

THE COLUMBIAN, BLOOMSBURG, COLUMBIA

Interesting Story.

Translated from the German.
THE LEG.
BY SCHORKE.

In the fall of 1782 the celebrated surgeon, Louis Thévenet, then practising at Calais, received an anonymous letter asking him to come on the next day to a country house near the road to Paris, and to bring with him everything necessary for an amputation.

Thévenet was known at that time far and wide as the most skilful man in his profession. It would have been nothing strange if he had been called across the channel to England for the sake of his professional services, but still he wondered at this letter. Time, hour and place were all specified with the greatest exactness, where and when he was expected; but, as we have said, the note had no signature. Probably some one wishing to send me on "a fool's errand," thought he, and did not go.

Three days afterward he received a similar invitation even more pressing, adding that at nine o'clock the next morning a carriage would stop at his house to convey him to the place designated. In fact, as the clock struck nine a pretty open carriage appeared; and Thévenet, with no further delay, sprang into it.

"Who sent for me?" he asked, as he got in.

"I don't know," answered the driver, "and I don't care."

"A pleasant beginning!" thought Thévenet.

The carriage stopped at last at the country house which had been described in the letter. "Who lives here? who is sick here?" asked Thévenet as he got out.

The driver gave the same answer as before, and Thévenet, not being satisfied turned towards the house. At the door a handsome young man, appearing to be about twenty-eight or thirty years old, received him and conducted him up stairs into a large chamber. The young man's language showed him to be an Englishman.

"You have sent for me?" said Thévenet in English, after the usual salutation had been courteously given on both sides.

"I am much obliged to you for coming," answered the Englishman. "Take a seat, sir; here is chocolate, coffee, wine. You had better take a lunch before you commence the operation."

"Thank you; but I must first see the patient and decide whether amputation is necessary."

"It is necessary, Dr. Thévenet; take a seat and hear me out. I have perfect confidence in you. Here is a purse of two hundred guineas. I promise them to you as your fee for the operation which you are to perform. It makes no difference whether you are successful or not. On the other hand, if you hesitate to execute my wishes, here is a loaded pistol; you are in my power, and I will blow your brains out."

"Sir, I am not afraid of your pistol. What do you want? Only say the word without any more circumlocutions. What am I to do here?"

"You must cut off my right leg."

"Very willingly, sir; if you wish it, and your head too. But so far as I can see, the leg appears perfectly sound. You sprang up the stairs before me like a rope dancer. What is the matter with the leg?"

"Nothing, but I want to get rid of it."

"You are a fool."

"That is none of your business, Dr. Thévenet?"

"What crime has the beautiful leg committed?"

"None; but are you going to take it off?"

"Excuse me, sir. I do not know you. You must give proof that you are in your right mind."

"Are you going to do what I ask, Dr. Thévenet?"

"As soon as you give me a reasonable ground for doing it."

"I cannot tell you the truth now, perhaps I can in a year or so. But I will tell you, Doctor, that you yourself will say that my reasons are the noblest possible."

"I will not bet sir, for you have not told me your name, your place of residence, your family or your business."

"All that you shall know presently, not now. However I will tell you that I am a nobleman."

"A nobleman does not threaten his physician with a pistol. I have duties even toward you unknown as you are. I will not malnourish you unnecessarily. If you wish to murder an innocent man shoot on."

"Very well, Doctor," said the Englishman, taking up the pistol. "I will not shoot you, but I will compel you to take off my leg. What you will not do out of kindness, nor for the love of reward, nor from fear of the bullet, you must do out of pity."

"How so, sir?"

"I will break my own leg with a bullet here before your eyes." The Englishman sat down and put the muzzle of the pistol to his knee. He kept his word; the leg lay on the floor, the Englishman was still smoking.

Thévenet did work like a master. By his skill the patient was cured in a tolerably short time. He paid the surgeon, whom he prided more highly every day, thanked him with tears for the loss of his limb, and sailed back to England with a wooden leg.

About eighteen weeks after his departure, Thévenet received a letter from England, running about as follows:

"You will find enclosed, as a mark of my gratitude, a check for two hundred guineas, on Messrs. Panchard, bankers, in Paris. You have made me the happiest of mortals in depriving me of a limb which alone stood in the way of my complete felicity.

"Now you can learn the cause of my foolish whim as you call it. You maintained then that there could be no reasonable ground for crippling oneself. I offered to bet with you, you acted wisely and declined the bet.

"After my return from the East Indies, I became acquainted with Emily Harley, the most beautiful of women. Her wealth and family connections delighted my relations. I saw only her

beauty, her heavenly grace. I joined the crowd of her admirers, and was fortunate enough to become the most fortunate of her admirers.—She loved me, me alone of all men. She did not deny it, and for that very reason rejected me.

"In vain I sought for her. In vain her parents, her friends all begged for me. She remained inviolable.

"I was unable for a long time to find the reason for her declination to a marriage with me whom, as she herself confessed, she had loved to destruction. One of her sisters at last told me the secret. Miss Harley was a wonder of beauty, but had one defect, she was lame; not, on account of this deformity, she feared to become my wife. She thought that my feeling toward her would change entirely when I discovered this. My resolution was immediate and total. There should be no difference between us. Thanks to you, my dear Thévenet, there is none.

"I came back to London with my wooden leg, and my first act was to visit Miss Harley. They had heard already in that I had broken my leg by falling from my horse, and had had it amputated. Everybody pitied me, Emily pitied when she saw me for the first time, but she married me. On the day after the marriage, I for the first time imparted to her my secret; what a sacrifice I had made in order to obtain her. She loves me more tenderly. My dear Thévenet! If I had ten legs to lose, I would give them without hesitation for my Emily. All my life I will thank you; come to London visit me, see my noble wife, and then say, if you can, that I am a fool." CHARLES THÉVENET.

Thévenet told the story and showed the letter to his friends laughing till he was red in the face each time he told it. "And he still remains a fool," said he. This was his answer.

"Sir—I thank you for your valuable present, for such I must call it since I cannot consider it a reward for my slight trouble. I congratulate you on your marriage with the most lovely of your country-women. It is true a leg is much to give over for a beautiful, virtuous and tender wife, but not too much. You are not cheated in the last gain. Again, I have given rib for his wife. Others of us, too, pay for their wives with a rib, some with a bone. Nevertheless, permit me to remain obstinate of my old opinion. True, for the present, you are right. You are living now in the paradise of the honeymoon. But I, too, am right only with this difference, that the truth of what I say comes in light slowly, as those facts which men behold a long while to receive. I am afraid that in two years you will regret having had your leg amputated above the knee below the knee you will have done as well. In three years you will be convinced that the loss of a foot would have been enough. In four years you will consider the sacrifice of the great too much and in six years you will agree with me that the passing of the nail would have been sufficient. All this, without disparaging the worth of your amiable wife. The fiddle may preserve their beauty and their virtue as men do their opinions. In my youth I would at any time have given my life for my lady-love, but not my leg." The former I would never have regretted out the latter I would certainly regret now. For if I had done so, I would be saying to myself, "Thévenet you were a fool."

"I have the honor to be, sir, your most obedient servant, G. THÉVENET."

In the year 1783, during the Reign of George III., the English, being accused of aristocratic tendencies, fled to London to escape the fury of the French revolutionaries. Among them was Dr. Thévenet, a surgeon of the Royal Hospital of Greenwich, who had been sent to England to treat the King.

Dr. Thévenet, however, was not satisfied with the King's service, and left him to go to France, where he became a surgeon to the Duke of Orleans.

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DRUGS & MEDICINES.

DRY GOODS.

MILLINERY Goods.

WARE & CUTLERY.

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"Young People—The House REVENGE Awarded over Eighty.

THE HIGHEST.

REVENGE.

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