

BETWEEN SPRING AND SUMMER.

(A BIRTHDAY POEM, WITH ROSES.)

To her whose birth and being
Touch summer out of spring,
These roses, reaching forward
From May to June, I bring.

To her whose fragrant friendship
Sweetens the life I live,
These flowers, Love's message hinting
With perfumed breath, I give.

The violet and the lily
Shall stand for these and those ;
But give her roses only
Whose soul suggests the rose, —

Whose Life's idea ranges
Through all of sweet and bright,
A vernal flow of feeling,
A summer day of light.

I bless the child whose coming
Sheds grace around us, where
Her voice falls soft as music,
Her step drops light as air :

Fair grace, to good related
In her, sweet sisters twin ;
As in this House of Roses
The fruits and flowers are kin.

ELLSWORTH.

THE beginnings of great periods have often been marked and made memorable by striking events. Out of the cloud that hangs around the vague inceptions of revolutions, a startling incident will-sometimes flash like lightning, to show that the warring elements have begun their work. The scenes that attended the birth of American nationality formed a not inaccurate type of those that have opened the

crusade for its perpetuation. The consolidation of public sentiment which followed the magnificent defeat at Bunker's Hill, in which the spirit of indignant resistance was tempered by the pathetic interest surrounding the fate of Warren, was but a foreshadowing of the instant rally to arms which followed the fall of the beleaguered fort in Charleston harbor, and of the intensity of tragic pathos

which has been added to the stern purpose of avenging justice by the murder of Colonel Ellsworth.

Ephraim Elmer Ellsworth was born in the little village of Mechanicsville, on the left bank of the Hudson, on the 23d day of April, 1837. When he was very young, his father, through no fault of his own, lost irretrievably his entire fortune, in the tornado of financial ruin that in those years swept from the sea to the mountains. From this disaster he never recovered. Misfortune seems to have followed him through life, with the insatiable pertinacity of the Nemesis of a Greek tragedy. And now in his old age, when for a moment there seemed to shine upon his path the sunshine that promised better days, he finds that suddenly withdrawn, and stands desolate, "stabbed through the heart's affections, to the heart." His younger son died some years ago, of small-pox, in Chicago, and the murder at Alexandria leaves him with his sorrowing wife, lonely, amid the sympathy of the world.

The days of Elmer's childhood and early youth were passed at Troy and in the city of New York, in pursuits various, but energetic and laborious. There is little of interest in the story of these years. He was a proud, affectionate, sensitive, and generous boy, hampered by circumstance, but conscious of great capabilities,—not morbidly addicted to day-dreaming, but always working heartily for something beyond. He was still very young when he went to Chicago, and associated himself in business with Mr. Devereux of Massachusetts.* They managed for a little while, with much success, an agency for securing patents to inventors. Through the treachery of one in whom they had reposed great confidence they suffered severe losses which obliged

them to close their business, and Devereux went back to the East. The next year of Ellsworth's life was a miracle of endurance and uncomplaining fortitude. He read law with great assiduity, and supported himself by copying, in the hours that should have been devoted to recreation. He had no pastimes and very few friends. Not a soul beside himself and the baker who gave him his daily loaf knew how he was living. During all that time, he never slept in a bed, never ate with friends at a social board. So acute was his sense of honor, so delicate his ideas of propriety, that, although himself the most generous of men, he never would accept from acquaintances the slightest favors or courtesies which he was unable to return. He told me once of a severe struggle between inclination and a sense of honor. At a period of extreme hunger, he met a friend in the street who was just starting from the city. He accompanied his friend into a restaurant, wishing to converse with him, but declined taking any refreshment. He represented the savory fragrance of his friend's dinner as almost maddening to his famished senses, while he sat there pleasantly chatting, and deprecating his friend's entreaties to join him in his repast, on the plea that he had just dined.

What would have killed an ordinary man did not injure Ellsworth. His iron frame seemed incapable of dissolution or waste. Circumstance had no power to conquer his spirit. His hearty good-humor never gave way. His sense of honor, which was sometimes even fantastic in its delicacy, freed him from the very temptation to wrong. He knew there was a better time coming for him. Conscious of great mental and bodily strength, with that bright outlook that industry and honor always give a man, he was perfectly secure of ultimate success. His plans mingled in a singular manner the bright enthusiasm of the youthful dreamer and the eminent practicality of the man of affairs. At one time, his mind was fixed on Mexico,—not with the licentious dreams that excit-

* Arthur F. Devereux, Esq., now in command of the Salem Zouave Corps, Eighth Massachusetts Regiment, distinguished for the gallant part borne by it in opening the route to Washington through Annapolis, and in the rescue of the frigate *Constitution*, "Old Ironsides," from the hands of the rebels.

ed the ragged *Condottieri* who followed the fated footsteps of the "gray-eyed man of Destiny," in the wild hope of plunder and power, — nor with the vague reverie in which fanatical theorists construct impossible Utopias on the absurd framework of Icarias or Phalansteries. His clear, bold, and thoroughly executive mind planned a magnificent scheme of commercial enterprise, which, having its centre of operations at Guaymas, should ramify through the golden wastes that stretch in silence and solitude along the tortuous banks of the Rio San José. This was to be the beginning and the ostensible end of the enterprise. Then he dreamed of the influence of American arts and American energy penetrating into the twilight of that decaying nationality, and saw the natural course of events leading on, first, Emigration, then Protection, and at last Annexation. Yet there was no thought of conquest or rapine. The idea was essentially American and Northern. He never wholly lost that dream. One day last winter, when some one was discussing the propriety of an amputation of the States that seemed thoroughly diseased, Ellsworth swept his hand energetically over the map of Mexico that hung upon the wall, and exclaimed, — "*There* is an unanswerable argument against the recognition of the Southern Confederacy."

But the central idea of Ellsworth's short life was the thorough reorganization of the militia of the United States. He had studied with great success the theory of national defence, and, from his observation of the condition of the militia of the several States, he was convinced that there was much of well-directed effort yet lacking to its entire efficiency. In fact, as he expressed it, a well-disciplined body of five thousand troops could land anywhere on our coast and ravage two or three States before an adequate force could get into the field to oppose them. To reform this defective organization, he resolved to devote whatever of talent or energy was his. This was a very large undertaking for a boy, whose majority and moustache were still of the

substance of things hoped for. But nothing that he could propose to himself ever seemed absurd. He attacked his work with his usual promptness and decision.

The conception of a great idea is no proof of a great mind; a man's calibre is shown by the way in which he attempts to realize his idea. A great design planted in a little mind frequently bursts it, and nothing is more pitiable than the spectacle of a man staggering into insanity under a thought too large for him. Ellsworth chose to begin his work simply and practically. He did not write a memorial to the President, to be sent to the Secretary of War, to be referred to the Chief Clerk, to be handed over to File-Clerk No. 99, to be glanced at and quietly thrust into a pigeon-hole labelled "Crazy and trashy." He did not haunt the anteroom of Congressman Somebody, who would promise to bring his plan before the House, and then, bowing him out, give general orders to his footman, "Not at home, hereafter, to that man." He did not float, as some theorists do, ghastly and seedy, around the *Adyta* of popular editors, begging for space and countenance. He wisely determined to keep his theories to himself until he could illustrate them by living examples. He first put himself in thorough training. He practised the manual of arms in his own room, until his dexterous precision was something akin to the sleight of a juggler. He investigated the theory of every movement in an anatomical view, and made several most valuable improvements on Hardee. He rearranged the manual so that every movement formed the logical groundwork of the succeeding one. He studied the science of fence, so that he could hold a rapier with De Villiers, the most dashing of the Algerine swordsmen. He always had a hand as true as steel, and an eye like a ger-falcon. He used to amuse himself by shooting ventilation-holes through his window-panes. Standing ten paces from the window, he could fire the seven shots from his revolver and not shiver the glass beyond the circumference of a half-dollar.

I have seen a photograph of his arm taken at this time. The knotted coil of thews and sinews looks like the magnificent exaggerations of antique sculpture.

His person was strikingly prepossessing. His form, though slight, — exactly the Napoleonic size, — was very compact and commanding; the head statuesquely poised, and crowned with a luxuriance of curling black hair; a hazel eye, bright, though serene, the eye of a gentleman as well as a soldier; a nose such as you see on Roman medals; a light moustache just shading the lips, that were continually curving into the sunniest smiles. His voice, deep and musical, instantly attracted attention; and his address, though not without soldierly brusqueness, was sincere and courteous. There was one thing his backwoods detractors could never forgive: he always dressed well; and sometimes wore the military insignia presented to him by different organizations. One of these, a gold circle, inscribed with the legend, *NON NOBIS, SED PRO PATRIA*, was driven into his heart by the slug of the Virginian assassin.

He had great tact and executive talent, was a good mathematician, possessed a fine artistic eye, sketched well and rapidly, and in short bore a deft and skillful hand in all gentlemanly exercise.

No one ever possessed greater power of enforcing the respect and fastening the affections of men. Strangers soon recognized and acknowledged this power; while to his friends he always seemed like a Paladin or Cavalier of the dead days of romance and beauty. He was so generous and loyal, so stainless and brave, that Bayard himself would have been proud of him. The grand bead-roll of the virtues of the Flower of Kings contains the principles that guided his life; he used to read with exquisite appreciation these lines: —

“To reverence the King as if he were

Their conscience, and their conscience as
their King, —

To break the heathen and uphold the
Christ, —

To ride abroad redressing human wrongs, —
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it, —
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity, —
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds,
Until they won her”;

and the rest, —

“high thoughts, and amiable words,
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
And love of truth, and all that makes a man.”

Such, in person and character, was Ellsworth, when he organized, on the 4th day of May, 1859, the United States Zouave Cadets of Chicago.

This company was the machine upon which he was to experiment. Disregarding all extant works upon tactics, he drew up a simpler system for the use of his men. Throwing aside the old ideas of soldierly bearing, he taught them to use vigor, promptness, and ease. Discarding the stiff buckram strut of martial tradition, he educated them to move with the loafing *insouciance* of the Indian, or the graceful ease of the panther. He tore off their choking collars and binding coats, and invented a uniform which, though too flashy and conspicuous for actual service, was very bright and dashing for holiday occasions, and left the wearer perfectly free to fight, strike, kick, jump, or run.

He drilled these young men for about a year at short intervals. His discipline was very severe and rigid. Added to the punctilio of the martinet was the rigor of the moralist. The slightest exhibition of intemperance or licentiousness was punished by instant degradation and expulsion. He struck from the rolls at one time twelve of his best men for breaking the rule of total abstinence. His moral power over them was perfect and absolute. I believe any one of them would have died for him.

In two or three principal towns of Illinois and Wisconsin he drilled other companies: in Springfield, where he made the friends who best appreciated what was best in him; and in Rockford, where he formed an attachment which imparted a coloring of tender romance to all the days of his busy life that remained. This

tragedy would not have been perfect without the plaintive minor strain of Love in Death.

His company took the Premium Colors at the United States Agricultural Fair, and Ellsworth thought it was time to show to the people some fruit of his drill. They issued their soldierly *défi* and started on their *Marche de Triomphe*. It is useless to recall to those who read newspapers the clustering glories of that bloodless campaign. Hardly had they left the suburbs of Chicago when the murmur of applause began. New York, secure in the championship of half a century, listened with quiet metropolitan scorn to the noise of the shouting provinces; but when the crimson phantasms marched out of the Park, on the evening of the 15th of July, New York, with metropolitan magnanimity, confessed herself utterly vanquished by the good thing that had come out of Nazareth. There was no resisting the Zouaves. As the erring Knight of the Round Table said,—

“men went down before his spear at a touch,

But knowing he was Lancelot; his great name conquered.”

There were one or two Southern companies that issued insulting defiances, but, after a little expenditure of epistolary valor, prudently, though ingloriously, stayed afar,—as is usual in New Gascony. With these exceptions, the heart of the nation went warmly out to these young men. Their endurance, their discipline, their alertness, their *élan*, surprised the sleepy drill-masters out of their propriety, and waked up the people to intense and cordial admiration. Chicago welcomed them home proudly, covered with tan and dust and glory.

Ellsworth found himself for his brief hour the most talked-of man in the country. His pictures sold like wildfire in every city of the land. School-girls dreamed over the graceful wave of his curls, and shop-boys tried to reproduce the *Grand Seigneur* air of his attitude. Zouave corps, brilliant in crimson and gold, sprang up, phosphorescently, in his

wake, making bright the track of his journey. The leading journals spoke editorially of him, and the comic papers caricatured his drill.

So one thing was accomplished. He had gained a name that would entitle him hereafter to respectful attention, and had demonstrated the efficiency of his system of drill. The public did not, of course, comprehend the resistless moral power which he exercised,—imperiously moulding every mind as he willed,—inspiring every soul with his own unresting energy. But the public recognized success, and that for the present was enough.

He quietly formed a regiment in the upper counties of Illinois, and made his best men the officers of it. He tendered its services to Governor Yates immediately on his inauguration, “for any service consistent with honor.” This was the first positive tender made of an organized force in defence of the Constitution. He seemed to recognize more clearly than others the certainty of the coming struggle. It was the soldierly instinct that heard “the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.”

Still intent upon the great plan of militia reform, he came to Springfield. He hoped, in case of the success of Mr. Lincoln in the canvass then pending, to be able to establish in the War Department a Bureau of Militia, which would prove a most valuable auxiliary to his work. His ideas were never vague or indefinite. Means always presented themselves to him, when he contemplated ends. The following were the duties of the proposed bureau, which may serve as a guide to some future reformer: I copy from his own exquisitely neat and clear memorandum, which lies before me:—

“First. The gradual concentration of all business pertaining to the militia now conducted by the several bureaus of this Department.

“Second. The collection and systematizing of accurate information of the number, arm, and condition of the militia of all classes of the several States, and

the compilation of yearly reports of the same for the information of this Department.

"Third. The compilation of a report of the actual condition of the militia and the working of the present systems of the General Government and the various States.

"Fourth. The publication and distribution of such information as is important to the militia, and the conduct of all correspondence relating to militia affairs.

"Fifth. The compilation of a system of instruction for light troops for distribution to the several States, including everything pertaining to the instruction of the militia in the school of the soldier,—company and battalion, skirmishing, bayonet, and gymnastic drill, adapted for self-instruction.

"Sixth. The arrangement of a system of organization, with a view to the establishment of a uniform system of drill, discipline, equipment, and dress, throughout the United States."

His plan for this purpose was very complete and symmetrical. Though enthusiastic, he was never dreamy. His idea always went forth fully armed and equipped.

Nominally, he was a student of law in the office of Lincoln and Herndon, but in effect he passed his time in completing his plans of militia reform. He made in October many stirring and earnest speeches for the Republican candidates. He was very popular among the country people. His voice was magnificent in melody and volume, his command of language wonderful in view of the deficiencies of his early education, his humor inexhaustible and hearty, and his manner deliberate and impressive, reminding his audiences in Central Illinois of the earliest and best days of Senator Douglas.

When the Legislature met, he prepared an elaborate military bill, the adoption of which would have placed the State in an enviable attitude of defence. The stupid jealousy of colonels and majors who had won bloodless glory, on both sides, in the

Mormon War, and the malignant prejudice instigated by the covert treason that lurked in Southern Illinois, succeeded in staving off the passage of the bill, until it was lost by the expiration of the term. Many of these men are now in the ranks, shouting the name of Ellsworth as a battle-cry.

He came to Washington in the escort of the President elect. Hitherto he had been utterly independent of external aid. The time was come when he must wait for the coöperation of others, for the accomplishment of his life's great purpose. He wished a position in the War Department, which would give him an opportunity for the establishment of the Militia Bureau. He was a strange anomaly at the capital. He did not care for money or luxury. Though sensitive in regard to his reputation, for the honor of his work, his motto always was that of the sage Merlin,—*"I follow use, not fame."* An office-seeker of this kind was an eccentric and suspicious personage. The hungry thousands that crowded and pushed at Willard's thought him one of them, only deeper and slier. The simplicity and directness of his character, his quick sympathy and thoughtless generosity, and his delicate sense of honor unfitted him for such a scramble as that which degrades the quadrennial rotations of our Departments. He withdrew from the contest for the position he desired, and the President, who loved him like a younger brother, made him a lieutenant in the army, intending to detail him for special service.

The jealousy of the staff-officers of the regular army, who always discover in any effective scheme of militia reform the overthrow of their power, and who saw in the young Zouave the promise of brilliant and successful innovation, was productive of very serious annoyance and impediment to Ellsworth. In the midst of this, he fell sick at Willard's. While he lay there, the news from the South began to show that the rebels were determined upon war, and the rumors on the street said that a wholesome North-

westerly breeze was blowing from the Executive Mansion. These indications were more salutary to Ellsworth than any medicine. We were talking one night of coming probabilities, and I spoke of the doubt so widely existing as to the loyalty of the people. He rejoined, earnestly,—“I can only speak for myself. You know I have a great work to do, to which my life is pledged; I am the only earthly stay of my parents; there is a young woman whose happiness I regard as dearer than my own: yet I could ask no better death than to fall next week before Sumter. I am not better than other men. You will find that patriotism is not dead, even if it sleeps.”

Sumter fell, and the sleeping awoke. The spirit of Ellsworth, cramped by a few weeks' intercourse with politicians, sprang up full-statured in the Northern gale. He cut at once the meshes of red tape that had hampered and held him, threw up his commission, and started for New York without orders, without assistance, without authority, but with the consciousness that the President would sustain him. The rest the world knows. I will be brief in recalling it.

In an incredibly short space of time he enlisted and organized a regiment, eleven hundred strong, of the best fighting material that ever went to war. He divided it, according to an idea of his own, into groups of four comrades each, for the campaign. He exercised a personal supervision over the most important and the most trivial minutæ of the regimental business. The quick sympathy of the public still followed him. He became the idol of the Bowery and the pet of the Avenue. Yet not one instant did he waste in recreation or lionizing. Indulgent to all others, he was merciless to himself. He worked day and night, like an incarnation of Energy. When he arrived with his men in Washington, he was thin, hoarse, flushed, but entirely contented and happy, because busy and useful.

Of the bright enthusiasm and the quenchless industry of the next few

weeks what need to speak? Every day, by his unceasing toil and care, by his vigor, alertness, activity, by his generosity, and by his relentless rigor when duty commanded, he grew into the hearts of his robust and manly followers, until every man in the regiment feared him as a Colonel should be feared, and loved him as a brother should be loved.

On the night of the twenty-third of May, he called his men together, and made a brief, stirring speech to them, announcing their orders to advance on Alexandria. “Now, boys, go to bed, and wake up at two o'clock for a sail and a skirmish.” When the camp was silent, he began to work. He wrote many hours, arranging the business of the regiment. He finished his labor as the midnight stars were crossing the zenith. As he sat in his tent by the shore, it seems as if the mystical gales from the near eternity must have breathed for a moment over his soul, freighted with the odor of amaranths and asphodels. For he wrote two strange letters: one to her who mourns him faithful in death; one to his parents. There is nothing braver or more pathetic. With the prophetic instinct of love, he assumed the office of consoler for the stroke that impended.

In the dewy light of the early dawn he occupied the first rebel town. With his own hand he tore down the first rebel flag. He added to the glories of that morning the seal of his blood.

The poor wretch who stumbled upon an immortality of infamy by murdering him died at the same instant. The two stand in the light of that event—clearly revealed—types of the two systems in conflict to-day: the one, brave, refined, courtly, generous, tender, and true; the other, not lacking in brute courage, reckless, besotted, ignorant, and cruel.

Let the two systems, Freedom and Slavery, stand thus typified forever, in the red light of that dawn, as on a Mount of Transfiguration. I believe that may solve the dark mystery why Ellsworth died.