

The  
PALL MALL  
MAGAZINE



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TO  
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L. Perrault, Paris

*Motherless*

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THE  
PALL MALL  
MAGAZINE

EDITED BY  
LORD FREDERIC HAMILTON

VOL. X.  
*SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 1896*

"Vires acquirit eundo"



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We made but a poor show of prisoners. The officers had been all offered their parole, and had taken it. They lived mostly in suburbs of the city, lodging with modest families, and enjoyed their freedom and supported the almost continual evil tidings of the Emperor as best they might. It chanced I was the only gentleman among the privates who remained. A great part were ignorant Italians, of a regiment that had suffered heavily in Catalonia. The rest were mere diggers of the soil, treaders of grapes or hewers of wood, who had been suddenly and violently preferred to the glorious state of soldiers. We had but the one interest in common: each of us who had any skill with his fingers passed the hours of his captivity in the making of little toys and *articles of Paris*; and the prison was daily visited at certain hours by a concourse of people of the country, come to exult over our distress, or—it is more tolerant to suppose—their own vicarious triumph. Some moved among us with a decency of shame or sympathy. Others were the most offensive personages in the world, gaped at us as if we had been baboons, sought to evangelise us to their rustic, northern religion, as though we had been savages, or tortured us with intelligence of disasters to the arms of France. Good, bad and indifferent, there was one alleviation to the annoyance of these visitors; for it was the practice of almost all to purchase some specimen of our rude handiwork. This led, amongst the prisoners, to a strong spirit of competition. Some were neat of hand, and (the genius of the French being always distinguished) could place upon sale little miracles of dexterity and taste. Some had a more engaging appearance; fine features were found to do as well as fine merchandise, and an air of youth in particular (as it appealed to the sentiment of pity in our visitors) to be a source of profit. Others again enjoyed some acquaintance with the language, and were able to recommend the more agreeably to purchasers such trifles as they had to sell. To the first of these advantages I could lay no claim, for my fingers were all thumbs. Some at least of the others I possessed; and finding much entertainment in our commerce, I did not suffer my advantages to rust. I have never despised the social arts, in which it is a national boast that every Frenchman should excel. For the approach of particular sorts of visitors, I had a particular manner of address and even of appearance, which I could readily assume and change on the occasion rising. I never lost an opportunity to flatter either the person of my visitor, if it should be a lady, or, if it should be a man, the greatness of his country in war. And in case my compliments should miss their aim, I was always ready to cover my retreat with some agreeable pleasantry, which would often earn me the name of an “oddity” or a “droll fellow.” In this way, although I was so left-handed a toy-maker, I made out to be rather a successful merchant; and found means to procure many little delicacies and alleviations, such as children or prisoners desire.

I am scarcely drawing the portrait of a very melancholy man. It is not indeed my character; and I had, in a comparison with my comrades, many reasons for content. In the first place, I had no family: I was an orphan and a bachelor; neither wife nor child awaited me in France. In the second, I had never wholly forgot the emotions with which I first found myself a prisoner; and although a military prison be not altogether a garden of delights, it is still preferable to a gallows. In the third, I am almost ashamed to say it, but I found a certain pleasure in our place of residence: being an obsolete and really mediæval fortress, high placed and commanding extraordinary prospects not only over sea, mountain and champaign, but actually over the thoroughfares of a capital city, which we could see blackened by day with the moving crowd of the inhabitants, and at night shining with lamps. And lastly, although I was not insensible to the restraints of





G. GRENVILLE MUNSON.

"Madam, your handkerchief."

[See p. 316.]

prison or the scantiness of our rations, I remembered I had sometimes eaten quite as ill in Spain, and had to mount guard and march perhaps a dozen leagues into the bargain. The first of my troubles, indeed, was the costume we were obliged to wear. There is a horrible practice in England to trick out in ridiculous uniforms, and as it were to brand in mass, not only convicts but military prisoners and even the children in charity schools. I think some malignant genius had found his masterpiece of irony in the dress which we were condemned to wear: jacket, waistcoat and trousers of a sulphur or mustard yellow, and a shirt of blue-and-white striped cotton. It was conspicuous, it was cheap, it pointed us out to laughter—we, who were old soldiers, used to arms, and some of us showing noble scars—like a set of lugubrious zanies at a fair. The old name of that rock on which our prison stood was (I have heard since then) the *Painted Hill*. Well, now it was all painted a bright yellow with our costumes; and the dress of the soldiers who guarded us being of course the essential British red rag, we made up together the elements of a lively picture of hell. I have again and again looked round upon my fellow-prisoners, and felt my anger rise, and choked upon tears, to behold them thus parodied. The more part, as I have said, were peasants, somewhat bettered perhaps by the drill-sergeant, but for all that ungainly, loutish fellows, with no more than a mere barrack-room smartness of address: indeed, you could have seen our army nowhere more discreditably represented than in this Castle of Edinburgh. And I used to see myself in fancy, and blush. It seemed that my more elegant carriage would but point the insult of the travesty. And I remembered the days when I wore the coarse but honourable coat of a soldier;

and remembered farther back how many of the noble, the fair and the gracious had taken a delight to tend my childhood. . . . But I must not recall these tender and sorrowful memories twice; their place is farther on, and I am now upon another business. The perfidy of the Britannic Government stood nowhere more openly confessed than in one particular of our discipline: that we were shaved twice in the week. To a man who has loved all his life to be fresh shaven, can a more irritating indignity be devised? Monday and Thursday were the days. Take the Thursday, and conceive the picture I must present by Sunday evening! And Saturday, which was almost as bad, was the great day for visitors.

Those who came to our market were of all qualities, men and women, the lean and the stout, the plain and the fairly pretty. Sure, if people at all understood the power of beauty, there would be no prayers addressed except to Venus; and the mere privilege of beholding a comely woman is worth paying for. Our visitors, upon the whole, were not much to boast of; and yet, sitting in a corner and very much ashamed of myself and my absurd appearance, I have again and again tasted the finest, the rarest and the most ethereal pleasures in a glance of an eye that I should never see again—and never wanted to. The flower of the hedgerow and the star in heaven satisfy and delight us: how much more the look of that exquisite being who was created to bear and rear, to madden and rejoice, mankind!

There was one young lady in particular, about eighteen or nineteen, tall, of a gallant carriage, and with a profusion of hair in which the sun found threads of gold. As soon as she came in the courtyard (and she was a rather frequent visitor) it seemed I was aware of it. She had an air of angelic candour, yet of a high spirit; she stepped like a Diana, every movement was noble and free. One day there was a strong east wind; the banner was straining at the flagstaff; below us the smoke of the city chimneys blew hither and thither in a thousand crazy variations; and away out on the Forth we could see the ships lying down to it and scudding. I was thinking what a vile day it was, when she appeared. Her hair blew in the wind with changes of colour; her garments moulded her with the accuracy of sculpture; the ends of her shawl fluttered about her ear and were caught in again with an inimitable deftness. You have seen a pool on a gusty day, how it suddenly sparkles and flashes like a thing alive? So this lady's face had become animated and coloured; and as I saw her standing, somewhat inclined, her lips parted, a divine trouble in her eyes, I could have clapped my hands in applause, and was ready to acclaim her a genuine daughter of the winds. What put it in my head, I know not: perhaps because it was a Thursday and I was new from the razor; but I determined to engage her attention no later than that day. She was approaching that part of the court in which I sat with my merchandise, when I observed her handkerchief to escape from her hands and fall to the ground; the next moment, the wind had taken it up and carried it within my reach. I was on foot at once: I had forgot my mustard-coloured clothes, I had forgot the private soldier and his salute. Bowing deeply, I offered her the slip of cambric.

"Madam," said I, "your handkerchief. The wind brought it me."

I met her eyes fully.

"I thank you, sir," said she.

"The wind brought it me," I repeated. "May I not take it for an omen? You have an English proverb, 'It's an ill wind that blows nobody good.'"

"Well," she said, with a smile, "'One good turn deserves another.' I will see what you have."

She followed me to where my wares were spread out under lee of a piece of cannon.

"Alas, mademoiselle!" said I, "I am no very perfect craftsman. This is supposed to be a house, and you see the chimneys are awry. You may call this a box if you are very indulgent; but see where my tool slipped! Yes, I am afraid you may go from one to another, and find a flaw in everything. *Failures for Sale* should be on my signboard. I do not keep a shop; I keep a Humorous Museum." I cast a smiling glance about my display and then at her, and instantly became grave. "Strange, is it not," I added, "that a grown man and a soldier should be engaged upon such trash, and a sad heart produce anything so funny to look at?"

An unpleasant voice summoned her at this moment by the name of Flora, and she made a hasty purchase and rejoined her party.

A few days after she came again. But I must first tell you how she came to be so frequent. Her aunt was one of those terrible British old maids, of which the world has heard much; and having nothing whatever to do and a word or two of French, she had taken what she called an *interest in the French prisoners*. A big, bustling, bold old lady, she flounced about our market-place with insufferable airs of patronage and condescension. She bought, indeed, with liberality, but her manner of studying us through a quizzing glass, and playing cicerone to her followers, acquitted us of any gratitude. She had a tail behind her of heavy, obsequious old gentlemen, or dull, giggling misses, to whom she appeared to be an oracle. "This one can really carve prettily: is he not a quiz with his big whiskers?" she would say. "And this one," indicating myself with her gold eye-glass, "is, I assure you, quite an oddity." The oddity, you may be certain, ground his teeth. She had a way of standing in our midst, nodding around, and addressing us in what she imagined to be French: "*Bienne, hommes! ça va bienne?*" I took the freedom to reply in the same lingo: "*Bienne, femme! ça va couci-couci tout d'même, la bourgeoise!*" And at that, when we had all laughed with a little more heartiness than was entirely civil, "I told you he was quite an oddity!" says she in triumph. Needless to say, these passages were before I had remarked the niece.

The aunt came on the day in question with a following rather more than usually large, which she manœuvred to and fro about the market and lectured to at rather more than usual length, and with rather less than her accustomed tact. I kept my eyes down, but they were ever fixed in the same direction, quite in vain. The aunt came and went, and pulled us out, and showed us off, like caged monkeys; but the niece kept herself on the outskirts of the crowd and on the opposite side of the courtyard, and departed at last as she had come, without a sign. Closely as I had watched her, I could not say her eyes had ever rested on me for an instant; and my heart was overwhelmed with bitterness and blackness. I tore out her detested image; I felt I was done with her for ever; I laughed at myself savagely, because I had thought to please; when I lay down at night, sleep forsook me, and I lay, and rolled, and gloated on her charms, and cursed her insensibility, for half the night. How trivial I thought her! and how trivial her sex! A man might be an angel or an Apollo, and a mustard-coloured coat would wholly blind them to his merits. I was a prisoner, a slave, a contemned and despicable being, the butt of her sniggering countrymen. I would take the lesson: no proud daughter of my foes should have the chance to mock at me again; none in the future should have the chance to think I had looked at her with admiration. You cannot imagine any one of a more resolute and independent spirit, or whose bosom was more wholly mailed with patriotic arrogance, than I. Before I dropped asleep, I had remembered all the infamies of Britain, and debited them in an overwhelming column to Flora.

The next day, as I sat in my place, I became conscious there was some one standing near; and behold, it was herself! I kept my seat, at first in the confusion of my mind, later on from policy; and she stood, and leaned a little over me, as in pity. She was very still and timid; her voice was low. Did I suffer in my captivity? she asked me. Had I to complain of any hardship?

"Mademoiselle, I have not learned to complain," said I. "I am a soldier of Napoleon."

She sighed. "At least you must regret *La France*," said she, and coloured a little as she pronounced the words, which she did with a pretty strangeness of accent.

"What am I to say?" I replied. "If you were carried from this country, for which you seem so wholly suited, where the very rains and winds seem to become you like ornaments, would you regret, do you think? We must surely all regret! the son to his mother, the man to his country; these are native feelings."

"You have a mother?" she asked.

"In heaven, mademoiselle," I answered. "She, and my father also, went by the same road to heaven as so many others of the fair and brave: they followed their queen upon the scaffold. So, you see, I am not so much to be pitied in my prison," I continued: "there are none to wait for me; I am alone in the world. 'Tis a different case, for instance, with yon poor fellow in the cloth cap. His bed is next to mine, and in the night I hear him sobbing to himself. He has a tender character, full of tender and pretty sentiments; and in the dark at night, and sometimes by day when he can get me apart with him, he laments a mother and a sweetheart. Do you know what made him take me for a confidant?"

She parted her lips with a look, but did not speak. The look burned all through me with a sudden vital heat.

"Because I had once seen, in marching by, the belfry of his village!" I continued. "The circumstance is quaint enough. It seems to bind up into one the whole bundle of those human instincts that make life beautiful, and people and places dear—and from which it would seem I am cut off!"

I rested my chin on my knee and looked before me on the ground. I had been talking until then to hold her; but I was now not sorry she should go: an impression is a thing so delicate to produce and so easy to overthrow! Presently she seemed to make an effort.

"I will take this toy," she said, laid a five-and-sixpenny piece in my hand, and was gone ere I could thank her.

I retired to a place apart near the ramparts and behind a gun. The beauty, the expression of her eyes, the tear that had trembled there, the compassion in her voice, and a kind of wild elegance that consecrated the freedom of her movements, all combined to enslave my imagination and inflame my heart. What had she said? Nothing to signify; but her eyes had met mine, and the fire they had kindled burned inextinguishably in my veins. I loved her; and I did not fear to hope. Twice I had spoken with her; and in both interviews I had been well inspired, I had engaged her sympathies, I had found words that she must remember, that would ring in her ears at night upon her bed. What mattered if I were half shaved and my clothes a caricature? I was still a man, and I had drawn my image on her memory. I was still a man, and, as I trembled to realise, she was still a woman. Many waters cannot quench love; and love, which is the law of the world, was on my side. I closed my eyes, and she sprang up on the background of the darkness, more beautiful than in life. "Ah!" thought



G. GREVILLE MONTAGU.

*"Her manner of studying us through a quizzing-glass."*

[See p. 317

I, "and you too, my dear, you too must carry away with you a picture, that you are still to behold again and still to embellish. In the darkness of night, in the streets by day, still you are to have my voice and face, whispering, making love for me, encroaching on your shy heart. Shy as your heart is, *it* is lodged there—I am lodged there; let the hours do their office—let time continue to draw me ever in more lively, ever in more insidious colours." And then I had a vision of myself, and burst out laughing.

A likely thing, indeed, that a beggar-man, a private soldier, a prisoner in a yellow travesty, was to awake the interest of this fair girl! I would not despair; but I saw the game must be played fine and close. It must be my policy to hold myself before her, always in a pathetic or pleasing attitude; never to alarm or startle her; to keep my own secret locked in my bosom like a story of disgrace, and let hers (if she could be induced to have one) grow at its own rate; to move just so fast, and not by a hair's-breadth any faster, than the inclination of her heart. I was the man, and yet I was passive, tied by the foot in prison. I could not go to her; I must cast a spell upon her at each visit, so that she should return to me; and this was a matter of nice management. I had done it the last time—it seemed impossible she should not come again after our interview; and for the next I had speedily ripened a fresh plan. A prisoner, if he has one great disability for a lover, has yet one considerable advantage: there is nothing to distract him, and he can spend all his hours ripening his love and preparing its manifestations. I had been then some days upon a piece of carving,—no less than the emblem of Scotland, the Lion Rampant. This I proceeded to finish with what skill I was possessed of; and when at last I could do no more to it (and, you may be sure, was already regretting I had done so much), added on the base the following dedication:—

À LA BELLE FLORA

LE PRISONNIER RECONNAISSANT

A. D. ST. Y. D. K.

I put my heart into the carving of these letters. What was done with so much ardour, it seemed scarce possible that any should behold with indifference; and the initials would at least suggest to her my noble birth. I thought it better to suggest: I felt that mystery was my stock-in-trade; the contrast between my rank and manners, between my speech and my clothing, and the fact that she could only think of me by a combination of letters, must all tend to increase her interest and engage her heart.

This done, there was nothing left for me but to wait and to hope. And there is nothing further from my character: in love and in war, I am all for the forward movement; and these days of waiting made my purgatory. It is a fact that I loved her a great deal better at the end of them, for love comes, like bread, from a perpetual rehandling. And besides, I was fallen into a panic of fear. How, if she came no more, how was I to continue to endure my empty days? how was I to fall back and find my interest in the major's lessons, the lieutenant's chess, in a twopenny sale in the market, or a halfpenny addition to the prison fare?

Days went by, and weeks; I had not the courage to calculate, and to-day I have not the courage to remember; but at last she was there. At last I saw her approach me in the company of a boy about her own age, and whom I divined at once to be her brother.

I rose and bowed in silence.



"I ran to my fallen adversary, kneeling by him."

[See p. 325.]

"This is my brother, Mr. Ronald Gilchrist," said she. "I have told him of your sufferings. He is so sorry for you!"

"It is more than I have the right to ask," I replied; "but among gentlefolk these generous sentiments are natural. If your brother and I were to meet in the field, we should meet like tigers; but when he sees me here disarmed and helpless, he forgets his animosity." (At which, as I had ventured to expect, this beardless champion coloured to the ears for pleasure.) "Ah, my dear young lady," I continued, "there are many of your countrymen languishing in my country even as I do here. I can but hope there is found some French lady to convey to each of them the priceless consolation of her sympathy. You have given me alms; and more than alms—hope; and while you were absent I was not forgetful. Suffer me to be able to tell myself that I have at least tried to make a return; and for the prisoner's sake deign to accept this trifle."

So saying, I offered her my lion, which she took, looked at in some embarrassment, and then, catching sight of the dedication, broke out with a cry.

"Why, how did you know my name?" she exclaimed.

"When names are so appropriate, they should be easily guessed," said I, bowing. "But indeed there was no magic in the matter. A lady called you by name on the day I found your handkerchief, and I was quick to remark and cherish it."

"It is very, very beautiful," said she, "and I shall be always proud of the inscription. Come, Ronald, we must be going." She bowed to me as a lady bows to her equal, and passed on (I could have sworn) with a heightened colour.

I was overjoyed: my innocent ruse had succeeded; she had taken my gift

without a hint of payment, and she would scarce sleep in peace till she had made it up to me. No greenhorn in matters of the heart, I was besides aware that I had now a resident ambassador at the court of my lady. The lion might be ill chiselled; it was mine. My hands had made and held it; my knife—or, to speak more by the mark, my rusty nail—had traced those letters; and simple as the words were, they would keep repeating to her that I was grateful and that I found her fair. The boy had looked like a gawky, and blushed at a compliment; I could see besides that he regarded me with considerable suspicion; yet he made so manly a figure of a lad, that I could not withhold from him my sympathy. And as for the impulse that had made her bring and introduce him, I could not sufficiently admire it. It seemed to me finer than wit, and more tender than a caress. It said (plain as language), “I do not and I cannot know you. Here is my brother—you can know him; this is the way to me—follow it.”

## CHAPTER II.

### A TALE OF A PAIR OF SCISSORS.

I WAS still plunged in these thoughts when the bell was rung that discharged our visitors into the street. Our little market was no sooner closed than we were summoned to the distribution and received our rations, which we were then allowed to eat according to fancy in any part of our quarters.

I have said the conduct of some of our visitors was unbearably offensive; it was possibly more so than they dreamed—as the sight-seers at a menagerie may offend in a thousand ways, and quite without meaning it, the noble and unfortunate animals behind the bars; and there is no doubt but some of my compatriots were susceptible beyond reason. Some of these old whiskerandos, originally peasants, trained since boyhood in victorious armies, and accustomed to move among subject and trembling populations, could ill brook their change of circumstance. There was one man of the name of Goguelat, a brute of the first water, who had enjoyed no touch of civilisation beyond the military discipline, and had risen by an extreme heroism of bravery to a grade for which he was otherwise unfitted—that of *maréchal des logis* in the 22nd of the line. In so far as a brute can be a good soldier, he was a good soldier; the cross was on his breast, and gallantly earned; but in all things outside his line of duty the man was no other than a brawling, bruising, ignorant pillar of low pouthouses. As a gentleman by birth and a scholar by taste and education, I was the type of all that he least understood and most detested; and the mere view of our visitors would leave him daily in a transport of annoyance, which he would make haste to wreak on the nearest victim, and too often on myself.

It was so now. Our rations were scarce served out, and I had just withdrawn into a corner of the yard, when I perceived him drawing near. He wore an air of hateful mirth; a set of young fools, among whom he passed for a wit, followed him with looks of expectation; and I saw I was about to be the object of some of his insufferable pleasantries. He took a place beside me, spread out his rations, drank to me derisively from his measure of prison beer, and began. What he said it would be impossible to print; but his admirers, who believed their wit to have surpassed himself, actually rolled among the gravel. For my part, I thought at first I should have died. I had not dreamed the wretch was so observant; but hate sharpens the ears, and he had counted our interviews and actually knew





"He deliberately lighted a cigar."

[See p. 329.]

Flora by her name. Gradually my coolness returned to me, accompanied by a volume of living anger that surprised myself.

"Are you nearly done?" I asked. "Because if you are, I am about to say a word or two myself."

"Oh, fair play!" said he. "Turn about! The Marquis of Carabas to the tribune."

"Very well," said I. "I have to inform you that I am a gentleman. You do not know what that means, hey? Well, I will tell you. It is a comical sort of animal; springs from another strange set of creatures they call ancestors; and in common with toads and other vermin, has a thing that he calls feelings. The lion is a gentleman; he will not touch carrion. I am a gentleman, and I cannot bear to soil my fingers with such a lump of dirt. Sit still, Philippe Goguelat! sit still and do not say a word, or I shall know you are a coward; the eyes of our guards are upon us. Here is your health!" said I, and pledged him in the prison beer. "You have chosen to speak in a certain way of a young child," I continued. "who might be your daughter, and who was giving alms to me and some others of us mendicants. If the Emperor"—saluting—"if my Emperor could hear you, he would pluck off the cross from your gross body. I cannot do that; I cannot take away what his Majesty has given; but one thing I promise you—I promise you, Goguelat, you shall be dead to night."

I had borne so much from him in the past, I believe he thought there was no end to my forbearance, and he was at first amazed. But I have the pleasure to think that some of my expressions had pierced through his thick hide; and

besides, the brute was truly a hero of valour, and loved fighting for itself. Whatever the cause, at least, he had soon pulled himself together, and took the thing (to do him justice) handsomely.

"And I promise you, by the devil's horns, that you shall have the chance!" said he, and pledged me again; and again I did him scrupulous honour.

The news of this defiance spread from prisoner to prisoner with the speed of wings; every face was seen to be illuminated like those of the spectators at a horse-race; and indeed you must first have tasted the active life of a soldier, and then mouldered for a while in the tedium of a jail, in order to understand, perhaps even to excuse, the delight of our companions. Goguelat and I slept in the same squad, which greatly simplified the business; and a committee of honour was accordingly formed of our shed-mates. They chose for president a sergeant-major in the 4th Dragoons, a greybeard of the army, an excellent military subject, and a good man. He took the most serious view of his functions, visited us both, and reported our replies to the committee. Mine was of a decent firmness. I told him the young lady of whom Goguelat had spoken had on several occasions given me alms. I reminded him that, if we were now reduced to hold out our hands and sell pill-boxes for charity, it was something very new for soldiers of the Empire. We had all seen bandits standing at a corner of a wood truckling for copper halfpence, and after their benefactors were gone spitting out injuries and curses. "But," said I, "I trust that none of us will fall so low. As a Frenchman and a soldier, I owe that young child gratitude, and am bound to protect her character, and to support that of the army. You are my elder and my superior: tell me if I am not right."

He was a quiet-mannered old fellow, and patted me with three fingers on the back. "*C'est bien, mon enfant,*" says he, and returned to his committee.

Goguelat was no more accommodating than myself. "I do not like apologies nor those that make them," was his only answer. And there remained nothing but to arrange the details of the meeting. So far as regards place and time, we had no choice; we must settle the dispute at night, in the dark, after a round had passed by, and in the open middle of the shed under which we slept. The question of arms was more obscure. We had a good many tools, indeed, which we employed in the manufacture of our toys; but they were none of them suited for a single combat between civilised men, and, being nondescript, it was found extremely hard to equalise the chances of the combatants. At length a pair of scissors was unscrewed; and a couple of tough wands being found in a corner of the courtyard, one blade of the scissors was lashed solidly to each with resined twine—the twine coming I know not whence, but the resin from the green pillars of the shed, which still sweated from the axe. It was a strange thing to feel in one's hand this weapon, which was no heavier than a riding-rod, and which it was difficult to suppose would prove more dangerous. A general oath was administered and taken, that no one should interfere in the duel nor (suppose it to result seriously) betray the name of the survivor. And with that, all being then ready, we composed ourselves to await the moment.

The evening fell cloudy; not a star was to be seen when the first round of the night passed through our shed and wound off along the ramparts; and as we took our places, we could still hear, over the murmurs of the surrounding city, the sentries challenging its further passage. Leclos, the sergeant-major, set us in our stations, engaged our wands, and left us. To avoid blood-stained clothing, my adversary and I had stripped to the shoes; and the chill of the night enveloped our bodies like a wet sheet. The man was better at fencing than myself; he

was vastly taller than I, being of a stature almost gigantic, and proportionately strong. In the inky blackness of the shed, it was impossible to see his eyes; and from the suppleness of the wands, I did not like to trust to a parade. I made up my mind accordingly to profit, if I might, by my defect; and as soon as the signal should be given, to throw myself down and lunge at the same moment. It was to play my life upon one card: should I not mortally wound him, no defence would be left me; what was yet more appalling, I thus ran the risk of bringing my own face against his scissor with the double force of our assaults, and my face and eyes are not that part of me that I would the most readily expose.

“*Allez!*” said the sergeant-major.

Both lunged in the same moment with an equal fury, and but for my manœuvre both had certainly been spitted. As it was, he did no more than strike my shoulder, while my scissor plunged below the girdle into a mortal part; and that great bulk of a man, falling from his whole height, knocked me immediately senseless.

When I came to myself, I was laid in my own sleeping-place, and could make out in the darkness the outline of perhaps a dozen heads crowded around me. I sat up. “What is it?” I exclaimed.

“Hush!” said the sergeant-major. “Blessed be God, all is well.” I felt him clasp my hand, and there were tears in his voice. “’Tis but a scratch, my child; here is papa, who is taking good care of you. Your shoulder is bound up; we have dressed you in your clothes again, and it will all be well.”

At this I began to remember. “And Goguelat?” I gasped.

“He cannot bear to be moved; he has his bellyful; ’tis a bad business,” said the sergeant-major.

The idea of having killed a man with such an instrument as half a pair of scissors seemed to turn my stomach. I am sure I might have killed a dozen with a firelock, a sabre, a bayonet, or any accepted weapon, and been visited by no such sickness of remorse. And to this feeling every unusual circumstance of our rencounter, the darkness in which we had fought, our nakedness, even the resin on the twine, appeared to contribute. I ran to my fallen adversary, kneeled by him, and could only sob his name.

He bade me compose myself. “You have given me the key of the fields, comrade,” said he. “*Sans rancune!*”

At this my horror redoubled. Here had we two expatriated Frenchmen engaged in an ill-regulated combat like the battles of beasts. Here was he, who had been all his life so great a ruffian, dying in a foreign land of this ignoble injury, and meeting death with something of the spirit of a Bayard. I insisted that the guards should be summoned and a doctor brought. “It may still be possible to save him,” I cried.

The sergeant-major reminded me of our engagement. “If you had been wounded,” said he, “you must have lain there till the patrol came by and found you. It happens to be Goguelat--and so must he! Come, child, time to go to by-by.” And as I still resisted, “Champdivers!” he said, “this is weakness. You pain me.”

“Ay, off to your beds with you!” said Goguelat, and named us in a company with one of his jovial gross epithets.

Accordingly the squad lay down in the dark and simulated, what they certainly were far from experiencing, sleep. It was not yet late. The city, from far below and all around us, sent up a sound of wheels and feet and lively voices. Yet awhile, and the curtain of the cloud was rent across, and in the space of sky between the eaves of the shed and the irregular outline of the ramparts a

multitude of stars appeared. Meantime, in the midst of us lay Goguelat, and could not always withhold himself from groaning.

We heard the round far off; heard it draw slowly nearer. Last of all, it turned the corner and moved into our field of vision: two file of men and a corporal with a lantern, which he swung to and fro, so as to cast its light in the recesses of the yards and sheds.

"Hullo!" cried the corporal, pausing as he came by Goguelat.

He stooped with his lantern. All our hearts were flying.

"What devil's work is this?" he cried, and with a startling voice summoned the guard.

We were all afoot upon the instant; more lanterns and soldiers crowded in front of the shed; an officer elbowed his way in. In the midst was the big naked body, soiled with blood. Some one had covered him with his blanket; but as he lay there in agony, he had partly thrown it off.

"This is murder!" cried the officer. "You wild beasts, you will hear of this to-morrow."

As Goguelat was raised and laid upon a stretcher, he cried to us a cheerful and blasphemous farewell.

### CHAPTER III.

#### MAJOR CHEVENIX COMES INTO THE STORY, AND GOGUELAT GOES OUT.

THERE was never any talk of a recovery, and no time was lost in getting the man's deposition. He gave but the one account of it: that he had committed suicide because he was sick of seeing so many Englishmen. The doctor vowed it was impossible, the nature and direction of the wound forbidding it. Goguelat replied that he was more ingenious than the other thought for, and had propped up the weapon in the ground and fallen on the point—"just like Nebuchadnezzar," he added, winking to the assistants. The doctor, who was a little, spruce, ruddy man of an impatient temper, pished and pshawed and swore over his patient. "Nothing to be made of him!" he cried. "A perfect heathen. If we could only find the weapon!" But the weapon had ceased to exist. A little resined twine was perhaps blowing about in the castle gutters; some bits of broken stick may have trailed in corners; and behold, in the pleasant air of the morning, a dandy prisoner trimming his nails with a pair of scissors!

Finding the wounded man so firm, you may be sure the authorities did not leave the rest of us in peace. No stone was left unturned. We were had in again and again to be examined, now singly, now in twos and threes. We were threatened with all sorts of impossible severities and tempted with all manner of improbable rewards. I suppose I was five times interrogated, and came off from each with flying colours. I am like old Souvaroff, I cannot understand a soldier being taken aback by any question; he should answer as he marches on the fire with an instant briskness and gaiety. I may have been short of bread, gold or grace; I was never yet found wanting in an answer. My comrades, if they were not all so ready, were none of them less staunch; and I may say here at once that the inquiry came to nothing at the time, and the death of Goguelat remained a mystery of the prison. Such were the veterans of France! And yet I should be disingenuous if I did not own this was a case apart; in ordinary circumstances, some one might have stumbled or been intimidated into an admission; and what

bound us together with a closeness beyond that of mere comrades was a secret to which we were all committed and a design in which all were equally engaged. No need to inquire as to its nature: there is only one desire, and only one kind of design, that blooms in prisons. And the fact that our tunnel was near done supported and inspired us.

I came off in public, as I have said, with flying colours; the sittings of the court of inquiry died away like a tune that no one listens to; and yet I was unmasked—I, whom my very adversary defended, as good as confessed, as good as told the nature of the quarrel, and by so doing prepared for myself in the future a most anxious, disagreeable adventure. It was the third morning after the duel, and Goguelat was still in life, when the time came round for me to give Major Chevenix a lesson. I was fond of this occupation; not that he paid me much—no more, indeed, than eighteenpence a month, the customary figure, being a miser in the grain; but because I liked his breakfasts and (to some extent) himself. At least, he was a man of education; and of the others with whom I had any opportunity of speech, those that would not have held a book upside-down would have torn the pages out for pipelights. For I must repeat again that our body of prisoners was exceptional: there was in Edinburgh Castle none of that educational busyness that distinguished some of the other prisons, so that men entered them unable to read, and left them fit for high employments. Chevenix was handsome, and surprisingly young to be a major: six feet in his stockings, well set up, with regular features and very clear grey eyes. It was impossible to pick a fault in him, and yet the sum-total was displeasing. Perhaps he was too clean; he seemed to bear about with him the smell of soap. Cleanliness is good, but I cannot bear a man's nails to seem japanned. And certainly he was too self-possessed and cold. There was none of the fire of youth, none of the swiftness of the soldier, in this young officer. His kindness was cold, and cruel cold; his deliberation exasperating. And perhaps it was from this character, which is very much the opposite of my own, that even in these days, when he was of service to me, I approached him with suspicion and reserve.

I looked over his exercise in the usual form, and marked six faults.

"H'm. Six," says he, looking at the paper. "Very annoying! I can never get it right."

"Oh, but you make excellent progress!" I said. I would not discourage him, you understand, but he was congenitally unable to learn French. Some fire, I think, is needful, and he had quenched his fire in soapsuds.

He put the exercise down, leaned his chin upon his hand, and looked at me with clear, severe eyes.

"I think we must have a little talk," said he.

"I am entirely at your disposition," I replied; but I quaked, for I knew what subject to expect.

"You have been some time giving me these lessons," he went on, "and I am tempted to think rather well of you. I believe you are a gentleman."

"I have that honour, sir," said I.

"You have seen me for the same period. I do not know how I strike you; but perhaps you will be prepared to believe that I also am a man of honour," said he.

"I require no assurances; the thing is manifest," and I bowed.

"Very well, then," said he. "What about this Goguelat?"

"You heard me yesterday before the court," I began. "I was awakened only——"

"Oh yes; I 'heard you yesterday before the court,' no doubt," he interrupted, "and I remember perfectly that you were 'awakened only.' I could repeat the most of it by rote, indeed. But do you suppose that I believed you for a moment?"

"Neither would you believe me if I were to repeat it here," said I.

"I may be wrong—we shall soon see," says he; "but my impression is that you will not 'repeat it here.' My impression is that you have come into this room, and that you will tell me something before you go out."

I shrugged my shoulders.

"Let me explain," he continued. "Your evidence, of course, is nonsense. I put it by, and the court put it by."

"My compliments and thanks!" said I.

"You *must* know—that's the short and the long," he proceeded. "All of you in Shed B are bound to know. And I want to ask you where is the common sense of keeping up this farce, and maintaining this cock-and-bull story between friends. Come, come, my good fellow, own yourself beaten, and laugh at it yourself."

"Well, I hear you go ahead," said I. "You put your heart in it."

He crossed his legs slowly. "I can very well understand," he began, "that precautions have had to be taken. I daresay an oath was administered. I can comprehend that perfectly." (He was watching me all the time with his cold, bright eyes.) "And I can comprehend that, about an affair of honour, you would be very particular to keep it."

"About an affair of honour?" I repeated, like a man quite puzzled.

"It was not an affair of honour, then?" he asked.

"What was not? I do not follow," said I.

He gave no sign of impatience; simply sat awhile silent, and began again in the same placid and good-natured voice: "The court and I were at one in setting aside your evidence. It could not deceive a child. But there was a difference between myself and the other officers, because *I knew my man* and they did not. They saw in you a common soldier, and I knew you for a gentleman. To them your evidence was a leash of lies, which they yawned to hear you telling. Now, I was asking myself, how far will a gentleman go? Not surely so far as to help hush a murder up? So that—when I heard you tell how you knew nothing of the matter, and were only awakened by the corporal, and all the rest of it—I translated your statements into something else. Now, Champdivers," he cried, springing up lively and coming towards me with animation, "I am going to tell you what that was, and you are going to help me to see justice done: how, I don't know, for of course you are under oath—but somehow. Mark what I'm going to say."

At that moment he laid a heavy, hard grip upon my shoulder; and whether he said anything more or came to a full stop at once, I am sure I could not tell you to this day. For, as the devil would have it, the shoulder he laid hold of was the one Goguelat had pinked. The wound was but a scratch; it was healing with the first intention; but in the clutch of Major Chevenix it gave me agony. My head swam; the sweat poured off my face; I must have grown deadly pale.

He removed his hand as suddenly as he had laid it there

"What is wrong with you?" said he.

"It is nothing," said I. "A qualm. It has gone by."

"Are you sure?" said he. "You are as white as a sheet."

"Oh no, I assure you! Nothing whatever. I am my own man again," I said, though I could scarce command my tongue.

"Well, shall I go on again?" says he. "Can you follow me?"

"Oh, by all means!" said I, and mopped my streaming face upon my sleeve, for you may be sure in those days I had no handkerchief.

"If you are sure you can follow me. That was a very sudden and sharp seizure," he said doubtfully. "But if you are sure, all right, and here goes. An affair of honour among you fellows would naturally be a little difficult to carry out, perhaps it would be impossible to have it wholly regular. And yet a duel might be very irregular in form, and, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, loyal enough in effect. Do you take me? Now, as a gentleman and a soldier."

His hand rose again at the words and hovered over me. I could bear no more, and winced away from him. "No," I cried, "not that. Do not put your hand upon my shoulder. I cannot bear it. It is rheumatism," I made haste to add. "My shoulder is inflamed and very painful."

He returned to his chair and deliberately lighted a cigar.

"I am sorry about your shoulder," he said at last. "Let me send for the doctor."

"Not in the least," said I. "It is a trifle. I am quite used to it. It does not trouble me in the smallest. At any rate, I don't believe in doctors."

"All right," said he, and sat and smoked a good while in a silence which I would have given anything to break. "Well," he began presently, "I believe there is nothing left for me to learn. I presume I may say that I know all."

"About what?" said I boldly.

"About Goguelat," said he.

"I beg your pardon. I cannot conceive," said I.

"Oh," says the major, "the man fell in a duel, and by your hand! I am not an infant."

"By no means," said I. "But you seem to me to be a good deal of a theorist."

"Shall we test it?" he asked. "The doctor is close by. If there is not an open wound on your shoulder, I am wrong. If there is——" He waved his hand. "But I advise you to think twice. There is a deuce of a nasty drawback to the experiment—that what might have remained private between us two becomes public property."

"Oh, well!" said I, with a laugh, "anything rather than a doctor! I cannot bear the breed."

His last words had a good deal relieved me, but I was still far from comfortable.

Major Chevenix smoked awhile, looking now at his cigar ash, now at me. "I'm a soldier myself," he says presently, "and I've been out in my time and hit my man. I don't want to run any one into a corner for an affair that was at all necessary or correct. At the same time, I want to know that much, and I'll take your word of honour for it. Otherwise, I shall be very sorry, but the doctor must be called in."

"I neither admit anything nor deny anything," I returned. "But if this form of words will suffice you, here is what I say: I give you my parole, as a gentleman and a soldier, there has nothing taken place amongst us prisoners that was not honourable as the day."

"All right," says he. "That was all I wanted. You can go now, Champdivers."

And as I was going out he added, with a laugh: "By-the-bye, I ought to apologise: I had no idea I was applying the torture!"

The same afternoon the doctor came into the courtyard with a piece of paper in his hand. He seemed hot and angry, and had certainly no mind to be polite.

"Here!" he cried. "Which of you fellows knows any English? Oh!"—spying me—"there you are, what's your name! You'll do. Tell these fellows that the other fellow's dying. He's booked; no use talking; I expect he'll go by evening. And tell them I don't envy the feelings of the fellow who spiked him. Tell them that first."

I did so.

"Then you can tell 'em," he resumed, "that the fellow, Goggle—what's his name?—wants to see some of them before he gets his marching orders. If I got it right, he wants to kiss or embrace you, or some sickening stuff. Got that? Then here's a list he's had written, and you'd better read it out to them—I can't make head or tail of your beastly names—and they can answer *present*, and fall in against that wall."

It was with a singular movement of incongruous feelings that I read the first name on the list. I had no wish to look again on my own handiwork; my flesh recoiled from the idea; and how could I be sure what reception he designed to give me? The cure was in my own hand; I could pass that first name over—the doctor would not know—and I might stay away. But to the subsequent great gladness of my heart, I did not dwell for an instant on the thought, walked over to the designated wall, faced about, read out the name "Champlivers," and answered myself with the word "Present."

There were some half-dozen on the list, all told; and as soon as we were mustered, the doctor led the way to the hospital, and we followed after, like a fatigue party, in single file. At the door he paused, told us "the fellow" would see each of us alone, and, as soon as I had explained that, sent me by myself into the ward. It was a small room, whitewashed; a south window stood open on a vast depth of air and a spacious and distant prospect; and from deep below, in the Grassmarket, the voices of hawkers came up clear and far away. Hard by, on a little bed, lay Goguelat. The sunburn had not yet faded from his face, and the stamp of death was already there. There was something wild and unmannish in his smile, that took me by the throat; only death and love know or have ever seen it. And when he spoke, it seemed to shame his coarse talk.

He held out his arms as if to embrace me. I drew near with incredible shrinkings, and surrendered myself to his arms with overwhelming disgust. But he only drew my ear down to his lips.

"Trust me," he whispered. "*Je suis bon bougre, moi.* I'll take it to hell with me, and tell the devil."

Why should I go on to reproduce his grossness and trivialities? All that he thought, at that hour, was even noble, though he could not clothe it otherwise than in the language of a brutal farce. Presently he bade me call the doctor; and when that officer had come in, raised a little up in his bed, pointed first to himself and then to me, who stood weeping by his side, and several times repeated the expression, "Frinds—frinds—dam frinds."

To my great surprise, the doctor appeared very much affected. He nodded his little bob-wigged head at us, and said repeatedly, "All right, Johnny—me comprong."

Then Goguelat shook hands with me, embraced me again, and I went out of the room sobbing like an infant.

How often have I not seen it, that the most unpardonable fellows make the happiest exits! It is a fate we may well envy them. Goguelat was detested in



life; in the last three days, by his admirable staunchness and consideration, he won every heart; and when word went about the prison the same evening that he was no more, the voice of conversation became hushed as in a house of mourning.

For myself I was like a man distracted; I cannot think what ailed me: when I awoke the following day, nothing remained of it; but that night I was filled with a gloomy fury of the nerves. I had killed him; he had done his utmost to protect me; I had seen him with that awful smile. And so illogical and useless is this sentiment of remorse, that I was ready, at a word or a look, to quarrel with somebody else. I presume the disposition of my mind was imprinted on my face; and when, a little after, I overtook, saluted and addressed the doctor, he looked on me with commiseration and surprise.

I had asked him if it was true.

"Yes," he said, "the fellow's gone."

"Did he suffer much?" I asked.

"Devil a bit; passed away like a lamb," said he. He looked on me a little, and I saw his hand go to his fob. "Here, take that! no sense in fretting," he said, and, putting a silver twopenny-bit in my hand, he left me.

I should have had that twopenny framed to hang upon the wall, for it was the man's one act of charity in all my knowledge of him. Instead of that, I stood looking at it in my hand and laughed out bitterly, as I realised his mistake; then went to the ramparts, and flung it far into the air like blood money. The night was falling; through an embrasure and across the gardened valley I saw the lamplighters hasting along Princes Street with ladder and lamp, and looked on moodily. As I was so standing a hand was laid upon my shoulder, and I turned about. It was Major Chevenix, dressed for the evening, and his neckcloth really admirably folded. I never denied the man could dress.

"Ah!" said he, "I thought it was you, Champdivers. So he's gone?"

I nodded.

"Come, come," said he, "you must cheer up. Of course it's very distressing, very painful and all that. But do you know, it ain't such a bad thing either for you or me? What with his death and your visit to him I am entirely reassured."

So I was to owe my life to Goguelat at every point.

"I had rather not discuss it," said I.

"Well," said he, "one word more, and I'll agree to bury the subject. What did you fight about?"

"Oh, what do men ever fight about?" I cried.

"A lady?" said he.

I shrugged my shoulders.

"Deuce you did!" said he. "I should scarce have thought it of him."

And at this my ill-humour broke fairly out in words. "He!" I cried. "He never dared to address her—only to look at her and vomit his vile insults! She may have given him sixpence: if she did, it may take him to heaven yet!"

At this I became aware of his eyes set upon me with a considering look, and brought up sharply.

"Well, well," said he. "Good night to you, Champdivers. Come to me at breakfast-time to-morrow, and we'll talk of other subjects."

I fully admit the man's conduct was not bad: in writing it down so long after the events I can even see that it was good.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

(To be continued)



THE ADVENTURES OF A FRENCH PRISONER IN ENGLAND.

CHAPTER IV.

ST. IVES GETS A BUNDLE OF BANK NOTES.

I WAS surprised one morning, shortly after, to find myself the object of marked consideration by a civilian and a stranger. This was a man of the middle age; he had a face of a mulberry colour, round black eyes, comical tufted eyebrows, and a protuberant forehead; and was dressed in clothes of a Quakerish cut. In spite of his plainness, he had that inscrutable air of a man well-to-do in his affairs. I conceived he had been some while observing me from a distance, for a sparrow sat betwixt us quite unalarmed on the breech of a piece of cannon. So soon as our eyes met, he drew near and addressed me in the French language, which he spoke with a good fluency but an abominable accent.

"I have the pleasure of addressing Monsieur le Vicomte Anne de Kéroual de Saint-Yves?" said he.

"Well," said I, "I do not call myself all that; but I have a right to, if I chose. In the meanwhile I call myself plain Champdivers, at your disposal. It was my mother's name, and good to go soldiering with."

"I think not quite," said he; "for if I remember rightly, your mother also had the particle. Her name was Florimonde de Champdivers."

"Right again!" said I, "and I am extremely pleased to meet a gentleman so well informed in my quarterings. Is monsieur Born himself?" This I said with a great air of assumption, partly to conceal the degree of curiosity with which my visitor had inspired me, and in part because it struck me as highly incongruous and comical in my prison garb and on the lips of a private soldier.

He seemed to think so too, for he laughed.

"No, sir," he returned, speaking this time in English; "I am not '*born*,' as you call it, and must content myself with *dying*, of which I am equally susceptible with the best of you. My name is Mr. Romaine—Daniel Romaine—a solicitor of London City, at your service; and, what will perhaps interest you more, I am here at the request of your great-uncle, the Count."



GRENVILLE MANTON

*"I have the pleasure of addressing Monsieur le Vicomte?"*

"What!" I cried, "does M. de K roual de St.-Yves remember the existence of such a person as myself, and will he deign to count kinship with a soldier of Napoleon?"

"You speak English well," observed my visitor.

"I had a good opportunity to learn it," said I. "I had an English nurse; my father spoke English with me; and I was finished by a countryman of yours and a dear friend of mine, a Mr. Vicary."

A strong expression of interest came into the lawyer's face.

"What!" he cried, "you knew poor Vicary?"

"For more than a year," said I; "and shared his hiding-place for many months."

"And I was his clerk, and have succeeded him in business," said he. "Excellent man! It was on the affairs of M. de K eroual that he went to that accursed country, from which he was never destined to return. Do you chance to know his end, sir?"

"I am sorry," said I, "I do. He perished miserably at the hands of a gang of banditti, such as we call *chauffeurs*. In a word, he was tortured, and died of it. See," I added, kicking off one shoe, for I had no stocking; "I was no more than a child, and see how they had begun to treat myself."

He looked at the mark of my old burn with a certain shrinking. "Beastly people!" I heard him mutter to himself.

"The English may say so with a good grace," I observed politely.

Such speeches were the coin in which I paid my way among this credulous race. Ninety per cent. of our visitors would have accepted the remark as natural in itself and creditable to my powers of judgment, but it appeared my lawyer was more acute.

"You are not entirely a fool, I perceive," said he.

"No," said I; "not wholly."

"And yet it is well to beware of the ironical mood," he continued. "It is a dangerous instrument. Your great-uncle has, I believe, practised it very much, until it is now become a problem what he means."

"And that brings me back to what you will admit is a most natural inquiry," said I. "To what do I owe the pleasure of this visit? how did you recognise me? and how did you know I was here?"

Carefully separating his coat skirts, the lawyer took a seat beside me on the edge of the flags.

"It is rather an odd story," says he, "and, with your leave, I'll answer the second question first. It was from a certain resemblance you bear to your cousin, M. le Vicomte."

"I trust, sir, that I resemble him advantageously?" said I.

"I hasten to reassure you," was the reply: "you do. To my eyes, M. Alain de St-Yves has scarce a pleasing exterior. And yet, when I knew you were here, and was actually looking for you—why, the likeness helped. As for how I came to know your whereabouts, by an odd enough chance, it is again M. Alain we have to thank. I should tell you, he has for some time made it his business to keep M. de K eroual informed of your career; with what purpose I leave you to judge. When he first brought the news of your—that you were serving Buonaparte, it seemed it might be the death of the old gentleman, so hot was his resentment. But from one thing to another, matters have a little changed. Or I should rather say, not a little. We learned you were under orders for the Peninsula, to fight the English; then that you had been commissioned for a piece of bravery, and were again reduced to the ranks. And from one thing to another (as I say), M. de K eroual became used to the idea that you were his kinsman and yet served with Buonaparte, and filled instead with wonder that he should have another kinsman who was so remarkably well informed of events in France. And it now became a very disagreeable question, whether the young gentleman was not a spy? In short, sir, in seeking to disserve you, he had accumulated against himself a load of suspicions.

My visitor now paused, took snuff, and looked at me with an air of benevolence.

"Good God, sir!" says I, "this is a curious story."

"You will say so before I have done," said he. "For there have two events followed. The first of these was an encounter of M. de K eroual and M. de Maus ant."

"I know the man to my cost," said I: "it was through him I lost my commission."

"Do you tell me so?" he cried. "Why, here is news!"

"Oh, I cannot complain!" said I. "I was in the wrong. I did it with my eyes open. If a man gets a prisoner to guard and lets him go, the least he can expect is to be degraded."

"You will be paid for it," said he. "You did well for yourself and better for your king."

"If I had thought I was injuring my emperor," said I, "I would have let M. de Mauséant burn in hell ere I had helped him, and be sure of that! I saw in him only a private person in a difficulty: I let him go in private charity; not even to profit myself will I suffer it to be misunderstood."

"Well, well," said the lawyer, "no matter now. This is a foolish warmth—a very misplaced enthusiasm, believe me! The point of the story is that M. de Mauséant spoke of you with gratitude, and drew your character in such a manner as greatly to affect your uncle's views. Hard upon the back of which, in came your humble servant, and laid before him the direct proof of what we had been so long suspecting. There was no dubiety permitted. M. Alain's expensive way of life, his clothes and mistresses, his dicing and racehorses, were all explained: he was in the pay of Buonaparte, a hired spy, and a man that held the strings of what I can only call a convoluted of extremely fishy enterprises. To do M. de Këroural justice, he took it in the best way imaginable, destroyed the evidences of the one great-nephew's disgrace—and transferred his interest wholly to the other."

"What am I to understand by that?" said I.

"I will tell you," says he. "There is a remarkable inconsistency in human nature which gentlemen of my cloth have a great deal of occasion to observe. Selfish persons can live without chick or child, they can live without all mankind except perhaps the barber and the apothecary; but when it comes to dying, they seem physically unable to die without an heir. You can apply this principle for yourself. Viscount Alain, though he scarce guesses it, is no longer in the field. Remains, Viscount Anne."

"I see," said I, "you give a very unfavourable impression of my uncle, the Count."

"I had not meant it," said he. "He has led a loose life—sadly loose—but he is a man it is impossible to know and not to admire; his courtesy is exquisite."

"And so you think there is actually a chance for me?" I asked.

"Understand," said he: "in saying as much as I have done, I travel quite beyond my brief. I have been clothed with no capacity to talk of wills, or heritages, or your cousin. I was sent here to make but the one communication: that M. de Këroural desires to meet his great nephew."

"Well," said I, looking about me on the battlements by which we sat surrounded, "this is a case in which Mahomet must certainly come to the mountain."

"Pardon me," said Mr. Romaine, "you know already your uncle is an aged man; but I have not yet told you that he is quite broken up, and his death shortly looked for. No, no, there is no doubt about it—it is the mountain that must come to Mahomet."

"From an Englishman, the remark is certainly significant," said I; "but you are of course, and by trade, a keeper of men's secrets, and I see you keep that of Cousin Alain, which is not the mark of a truculent patriotism, to say the least."

"I am first of all the lawyer of your family!" says he.

"That being so," said I, "I can perhaps stretch a point myself. This rock is very high, and it is very steep; a man might come by a devil of a fall from almost any part of it, and yet I believe I have a pair of wings that might carry me just so far as to the bottom. Once at the bottom I am helpless."

"And perhaps it is just then that I could step in," returned the lawyer. "Suppose by some contingency, at which I make no guess, and on which I offer no opinion——"

But here I interrupted him. "One word ere you go further. I am under no parole," said I.

"I understood so much," he replied, "although some of you French gentry find their word sit lightly on them."

"Sir, I am not one of those," said I.

"To do you plain justice, I do not think you one," said he. "Suppose yourself, then, set free and at the bottom of the rock," he continued, "although I may not be able to do much, I believe I can do something to help you on your road. In the first place I would carry this, whether in an inside pocket or my shoe." And he passed me a bundle of bank notes.

"No harm in that," said I, at once concealing them.

"In the second place," he resumed, "it is a great way from here to where your uncle lives—Amersham Place, not far from Dunstable; you have a great part of Britain to get through; and for the first stages, I must leave you to your own luck and ingenuity. I have no acquaintance here in Scotland, or at least" (with a grimace) "no dishonest ones. But farther to the south, about Wakefield, I am told there is a gentleman called Burchell Fenn, who is not so particular as some others, and might be willing to give you a cast forward. In fact, sir, I believe it's the man's trade: a piece of knowledge that burns my mouth. But that is what you get by meddling with rogues; and perhaps the biggest rogue now extant, M. de Saint-Yves, is your cousin, M. Alain."

"If this be a man of my cousin's," I observed, "I am perhaps better to keep clear of him?"

"It was through some papers of your cousin's that we came across his trail," replied the lawyer. "But I am inclined to think, so far as anything is safe in such a nasty business, you may apply to the man Fenn. You might even, I think, use the Viscount's name; and the little trick of family resemblance might come in. How, for instance, if you were to call yourself his brother?"

"It might be done," said I. "But look here a moment! You propose to me a very difficult game: I have apparently a devil of an opponent in my cousin; and being a prisoner of war, I can scarce be said to hold good cards. For what stakes, then, am I playing?"

"They are very large," said he. "Your great-uncle is immensely rich—immensely rich. He was wise in time; he smelt the revolution long before; sold all that he could, and had all that was movable transported to England through my firm. There are considerable estates in England; Amersham Place itself is very fine; and he has much money, wisely invested. He lives, indeed, like a prince. And of what use is it to him? He has lost all that was worth living for—his family, his country; he has seen his king and queen murdered; he has seen all these miseries and infamies," pursued the lawyer, with a rising inflection and a heightening colour; and then broke suddenly off,—“In short, sir, he has seen all the advantages of that government for which his nephew carries arms, and he has the misfortune not to like them.”

"You speak with a bitterness that I suppose I must excuse," said I; "yet which

of us has the more reason to be bitter? This man, my uncle, M. de K roual, fled. My parents, who were less wise perhaps, remained. In the beginning, they were even republicans; to the end, they could not be persuaded to despair of the people. It was a glorious folly, for which, as a son, I reverence them. First one and then the other perished. If I have any mark of a gentleman, all who taught me died upon the scaffold, and my last school of manners was the prison of the Abbaye. Do you think you can teach bitterness to a man with a history like mine?"

"I have no wish to try," said he. "And yet there is one point I cannot understand: I cannot understand that one of your blood and experience should serve the Corsican. I cannot understand it: it seems as though everything generous in you must rise against that—domination."

"And perhaps," I retorted, "had your childhood passed among wolves, you would have been overjoyed yourself to see the Corsican Shepherd."

"Well, well," replied Mr. Romaine, "it may be. There are things that do not bear discussion."

And with a wave of his hand he disappeared abruptly down a flight of steps and under the shadow of a ponderous arch.



"He disappeared . . . under the shadow of a ponderous arch."

## CHAPTER V.

### ST. IVES IS SHOWN A HOUSE.

THE lawyer was scarce gone before I remembered many omissions; and chief among these, that I had neglected to get Mr. Burchell Fenn's address. Here was an essential point neglected; and I ran to the head of the stairs to find myself already too late. The lawyer was beyond my view; in the archway that led downward to

the castle gate, only the red coat and the bright arms of a sentry glittered in the shadow ; and I could but return to my place upon the ramparts.

I am not very sure that I was properly entitled to this corner. But I was a high favourite ; not an officer, and scarce a private, in the castle would have turned me back, except upon a thing of moment ; and whenever I desired to be solitary, I was suffered to sit here behind my piece of cannon unmolested. The cliff went down before me almost sheer, but mantled with a thicket of climbing trees ; from farther down, an outwork raised its turret ; and across the valley I had a view of that long terrace of Princes Street which serves as a promenade to the fashionable inhabitants of Edinburgh. A singularity in a military prison, that it should command a view on the chief thoroughfare !

It is not necessary that I should trouble you with the train of my reflections, which turned upon the interview I had just concluded and the hopes that were now opening before me. What is more essential, my eye (even while I thought) kept following the movement of the passengers on Princes Street, as they passed briskly to and fro—met, greeted, and bowed to each other—or entered and left the shops, which are in that quarter, and, for a town of the Britannic provinces, particularly fine. My mind being busy upon other things, the course of my eye was the more random ; and it chanced that I followed, for some time, the advance of a young gentleman with a red head and a white great-coat, for whom I cared nothing at the moment, and of whom it is probable I shall be gathered to my fathers without learning more. He seemed to have a large acquaintance : his hat was for ever in his hand ; and I daresay I had already observed him exchanging compliments with half a dozen, when he drew up at last before a young man and a young lady whose tall persons and gallant carriage I thought I recognised.

It was impossible at such a distance that I could be sure, but the thought was sufficient, and I craned out of the embrasure to follow them as long as possible. To think that such emotions, that such a concussion of the blood, may have been inspired by a chance resemblance, and that I may have stood and thrilled there for a total stranger ! This distant view, at least, whether of Flora or of some one else, changed in a moment the course of my reflections. It was all very well, and it was highly needful, I should see my uncle ; but an uncle, a great-uncle at that, and one whom I had never seen, leaves the imagination cold ; and if I were to leave the castle, I might never again have the opportunity of finding Flora. The little impression I had made, even supposing I had made any, how soon it would die out ! how soon I should sink to be a phantom memory, with which (in after days) she might amuse a husband and children ! No, the impression must be clenched, the wax impressed with the seal, ere I left Edinburgh. And at this the two interests that were now contending in my bosom came together and became one. I wished to see Flora again ; and I wanted some one to further me in my flight and to get me new clothes. The conclusion was apparent. Except for persons in the garrison itself, with whom it was a point of honour and military duty to retain me captive, I knew, in the whole country of Scotland, these two alone. If it were to be done at all, they must be my helpers. To tell them of my designed escape while I was still in bonds, would be to lay before them a most difficult choice. What they might do in such a case, I could not in the least be sure of, for (the same case arising) I was far from sure what I should do myself. It was plain I must escape first. When the harm was done, when I was no more than a poor wayside fugitive, I might apply to them with less offence and more security. To this end it became necessary that I should find out where they lived and how to reach it ; and feeling a strong confidence that they would soon return to visit





*"I ran to the head of the stairs."*

me, I prepared a series of baits with which to angle for my information. It will be seen the first was good enough.

Perhaps two days after, Master Ronald put in an appearance by himself. I had no hold upon the boy, and pretermitted my design till I should have laid court to him and engaged his interest. He was prodigiously embarrassed, not having previously addressed me otherwise than by a bow and blushes; and he advanced to me with an air of one stubbornly performing a duty, like a raw soldier under fire. I laid down my carving; greeted him with a good deal of formality, such as I thought he would enjoy; and finding him to remain silent, branched off into narratives of my campaigns such as Goguelat himself might have scrupled to endorse. He visibly thawed and brightened; drew more near to where I sat; forgot his timidity so far as to put many questions; and at last, with another blush, informed me he was himself expecting a commission.

"Well," said I, "they are fine troops, your British troops in the Peninsula. A young gentleman of spirit may well be proud to be engaged at the head of such soldiers."

"I know that," he said; "I think of nothing else. I think shame to be dangling here at home and going through with this foolery of education, while others, no older than myself, are in the field."

"I cannot blame you," said I. "I have felt the same myself."

"There are—there are no troops, are there, quite so good as ours?" he asked.

"Well," said I, "there is a point about them: they have a defect,—they are not to be trusted in a retreat. I have seen them behave very ill in a retreat."

"I believe that is our national character," he said—God forgive him!—with an air of pride.

"I have seen your national character running away at least, and had the honour to run after it!" rose to my lips, but I was not so ill advised as to give it utterance. Every one should be flattered, but boys and women without stint; and I put in the rest of the afternoon narrating to him tales of British heroism, for which I should not like to engage that they were all true.

"I am quite surprised," he said at last. "People tell you the French are insincere. Now, I think your sincerity is beautiful. I think you have a noble character. I admire you very much. I am very grateful for your kindness to—to one so young," and he offered me his hand.

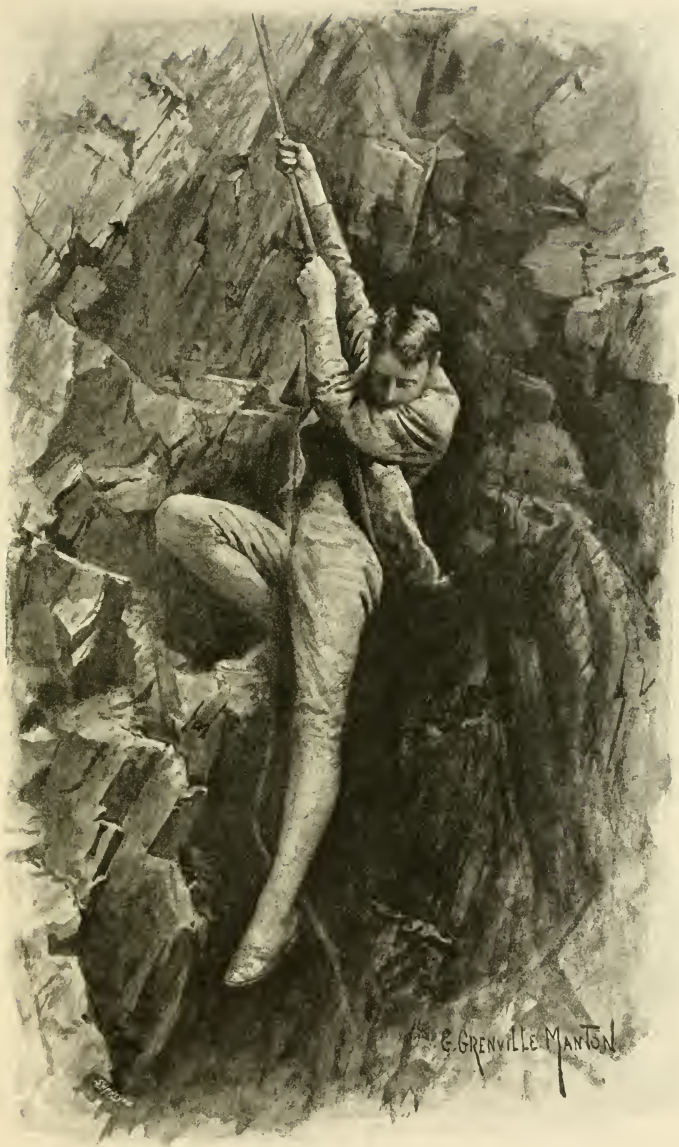
"I shall see you again soon?" said I.

"Oh, now! Yes, very soon," said he. "I—I wish to tell you. I would not let Flora—Miss Gilchrist, I mean—come to-day. I wished to see more of you myself. I trust you are not offended: you know, one should be careful about strangers."

I approved his caution, and he took himself away: leaving me in a mixture of contrarious feelings, part ashamed to have played on one so gullible, part raging that I should have burned so much incense before the vanity of England; yet, in the bottom of my soul, delighted to think I had made a friend—or, at least, begun to make a friend—of Flora's brother.

As I had half expected, both made their appearance the next day. I struck so fine a shade betwixt the pride that is allowed to soldiers and the sorrowful humility that befits a captive, that I declare, as I went to meet them, I might have afforded a subject for a painter. So much was high comedy, I must confess; but so soon as my eyes lighted full on her dark face and eloquent eyes, the blood leaped into my cheeks—and that was nature! I thanked them, but not the least with exultation; it was my cue to be mournful, and to take the pair of them as one.

"I have been thinking," I said, "you have been so good to me, both of you,



*"Dashed me at intervals against the face of the rock."*

[See p. 473.]

stranger and prisoner as I am, that I have been thinking how I could testify to my gratitude. It may seem a strange subject for a confidence, but there is actually no one here, even of my comrades, that knows me by my name and title. By these I am called plain Champdivers, a name to which I have a right, but not the name which I should bear, and which (but a little while ago) I must hide like a crime. Miss Flora, suffer me to present to you the Vicomte Anne de K eroual de Saint-Yves, a private soldier."

"I knew it!" cried the boy; "I knew he was a noble!"

And I thought the eyes of Miss Flora said the same, but more persuasively. All through this interview she kept them on the ground, or only gave them to me for a moment at a time, and with a serious sweetness.

"You may conceive, my friends, that this is rather a painful confession," I continued. "To stand here before you, vanquished, a prisoner in a fortress, and take my own name upon my lips, is painful to the proud. And yet I wished that you should know me. Long after this, we may yet hear of one another—perhaps Mr. Gilchrist and myself in the field and from opposing camps—and it would be a pity if we heard and did not recognise."

They were both moved; and began at once to press upon me offers of service, such as to lend me books, get me tobacco if I used it, and the like. This would have been all mighty welcome, before the tunnel was ready. Now it signified no more to me than to offer the transition I required.

"My dear friends," I said—"for you must allow me to call you that, who have no others within so many hundred leagues—perhaps you will think me fanciful and sentimental; and perhaps indeed I am; but there is one service that I would beg of you before all others. You see me set here on the top of this rock in the midst of your city. Even with what liberty I have, I have the opportunity to see a myriad roofs, and I dare to say thirty leagues of sea and land. All this hostile! Under all these roofs my enemies dwell; wherever I see the smoke of a house rising, I must tell myself that some one sits before the chimney and reads with joy of our reverses. Pardon me, dear friends, I know that you must do the same, and I do not grudge at it! With you, it is all different. Show me your house, then, were it only the chimney, or, if that be not visible, the quarter of the town in which it lies! So, when I look all about me, I shall be able to say: '*There is one house in which I am not quite unkindly thought of.*'"

Flora stood a moment.

"It is a pretty thought," said she, "and as far as regards Ronald and myself, a true one. Come, I believe I can show you the very smoke out of our chimney."

So saying, she carried me round the battlements towards the opposite or southern side of the fortress, and indeed to a bastion almost immediately overlooking the place of our projected flight. Thence we had a view of some foreshortened suburbs at our feet, and beyond of a green, open, and irregular country rising towards the Pentland Hills. The face of one of these summits (say two leagues from where we stood) is marked with a procession of white scars. And to this she directed my attention.

"You see these marks?" she said. "We call them the Seven Sisters. Follow a little lower with your eye, and you will see a fold of the hill, the tops of some trees, and a tail of smoke out of the midst of them. That is Swanston Cottage, where my brother and I are living with my aunt. If it gives you pleasure to see it, I am glad. We, too, can see the castle from a corner in the garden, and we go there in the morning often—do we not, Ronald?—and we think of you, M. de Saint-Yves; but I am afraid it does not altogether make us glad."

"Mademoiselle!" said I, and indeed my voice was scarce under command, "if you knew how your generous words—how even the sight of you—relieved the horrors of this place, I believe, I hope, I know, you would be glad. I will come here daily and look at that dear chimney and these green hills, and bless you from the heart, and dedicate to you the prayers of this poor sinner. Ah! I do not say they can avail!"

"Who can say that, M. de Saint-Yves?" she said, softly. "But I think it is time we should be going."

"High time," said Ronald, whom (to say the truth) I had a little forgotten.

On the way back, as I was laying myself out to recover lost ground with the youth, and to obliterate, if possible, the memory of my last and somewhat too fervent speech, who should come past us but the major? I had to stand aside and salute as he went by, but his eyes appeared entirely occupied with Flora.

"Who is that man?" she asked.

"He is a friend of mine," said I. "I give him lessons in French, and he has been very kind to me."

"He stared," she said,—*"I do not say, rudely; but why should he stare?"*

"If you do not wish to be stared at, mademoiselle, suffer me to recommend a veil," said I.

She looked at me with what seemed anger. "I tell you the man stared," she said.

And Ronald added: "Oh, I don't think he meant any harm. I suppose he was just surprised to see us walking about with a pr—with M. Saint-Yves."

But the next morning, when I went to Chevenix's rooms, and after I had dutifully corrected his exercise—"I compliment you on your taste," said he to me.

"I beg your pardon?" said I.

"Oh no, I beg yours," said he. "You understand me perfectly, just as I do you."

I murmured something about enigmas.

"Well, shall I give you the key to the enigma?" said he, leaning back. "That was the young lady whom Goguelat insulted and whom you avenged. I do not blame you. She is a heavenly creature."

"With all my heart, to the last of it!" said I. "And to the first also, if it amuses you! You are become so very acute of late that I suppose you must have your own way."

"What is her name?" he asked.

"Now, really!" said I. "Do you think it likely she has told me?"

"I think it certain," said he.

I could not restrain my laughter. "Well, then, do you think it likely I would tell you?" I cried.

"Not a bit," said he. "But come, to our lesson!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE ESCAPE.

THE time for our escape drew near, and the nearer it came the less we seemed to enjoy the prospect. There is but one side on which this castle can be left either with dignity or safety; but as there is the main gate and guard, and the chief street of the upper city, it is not to be thought of by escaping prisoners. In all other directions an abominable precipice surrounds it, down the face of which

(if anywhere at all) we must regain our liberty. By our concurrent labours in many a dark night, working with the most anxious precautions against noise, we had made out to pierce below the curtain about the south-west corner, in a place they call the *Devil's Elbow*. I have never met that celebrity; nor (if the rest of him at all comes up to what they called his elbow) have I the least desire of his acquaintance. From the heel of the masonry, the rascally, breakneck precipice descended sheer among waste lands, scattered suburbs of the city, and houses in the building. I had never the heart to look for any length of time—the thought that I must make the descent in person some dark night robbing me of breath; and, indeed, on anybody not a seaman or a steeple-jack, the mere sight of the *Devil's Elbow* wrought like an emetic.

I don't know where the rope was got, and doubt if I much cared. It was not that which gruelled me, but whether, now that we had it, it would serve our turn. Its length, indeed, we made a shift to fathom out; but who was to tell us how that length compared with the way we had to go? Day after day, there would be always some of us stolen out to the *Devil's Elbow* and making estimates of the descent, whether by a bare guess or the dropping of stones. A private of pioneers remembered the formula for that—or else remembered part of it and obligingly invented the remainder. I had never any real confidence in that formula; and even had we got it from a book, there were difficulties in the way of the application that might have daunted Archimedes. We durst not drop any considerable pebble lest the sentinels should hear, and those that we dropped we could not hear ourselves. We had never a watch—or none that had a second-hand; and though every one of us could guess a second to a nicety, all somehow guessed it differently. In short, if any two set forth upon this enterprise, they invariably returned with two opinions, and often with a black eye in the bargain. I looked on upon these proceedings, although not without laughter, yet with impatience and disgust. I am one that cannot bear to see things botched or gone upon with ignorance; and the thought that some poor devil was to hazard his bones upon such premises, revolted me. Had I guessed the name of that unhappy first adventurer, my sentiments might have been livelier still.

The designation of this personage was indeed all that remained for us to do; and even in that we had advanced so far that the lot had fallen on Shed B. It had been determined to mingle the bitter and the sweet; and whoever went down first, the whole of his shed-mates were to follow next in order. This caused a good deal of joy in Shed B, and would have caused more if it had not still remained to choose our pioneer. In view of the ambiguity in which we lay as to the length of the rope and the height of the precipice—and that this gentleman was to climb down from fifty to seventy fathoms on a pitchy night, on a rope entirely free, and with not so much as an infant child to steady it at the bottom, a little backwardness was perhaps excusable. But it was, in our case, more than a little. The truth is, we were all womanish fellows about a height; and I have myself been put, more than once, *hors de combat* by a less affair than the rock of Edinburgh Castle.

We discussed it in the dark and between the passage of the rounds; and it was impossible for any body of men to show a less adventurous spirit. I am sure some of us, and myself first among the number, regretted Goguelat. Some were persuaded it was safe, and could prove the same by argument; but if they had good reasons why some one else should make the trial, they had better still why it should not be themselves. Others, again, condemned the whole idea as insane; among these, as ill-luck would have it, a seaman of the fleet; who was the

most dissipating of all. The height, he reminded us, was greater than the tallest ship's mast, the rope entirely free; and he as good as defied the boldest and strongest to succeed. We were relieved from this dead-lock by our serjeant-major of dragoons.

"Comrades," said he, "I believe I rank you all; and for that reason, if you really wish it, I will be the first myself. At the same time, you are to consider what the chances are that I may prove to be the last, as well. I am no longer young—I was sixty near a month ago. Since I have been a prisoner, I have made for myself a little *bédaine*. My arms are all gone to fat. And you must promise not to blame me, if I fall and play the devil with the whole thing."

"We cannot hear of such a thing!" said I. "M. Laclas is the oldest man here; and, as such, he should be the very last to offer. It is plain, we must draw lots."

"No," said M. Laclas; "you put something else in my head! There is one here who owes a pretty candle to the others, for they have kept his secret. Besides, the rest of us are only rabble; and he is another affair altogether. Let Champdivers—let the noble go the first."

I confess there was a notable pause before the noble in question got his voice. But there was no room for choice. I had been so ill-advised, when I first joined the regiment, as to take ground on my nobility. I had been often rallied on the matter in the ranks, and had passed under the by-names of *Monseigneur* and *the Marquis*. It was now needful I should justify myself and take a fair revenge.

Any little hesitation I may have felt passed entirely unnoticed, from the lucky incident of a round happening at that moment to go by. And during the interval of silence there occurred something that sent my blood to the boil. There was a private in our shed called Clausel, a man of a very ugly disposition. He had made one of the followers of Goguelat; but, whereas Goguelat had always a kind of monstrous gaiety about him, Clausel was no less morose than he was evil-minded. He was sometimes called *the General*, and sometimes by a name too ill-mannered for repetition. As we all sat listening, this man's hand was laid on my shoulder, and his voice whispered in my ear: "If you don't go, I'll have you hanged, Marquis!"

As soon as the round was past—"Certainly, gentlemen!" said I. "I will give you a lead, with all the pleasure in the world. But, first of all, there is a hound here to be punished. M. Clausel has just insulted me, and dishonoured the French army; and I demand that he run the gauntlet of this shed."

There was but one voice asking what he had done, and, as soon as I had told them, but one voice agreeing to the punishment. The General was, in consequence, extremely roughly handled, and the next day was congratulated by all who saw him on his *new decorations*. It was lucky for us that he was one of the prime movers and believers in our project of escape, or he had certainly revenged himself by a denunciation. As for his feelings towards myself, they appeared, by his looks, to surpass humanity; and I made up my mind to give him a wide berth in the future.

Had I been to go down that instant, I believe I could have carried it well. But it was already too late—the day was at hand. The rest had still to be summoned. Nor was this the extent of my misfortune; for the next night, and the night after, were adorned with a perfect galaxy of stars, and showed every cat that stirred in a quarter of a mile. During this interval, I have to direct your sympathies on the Vicomte de Saint-Yves! All addressed me softly, like folk round a sick-bed. Our Italian corporal, who had got a dozen of oysters from a fishwife, laid them at my feet, as though I were a Pagan idol; and I have never

since been wholly at my ease in the society of shellfish. He who was the best of our carvers brought me a snuff-box, which he had just completed, and which, while it was yet in hand, he had often declared he would not part with under fifteen dollars. I believe the piece was worth the money too! And yet the voice stuck in my throat with which I must thank him. I found myself, in a word, to be fed up like a prisoner in a camp of anthropophagi, and honoured like the sacrificial bull. And what with these annoyances, and the risky venture immediately ahead, I found my part a trying one to play.

It was a good deal of a relief when the third evening closed about the castle with volumes of sea-fog. The lights of Princes Street sometimes disappeared, sometimes blinked across at us no brighter than the eyes of cats; and five steps from one of the lanterns on the ramparts it was already groping dark. We made haste to lie down. Had our jailors been upon the watch, they must have observed our conversation to die out unusually soon. Yet I doubt if any of us slept. Each lay in his place, tortured at once with the hope of liberty and the fear of a hateful death. The guard call sounded; the hum of the town declined by little and little. On all sides of us, in their different quarters, we could hear the watchmen cry the hours along the street. Often enough, during my stay in England, have I listened to these gruff or broken voices; or perhaps gone to my window when I lay sleepless, and watched the old gentleman hobble by upon the causeway with his cape and his cap, his hanger and his rattle. It was ever a thought with me how differently that cry would re-echo in the chamber of lovers, beside the bed of death, or in the condemned cell. I might be said to hear it that night myself in the condemned cell! At length a fellow with a voice like a bull's began to roar out in the opposite thoroughfare:

"Past yin o'clock, and a dark, haary moarnin'."

At which we were all silently afoot.

As I stole about the battlements towards the—gallows, I was about to write—the sergeant-major, perhaps doubtful of my resolution, kept close by me, and occasionally proffered the most indigestible reassurances in my ear. At last I could bear them no longer.

"Be so obliging as to let me be!" said I. "I am neither a coward nor a fool. What do *you* know of whether the rope be long enough? But I shall know it in ten minutes!"

The good old fellow laughed in his moustache, and patted me.

It was all very well to show the disposition of my temper before a friend alone; before my assembled comrades the thing had to go handsomely. It was then my time to come on the stage; and I hope I took it handsomely.

"Now, gentlemen," said I, "if the rope is ready, here is the criminal!"

The tunnel was cleared, the stake driven, the rope extended. As I moved forward to the place, many of my comrades caught me by the hand and wrung it, an attention I could well have done without.

"Keep an eye on Clausel!" I whispered to Laclas; and with that, got down on my elbows and knees, took the rope in both hands, and worked myself, feet foremost, through the tunnel. When the earth failed under my feet, I thought my heart would have stopped; and a moment after I was demeaning myself in mid-air like a drunken jumping-jack. I have never been a model of piety, but at this juncture prayers and a cold sweat burst from me simultaneously.

The line was knotted at intervals of eighteen inches; and to the inexpert it may seem as if it should have been even easy to descend. The trouble was, this devil of a piece of rope appeared to be inspired, not with life alone, but with a personal



malignity against myself. It turned to the one side, paused for a moment, and then spun me like a toasting-jack to the other; slipped like an eel from the clasp of my feet; kept me all the time in the most outrageous fury of exertion; and dashed me at intervals against the face of the rock. I had no eyes to see with; and I doubt if there was anything to see but darkness. I must occasionally have caught a gasp of breath, but it was quite unconscious. And the whole forces of my mind were so consumed with losing hold and getting it again, that I could scarce have told whether I was going up or coming down.

Of a sudden I knocked against the cliff with such a thump as almost bereft me of my sense; and, as reason twinkled back, I was amazed to find that I was in a state of rest, that the face of the precipice here inclined outwards at an angle which relieved me almost wholly of the burthen of my own weight, and that one of my feet was safely planted on a ledge. I drew one of the sweetest breaths in my experience, hugged myself against the rope, and closed my eyes in a kind of ecstasy of relief. It occurred to me next to see how far I was advanced on my unlucky journey, a point on which I had not a shadow of a guess. I looked up: there was nothing above me but the blackness of the night and the fog. I craned timidly forward and looked down. There, upon a floor of darkness, I beheld a certain pattern of hazy lights, some of them aligned as in thoroughfares, others standing apart as in solitary houses; and before I could well realise it, or had in the least estimated my distance, a wave of nausea and vertigo warned me to lie back and close my eyes. In this situation I had really but the one wish, and that was something else to think of! Strange to say, I got it: a veil was torn from my mind, and I saw what a fool I was—what fools we had all been—and that I had no business to be thus dangling between earth and heaven by my arms. The only thing to have done was to have attached me to a rope and lowered me, and I had never the wit to see it till that moment!

I filled my lungs, got a good hold on my rope, and once more launched myself on the descent. As it chanced, the worst of the danger was at an end, and I was so fortunate as to be never again exposed to any violent concussion. Soon after I must have passed within a little distance of a bush of wallflower, for the scent of it came over me with that impression of reality which characterises scents in darkness. This made me a second landmark, the ledge being my first. I began accordingly to compute intervals of time: so much to the ledge, so much again to the wallflower, so much more below. If I were not at the bottom of the rock, I calculated I must be near indeed to the end of the rope, and there was no doubt that I was not far from the end of my own resources. I began to be light-headed and to be tempted to let go,—now arguing that I was certainly arrived within a few feet of the level and could safely risk a fall, anon persuaded I was still close at the top and it was idle to continue longer on the rock. In the midst of which I came to a bearing on plain ground, and had nearly wept aloud. My hands were as good as flayed, my courage entirely exhausted, and, what with the long strain and the sudden relief, my limbs shook under me with more than the violence of ague, and I was glad to cling to the rope.

But this was no time to give way. I had (by God's single mercy) got myself alive out of that fortress; and now I had to try to get the others, my comrades. There was about a fathom of rope to spare; I got it by the end, and searched the whole ground thoroughly for anything to make it fast to. In vain: the ground was broken and stony, but there grew not there so much as a bush of furze.

"Now then," thought I to myself, "here begins a new lesson, and I believe it will prove richer than the first. I am not strong enough to keep this rope extended.

If I do not keep it extended the next man will be dashed against the precipice. There is no reason why he should have my extravagant good luck. I see no reason why he should not fall—nor any place for him to fall on but my head.”

From where I was now standing there was occasionally visible, as the fog lightened, a lamp in one of the barrack windows, which gave me a measure of the height he had to fall and the horrid force that he must strike me with. What was yet worse, we had agreed to do without signals: every so many minutes by Laclas' watch another man was to be started from the battlements. Now, I had seemed to myself to be about half an hour in my descent, and it seemed near as long again that I waited, straining on the rope, for my next comrade to begin. I began to be afraid that our conspiracy was out, that my friends were all secured, and that I should pass the remainder of the night, and be discovered in the morning, vainly clinging to the rope's end like a hooked fish upon an angle. I could not refrain, at this ridiculous image, from a chuckle of laughter. And the next moment I knew, by the jerking of the rope, that my friend had crawled out of the tunnel and was fairly launched on his descent. It appears it was the sailor who had insisted on succeeding me: as soon as my continued silence had assured him the rope was long enough, Gautier, for that was his name, had forgot his former arguments, and shown himself so extremely forward, that Laclas had given way. It was like the fellow, who had no harm in him beyond an instinctive selfishness. But he was like to have paid pretty dearly for the privilege. Do as I would, I could not keep the rope as I could have wished it; and he ended at last by falling on me from a height of several yards, so that we both rolled together on the ground. As soon as he could breathe, he cursed me beyond belief, wept over his finger which he had broken, and cursed me again. I bade him be still and think shame to himself to be so great a cry-baby. Did he not hear the round going by above? I asked; and who could tell but what the noise of his fall was already remarked, and the sentinels at the very moment leaning upon the battlements to listen?

The round, however, went by, and nothing was discovered; the third man came to the ground quite easily; the fourth was, of course, child's play; and before there were ten of us collected, it seemed to me that, without the least injustice to my comrades, I might proceed to take care of myself.

I knew their plan: they had a map and an almanack, and designed for Grangemouth, where they were to steal a ship. Suppose them to do so, I had no idea they were qualified to manage it after it was stolen. Their whole escape, indeed, was the most haphazard thing imaginable; only the impatience of captives and the ignorance of private soldiers would have entertained so misbegotten a device; and though I played the good comrade and worked with them upon the tunnel, but for the lawyer's message I should have let them go without me. Well, now they were beyond my help, as they had always been beyond my counselling; and, without word said or leave taken, I stole out of the little crowd. It is true I would rather have waited to shake hands with Laclas, but in the last man who had descended I thought I recognised Clausel, and since the scene in the shed my distrust of Clausel was perfect. I believed the man to be capable of any infamy, and events have since shown that I was right.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

*(To be continued.)*







