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## AN HONEST ROGUE.

(From the London Lamp.)

"None are all evil"—Byron.

Dear reader, start not, nor look intensely shocked, when I tell thee that in this brief sketch are contained my own prison adventures. I had stopped no mail coaches. I had waylaid no unprotected pedestrians. I had not even picked a pocket, and yet the hand of the law was upon me. To thee this may seem somewhat strange, yet in my day it was usual enough; for I speak of the time when I was a hair-brained student, a French student, and above all a Parisian student. I speak of some thirty years ago, when almost every tenth house in Paris was the rendezvous of some political association, and most of these associations, organized and supported by 'our men,' the flighty, harum-scarum, devil-may-care students of Paris, who, with no more knowledge of politics than so many waiting-maids, were nevertheless perfectly ready to do anything, to enter into any plan, that might lead to a 'glorious row.'

With these few words of introduction by way of establishing my respectability, and of clearing away all conscientious scruples as to my character, I shall forthwith transport myself, in memory at least, and beg the indulgent reader to follow me, to the Depot de la Prefecture de Police, where the following 'sweet and bitter' dialogue is going on between myself and a juge d'instruction—antithetically so called, I presume, from his peculiar talent of perplexing and entangling the simplest case in his endeavors to investigate it.

'I have now been here six times twenty-four hours; for the first twenty-four no one deigned to interrogate me; since then, however, you have twice called me before you, and each time granted me half an hour's examination.—All this is illegal. The law requires that every citizen consigned to the Prefecture de Police should be interrogated within the twenty-four hours following his arrest, and that, according to the result of his examination, he should be transferred to one of the central prisons, or set at liberty.'

'You have nobody but yourself to blame for the slowness of your case; your obstinate refusal to answer the different questions which have been put to you is the only cause of this delay; and believe me, instead of complaining, you ought to change your plan of action, and the desired result would soon follow.'

'I would ask you to bear in mind, sir, that my refusal to answer your questions is not absolute, nor arising from any ridiculous obstinacy. Concerning my own actions, concerning what ever regards myself personally, I have given you all the information you could wish for. If I have not thought it my duty to be so explicit on all points, and to answer all your questions in this satisfactory manner, it is because I noticed that not a few of them concerned my friends; and I am indeed astonished that an honorable magistrate should call me to task for the reserve behind which I shield them—a reserve which my honor as a gentleman imperatively demanded. I am not an informer. However, sir, I repeat it, I have been illegally deprived of my liberty for six days; I now appear before you for the third time, so that you ought certainly to be perfectly satisfied as to the nature of the suspicions directed against me. Therefore, I formally demand that you either set me a liberty, or transfer me to one of the central prisons.'

'Very well, sir, it shall be as you desire.—You shall be transferred to-morrow.'

'To Ste. Pelagie, I presume?'

'No, sir, to La Force.'

At a sign from my juge d'instruction the agents d'police who had brought me into his office led me back to my cell. I followed them almost joyfully, cheered by the thought that next day I should be removed from my frightful den. It was clear to me that I was sent to La Force instead of to the semi-state prison, Ste. Pelagie, as a punishment for my want of deference to the wishes of the gentlemen of the police; and I must candidly confess that the idea of being thrown alone into the midst of a tribe of criminals, in the very hotbed of vice, the nursery of the Parisian thieves, had caused me a vague feeling of an anxiety and fear. The impression, however, was but momentary, and quickly effaced by the consoling thought that I was at last on the eve of bidding farewell to the Depot de la Prefecture de Police.

They alone who have undergone the terrible ordeal, who have passed through that horrible hell upon earth, can understand with what ardor a prisoner longs for a prison even, where man can mix with his fellow men, however degraded they may be; where he may hear the sound of human voices in answer to his own; where his sight, no longer bounded by the stone and iron of a loathsome cell, may catch a few glimpses of

the blue sky; where he may breathe a purer air; where the light of the sun may shine upon him as brightly and as genially as on those who are free without the prison walls.

I slept but little all night, and the hours seemed to succeed each other with weary sluggishness. La Force, hideous as it is, appeared to me fresh and smiling as the oasis in the wanderer in the desert, as the harbor to the shipwrecked mariner. At an early hour I was up and stirring, awaiting with impatience the moment of departure, which, however, did not come. I breakfasted, rather to kill time than to satisfy my appetite. I was absorbed in the one idea of being at last taken out of my filthy dungeon.—If this feverish impatience appear childish or exaggerated, let it be remembered that since my arrest I had been 'au secret'—in strict solitary confinement, deprived of all communication with the exterior, provided with nothing, not even with linen, not even with those objects necessary for personal cleanliness.

The clock struck twelve,—two,—four, yet no indication of my departure. At the usual hour—half-past four—a turnkey brought me my dinner. I would not take it, and declared my resolution of not touching a morsel of food till I was removed from the depot.

'Well, it won't be very difficult for you to keep your word,' replied the turnkey; 'you'll be off in an hour or two. I suppose you can wait till there is enough to fill the 'salad-basket,' by which he meant the prison van.—'Perhaps you'd like us to send one off on purpose for you?'

I answered nothing; far from being angry with the jailer's coarseness, I thought him charming. In an hour or two I was to be off.

It struck half past five, and scarcely had the last stroke died away when the door of my cell was opened, and a voice which sounded most harmoniously to my ears, cried out:

'Armes et bagage pour La Force!'

As for my 'arms'—a light sword-stick which I occasionally carried with me, and a penknife—they had been thoughtfully taken from me on my arrival; and my 'baggage' consisted of exactly the amount of clothes which I wore; for having been arrested at night, in the street just as I was returning home, I had not been able to provide myself with any articles either of dress or of toilet. I was soon ready, therefore, and followed the turnkey to the waiting room, if I may honor it with the name, where I found my travelling companions already assembled. They were a crowd of ruffianly-looking men, whom the police had routed out, nobody could say whence, and who, even in Paris, are seldom seen but in the very lowest slums or the criminal prisons.

We were marshalled out into a dark and narrow gallery, ranged in long file against the wall, counted off and numbered like a flock of sheep, then called out according to our numbers, to be led one at a time to the conveyance which the municipality of the government had prepared for us, and which Parisian slang has characteristically styled 'panier-a-salade'—salad basket.—When the last of us had taken his place inside the vehicle, we were counted, and being found 'right,' the door was shut and double locked, the driver whipped his horses, and we rolled off at an easy trot.

At my first appearance, I had become the 'observed of all observers,' and during the whole ceremony, which had been performed in silence, the eyes of all my companions were upon me.

Scarcely, however, had we started, than the silence was broken by a hoary-headed ruffian seated opposite me, and addressing my neighbor, invited him to pick my pockets.

Amongst my miscellaneous acquisitions, I could then boast of a very tolerable knowledge of that curious language by means of which the Parisian thieves, like their London brethren, are enabled to converse without betraying a single idea to an uninitiated listener. I was not quite so green as the old villain had pronounced me in his cabalistic formula, and without appearing to be on my guard I watched with considerable interest the various manoeuvres by which my unscrupulous neighbor was endeavoring to get at my pockets. When I felt his fingers on my pocket-book, the contents of which, by the way, would have disappointed him sadly, I thought it time to interfere and to call him to order.—Turning round suddenly, I struck him a fair blow full in the face, and sent his head ringing against the oaken boards of our morose prison. Thus taken unawares, and doubtless somewhat stunned by the shock, he made no attempt to return my compliment. The general burst of laughter which greeted his discomfiture seemed further to confuse him, for, strange to say, the other rascals seemed to enjoy the joke intensely, and the old ruffian who had given the advice was the first to rally his luckless pupil:

'Hillo, younker! what's up? You tried to clean him and he wiped you? Accidents will happen, you know.'

The remainder of our journey was performed

without any further attempt on the part of my 'friends,' in whose estimation my pugilistic display seemed to have raised me amazingly.

On our arrival at La Force we were deposited in a court yard and immediately led off to be duly registered. Here I intimated, my wish to be provided with a bed—that is, with blankets and sheets, which were at that time 'extras' in a French prison.

'You'd better ask first whether there's a spare bed for you,' answered the head turnkey, in that sweet tone which characterizes most prison officials.

'There is some truth in that; it would be more precise,' I answered carelessly, rather anxious to make some remark, by way of showing that I was not in the least awed by his manner, than to resent his impertinent rejoinder.

He inquired of another turnkey, and was informed that there was a spare bed in No. 27.

'Then give that individual a pair of sheets and show him to No. 27.'

I followed my guide, who took me through two court-yards, two wickets, a 'parlor,' across which ran a double grating of iron, and up a flight of steps, to the third and last story of one of the wings of the building. It was just on the stroke of seven o'clock, and the prisoners had long been shut up in their rooms, or I should rather say in their dormitories.

At the noise which my conductor made in opening No. 27, all the inmates of the room had left the store around which they were assembled, and had flocked to the door, in the fear, perhaps in the hope, of recognizing a friend in the new arrival. At the time of which I am writing beards and moustaches were not so generally worn as now—a days, and thieves especially, for obvious reasons, were particularly averse to such facial distinctions. For the 'lodgers' in No. 27, therefore, my beard and moustache were an evident sign that I was none of theirs, and I made my entry into the room between two rows of surprised and disappointed faces.

When the turnkey had retired and closed the door, one of my 'co-mates and brothers' in adversity pointed out to me the spare bed which I was to occupy.

He was a man of some forty years, tall, and strongly built. He wore a blue frock coat with yellow buttons, tight-fitting trousers, and a red smoking cap.

'Mon-sieur is political?' he quietly inquired, at the moment when, for the first time in my life, I was undertaking the duties of chamber maid—making my own bed.

'Yes, sir, he is.'

'Legitimist or Republican?'

I thought the question somewhat indiscreet, and answered accordingly:

'If anybody should ask you, tell him you don't know.'

'O, monsieur! a thousand pardons? I hope my question has not offended you; in my mouth it is, I assure you, perfectly meaningless—a species of 'how do you do?' or 'delightful weather,' nothing more! Again I beg your pardon, for believe me, I am totally indifferent to all that concerns politics.'

'You have not offended me, only I know where I am, and I wished you to understand such questions were not to my taste. But, however, let us say no more about it, and allow me to ask you a question which is by no means idle or meaningless, but on the contrary, of the greatest interest to me. I breakfasted very poorly this morning, I have not dined at all, and I feel terribly hungry; could I get anything to eat?'

'Well, you see, we are all locked up, and of course can get nothing from outside.'

Then, reading disappointed hunger on my face, he continued:

'However, let not that trouble you: I can, if you will allow me, prevent you from going quite superfluous to bed.'

It seemed very evident to me that my interlocutor was one of those individuals who can squeeze money out of paving stones, who know how to take advantage of all the circumstances of life so as to bring them to a practical result of pounds, shillings and pence. Consequently I accepted his offer without the slightest hesitation, as though I had been ordering my dinner of an ordinary waiter.

In a moment, a stainless table-cloth was spread at the end of the table, and on it were placed knife, fork, plate, and glass, all blamelessly clean. My host offered me a cold fowl, a slice of ham, some asparagus, some jam, some cheese, a few apples, and above all a bottle of Bordeaux which might have done credit to a choicer restaurant than La Force.

'Do you take coffee?' inquired my singular *maitre d'hotel*, whilst I was busied in doing ample justice to the improvised supper, as quietly and as calmly as though, instead of being in the midst of a band of robbers and perhaps worse, I had been seated in a comfortable room of the Cafe de Paris.

Now, just then my personal property amounted to something less than five francs, and at each dish that appeared on the table I found myself mentally calculating whether I was not living beyond my means, that is, eating more than I could pay for. Allowing a fair sum for each course, I thought I might clear the expense of the eatables; but in yielding to the temptations of the Bordeaux I felt I was doing a reckless thing—running into debt; when, therefore, in addition to this my host asked me whether I would take coffee, it was a kind of 'in for a penny in for a pound' determination that I boldly answered:

'With pleasure, if you have any?'

'I haven't any, but I can make some.'

'Then pray do so, for it is some time since I tasted any?'

'Some time? How so? you have just arrived?'

'Yes, but I have passed a considerable time already in solitary confinement at the Prefecture de Police.'

'O, then, I pity you!'

So saying he proceeded to the making of the mocha, which a few moments later he placed before me.

'Unfortunately,' said he, as he poured it out into a neat porcelain cup, 'you can have no *gloria*; cognac, as well as all other spirituous liquors, is prohibited, and it is very difficult not to say impossible, to smuggle it through the three wards which separate us from the outer world.'

'O, I shall easily do without, the more so that I care but little for it at any time.'

Whilst I was drinking my coffee, or rather sipping it slowly so as to lose no atom of the delicate aroma, I summoned courage to ask for the score.

'The score! What score?'

'Why, for my dinner.'

A loud burst of laughter greeted my words, and brought upon me the eyes of the whole room.

'Excuse me,' said my strange host, when his mirth had somewhat subsided, 'but would you be so good as to tell me whom you do me the honor of taking me for?'

I was quite ashamed, and felt myself blushing to the very roots of my hair.

'When I accepted your offer,' stammered I, 'I fancied—that is, I thought you were—you might be doing a little honest—useful business.'

'In other words, and more plainly, you have done me the honor to think I keep a cook shop on a small scale? Many thanks!'

And he again indulged in a boisterous peal of laughter.

I felt deeply mortified at all this; he saw my embarrassment, and quickly returning to his habitual seriousness—

'Excuse,' said he, 'this gaiety, which is not familiar to me unhappily; I am not laughing at you, but at your strange mistake, which, you must allow is somewhat ludicrous, is it not? Come,' he added, 'call back your good humour, and banish altogether the annoyance which I read in your countenance. You were hungry, and you could get no food; I was fortunate enough to be able to oblige you; is it not, I shall not say a favor, but a good turn such as we all owe each other, *entre camarades de prison*? And, whoever I be, don't you think it would be somewhat ungenerous to bear me ill-will because I have provided a supper for you?'

All this was too just to admit of a reply. I therefore contented myself with thanking him, and inviting him to dine with me next day.

'There again!' he exclaimed, in answer to my invitation, 'the same thought, you don't wish to be in my debt.'

'This time you mistake me entirely; I do not invite you to be quits with you; it is merely, as you say, *entre camarades de prison*.'

'Well, prove that you mean what you say.'

'How shall I do so?'

'You tell me you have been in solitary confinement at the Prefecture; I know what that means; you must feel the greatest desire for a change of linen—to cast your skin, as they say. Well, I have at your service all that you could desire, and I beg you will make use of it until you are able to send for what you require.'

How could I possibly refuse an offer made in such a way? I accepted, and indeed I had no cause to repent so doing, for never shall I forget the pleasing sensation I experienced in putting away the linen which my sojourn at the Prefecture had rendered more than filthy, and exchanging it for the cleanest and softest in my protector's wardrobe. He lent me even to a pair of slippers, which were most grateful to my aching feet after their imprisonment in tight-fitting boots.

When my ablutions and my toilet were completed, I called my comrade—for I suppose I must give him that name—and asked him to show me the 'prevot,' the president or dean—in short, the 'head man,' of the room.

'I am the prevot,' he replied.

'In that case, I know it is customary in these places for every new comer to pay his footing; will you have the goodness to let me know what that footing may cost, that I make matters smooth at once?'

'O!' said he, 'there is such a thing; but that only concerns us, and not men such as you.—Pray let us say no more about these matters.'

And so this man, this professed thief, this out-cast, this social leper, did me the honor of not confounding me with his fellows, whilst a juge d'instruction, a protector of public morals, had seen no difference between them and me.

Meantime, it was nearly ten, at which hour the prison regulation requires all lights to be put out and all the prisoners to be in bed. Following the example of those around me, I prepared to take possession of my couch. My bolster was of appalling smallness, so that in order to raise my head somewhat above my feet, I rolled up my trousers and placed them under the mattress. Frederic—such was the name by which my companion was known—perceived this manoeuvre, and approached me with a cunning smile.

'It is doubtless to protect your purse that you are burying that garment under the mattress?'

'Not at all.'

'Then that's another matter: but, you see, if anybody took a fancy to your purse, it would just as easily be walked off from under your mattress as from the back of your chair.'

'You must at least allow that I would feel it?'

'Not in the least. Suppose two men wish to rob you whilst you are asleep; what do they do? One of them crouches by your bedside, as low as possible, so as to avoid being seen by you; the other creeps up quietly and strikes you full on the face or chest with a bolster. You start up, as much with the intention of escaping another blow as of discovering your aggressor. In the mean time the man at your bedside slips his hand under the mattress, seizes—I beg your pardon, seizes—your trousers, and the trick is done.'

'That's ingenious, certainly.'

'But if not for precaution, why do you thus hide those mysterious pantaloons?'

'I tell you I am not hiding them; I put them there with the very innocent intention of raising my head to a comfortable height.'

'Then, why on earth did you not say so? I have exactly what you want.'

And going to some mysterious locker at the other end of the room, he took from it a pillow, which, having slipped into a clean pillow-case, he brought to me, then retired, wishing me good-night.

And indeed his wishes were not vain. I soon fell into a sound sleep, which, strange to say, was not troubled by those horrid dreams which novelists invariably put into the brain of romantic youths at their first appearance within the walls of a prison.

When I awoke next morning, it was broad daylight, and much to my surprise I found myself the only occupant of the room. All the other beds were made and the owners were nowhere to be seen. This astonished me the more that I knew the prison regulations required all the prisoners to get up together, and to have the room cleared and made up by an early hour. I afterwards found out that for the indulgence extended to me I was indebted to my friend of the previous night, who, seeing how soundly I slept after so many nights' exile from a bed, had prevailed on the turnkey to overlook me, and had insisted on silence from the other prisoners during their toilet, that I might not be disturbed by their noise.

Seeing, as I have said, that it was evidently late in the morning, I reached out my hand to take my watch, which I had left in my waistcoat-pocket, so as to ascertain the precise time. I felt in one pocket, then in the other, but no watch was to be found; I searched my coat, then my trousers, rather to satisfy my conscience than in the hope of finding it in such unlikely places.—But all was vain, my watch had disappeared, and my purse was to be found in none of my pockets.

'This,' I thought, 'comes from rusting to appearances, and believing a thief. It may be very easy to steal a man's valuables from beneath his mattress, but I wish I had not been so absurd as to neglect all precautions, because, forsooth, a pickpocket assured me they were unnecessary. However, I shall be wiser for the future; experience, they say, is a good mistress.'

These philosophical reflections did not, however prevent the resolution of speaking my mind pretty plainly to my honest *camarade*, and with this intention I dressed hastily and descended into the court yard. The prisoners were taking their morning's recreation. A few of them were playing hand ball, whilst others, in spite of prison regulations, were taking advantage of the temporary absence of the guard to indulge in the more exciting pastime of 'pitch and toss.'

Others, seemingly too apathetic for even this light labor, were lounging lazily against the wall, smoking some nauseous substance which was most certainly innocent of the slightest particle of