torn to pieces by the rabble. The army kept possession of the park and its environs for three days, against the forces that were pouring in from every side, the cuirassiers advancing as far as the Place Royale, and would most probably have taken the place, had not Don Juan Van Halen,* one of the Spanish refugees, been chosen to direct the operations of the insurgents: he brought up fifteen thousand of the Beaurin miners, and being an experienced soldier, of course easily prevented the military from making any further advances; so that from fatigue and want of provisions they were forced to evacuate the place. If the Prince had then set fire to the city, as he was advised, he might still have saved the country: fearful as it may seem, there was no other alternative—it was like the amputation of a limb, to save the life of a patient; however, rather than plunge so many thou-

* This extraordinary man has written memoirs of his life, which appears to have been one entire romance; indeed, a stranger would say on perusing it, that it was an amusing fiction, but rather overstrained: yet those who are personally acquainted with him, corroborate every circumstance that came under their own observation. He was first confined in the Inquisition of Spain, from which he made his escape, and many of the secrets of whose gloomy dungeons he has revealed. He is looked upon as a highly talented soldier, and was chosen as the commander of the Belgian forces, during the three days; in which time he is said to have displayed great skill in his military capacity.

sands into ruin and beggary, he preferred leaving it in the hands of the enemy. Thus, by the mistaken humanity of two of the house of Nassau, was the place twice lost. It was magnified into a great action—a struggle between the rising spirit of liberty and oppression, and a wonderful display of courage on the part of the people; and as such credited for a long time by the world. Since the bombardment of Antwerp, and the defeat of Leopold and his troops, the whole question has taken a very different aspect in the eyes of Europe, which have been opened to the truth; and those originally led away by hastiness and prejudice, are fast awakening from their error. The sovereign and people of Holland have acted from the beginning as equitably and justly as could an individual the most jealous of his honour; but if we look to other nations, I am aware that this is no panegyric on his policy.

NOTE XV.—p. 47.

VAN SPYK.

“Ah! there is many a laurelled brow the world
Will mourn with marble’s monumental urn.”

It is almost needless to explain the title of this young and gallant officer to the mingled reproach and admiration of his country. Commanding a small vessel of war in the Scheldt, it ran aground, during the night time, near Antwerp, and next morning was boarded by the Belgians; he threatened, if they attempted to take possession of it, or lower the colours of Holland from the mast, to fire the powder magazine. Some of the assailants were alarmed, and retired to the shore; but their boldness increasing with their numbers, he carried his menace into execution, and saved the honour of the national flag by a fearful, but necessary, sacrifice of life, blowing his crew and the enemy into the air in promiscuous destruction.

It was a dreadful alternative, not the act of desperation, but the enthusiastic heroism of a patriot, and one we can look upon without the horror we naturally feel towards those who, whether uselessly or not, cause any great effusion of blood. It was not the heartless indifference to human life which does not calculate the expenditure to carry a certain point, for of course he fell among the number; and there is many a one borne through the dangers of battle by the prospect of personal advancement and glory, but here the grave must have ended all personal views. It is common among the orientals, rather than surrender a fort, to blow up the enemy with them; but it is always when sure of protracted tortures, or the more lingering death of slavery: but here, he would simply have been made prisoner of war, and preferred death to any addition of dishonour to his country. It cannot avail the dead, but it must be a satisfaction to his country to know that he died not vainly; he was one of the first to remove the unjust stigma under which she laboured; and that such was his motive must be the justification of his suicide.* Since the ineffectual attempt on Brussels, the army, half of which was composed of Belgians, of whose fidelity the king was uncertain, had received orders to retreat into Holland; the Belgians imagined they were flying from them, and the French and English papers had echoed back their voice, every day teem-

* It is not the first time that a similar act has saved the Batavian banner from pollution. In the times of Prince Maurice, the Dutch admiral was surprised, by an overpowering Spanish fleet, off Cape St. Vincent; they hoisted their sails and fled, with the exception of one vessel, commanded by Vice-Admiral Klazoon, who fearlessly attacked the galleons, and, when almost all his crew were killed or wounded, prevailed on the rest to agree to the resolution he had formed. They knelt on the deck, and, after putting up a brief prayer for the act they were about to commit, thrust a light into the powder, and were instantly blown up!

ing with fresh proofs of Dutch cowardice and oppression. It was a common saying among the Belgians at that time, that one Belgian was at least equal to three Dutchmen, and that in one week they could easily overrun Holland. From this pleasing reverie they were however awakened by the cannon of Chassé, and the first gleam of Dutch bayonets met in open field. It was the consciousness of the contempt so liberally showered upon them by all the world at that time, that urged him to vindicate the national courage, and that has now aroused all ranks of his countrymen in one common cause, with a patriotism scarcely equalled in modern times. It is said, that in the cabin of every Dutch man-of-war are written the words, "Remember Van Spyk," and that the officers, in their enthusiasm, have taken an oath among themselves to imitate his example, rather than surrender to any adversary; and would be forced to its fulfilment if put to the test, by the same laws of honour that force a man to a duel—under pain of being degraded and rendered infamous in the eyes of society. Men of the highest rank, even retired field-officers, have recommenced the career of arms as privates in the volunteer regiments; nay, the very ladies are about to adopt a national costume, that all useless expenditure may go towards the support of the state; and in such a disposition, what has Holland to fear?—when her children are resolved (as they were in the days of Charles the 2nd, when England and France attempted to crush her, to submerge and abandon the whole of the artificial country they inhabit to the mercy of the waves, and retire to their Indian settlements.) And the Prince of Orange declared he would rather die in the last ditch than be the spectator of his country's ruin, or cede to their invaders. Their energies were aroused, and Louis the 14th and the English monarch saw themselves defeated, and forced to an inglorious peace by the inhabitants of those northern marshes; and

is Holland weaker now than at that period, or England and France more powerful? The iron is slow to be heated, but retains its glow when the blazing wood has turned to frigid ashes. There is a spirit in some nations, difficult indeed to conjure up, but when once awakened, as difficult to allay.

NOTE XVI.—p. 53.

“ Fled with their mushroom monarch, Leopold.”

It is said that Leopold remained on the field of battle as long as any of his men would keep together, and was several times on the point of falling into the hands of the Prince of Orange, who commanded the Dutch army, and whom by a strange fatality he had first deprived of his wife, and then of his kingdom. In the flight, his men and officers having already had some experience in that way, soon left their new sovereign behind. To do him justice, his courage has never been impugned, although by his talents he is not in any way distinguished from the common herd of men.

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