

Upon the assembled townspeople, the effect produced by the sight of this transaction was indescribable. As for the captain, he contented himself with directing Master Nicolas to bring after him the fowl, happily still intact; and then, taking Raoul's arm, returned to the garden at the rear of the cabaret.

"Decidedly, my dear chevalier," he said, "the luxury of these country gentlemen is of poor quality. A mere box on the ear is more than their chief bullics can stand."

An hour after the accomplishment of this exploit, and when he had eaten two-thirds of the famous pullet, which had been the cause of so many events, Captain Roland, his back resting against the wall, his legs crossed before him, and his manner somewhat anxious and reflective, addressed his new friend:

"Chevalier," he said, "there's nothing like a good dinner to make a man take a reasonable view of things. Now, I won't attempt to conceal from you that I see clearly our present position has a vulnerable and dangerous side. I think it's very likely that I did wrong to chastise the insolence of the chief of the apostles, and I shall not be the least surprised if it brings us into trouble. The Marquis de la Tremblais counts among the highest and most powerful of the nobility of Auvergne. He has at his command sixty cuirassiers, forty light horsemen, and a hundred pikemen. With such an adversary therefore, you see, dear friend, precaution cannot be counted as cowardice. Moreover, the reputation enjoyed by this powerful gentleman is as little amiable as it can be—he is said to be traitorous, vindictive and sanguinary to excess. If it should come into his head, therefore—and it's not at all unlikely to do so—to consider himself insulted by the cuff on the head given to the chief of his apostles, he is quite capable of treating us as if we were serfs—that is to say, hanging us out of hand on the nearest tree. My advice is, that we lose no time in getting away from this place."

"I am ready to do whatever you think best, captain," said Raoul.

"If we could only reach either the outskirts of Mont d'Or or Clermont we should be out of danger. My presence in Auvergne once known, the office I hold renders my person sacred and inviolable. The only thing I dread is to be carried off before I have time to make my name heard by the echoes of the mountains."

Captain Roland paused for a moment, and it was with visible embarrassment that he continued:

"Chevalier, I am afraid that you judge unfavorably of my prudence. Answer me, I beg of you, with perfect frankness: Do you think me a man who would shrink from, for example being cut in bits, or torn to pieces on a rack, if by making my own escape I left you in peril?"

"No, captain; I do not believe you to be such a man."

"On the faith of a gentleman?"

"On the faith of a gentleman."

"In that case, let us set off without delay. The opinion you have formed of me, dear chevalier, fills me with delight."

The two companions of fortune called the cabaretier; then, after Sforzi had paid their reckoning, in spite of the captain's strong opposition, they mounted their horses.

"What is the nearest inhabited place to Pardoux, Master Nicolas?" demanded Captain Roland.

"The domain of Tauve, monseigneur," answered the cabaretier.

"Is it a town or a village?"

"A fortified house, monseigneur, belonging to the Dame Loise d'Erlanges."

"One last question, Master Nicolas. What is the distance from Pardoux to Tauve?"

"About a league. But, pardon me, monseigneur, can it be your intention to go to Tauve?"

"What is that to you?" replied the captain, to whom the question conveyed a suspicion of possible treason.

"Nothing to me, monseigneur," replied Nicolas; "but if I were in your place, I should not go to Tauve, that's all."

The cabaretier spoke with such a tone of frankness that the captain, after a moment's reflection, replied in a softened tone:

"Explain what you mean, without fear. On my honor as a soldier and a gentleman, I will preserve in inviolable secrecy all you now tell me."

"In good faith, captain," cried Master Nicolas, after a moment's hesitation; "I am so grateful to you for the way you knocked over the chief of the apostles, that I cannot let you walk blindly into difficulties. With regard to the Dame d'Erlanges's house at Tauve, this is how the matter stands. Our master, the Marquis de la Tremblais, villainously in love with the daughter of the Dame d'Erlanges, and finding that the young lady regards him only with horror, has resolved to succeed by force and cunning. With this view he has isolated her in her mother's house, and deprives her of all aid and assistance. Our master, who shrinks at nothing, has published by sound of trumpet throughout his domain, that all persons approaching within a league of the fortified house of Tauve shall be accounted by him as enemies, and treated as such. At first there was a great commotion in the surrounding country, and several gentlemen, indignant at the proceeding, came forward and offered their support to the Demoiselle d'Erlanges. But these brave gentlemen had not taken the twelve apostles into account. Master Benoist set to work, and, in less than a fortnight, five gentlemen fell by the pistols or daggers of that dreadful band. Everywhere there was great indignation and regret;

but what could be done? After Monsieur de Canilhac, the governor for the king, our master is the most powerful person in the province."

"In saying 'after' Monsieur de Canilhac, I am wrong," continued Nicolas; "for if these two seigneurs were to meet in battle, the one who would be beaten is certainly the lieutenant of the Valois. Now, while I speak, the sentence pronounced against the Demoiselle d'Erlanges is in such force that the most daring gentleman in Auvergne would not venture to approach her house within the limits proclaimed by the Marquis de la Tremblais."

"Captain Roland," cried Raoul, "I will not do you the wrong of asking you what you think we ought to do. Our conduct is so plainly indicated by honor that doubt or question is impossible."

"We don't look at this matter with the same eyes, dear chevalier," replied the giant, calmly. "To me it appears to require extreme caution in the handling. You fancy, without doubt, that we are in the age of Charlemagne, but I know that the days are passed for cutting through a mountain with the stroke of a sword, or of making one's way into a strong castle with a single blow of a battle-axe. What have we to do with the love misfortunes of the Demoiselle d'Erlanges? What prospect does our interference offer but the chance of getting ourselves pistolled or stabbed, like the five gentlemen of whose fate Master Nicolas has just told us? If there were any chance of realizing a handsome reward for the danger of our skins—that, I grant you, might leave the subject open to discussion."

"Every one is free to indulge his own opinion, captain," replied Sforzi, with cold hauteur. "Don't let my example influence you. I go to Tauve."

"You have a bad memory, chevalier," replied Captain Roland. "I have promised you a friendship faithful and devoted equal to all proofs to which you can put it. Why, then, should you try to stimulate my self-love by useless rallery. It would have been a hundred times more simple to have said to me, 'Captain Roland, I am going upon a ridiculous and pitiable enterprise. Come with me, I shall want you.' This way of stating the question that now divides us would have put us at once in accord. I should have instantly answered you, as I do now: 'Chevalier, you are acting with utter thoughtlessness. Good—! I'm with you!'"

Without leaving Raoul time to express either regret or gratitude, Captain Roland spurred his powerful iron-grey horse, and rode off in the direction of Tauve.

(To be continued.)

MEN WHO FACE DEATH.

THE POLICEMAN.

Don't you go and make any mistake! The pictures in the comic papers, and all the rest of the jokes about the policemen, may be all very well in their way, and I can laugh myself at a good joke at the expense of the Force, but for all that there is not as much in them as some of the would-be sharp ones make out. Most of 'em are as stale as they well can be, and though for anything I know they may have been to the point some time, they ain't now-a-days, not by a long way. There's a saying about life not being all beer and skittles, and you may take my word for it that life ain't all cupboard courtship for a policeman. Even if he had the inclination for it, his superiors would take precious good care that he didn't spend his time on duty making love to cooks and feeding in gentlemen's kitchens. That may be very well in a pantomime, but it's about as much the real thing as pantomime fish and carrots are; whatever people may think, policemen don't always come up just when a fight is over, and it isn't only women and little boys that they collar—I should like to see some of them that talk that way have to tackle some of the customers that we have to do; they'd mighty soon alter their tone, I expect. Why, taking it all through, there's few businesses as are more risky than a policeman's. In plenty of neighborhoods he goes on duty with his life in his hand. People read and talk about the dangerous classes, but it is the policeman that has to deal with 'em, and it's him as knows how dangerous they are. They know whether it's only women and boys that we collar; they know who lays them by the heels, and they remember it, with a vengeance. "Revenge is sweet" is a motto with a good many of them, and when they are loose they will often go a long way to have it on the man that has been the means of caging them—that was how I came by the gash you see on the side of my face here.

I had got a customer two years for stealing lead, and I was one of those that escorted him to the van after he was sentenced, and as we passed along he growls out to me under his breath, "You've scored this chalk, but you may lay any odds that I'll score the next, if I have to die for it."

I could tell that he meant what he said, and I bore it in mind. When he was out again, I kept well on my guard whenever I saw him lurking about; but at length he was too sharp for me.

One rather foggy night I was passing the top

of a dark-side street, when hearing a rush, I wheeled round as quickly as I could—but too late. I just caught sight of the scoundrel making a swinging hit at me with a bottle tied in a handkerchief, and the next instant I was stretched senseless. I shall carry the mark of the blow to the grave with me, as you may see, and it was pretty nigh carrying me to the grave; I was within half an inch of death, as you may say, for if it had been half an inch more on the temple it would have been an end of me. As it was, it laid me up for about three months, but beyond marking me, it did me no permanent harm.

When I got on duty again I said nothing, but made up my mind that there should be a third chalk to the game between me and the fellow that struck the blow. He had bolted as soon as he had done it, and hadn't been heard of since; but for all that I felt quite sure he would turn up in his old lurk again, sooner or later, for his wife and all his companions were there. So I watched and watched, and sure enough at the end of a couple of years I spotted him again. I found out that he had only been back a week when I caught sight of him, and so I didn't try to flutter the nest too soon. I let three months go by, so that he was all right, and then I went in to score my next chalk.

I reported him, and half a dozen of us were told off to take him. Three went into the house after him, two kept watch in the front, and I took my stand at the back, the way he was likeliest to come if he managed to make a run of it. As it turned out, he did make a run, or at any rate he got a start.

It was a low-built house, and before those who went in could get up-stairs he dropped out of the bed-room window, coming down safely on his feet; but before he could take to his heels I was facing him, my right hand holding my staff ready-drawn behind my back, my left hand ready to collar him.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" he grinds out between his teeth, and before I could say a word or move an inch, he had whipped out a large clasp-knife. I could see murder in his eye, and so I dashed in at once to seize him; but before I could lay hold of him he had gashed my hand to the bone—and then it was my turn. He was drawing back to make a running stab at me, when, quick as lightning, and with all the strength I could put into it, I swung round my right arm and caught him with the staff full in the face, felling him like a bullock. He was quite senseless, and by the time the others got round I had him quietly handcuffed. When we got him to the station we sent for a doctor to dress his wound, but he wouldn't have it touched, and insisted upon being taken into court next morning with his face all marked; but though he certainly looked horrible enough, he didn't take anything by his move. He was well known, and besides, though I struck with a will, I struck in self-defence, and for life. He had penal servitude, and he didn't live to do his time out.

This is the sort of customer a policeman has sometimes to tackle, and he never knows the day or hour he may have to tackle. Men as are wanted will generally come quiet enough, when they find they are fairly dropped upon; but still you can never be quite certain of them; if the drink or the devil is in them at the time, they may take it into their heads to show fight, and when they do they're not particular to trifles—the first thing that comes handy they'll use. But, as I said before, it's when they go in for being revenged on you that they are the most dangerous. It isn't a case of fighting then; they don't give you the chance to fight; they creep upon you—in the dark for choice—and are up to all sorts of cruel, cowardly ways of laming a man. Many a fine man has been made a cripple for life, in doing or for having done his duty as a policeman, and some have been killed outright.

Then see how a policeman has to go into a row, and take his chance of what may happen from interfering with wild or drunken men with their blood up; again, see how he has to go into a house where "Murder" is being shouted, and where perhaps the first thing that meets his sight is a man more than half-mad, and slashing right and left with a poker. Then there is being at fires, and being out in all sorts of weather, so that what with one thing and what with another, a policeman's is both a hard job and a risky one. If there's any one as thinks as it ain't risky, just let 'em ask any policeman's wife as cares for her husband how often she has lain awake, fearing something might happen to him, when he's been on night duty in a bad quarter!

What class of criminals are the most dangerous for a policeman to have to deal with? Well, I hardly know; the regulars, the "habitual criminals," as they are called, are much of a muchness. A sneaking thief may turn Turk upon you, while a burglar or garotter, as you might think likely to show fight, will often let himself be took as quietly as a lamb. The chance cases are often rough ones. A mad-drunk sailor ain't a nice customer to handle, and a mad-drunk soldier—especially when he takes to the belt—is a decidedly nasty one; and sometimes your swindling clerk, or absconding bankrupt, will show his teeth—pull out a pistol, or pick up a deceiver or chair, and talk of knocking your brains out if you lay a hand on him; though of course we do lay hands on 'em for all that. If you dash in boldly at them they generally knock under.

Coiners used to be the worst, but there's not many about now. There is one customer, however, as is more likely than not to make a fight of it before he'll be taken, and as is generally a

tough un to fight, and that is the escaped convict. It's generally a desperate hand that does manage to escape, and one that's dreadfully fond of his liberty, and that knows that if he is took again he may bid a long good-bye to it. A gentleman of that stamp gave me the stiffest tussle I ever had, and the one I'm proudest of, for I fought him fair, and took him single-handed. When he made his escape he got clean away, and he had sense enough not to bark back to his old London haunts while the search was hot; but about a year afterwards he did venture back, and I accidentally got wind of it.

I knew that there was five pounds for any one who took him, and I had a pretty good idea that the governor of the prison he had broke out of would stand something more; but more than all that, I—Well, I may well say it: I had not been long in the force at the time, and I wanted to show that I had something in me; and so, though I could have asked for help, I made up my mind to try to take him by myself. I was twenty-seven at the time, stood five foot eleven, weighed twelve stone—good fighting weight—and, though I say it that shouldn't, the convict, escaped or unescaped, didn't breathe that I feared to tackle single-handed.

It was not of the man himself that I was afraid, though I knew he was a Tartar; what made the job so risky was the danger of being set upon by the whole of the gang to which he belonged, and who always went about together, and would, I knew, think nothing of murdering a policeman. I waited a few weeks to see what chance might turn up, and at length one afternoon I heard that the gang had picked up some sailors, and were spreeing with them in a public-house some little distance from their regular lurk; and thinking to myself that I might wait long enough without finding any much better opportunity, I determined to try my luck there and then, and down to this public-house I went.

There was no one then particular at the bar, and so I passed through to the back, and there in a shut-in skittle alley I caught sight of the gang, eight in number, and with three sailors in tow. I felt quailish, but I knew that it wouldn't do to give way to that feeling, and so seeing my gentleman there in the midst as large as life, I put on my boldest face, bounced into the alley, and shutting the door, placed my back against it. Though the gang were taken by surprise, they acted cleverly enough; they didn't know which of them might be wanted, and not one of them said a word or moved an inch, but I noticed my man pick up a pot and make a pretence of sipping at it, though I could see easy enough that his real move was to be ready to fling it at my head if it should turn out that he was the man wanted.

I caught his eye, and in an off-handed tone said, "Oh, you know it's you I've come for, then; but take my advice, don't do anything in the pot-throwing line. It will only make things worse for you, for the house is surrounded, and there are men enough in reserve to take a houseful of you."

"I shall make it death or glory this time," he answered, "and so here goes;" and as he spoke the words he threw the pot as hard as he could, and then made a dash for a window at the end of the alley. The pot just skimmed my ear, and then I was on him like a panther, and dragged him back just as he had got about half out of the window. I downed him, and had all but mastered him, when one of the gang, that had popped out as soon as my back was from the door, came running back to tell the others that it was all gammon about there being a reserve. This was enough for them. Without another word said, they made a rush towards me; and, though I still held my man, my heart grew cold, and a prayer flashed through my mind, for I felt I was face to face with death. I knew that they'd stick at nothing, and that the very same gang had kicked a man to death only a few months before. But I was in luck.

I would have called to the sailors for help, but they looked helplessly drunk, and two of 'em was, but the third, as it happened, was only half-seas over. He was a big lump of a fellow, a Yankee mate, as I knew afterwards and about as cool and bold a card as there could be. As they sprang forward, so did he, and whipping out a revolver, says he, in an aggravating sort of way, "Gentlemen, fair play is a jewel, and I like to see it respected—and so I will. They are men to man, and pretty fairly matched, and if the officer can take him, he shall." Whether or not he really would have fired at them, they must have believed so, for they slunk back. All the same they had done a good thing for their mate.

While this had been going on I had, without knowing it, slackened my hold, and my man, putting out all his strength in a sudden move, threw me off, and got on to his feet, and before I could close with him again, had drawn a life-preserver. He made a dash at me with it, and aimed a crushing blow at my head.

Fortunately it only reached my left shoulder, but even there it was a crippler for the time being, for I felt my arm drop useless to my side. He staggered a bit from partly missing his blow, and before he could recover himself I was alongside of him, and he went over like a ninepin, and held up his hands to have the bracelets put on.

It was only about two minutes' job altogether, but it was a mighty tough one, I can tell you, and a dangerous one too; and what I say is, that when people talk about policemen, they should remember that they never know the day or hour when, in the way of duty, they may have to tackle a job in which their life is at stake.