

## THEIR WEDDING DAY.

They stood together, hand in hand.  
Amid the happy wedding cheer,  
Upon the borders of a land  
Whose rare, enchanted atmosphere  
They had not breathed yet; not a blur  
Of doubt her perfect faith could dim—  
He was the man of men for her—  
She, the one woman made for him.  
They stood, exchanging troth and plight,  
Five years ago to-night.

They knew the realm that stretched beyond,  
Held heights whereon the purple play  
Of love's full sunshine, fair and fond,  
Was never seen to fade away.  
They knew that there were gulfs to cross,  
And many a tangled path to tread,  
But whether strewn with dints or moss,  
What need they care, since overhead  
The lambent honeymoon shone bright,  
Five years ago to-night?

'Twas not to be a setting moon.  
Like earthly ones, but heavenly clear,  
To pour its beams, a steadfast boon  
Of blessing thro' the circling year.  
And now into each other's eyes  
They look and say, "Our dream comes true!  
But could it, dear, be otherwise  
With you to love me so—with you  
To pledge me all this strange delight,  
Five years ago to-night!"

No cross has come too hard to bear.  
No care that hid too keen a smart,  
With two the burden's weight to share,  
With two to lift it from the heart.  
They had not dared to ask so much  
Of bliss that should not know alloy,  
Or hope that time would lay a touch  
So gentle on their perfect joy,  
As dashed the future on their sight,  
Five years ago to-night.

The heights that stretch before their gaze,  
Like Beulah's, their rapt vision fill;  
The tender sheen of spousal days  
Is softly lingering round them still.  
Her foot has only felt the moss,  
And his has spurned the flints aside;  
And there has been no gulf to cross,  
And she to him is still the bride  
To whom he vowed the marriage plight,  
Five years ago to-night!

Oh, happier, richer, gladder far,  
With their twin cherubs hand in hand,  
Than on that bridal eve, they are,  
As here, all dreams fulfilled, they stand!  
God grant that when their years shall reach  
Another lustrium they may say,  
With radiant faces, each to each,  
"Why, 'tis another wedding day,  
Just like our first, so sweet, so bright—  
Ten years ago to-night!"

— MARGARET J. PRESTON.

## HOW WE LOST A TREASURE.

Ten years ago I was church-warden, or trustee, or something of the sort (I could never quite make out my exact legal status), of the English church in a well-known French seaside town. In this capacity I became involved in a very strange affair, which, though anything but entertaining at the time, has at least provided me with one good story drawn from personal experience.

Féteville, if I may so name the town in which my lot was cast, is by no means one of those brand-new watering-places which have sprung up on the French coast during the last thirty years. It is a place of great antiquity, whose name is continually met in the history of medieval France; and is, I may add, eminently unfashionable, though much frequented by the Briton whose ideas of a visit to the continent are mild and limited.

In the eighteenth century, before the idea of travelling for pleasure had entered the middle-class English mind, Féteville was, I suppose, very like any other French provincial town. It therefore rejoiced in old ramparts, a cathedral, and (what is more to the point) several monasteries and convents. With one of the former my story is, strange to say, connected; and I must make a few introductory remarks concerning it, that the whole of my own adventure may be comprehensible.

In the year 1759 the Capuchin fathers were established in Féteville in the steep Rue des Vieillards. They were in a flourishing condition, and are, moreover, said to have possessed some extraordinarily fine church-plate. There was a very considerable quantity of it, the accumulations of five centuries of pious donors, including many valuable offerings to the shrine of "St. Ambrose of Féteville," a local saint who had flourished in the fourteenth century. Now one fine day in 1751 the poor fathers shared the fate of their brethren in other parts of France, and were driven out without a moment's notice by a rabid and ragged mob, who were no doubt stimulated by Republican enthusiasm, and not by a vision of the nice pickings to be had inside the chapel. However, the reverend fathers' movable property did not follow them, but somehow appeared in the houses of various poor but virtuous citizens. Be it observed, however, that while carved chests and stools were rife in the back streets, and though something which bore a resemblance to a handsome but mutilated confessional-box was to be found affording shelter to a tribe of hens in one retired quarter, yet no one could be found who would own to having secured any plate beyond a few paltry silver ornaments of small size. The conclusion arrived at by the public was, that some particularly cool hand had been the first to discover the strong-box, and was keeping quiet, to avoid any unpleasant investigations that might be made when a settled government should be in power.

I have forgotten to mention that on the night after the monastery was pillaged some especially excited patriot, wishing to free the town from the taint of having harboured such an "abomination" as a body of friars, set fire to the place,

which was burnt almost to the ground, with the exception of its chapel. Of this only the shell was left; however, after a short time, it was fitted with a new roof, and was utilised as a cask warehouse by an enterprising cooper, who had somehow obtained a grant of it. The place where the other buildings had stood, and the little garden of the monastery, were soon covered by a hive of small houses.

Now the strange story which I am about to relate seems to make it probable that the monks' hoard was never discovered at all at the time of the Revolution. If so, it may be asked why, when settled times came again, the fathers made no effort to recover their lost property. To this I can only answer that several of them are said to have been so maltreated as not to survive the pillage, and that among these may have been all the individuals intrusted with the secret of the hiding-place of their treasure.

After the great French wars of the early part of this century were over, the town of which I am writing, being close to England, became greatly frequented by our countrymen. Among the various wants of the expatriated Briton a church was found to have a place; and when a suitable situation was being sought, it chanced that the old chapel, now a cask warehouse, was chosen, as being cheap, and requiring only a few repairs and additions to make it all that was needed. For as funds were not plentiful, it was a desideratum to escape the expense of erecting a new building. Now of this church, in the year 1869, it happened that I was a churchwarden, and thereby met with this curious experience.

It was a very nice place, that town by the sea, and no doubt is still; but I have not shown my face in it these ten years on account of this wretched affair. Then, however, there was no place that I liked better, though I must acknowledge that it was a little dull and melancholy in the winter. But with that reason my tale has no concern, as it opens on a certain evening, or rather night, in June.

The hour of eleven had just struck by the weak-toned clock of the Custom-house, and I was seated at the end of the long pier. The waves were leaping and heaving outside the breakwater, and showing their white crests in the bright moonlight; exulting no doubt at the way in which they had tormented the late London boat, which had just emptied out its ghastly freight of passengers. I had been amused at the state those unpleasant-looking Britons were in after their rough passage, and especially at the oburgations on one individual, who appeared to have staved off the qualms of sea-sickness by copious libations of brandy, and, after refusing to allow the *douaniers* to overhaul his luggage, had attempted to rescue it from them *à la ratisse*, whence there seemed to be every probability of his spending his first night abroad in a French lock-up.

When the bustle was over, I had sauntered down to the end of the pier, and had seated myself there. I do not know why I lingered; but I liked the cool night breeze, and it slowly lulled me to sleep. I was awakened by a step near me; and as, with a shudder and an instinctive movement to feel that my watch was safe, I recovered my sight, I found that a stranger must have passed very close in front of me. I stared after him, and was surprised to see him turn and walk back till he stood before me.

"Pardon me, Herr Lamb."

(Solomon Lamb is my name.)

"Hullo," said I, "how do you know who I am?"

"O meinheer, I have walked up and down before you two or three times, and I am sure I am not wrong in thinking that you are the gentleman who was so kind to me at Aachen. Do you not remember the carpenter who repaired your travelling-desk, which had been broken by the carelessness of the porter at the hotel, and to whom you gave some other little jobs during your stay? Perhaps you will remember my name, Carl Muller."

"O yes," I replied, brightening up more and more, "I remember. But what are you doing here?"

"Well, sir, it's a long story, but I have been forced to leave Germany through being persecuted by the Government. I know a little of trades, and I have a knowledge of mining, my people belonging to the Hartz. I also had a speciality for finding lost and buried treasure, and three times discovered valuable hoards for the authorities; but instead of it doing me any good, I only became a suspected character, and it ended by my having to fly with hardly a groschen to help myself with. I have been tramping all through Belgium, and now I have wandered into France, looking out for work."

"I am afraid," I said, "that you will not find any treasure here; it is not at all a likely place for that."

"No," he answered; "but I am a good carpenter, and know something of boat-building. I therefore came here after trying Calais and Dunkerque, and have been inquiring for employment at the different building-yards, but as yet I have not been successful. Perhaps, as I have had the good fortune of meeting you, you may be able to help me to get work."

A happy thought struck me. I owned a boat which my boys sailed about in; it wanted a deck in the bows; here was a man who would do the work cheaper and sooner than the dilatory workmen of Féteville.

"Well," said I, "I think I can help you to a small job; so if you come up to my house on the esplanade to-morrow morning we will talk it over. It will be about doing up a boat."

The man seemed very thankful, bowed, and then walked away. I told my wife when I reached home of my meeting Muller, and how strange it was that he knew me, and said what I had promised in the way of work.

"I know he is a clever fellow, and I want to see what he can do with the boat; if he is a good carpenter he may be of great use, especially as these Féteville people are so very independent. But I do not quite understand that rigmarole about his reason for leaving Germany."

Muller came in the morning, very punctually at the hour I had named to him. I walked with him down to the basin, showed him what I wanted done, and advanced him a few francs, as he said he was penniless.

In a day or two the results of his work made it apparent that he was very skillful, and both my boys and myself were delighted at his handiwork. I found him one or two other small jobs, and also recommended him to several of my friends. Among these was Mr. Dawkins, our parson, and it struck him that Muller would be the very man to do some repairs that were needed about the church cheaply and well.

He finished this work also—did everything so cleverly, and made himself so generally useful; that at last he was installed in a couple of rooms close to the church, and acted as a sort of decorator, verger, and, in fact, Jack-of-all-trades.

In a few months Muller's appearance improved wonderfully; a wife and child, of whom he had told us nothing, joined him from Germany. He bought some furniture, and, being a general favourite, seemed in a fair way to secure a respectable living. He appeared very devoted to his family, was quite sober, and very seldom left his house, except to look after the interior of the church, which seemed to have some great charm for him.

He was a Protestant, of course, and appeared to be such a thorough Christian, that the clergyman and all the devout old ladies of the congregation took quite an interest in him and his wife. When he took to holding the plate at the door on Sundays, in a full suit of black and a white tie, everybody was quite melted, if I may use the expression. As a finish to his excellences, he suggested two or three ornamental improvements to the pulpit, did some very pretty carvings for the altar-rails, and repainted the table of Commandments under the east window not at all badly. This work kept him about the church all day for some weeks.

In July 1870 I wanted some repairs done to the mast of my boat, which had been slightly sprung, so went to Muller's early in the morning to ask his advice and assistance. I knocked at the door, but no one answered. I called through the keyhole for Mrs. Muller. As no one came, I tried to look in at one of the windows. At last I banged at the door with my heel till I nearly forced it in; still nobody stirred.

"Very strange this," I thought; "I'll go and ask the parson whether he knows anything about it." I walked off at a tremendous pace to Mr. Dawkins's house, knocked, and was admitted, and went straight after the servant into the breakfast-room.

I fear that without saying "Good-morning" to Mrs. Dawkins, who was just pouring out the tea for breakfast, I began by blurting out,

"Where's Muller?"

"Muller?" said Mr. Dawkins, taking off his spectacles and looking at me in great surprise; "I suppose he is at his house."

"No," I replied; "or if he is, he is dead, and his wife too. He's gone."

"What?" said Mr. Dawkins, nearly upsetting his tea-cup. "What do you say?"

"O, I mean he's bolted—gone off."

Visions of francs advanced for the repairs and alterations must have crossed Mr. Dawkins's mental disc; but he evidently could not easily believe anything wrong of Muller. He got up hastily, and, with a slight tremor in his voice, said,

"I think we had better go down again to his house and see."

We went as fast as we could walk, and hammered at the door again, but could get no response. Then I suggested that we should send for a locksmith, and get the door opened.

This was soon done, and behold! there were the rooms exactly as they used to be, but not a soul in them. None of the furniture had been removed, and the plates and crumbs of the last meal were still on the kitchen-table. The clothes-press in the bedroom, however, was empty and open.

Mr. Dawkins and I looked at each other, but could not guess in the least what had become of Muller and his family. We then tried the neighbors for information, and ascertained from an old washerwoman, who lived two doors off, that she had seen Muller leave in Jean Dubois's cart at daybreak that very morning. "And a nice lot of boxes he had with him. They seemed so heavy that he and Dubois could hardly lift them into the cart."

"Boxes?" remarked Mr. Dawkins inquiringly.

"Yes, boxes of good white deal, four of them, all with the sides bound with iron clamps."

"And do you know where Madame Muller is?" I asked.

"O yes; she told Madame Chevert yesterday that she was going off in the morning by train to Dunkerque, to meet her mother, who was coming from Germany; and she took the child with her."

The old woman directed us to the carter's house, to which we at once walked, and found

that he had started very early that morning with some boxes for Mr. Muller. He had gone by the Calais road, and would not be back till the evening, or perhaps not till next morning. Here was a nice state of things! Muller had evidently absconded, and we could not find out anything about him till the carter returned.

But the puzzle was, where did the heavy boxes come from? I had an inward consciousness that something serious had happened, but what it was I had not the least idea.

Mr. Dawkins suggested that we should go and see if the interior of the church was all right. We found everything there as usual. Then we began to look about in an objectless sort of way, to see if we could find any traces of the lost one; and at last, looking into the shed built against our boundary wall, where we kept the coals for heating the church in winter, I saw a large quantity of freshly-dug earth.

This seemed strange, and going in I stumbled over a heavy board, which was thus slightly displaced, and revealed part of a hole. I lifted the board away, and saw a neatly-cut circular opening, but how deep I could not tell. I called Mr. Dawkins, and, tying a piece of string which was in my pocket to his walking-stick, we felt for the bottom, but failed to find it.

"We must get some one to go down and see what this means," said I; "it strikes me that there may be a passage through this hole leading under the church."

"That is not at all improbable," said Mr. Dawkins; "and now I come to think of it, Muller spoke to me rather mysteriously a few weeks ago of his having an idea that there must be a crypt under here, and that some day it might be found out."

"Shall we put this into the hands of the authorities, Mr. Dawkins?" I asked.

Mr. Dawkins, however, thought that we had better wait for the return of the carter, and see if there was anything in the hole. "For if there is anything wrong, and we call in the police, we may be involved in a lot of trouble before the business is over."

Accordingly we agreed to conduct our exploration ourselves, and to meet again at the church after lunch, with candles and a rope, and a few tools. I was too excited myself to make much of a meal, and was waiting at the church long before two o'clock, with a couple of lanterns and a packet of candles. A few minutes after, Mr. Dawkins appeared, and with him his eldest son, a light active boy of fifteen. They had brought with them a coil of rope.

Our first act was to let a lantern down the hole. We could then see that it had been made by an experienced workman, as we found that at a depth of a few feet it was carefully shored up with short pieces of timber. We could soon see the bottom, at a great depth. We then pulled the lantern up, and let down young Dawkins, who was in high glee at the prospect of an adventure. After some ten or eleven feet of rope had passed through our hands, he cried, "Stop! I have reached the bottom." We then gave him the lantern, and asked what the place was like. He answered that there was plenty of room to turn about in, and that the hole was continued in a horizontal direction towards the church. At this I became thoroughly excited, stripped off my coat, and lighted the other lantern, and then got Mr. Dawkins to lower me. Down I went, and looked about me.

The tunnel, leading towards the church, was regularly supported at intervals with side posts and cross pieces of wood, and was big enough to allow a man to crawl on his hands and knees very comfortably. As there seemed no great difficulty in the matter, I shouted up to Mr. Dawkins.

"We are going up the passage; you had better go into the church, and if you hear a knocking, you will know that we are below."

The wall of the church was only some twenty-five feet from the coal-shed; we soon penetrated to that distance, and young Dawkins, who preceded me, said,

"We have come to a hole in a wall; and the ground seems lower on the other side."

After lowering his lantern he found that there was a fall of about three feet, down which he stepped. I followed, and holding up our lanterns we stood upright. We were in an angle of a stone-built chamber, evidently a portion of the crypt of the old monastery, whose existence had never been suspected. The open space in which we stood was some twenty feet square; two of its sides were formed of old stone walls, the other two of heaps of rubbish, reaching quite up to the low arched roof.

Looking carefully around, traces of Muller's handiwork were to be seen everywhere; here was a passage tunnelled through the rubbish; there a wall bored through, and the bones of several skeletons proved that he had disinterred some bodies in his search. One stone coffin lay in a corner, with the lid off; within was the skeleton of its tenant, quite perfect, with a leaden crucifix resting against the ribs.

After deliberating a little we determined to examine the largest of three openings into the rubbish, as it showed signs of having been well trodden down, and was of a good size. We followed it for some little distance, and again emerged into the open crypt.

Almost the first thing that we noticed was a small iron door, half-eaten away with rust. It had been taken off its hinges and lay at our feet. In the wall opposite was a small massively built recess. And now it was that we found evidence of the success of Muller's search, for on the floor of the recess was a quantity of old and rotten wood, some of it still joined together with rusty