

A Son's Adventures.

I WAS born in the Luxembourg just about fifty years ago. Goodness! How I used to work at the bench when I was a lad, sewing and hammering, hammering and sewing on boots and shoes. There was that dear old father of mine, with his big steel-rimmed spectacles perched on his nose, who set me an example of thrift and honesty.

"Above all," he would say to us, for a brother then worked with me, "be a good shoemaker. Never scamp anything. Do the best you can, and do it all the time."

We would work from sunrise till far into the night. The pay we got was little enough, so small that we used to watch the candle that fluttered in the wind, and worry over its cost. If we worked very, very hard, and custom was good, we might count on a gain of ten sous each, but sometimes we would all stop pegging away because the poor people in our village had no money to pay for shoes. Oh! how difficult it was to buy a sack of coarse flour or a little scrap of meat. We lived from hand to mouth. Poor old father, do what we could to help him, he got into debt, and owed at one time as much as thirty francs. What a huge sum that seemed to me to be what a whole mountain of embarrassment!

I starved myself in order to put a little money aside. One day I said to father:

"This thing don't work. I am going to clear out. I can't stand it."

"You will leave me, my son? Your poor old father is an incubance to you?"

"No, not at all. But I must go away to work for him."

"It is well," replied my father. "You are a good shoemaker. Your stitches are strong and even. You shape well. Go see the world, and God's blessing accompany you."

I went to Paris and led a miserable life there for a time. I hardly gained my bread at first. The habits of the Parisian shoemaker horrified me, for I had been brought up by a pious father. I was a good workman, however, and after awhile found steady employment, but I could help poor father but very little. Oh! it used to make my heart sore to think of him cramped up in his little, dingy room, working away for dear life, with the meagre reward of a crust of dried bread. The habits of economy he had taught me helped me then. I scraped together sou by sou and at last sent him 10f. He wrote me that the sum had saved him from being turned out of his poor old chamber. "This will never do," I said. I must go somewhere else. I am a good shoemaker, and my experience in Paris has given me the finishing touch. I must go somewhere else where the art of Crispin will be appreciated." One fine day in 1850 I took a place as landsman on an English bark, from Havre to Boston. I landed in the United States with just forty cents (two francs) in my pocket. I sought work at once. I saw in a little shoemaker's shop up a narrow street a sign written on paper and stuck on the glass with wafers. I could not read it. I did not know a single word of English then, but over the door there was a German name. I made bold to enter and talked German to the proprietor.

"Sit down," he said, "on that bench, and sew me on that sole."

"I am a fair shoemaker, as you will see," I replied.

It was a pleasure to take hold of the tools once more; they seemed to know me. How I blessed my father then.

My boss was satisfied, and I got a job right off at one dollar day and my food. That was a fortune to me then. I worked for six months steadily, and, save for a second-hand pair of trousers, bought by me at a bargain, I hoarded every penny. I sent the dear old father fifty dollars, and back came his blessing. He wrote he had never seen so much money at one time in his life. But I was ambitious. Just then the California fever was raging. Something told me to go to the Pacific coast. I took ship and crossed the Isthmus. Just before arriving at San Francisco there was a heavy gale; we came near being shipwrecked, and I lost my hat. I remember that quite well. I landed in San Francisco with one dollar exactly. On board there was a carousing shoemaker, who had been sent for from the East by a man who had kept a shop in San Francisco. I heard him say that he had come before his time, and that, anyway, if he could do better he was not going to work at cobbling. He mentioned the name of the man who was to hire him, and I had his consent to apply for the place.

I went to the shoe-shop at once and asked for the position.

"It is given to another man, who ought to be here soon, and I can't make use of you. Besides, you have no hat."

"That makes no difference," I replied. "I see shoemakers' wages are six dollars a day—(it was the flush times of California then)—give me three dollars and feed me, and only let me stay until the man you hired turns up, for I am indeed a shoemaker."

The boss gave a kind of grudging consent. Then I set to work, and slept that night in the shop. When the master came to the place in the morning he found everything in elegant order, and I had made five dollars before breakfast by mending a boot. I suited him exactly—for I am a good shoemaker. I lived with that man for a year, and saved all my money. I sent the dear old fellow at home one hundred dollars. If you could only have seen the letter that came back! The blessed old daddy wanted to know if I thought he was a spendthrift? That one hundred dollars he was going to make do for the next three years! There was a chance I heard of in Sacramento. I went there, my master giving me some of his shop-worn stock. I did a splendid business. In six months I had made for my share \$3,000. My fortune was before me. Poor old daddy was not forgotten. I got a cross letter from him this time. The poor simple soul wanted to know whether I thought he was going to the dogs. Did I want to make him a drunkard, a gourmand, and put all kinds of temptation in his way? Too much money was the source of all evil. I was robbing myself to pamper him—but for all that there was a lot of sweetness in the letter.

Well, I thought that fortune was now mine. But one night a bad fire broke out and I was burned out. Fires occur in Sacramento every night and were the work of thieves. I gathered together the few pairs of boots. I could put my hands on, and placed them with my money, all in gold, in a trunk, and I carried it out of the wooden shanty just as the roof fell in. For better security I sat on my trunk, and gazed bewildered-like at the flames. "I have something left," I said, after all, "to begin the world with." Just then I was struck a heavy blow over the head with a club, and lost all consciousness. When I came to I found myself on the ground and my trunk gone. The thieves had done the business for me. Ah! then I gave myself up, just for a moment, to despair. "I am ruined—ruined for ever—