

brutal one. To look upon savagery as a purely physical quality, to define brutality always and only in terms of physical force, is, in our view, an error of ill-breeding, a failure in refinement. In all civilised times and nations there have been natures, and those among the highest and finest, who would wince under the pain of a shameful word, however untrue, even more instinctively than they would face an honourable wound or death. Robert Louis Stevenson, whose last years in Samoa proved his title, as a born chief, to authority in matters of breeding and delicacy, had founded long before one of his subtlest stories upon this theme. In "A Lodging for the Night" he draws, without any comment or apparent intention, a strong and vivid contrast between Francis Villon, the brilliant thief, the quick-witted coward, the low-bred man of genius, and an old gentleman delightfully named Seigneur de Brisetout, Bailly du Patatrac, whose duller intellect is reinforced by the nobility of his character and training. He is giving the disreputable poet a night's refuge from the snow-bound streets; his mind is troubled by the other's destitution, but still more by his cynical confession of vice and crime. Villon argues that there is not so much difference at bottom between himself and his host, the man of arms. "Look at us two," replies the other; "I fear no man and nothing: I have seen you tremble and lose countenance at a word. I wait God's summons contentedly in my own house, or, if it please the king to call me out again, upon the field of battle. You look for the gallows. Is there no difference?" Villon acquiesces; "But if I," he adds, "had been lord of Brisetout, and you had been the poor scholar Francis, would the difference have been any the less? Should not I have been the soldier and you the thief?"

"A thief," cried the old man. "I a thief! If you understood your words you would repent them."

Villon turned out his hands with a gesture of inimitable impudence. "If your lordship had done me the honour to follow my argument!" he said.

The old seigneur gets the better of his anger at last, and begins again: