

THE SUBSTITUTE

(By Francois Coppee.)

He was scarcely ten years old when he was arrested as a vagrant. He spoke thus to the judge: "I am called Jean Francois Leture, and for six months I was with the man who sings and plays upon a cord of catgut between the lanterns at the Place de la Bastille. I sang the refrain with him, and after that I called, 'Here's all the new songs, ten centimes, two sous!' He was always drunk, and used to beat me. That is why the police picked me up the other night. Before that I was with the man who sells brushes. My mother was a laundress, her name was Adele. At one time she lived on the ground floor at Montmartre. She was a good workwoman and liked me. She made money, because she had for customers waiters in the cafes, and they use a good deal of linen. On Sundays she used to put me to bed early so that she could go to the ball. On week-days she sent me to Les Freres, where I learned to read. Well, the sergeant-de-ville, whose beat was on our street, used always to stop before our windows to talk with her—a good-looking chap with a medal from the Crimea. They were married, and after that every thing went wrong. He didn't take to me, and turned mother against me. Every one had a blow for me, and so, to get out of the house, I spent whole days in the Place Clugny, where I knew the mountebanks. My step-father lost his place and my mother her work. She used to go out washing to take care of him; this gave her a cough—the steam—she is dead—died at Lauboisserie. She was a good woman. Since then I have lived with the seller of brushes and the catgut scraper. Are you going to send me to prison?"

He said this openly, cynically, like a man. He was a little ragged street arab, as tall as a boot, his forehead hidden under a queer mop of yellow hair.

Nobody claimed him, and they sent him to the Reform School. Not very intelligent, clumsy with his hands, the only trade he could learn there was not a good one—that of reseating straw chairs. However, he was obedient, naturally quiet and silent, and he did not seem to be profoundly corrupted by that school of vice. But when in his seventeenth year he was thrown out again on the street of Paris, he un-expectedly found there his prison comrades, all great scamps, exercising dirty professions, teaching dogs to catch rats in the sewers and blacking shoes on ball nights in the passage of the opera, amateur wrestlers, who permitted themselves to be thrown by the Hercules of the booths, or fishing at noontime from vaults. All of these occupations he followed to some extent, and some months after he came out of the house of correction he was arrested again for a petty theft—a pair of old shoes priggled from a shop window. Result: A year in the prison of Sainte Pelagie, where he served as warden to the political prisoners.

He lived in much surprise among the group of prisoners, all very young, negligent in dress, who talked in loud voices and carried their heads in a very solemn fashion. They used to meet in the cell of one of the oldest of them, a fellow of some thirty years, already a long time in prison and quite a fixture at Sainte Pelagie—a large cell, the walls covered with colored caricatures, and from the window of which one could see all Paris—its roofs, its spires and its domes—and far away the distant line of hills, blue and indistinct upon the sky. There were upon the walls some shelves filled with volumes and all the old paraphernalia of a fencing room: broken masks, rusty foils, breast-plates and gloves that were losing their tow. It was there that the "politicians" used to dine together, adding to the everlasting "soup and beef," fruit, cheese, and joints of wine, which Jean Francois went out and got by the can—a turbulent repast interrupted by violent disputes, and where, during the dinner, the "Carmagnole" and "Co-cha" were sung in full chorus. They assumed, however, an air of great dignity on those days, when a new-comer was brought in among them, at first entertaining him gravely as a citizen, but on the morrow using him with affectionate familiarity and calling him by his nickname. Great words were used there: corruption, responsibility and phrases quite unintelligible to Jean Francois—such as this, for example, which he once heard imperiously put forth by a frightful little hawk-backed who blotted some writing-paper every night: "It is done. This is the composition of the Cabinet: Raymond, the Bureau of Public Instruction; Marcial, the Interior; and for Foreign Affairs, myself."

His time done, he wandered again around Paris, watched afar by the police, after the fashion of cock-fighters made by cruel children to fly at the end of a string. He became

one of those fugitives and timid beings whom the law, with a sort of coquetry, arrests and releases by turns—something like those platonic fishers who, in order that they may not exhaust their fish pond, throw immediately back into water the fish which has just come out of the net. Without a suspicion on his part that so much honor has been done to so sorry a subject, he had a special bundle of memoranda in the mysterious portfolios of the Rue de Jerusalem. His name was written in round hand on the gray paper of the cover, and the notes and reports, carefully classified, gave him his successive appellations: "Name, Leture"; the prisoner Leture; and at last "the criminal Leture."

He was two years out of prison, finding where he could, sleeping in the night lodgings-houses and sometimes in lime-kilns, and taking part with his fellows in interminable games of pitch-penny on the boulevards near the barriers. He wore a grubby cap on the back of his head, carpet slippers and a short white blouse. When he had five sous he had his hair curled. He danced at Constant's at Montparnasse; bought for two sous to sell for four at the door of Bobino, the jack of hearts or the ace of clubs serving as a countermark; sometimes opened the door of a carriage; led horses to the horse market. From the lottery of all sorts of miserable employments he drew a goodly number. Who can say if the atmosphere of honor which one breathes as a soldier, if military discipline might not have saved him? Taken in a cast of the net with some young loafers who robbed drunkards sleeping on the streets, he denied very earnestly having taken part in their expeditions. Perhaps he told the truth, but his antecedents were accepted in lieu of proofs, and he was sent for three years to Poissy. There he made coarse playthings for children, was tattooed on the chest, learned thieves' slang and the Penal Code. A new liberation and a new plunge into the sink of Paris: but very short this time, for at the end of six months, at the most, he was again compromised in a night robbery, aggravated by climbing and breaking out in an open and framed peal of laughter which showed his white teeth, a peal so contagious that all the scholars laughed loudly in their turn. It was such a sweet, simple group in the bright sunlight, which lighted their dear eyes and their blond curls.

Jean Francois looked at them for some time in silence, and for the first time in that savage nature—all instinct and appetite—there awoke a mysterious, a tender emotion. His heart, that seared and hardened heart, unmoved when the convict's cudgel or the heavy whip of the watchman fell on his shoulders, beat oppressively. In that sight he saw again his infancy and closing his eyes sadly, the prey to torturing regret, he walked quickly away.

Then the words written on the blackboard came back to his mind. "If it wasn't too late, after all!" he murmured. "If I could again, like others, eat honestly my brown bread and sleep my fill without nightmare! The spy must be sharp who recognizes me. My beard, which I shaved off down there, has grown out thick and strong. One can burrow somewhere in the great ant hill, and work can be found. Whoever is not worked to death in the hell of the galleys comes out agile and robust, and I learned there to climb ropes with loads upon my back. Building is going on everywhere here, and the masons need helpers. Three francs a day! I never earned so much. Let me be forgotten, and that is all I ask."

He followed his courageous resolution, he was faithful to it, and after three months he was another man. The master for whom he worked called him his best workman. After a long day upon the scaffolding in the hot sun and the dust, constantly bending and raising his back to take the load from the man at his feet and pass it to the man over his head, he went for his soap to the cobbler-shop tired out, his legs aching, his hands burning, his eyelids stuck with plaster, but content with himself, and carrying his well-earned money in a knot in his handkerchief. He went out now without fear, since he had noticed that the suspicious glances of the policeman were seldom turned on the tired workman. He was quiet and sober. He slept the sound sleep of fatigue. He was free!

At last—Oh, supreme recompense!—he had a friend. He was a fellow-workman like himself, named Savinien, a little peasant with red lips, who had come to Paris with his stick over his shoulder and a bundle on the end of it, fleeing from the wine shops and going to Mass every Sunday. Jean Francois loved him for his piety, for his candor, for his honesty, for all that he himself had lost so long ago. It was a passion, profound and unrestrained, which transformed him by fatherly cares and attentions. Savinien, himself of a weak and egotistical nature, let things take their course, satisfied only in finding a companion who shared his horror of the wine shop. The two friends lived together in a fairly comfortable lodging, but their resources were very limited. They were obliged to take into their room a third companion, an old Auvergnat, gloomy and rancorous, who found it possible out of his meagre salary to save something with which to buy a place in his own country. Jean Francois and Savinien were always together. On holidays they took long walks in the environs of Paris, and dined under an arbor in one of those small country inns where there are a great many mushrooms in the sauces and innocent rebuses on the napkins. There Jean Francois learned from his friend all that lore of which they who are born in the city are ignorant; learned the names of the trees, the flowers and the plants; the various seasons for harvesting. He heard eagerly the thousand details of a laborious country life—the autumn sowing, the winter chores, the splendid celebrations of harvest and vintage days, the sound of the mills at the waterside, and the flails striking the ground, the tired horses led to water and the hunting in the morning mist; and, above all, the long evenings around the fire of vine shoots, that were shortened by some marvellous stories. He discovered in himself a source of imagination before unknown, and found a singular delight in the recital of events so placid, so calm, so monotonous.

One thing troubled him, however: it was the fear lest Savinien might learn something of his past. Sometimes there escaped from him some low word of thieves' slang, a vulgar gesture—vestiges of his former

USED MEN AT THE OFFICE UP AND TIRED OUT WOMEN IN THE HOME CHILDREN AT SCHOOL

Every day in the week and every week in the year men, women and children feel all used up and tired out. The strain of business, the cares of home and social life and the task of study cause terrible suffering from heart and nerve troubles. The efforts put forth to keep up to the modern "high pressure" mode of life in this age soon wears out the strongest system, shatters the nerves and weakens the heart. Thousands find life a burden and others an early grave. The strain on the system causes nervousness, palpitation of the heart, nervous prostration, sleeplessness, faint and dizzy spells, skip beats, weak and irregular pulse, smothering and sinking spells, etc. The blood becomes weak and watery and eventually causes decline.

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watching him seemed scarcely less childlike than his; above all, when delighted with some of his own simple and priestly pleasantries, he broke out in an open and framed peal of laughter which showed his white teeth, a peal so contagious that all the scholars laughed loudly in their turn. It was such a sweet, simple group in the bright sunlight, which lighted their dear eyes and their blond curls.

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horrible existence—and he felt the pain one feels when old wounds reopen, the more because he fancied that he sometimes saw in Savinien the awakening of an unhealthy curiosity. When the young man, already tempted by the pleasantries which Paris offers to the poorest, asked him about the mysteries of the great city, Jean Francois feigned ignorance and told the subject; but he felt a vague inquietude for the future of his friend.

His uneasiness was not without foundation. Savinien could not long remain the simple rustic that he was on his arrival in Paris. If the gross and noisy pleasures of the wine shop always repelled him, he was profoundly troubled by other temptations, full of danger for the inexperienced of his twenty years. When spring came he began to go off alone, and at first he wandered about the brilliant entrance of some dancing hall, watching the young girls who went in with their arms around each other's waist, talking in low tones. Then, one evening, when the lilacs perfumed the air and the call to quadrilles was most captivating, he crossed the threshold, and from that time Jean Francois observed a change, little by little, in his manners and his visage. He became more frivolous, more extravagant. He often borrowed from his friend his scanty savings, and he forgot to repay. Jean Francois, feeling that he was abandoned, jealous and forgiving at the same time, suffered and was silent. He felt that he had no right to approach him, but with the foresight of affection he indulged in cruel and inevitable presentiments.

One evening, as he was mounting the stairs to his room, absorbed in his thoughts, he heard, as he was about to enter, the sound of angry voices, and he recognized that of the old Auvergnat who lodged with Savinien and himself. An old habit of suspicion made him stop at the landing-place and listen to learn the cause of the trouble.

"Yes," said Auvergnat, angrily, "I am sure that some one has opened my trunk and stolen from it the three louis that I had hidden in a little box; and he who has done this thing must be one of the two companions who sleep here, if it were not the servant, Maria. It concerns you as much as it does me, since you are the master of the house, and I will drag you to the courts, if you do not let me at once break open the valises of the two masons. My poor gold! It was here yesterday in its place, and I will tell you just what it was, so that if we find it again nobody can accuse me of having lied. Ah, I know them, my three beautiful gold pieces, and I can see them as plainly as I see you. One piece was more worn than the others; it was of greenish gold, with a portrait of the great emperor. The other was a great old fellow, with a queue and epaulettes, and the third, which had on it a Philippe with whiskers, I had marked with my teeth. They don't trick me. Do you know that I only wanted two more, like that to pay for my vineyard? Come, search these fellows' things with me, or I will call the police! Hurry up!"

"All right," said the landlord, "we will go and search with Maria. So much the worse for you if we find nothing and the masons get angry. You have forced me to do it."

Jean Francois' soul was full of fright. He remembered the embarrassed circumstances and the small loans of Savinien, and how sober he had seemed for some days. And yet he could not believe that he was a thief. He heard the Auvergnat panting in his eager search, and he pressed his closed fist against the breast as if to still the furious beating of his heart. "Here they are!" suddenly shouted the victorious miser. "Here they are, my louis, my dear treasure, and in the Sunday vest of that little hypocrite of Limousin! Look, landlord, they are just as I told you. Here is the Napoleon, the man with a queue and the Philippe that I have bitten. See the dents? Ah, the little beggar with the sanctified air. I should have much sooner suspected the other. Ah, the wretch! Well, he must go to the convict prison."

At this moment Jean Francois heard the well-known step of Savinien coming slowly up the stairs. He is going to his destruction thought he. Three stories. I have time!

And pushing open the door he entered the room, pale as death, where he saw the landlord and the servant stupefied in a corner, while the Auvergnat, on his knees, in the disordered heap of clothes, was kissing the pieces of gold.

"Enough of this," he said, in a thick voice. "I took the money and put it in my comrade's trunk. But that is too bad. I am a thief, but not a Judas. Call the police; I will not try to escape, only I must say a word to Savinien in private. Here he is."

In fact the little Limousin had just arrived, and seeing his crime discovered, believing himself lost, he stood there, his eyes fixed, his arms hanging.

Jean Francois seized him forcibly by the neck, as if to embrace him; he put his mouth close to Savinien's ear and said to him in a low, suppliant voice: "Keep quiet."

Then turning towards the others: "Leave me alone with him. I tell you I won't go away. Lock us in if you wish, but leave us alone."

With a commanding gesture he showed them the door. They went out. Savinien, broken by grief, was sitting on the bed, and lowered his eyes without understanding anything. "Listen!" said Jean Francois, who came and took him by the hands. "I understand! You have stolen three gold pieces to buy some trifle for a girl. That costs six months in prison. But one only comes out from there to go back again, and

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you will become a pillar of police courts and tribunals. I understand it. I have been seven years at the Reform School, a year at Sainte Pelagie, three years at Poissy, five years at Toulon. Now, don't be afraid. Everything is arranged. I have taken it on my shoulders. "It is dreadful," said Savinien, but hope was springing up again in his cowardly heart. "When the elder brother is under the flag, the younger one does not go," replied Jean Francois. "I am your substitute, that's all. You care for me a little, do you not? I am paid. Don't be childish—don't refuse. They would have taken me again one of these days, for I am you see, that life will be less hard for me than for you. I know it all, and I shall not complain if I have not done you this service for nothing, and if you swear to me that you will never go it again. Savinien, I have loved you well, and your friendship has made me happy. It is through it that, since I have known you, I have been honest and pure, as I might always have been, perhaps (if I had had, like you, a father to put a tool in my hands, a mother to teach me my prayers. It was my sole regret that I was useless to you and that I deceived you concerning myself. To-day I have unmasked in saving you. It is right. Do not cry, and embrace me, for already I hear heavy boots on the stairs. They are coming with the posse, and we must not seem to know each other so well before those chaps."

ing-place, held out his hands for the handcuffs, and said, laughing, "Forward, bad lot!" To-day he is at Cayenne, condemned for life as an incorrigible.

The Woodchuck and the Bobolink One autumn day they went away. The woodchuck and the bobolink. And left behind a season gray. And naked trees to creak and sway. And they went to—where do you think? Why, woodchuck turned a somersault into his winter's home. And bobolink went off down south. To rice fields at some river's mouth. To sing and chirp and roam— A winter carnival to keep— While woodchuck lay curled up asleep.—F. H. Sweet, in Sunday-school Times.

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