

THE BEARLESS DRUMMER-BOY.

In the year 1812, in the ninth regiment of the line, which formed part of the grand army that Napoleon lost in Russia, there was a little drummer-boy named Bilboquet. Of course that was not the name his godfathers and godmothers had given him in his baptism, but it was the one by which he was known throughout the regiment. The soldiers, and especially the grown-up drummer, and, above all, the terrible drum-major were in the habit of teasing little Bilboquet, as boy had never been teased before. The drum-major used often to beat him across the shoulders with the heavy cane, which these military beards are in the habit of swinging and twisting at the head of the regiment. At first, little Bilboquet used to cry, but then his comrades only laughed at him, and the terrible drum-major beat him the more. Yet little Bilboquet never did any thing that was wrong—not in one sense, that is to say, for in another, he never did any thing right. He was neither lazy, nor untidy, nor greedy, nor mean, nor revengeful; though he did certainly owe a grudge to the drum-major, which he was resolved, one day or other, to pay; but he always had his drum slung too much on one side, or got out of step marching, or stood in the wrong place when the company was drawn up in a line, or committed some mistake, which was natural enough on the part of a boy who had left his top and his marbles to join the greatest general of the age, but which was looked upon by the drum-major and other rigid disciplinarians, as quite unpardonable.

The ninth of the line, with Bilboquet at its head—the drummer always march in front—was on the banks of the Dwina, and on the high road to Moscow, when the general commanding the brigade of which this regiment formed a part, was ordered by the Emperor to occupy a position on the other side of an enormous ravine.

The ravine was defended by a battery of six guns. These guns were of a large caliber, and were well served by the Russians.

"Are those anything like the pop-guns you used to play with at school, young Bilboquet?" asked the magnificent but slightly brutal drum-major as he twisted his long moustache between his finger and thumb.

The little drummer bit his lips, for he felt that the tall oppressor doubted his courage; but he did not utter a word.

"Do you hear how the ground shakes," continued the giant. "Ah! its lucky your head is not so high as mine, and its luckier still that the Cossacks have a very excellent habit of firing into the air."

But the Cossacks lowered the muzzles of their pieces, and then the drum-major and his little pupil, saw whole files of soldiers knocked down like skittles, with this difference: that it would be impossible ever to make them stand up again.

An aid-de-camp now galloped up to the colonel of the ninth, who was in front of the regiment, close to where Bilboquet and the drum-major were standing.

"Take the battery with two hundred men," were the concise orders.

"Yes! its easy enough to say 'take the battery with two hundred men,'" muttered an old sergeant, "but I should like to see twenty of them get there."

"The Emperor is waiting," added the aid-de-camp, observing that the soldiers were not overpleased with the work they had before them.

The captain of Bilboquet's company was to lead the assault with two hundred voltigeurs.

"If the Emperor is looking at us, we must be quick," said the old sergeant, as he fixed his bayonet to his fire-lock.

The captain noticed considerable hesitation in the ranks. Twice he had ordered the drum-major to take a couple of drummers, go to the front, and beat the charge. The drum-major was evidently in no hurry. He was leaning on his long cane and shook his head from side to side as he examined the drummers, without the slightest appearance of enthusiasm.

In the meanwhile, Bilboquet sat astride on his little drum, whistling a martial air between his teeth and beating a tattoo with his fingers on the parchment.

At length, the captain lowered his brow, and in a voice of thunder, roared out the order for the third time. The gigantic drum-major, nevertheless, seemed inclined to spend a few minutes more in the selection of his drummers, when suddenly, young Bilboquet sprang up, fastened his drum to his side, seized his drum-sticks convulsively, and passing close to his tyrant, looked at him from head to foot, and exclaimed with an air of triumph—

"Now, who's afraid of the pop-guns?" The drum-major was about to strike him, but Bilboquet was at the head of the two companies, beating the charge, in furious styles. The soldiers advanced after him towards the terrible battery.

The commander of the fort had seen the aid-de-camp gallop up to the ninth regiment, and had understood that his battery was to be silenced by an assaulting column. But as the old sergeant had remarked, it was necessary first of all to reach it. The Russians determined to reserve their fire; and when the French had marched over half about the ground that separated them from the guns, they were received with a general discharge, which seemed to blow the attacking party to pieces. Still young Bilboquet ran ahead, hammering away at his drum, as if in mockery of the Russian artillery. With wonderful rapidity, the gunners reloaded, and again plowed up the ranks of the advancing voltigeurs. Bilboquet was not touching, but on looking round he saw that scarcely a quarter of the two

companies were following him. The rest were lying wounded on the plain. Bilboquet's drum sounded like twenty. If his drum had been the enemy, he could not have attacked it with greater violence. The critical moment had now been passed. It would be impossible for the Russians to fire on their assailants a third time, for, in half a minute they would be in the battery, engaged in a hand to hand fight with the artillerymen. Another rush, and after receiving a volley of musketry, which scarcely took effect, the voltigeurs, with Bilboquet still at their head, leaped into the battery, and in a few seconds had dispersed their opponents and captured the terrible guns.

During the attack, the Emperor stood on a hillock watching the progress. He shuddered, as each volley of artillery swept down his men, and when at length he saw less than half a company enter the battery, he lowered his glass, exclaiming—"Brave fellows!"

The ten thousand men of the Imperial Guard, who were stationed near him, began to clap their hands and to shout, "Bravo Voltigeurs." And these were good critics; they knew what they were applauding.

Immediately afterward, Napoleon gave some orders to an aid-de-camp, who, thereupon, set off at a gallop toward the battery, and instantly returning at the same pace.

"How many got in?" inquired the Emperor.

"Forty-one, Sire," replied the aid-de-camp. "Forty-one crosses to-morrow morning," said the Emperor, turning toward the general of the brigade to which the ninth belonged.

The next day, the regiment was formed in a circle around the remains of the two companies that had been entrusted with the capture of the battery. As the name of each was called out, the soldier answering to it, stepped forward to the general, and received the Cross of the Legion of Honor.

The ceremony was over, the forty-one had received their crosses, and the men were about to be marched back to their encampments, when a voice from the ranks cried out—

"And I then; am I to have nothing?"

It was Bilboquet, the little drummer-boy, who had been quite forgotten.

The general looked round and saw the young hero standing before him, his face red with excitement, and two big tears starting from his eyes.

"You, what do you want?" asked the general.

"Why, general, wasn't I one of them?" inquired Bilboquet, almost in a passion. Didn't I beat the charge in front of them all, and wasn't I the first who got into the battery?"

"It is true, general, he did," exclaimed forty-one voices.

"Silence in the ranks," shouted the general, then turning to Bilboquet, he said—

"What am I to do, my poor boy? It's very hard they have forgotten you—beside, you are very young," he continued. "Wait till you have hair on your chin, and then you'll get the cross, too. In the meanwhile, you must try to console yourself with this."

And with these words, the general held out a forty-franc piece to the unfortunate Bilboquet, who looked at it for a few seconds without evincing the slightest intentions of taking it. All were silent. Every one was looking at the poor little drummer-boy, and wondering what he would do. His eyes were full of tears, and those who had been the first to tease him, now pitied him from the bottom of their hearts. The whole regiment seemed inclined to take up his case, and probably the result would have been a petition to the Emperor, had not the young drummer changed his attitude.

He raised his head, looked the general full in the face, and said—

"Well, give it to me, I must wait for another time."

And without waiting any farther ceremony, he put the coin in his pocket, and went back to the ranks humming an air.

From this moment no one thought of ill-treating young Bilboquet. But he was not very communicative to his comrades, and seemed to have some strange project in his head, about which he was constantly meditating. It was expected that he would spend his forty francs in a treat, and several hints to that effect were thrown out by his fellow-soldiers. But no. Bilboquet kept his money and his counsel to himself.

Some time afterward, the French army entered Smolensk. Bilboquet had assisted at the capture, and the day after, walked all over the town, examining every face with remarkable curiosity. He seemed pleased with most of the physiognomies he saw, for he was perpetually smiling, especially when he met a man with a long beard, and he met several thousands of them in course of the day.

However, the beards of Smolensk are, for the most part, carotty. This seemed not to have yet met with Bilboquet's approbation; but he probably reflected that, if the Russians, the Poles and other Slavonians had red beards, that was not their fault, and that they had not chosen that color themselves for the purpose of annoying a French drummer-boy. However, that may have been, he continued to laugh whenever he met a man with red beard, until at last, he found himself in the Jewish quarter of the city, where all the beards were black.

Bilboquet did not like Jews, but he liked their black beards, and indeed, was so delighted, that he resolved to have one of them, and that without delay.

Behind the counter, in a dirty little shop, which was one of a long line, stood a Hebrew, with a magnificent beard as black as ebony.

"What do you want, my little man?" said the Jew patronizingly.

"I want your beard," answered Bilboquet, in a decided tone.

"My beard? you're joking, my little man!" suggested its proprietor, with an uneasy expression of countenance.

"I want your beard, I tell you," repeated Bilboquet, as he put his hand to his saber; "and what's more, I mean to have it. But don't think I want to rob you of it," he added; "here is a forty franc piece, and you can keep the change."

The poor Jew tried to convince Bilboquet that his beard would be of no use to him that it was not worth forty-francs, or forty sous or forty centimes to any one, that he, Bilboquet, would do much better to invest his money in horse-hair, if he really wanted anything of that kind, that he, the Jew, would gladly undertake such a commission, and so on.

But it was all in vain. Bilboquet was determined to have his forty franc's worth of black beard. Some French soldiers had been attracted to the Jew's shop by the high words that had passed between the latter and Bilboquet; and having ascertained what the quarrel was about, came to the conclusion that the drummer-boy's notion was both humorous and original, and called upon the Hebrew to surrender his chin at discretion.

Fortunately for the Jew, one of the soldiers who were present, happened to be the barber of the regiment; we say fortunately, because, in the absence of a razor, there can be no doubt whatever, but that he would have been shaven with a saber. However, the beard was taken off, more or less, according to art, and given to Bilboquet, who folded it up carefully in a piece of paper, and stowed it away in his pocket.

When Bilboquet regained his quarters, he got the regimental tailor to sew the Jew's beard, or Bilboquet's beard as it had now become, to a strip of parchment cut from an old drum, and then, without giving any explanation of his design, put it at the very bottom of his napsack. His comrades bothered him about the matter for a few days, but then the regiment started eastward, and after the battle of Borodino, and the taking of Moscow, such incidents as Bilboquet's adventures with the Jew of Smolensk, naturally escaped recollection.

Then came the horrors of the retreat—cold, Cossacks, and famine. Napoleon's army was decimated in the worst sense; that is to say, every tenth man was spared, while the nine others fell victims to the Cossack's lances, hunger, or to the Russian snow. The ninth regiment formed part of the rear-guard, which fought so magnificently under the leadership and auspices of Ney. Little Bilboquet was among the most fortunate, for he was neither wounded nor frost-bitten.

A few days after the terrible passage of the Beresino, the troops had to cross a small river, over which the engineers had already thrown a bridge. Bilboquet's brigade, which formed the extreme rear, had passed over in safety, and the great point now was to prevent the Russians following. The general ordered the sappers to blow up the bridge, but the explosion was attended with only partial success. One half of the bridge was still connected with the other, by means of a single beam. If this beam could be cut in two, the whole structure would fall into the water. Otherwise the enemy would have no difficulty in repairing the bridge, and their pursuit would not be delayed for more than an hour at most. Some sappers were directed to get on a raft, and endeavor to destroy the raft altogether, but the Russians arrived on the opposite bank of the river, before the order could be obeyed, and opened a murderous fire which seemed to render its execution quite impossible. The French returned the fire, and the army was about to move on, when suddenly a soldier with a hatchet on his shoulder, plunged into the river, dived, and came up half a minute afterward at a short distance from the beam, which it was desired to sever. By his long beard, it was easy to see that this was a sapper, who was so nobly sacrificing himself for the sake of his comrades. This brave man swam vigorously toward the important point, and continued his course through a shower of bullets, which caused the water to boil all around him, until at last he reached the centre pile, and climbing up to it, got on to the bridge. The beam was not so large as it appeared from the shore, and it was already half divided. With one blow, the soldier cuts it in two, when the bridge and himself with it, fell into the water with a tremendous crash.

The Russians, in their astonishment, ceased firing for a moment, but the Frenchman soon rose to the surface, and was then again saluted with a storm of shot. Now, a hundred poles were extended to the daring sapper, and the general himself was among the most enthusiastic applauders of his gallant exploit.

Suddenly, the general gave a start.

"What is that?" he exclaimed.

He might well be astonished, for the supposed sapper who had destroyed the bridge, was no other than young Bilboquet, the drummer, with his belebrated black beard tied under his chin.

"It's only me," said Bilboquet, "the drummer-boy, that you said that you'd give the cross to, when he had hair on his chin. I've beard, now, general, and a capitol one, too—I gave your forty francs for it, and I think it ought to be good."

The general was fairly stupefied by the youngster's courage, and scarcely less so by his originality and humor. He took Bilboquet by the hand, and without a moment's delay, gave him the cross he had been wearing on his breast.

From that moment, even the veterans of the regiment treated Bilboquet with respect, and the drum-major never struck him any more with his long cane.

PROPOSED NEW REPUBLIC.

Since the right of secession is claimed by the south, and conceded by the dominant party in the north, it is proper to look at results. If South Carolina can secede for any pretended cause—herself, of course, sole judge in the case—then Maine can secede. So can Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota, or Oregon. If one State can secede so can another; and, as a logical consequence, each State can coalesce with other States, and form republics of one, two, or twenty out of the original fragments of this Union.

Now, if this is to be the prevailing doctrine, we would propose the following list of confederacies:

REPUBLIC NO. 1.

A southern republic, with all the slave States, save Delaware and Missouri, the latter, in fact and feeling being a western state, and will soon be as free as Ohio, with New Mexico and the Indian territory.

The staple productions of this republic, would be cotton, tobacco, sugar, nullification and niggers.

REPUBLIC NO. 2.

A western republic, including the seven north-western states, Missouri, Kansas and Nebraska.

The productions of this republic would be wheat, corn, beef, pork, potatoes and popular sovereignty.

REPUBLIC NO. 3.

The central republic, including New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware.—The latter named state has elected a Lincolnite to Congress, and has not niggers enough to-day to run a respectable hotel.

The productions of the central republic would be a great variety of cereals, cider, panic-makers, and politicians.

REPUBLIC NO. 4.

The Puritan republic, including the six New England states.

Productions—Prayers, priests, and pumpkin pies.

REPUBLIC NO. 5.

The Pacific republic, including California, Oregon, and Washington territory, with the eventual addition of Sonora and Utah.

Staples—Gold, grizzly bears and babies. Here are republics enough to suit seceders, and when any of the states are dissatisfied with their new unions, all they will have to do will be to raise the flag of disunion, and march to a more congenial section, a la Mexicana.—[From the Cleveland Plaindealer.]

HOW THE LONDON TIMES IS PRINTED.—A correspondent of the Philadelphia Ledger, having visited the office and press room of the "Great Thunderer," communicates the following interesting facts which came under his observation: "They use nine tons of paper a day—enough to reach to Dover, eighty miles. The water to wet the paper is raised by an engine, and going through a perforated zinc cylinder, falls on an endless blanket and wets twenty-four sheets at a time. They use twenty-seven kegs, or two tons of ink in a week. Moulds for electrotyping are made of paper mache, from which lead impressions are taken and ready for use in half an hour; can take six plates from a mould, the manner of doing it without burning the mould is a secret; save six hours by electrotyping. Have an eight cylinder Applegate press, that takes twelve thousand five hundred impressions, and a Hoe's ten cylinder, that turns out sixteen thousand four hundred an hour, working six men. The latter moving horizontally, is not near so complicated as the former, which works vertically. They prefer Applegate's, as it does its work more neatly. Employ 360 men, and issue 55,000; have a man who counts 300 in a minute, and they are all delivered five minutes after the stoppage of the press. One dealer takes 28,000 copies in twenty-four carts.—Two twelve-horse power engines are used.—Forty years ago only took 1200 per hour; and first yearly volume (1891) is but quarter the size of the quarterlies of late years."

AN INCONTROVERTIBLE PROOF.—An old ironside Baptist preacher, in the eastern part of the State of North Carolina, was on one occasion, in a sermon, defending the favorite notion of his sect—that no education is necessary for a minister of the gospel, and made use of this most unanswerable argumentum ad hominem. "Now, my brethren, when did you ever read or hear that the disciples were educated men? No such thing. They were every one ignorant fishermen, like yourselves. But then, some tell you, that Paul was a learned man. No such thing; for he tells us himself that he was brought up at the foot of Gam-mel-hill. Brought up, mark ye, not educated. Now Paul was the chief of the Apostles and if he was brought up only at the foot of Gam-mel-hill, he must have had no education.—Why? Because, my brethren, I know, and you know where Gam-mel-hill is; and you all know that on the top of Gam-mel-hill, there is only an old tumble-down-log-cabin of a school-house. No college, mark ye. Now it stands to reason, if Paul himself was brought up only at the foot of Gam-mel-hill, not even in the old school-house at the top, he must have had no education; therefore, education is not necessary for a minister of the gospel."