

## Two Escapes.

I AM a Frenchman by birth, and my name is Francois Thierry. I need not weary you with my early history. Enough that I committed a political offense—that I was sent to the galleys for it—that I am an exile for it to this day. The brand was not abolished in my time. If I chose, I could show you the fiery letters on my shoulder.

I was arrested, tried, and sentenced in Paris. I went out of the court with my condemnation ringing in my ears. The rumbling wheels of the prison-van repeated it all the way from Paris to Bicetre that evening, and all the next day, and the next, and the next, along the weary road from Bicetre to Toulon. When I look back upon that time I think I must have been stupefied by the unexpected severity of my sentence, for I remember nothing of the journey, nor of the places where we stopped.

Late in the afternoon of the third day the van stopped, the door was thrown open and I was conducted across a stone yard, through a stone corridor, into a huge stone hall, dimly lighted from above. Here I was interrogated by a military superintendent, and entered by name in a ponderous ledger, bound and clasped with iron, like a book in fetters.

"Number Two Hundred and Seven," said the superintendent. "Green."

They took me into an adjoining room, searched, stripped, and plunged me into a cold bath. When I came out of the bath I put on the livery of the galleys—a coarse canvas shirt, trousers of tawney serge, a red serge blouse, and heavy shoes clamped with iron; last of all, a green woolen cap. On each leg of the trousers, and on the breast and back of the blouse were printed the fatal letters "T. F." On the brass label in front of the cap were engraved the figures "207." From that moment I lost my individuality. I was no longer Francois Thierry. I was number Two Hundred and Seven. The superintendent stood by and looked on.

"Come, be quick," said he, twirling his long moustache between his thumb and forefinger. "It grows late, and you must be married before supper."

"Married!" I repeated.

The superintendent laughed and lighted a cigar, and his laugh was echoed by the guards and jailors.

"Down another stone corridor, across another yard, into another gloomy hall, the very counter-part of the last, but filled with squalid figures, noisy with the clank of fetters, and pierced at each end with a circular opening through which a cannon's mouth showed grimly.

"Bring Number Two Hundred and Six," said the superintendent, "and call the priest."

Number Two Hundred and Six came from a farther corner of the hall, dragging a heavy chain, and along with him a blacksmith, bare-armed and leather-aproned.

"Lie down," said the blacksmith, with an insulting spurn of the foot.

I lay down. A heavy iron ring attached to a chain of eighteen links was then fitted to my ankle, and riveted with a single stroke of the hammer. A second ring next received the disengaged ends of my companion's chain and mine, and was secured in the same manner. The echo of each blow resounded through the vaulted roof like a hollow laugh.

"Good," said the superintendent, drawing a small red book from his pocket. "Number Two Hundred and seven, attend to the prison code. If you attempt to escape without succeeding, you will be bastinadoed. If you succeed in getting beyond the port, and are then taken, you will receive three years of double chaining. As soon as you are missed three cannon shots will be fired, and alarm-flags will be hoisted on every bastion. Signals will be telegraphed to the maritime guards, and to the police of the ten neighboring districts. A price will be set upon your head. Placards will be posted on the gates of Toulon, and sent to every town throughout the empire, it will be lawful to fire upon you, if you cannot be captured alive.

Having read this with grim complacency, the superintendent resumed his cigar, replaced the book in his pocket, and walked away.

All was over now—all the incredulous wonder, the dreamy dullness, the smoldering hope of the past three days. I was a felon, and (slavery in slavery!) chained to a fellow-fellow. I looked up and found his eyes upon me. He was a swarthy, heavy-browed, sullen-jawed man of about forty; not much taller than myself, but of immensely powerful build.

"So," said he, "you're for life, are you? So am I."

"How do you know I am for life?" I asked wearily.

"By that." And he touched my cap roughly with the back of his hand. "Green, for life. Red, for a term of years. What are you in for?"

"I conspired against the government." He shrugged his shoulders with contempt. "Devil's mass! Then you're a gentleman convict, I suppose! Pity you've not a berth to yourselves—we poor forcats hate such fine company."

"Are there any political prisoners?" I asked, after a moment's pause.

"None in this department."

Then as if detecting my unspoken thought, "I am no innocent, he added with an oath. "This is the fourth time I have been here. Did you ever hear of Gasparo?"

"Gasparo, the forger?"

He nodded.

"Who escaped three or four months since, and—"

"And flung the sentinel over the ramparts, just as he was going to give the alarm. I am the man."

I had heard of him, as a man, who, early in his career, had been sentenced to a prolonged term of solitary imprisonment, and who had come forth from his cell hardened and desperate. I shuddered, and, as I shuddered, found his evil eye taking vindictive note of me. From that moment he hated me. From that moment I loathed him.

A bell rang, and a detachment of convicts came in from labor. They were immediately searched by the guard, and chained up, two and two, to a slopping wooden platform that reached all down the center of the hall. Our afternoon meal was then served out, consisting of a mess of beans, and allowance of bread and ship-biscuit, and a measure of thin wine. I drank the wine, but I could eat nothing. Gasparo took what he pleased from my untouched allowance, and those who were nearest scrambled for the rest. The supper over, a shrill whistle echoed down the hall, each man took his narrow mattress from under the platform which made our common bedstead, rolled himself in a piece of seamed matting, and lay down for the night. In less than five minutes all was profoundly silent. Now and then I heard the blacksmith going round with his hammer testing the gratings and trying the locks in all the corridors. Now and then the sentinel past with his musket on his shoulder. Sometimes a convict moaned or shook his fetters in his sleep. Thus the weary hours went by. My companion slept heavily, and even I lost consciousness at last.

I was sentenced to hard labor. At Toulon, the hard labor is of various kinds; such as quarrying, mining, pumping in the docks, lading and unlading vessels, transporting ammunition, and so forth. Gasparo and I were employed, with about two hundred other convicts, in a quarry a little beyond the port. Day after day, week after week, from seven in the morning until seven at night, the rocks echoed with our blows. At every blow our chains rang and rebounded on the stony soil. In that fierce climate, terrible tempests and tropical droughts succeed each other throughout the summer about autumn. Often and often, after toiling for hours under a burning sky, have I gone back to prison and to my pallet drenched to the skin. Thus the last days of the dreary spring echoed slowly past; and then the autumn-time came round.

My fellow-convict was a Piedmontese. He had been a burglar, a forger, and an incendiary. In his last escape he had committed manslaughter. Heaven alone knows how my sufferings were multiplied by that abhorred companionship—how I shrank from the touch of his hand—how I sickened if his breath came over me as we laid side by side at night. I strove to disguise my loathing; but in vain. He knew it as well as I knew it, and he revenged himself upon me by every means that a vindictive nature could devise. That he should tyrannize over me was not wonderful; for his physical strength was gigantic, and he was looked on as an authorized despot throughout the port; but simple tyranny was the least part of what I had to endure; I had been fastidiously nurtured; he purposely and continually offended my sense of delicacy. I was unaccustomed to bodily labor; he imposed on me the largest share of our daily work. When I needed rest he would insist on walking. When my limbs were cramped, he would lie down obstinately, and refuse to stir. He delighted to sing blasphemous songs, and relate hideous stories of what he had thought and resolved on in his solitude. He would even twist the chain in such a wise that it should gall me at every step. I was at that time just twenty-two years of age, and had been sickly from boyhood. To retaliate, or defend myself, would have been alike impossible. To complain to the superintendent would only have been to provoke my tyrant to greater cruelty.

There came a day, at length, when his hatred seemed to abate. He allowed me to rest when our hour of repose came round. He abstained from singing the songs I abhorred, and fell into long fits of abstraction. The next morning, shortly after we had begun work, he drew near enough to speak to me in a whisper.

"Francois, have you a mind to escape?"

I felt the hot blood rush to my face. I clasped my hand, I could not speak.

"Can you keep a secret?"

"To the death."

"Listen then. To-morrow, Marshal De La Tour d'Auvergne will visit the port. He will inspect the docks, the prisons, the quarries. There will be plenty of cannonading from the forts and the shipping, and if two convicts escape, a volley more or less will attract no attention round about Toulon. Do you understand?"

"You mean that no one will recognize the signals?"

"Not even the sentries at the town gate—not even the guards in the next quarry. Devil's mass! What can be easier than to strike off each other's fetters with the pickaxe when the superintendent is not looking, and the salutes are firing? Will you venture?"

"My life!"

"A bargain. Shake hands on it."

I had never touched his hands in fellowship before, and I felt as if my own were blood-stained by the contact. I knew by the sullen fire in his glance that he interpreted my faltering touch aright.

We were roused an hour earlier than usual the following morning, and went through a general inspection in the prison yard. Before going to work, we were served with a double allowance of wine. At one o'clock we heard the first far-off salutes from the ships of war in the harbor. The sound ran through me like a galvanic shock. One by one the forts took up the signal. It was repeated by the gun-boats closer in shore. Discharge followed discharge, all along the batteries on both sides of the port, and the air grew thick with smoke.

"As the first shot is fired yonder," whispered Gasparo, pointing to the barracks behind the prison, "strike at the first link of my chain, close to the ankle."

A rapid suspicion flashed across me.

"If I do, how can I be sure that you will free me afterward? No, Gasparo; you must deal the first blow."

"As you please," he cried, with a laugh and an imprecation.

At the same instant came a flash from the battlements of the barrack close by, and then a thunderous reverberation, multiplied again and again by the rocks around. As the roar burst over our heads, I saw him strike, and I felt the fetters fall. Scarcely had the echo of the first gundied away when the second was fired. It was now Gasparo's turn to be free. I struck, but less skillfully, and had twice to repeat the blow before breaking the stubborn link. We then went on apparently, with our work, standing somewhat closer together, with the chain huddled up between us. No one had observed us, and no one, at first sight, could have detected what we had done. At the third shot, a party of officers and gentlemen made their appearance at the bend of the road leading up to the quarry. In an instant every head was turned in their direction; every felon paused in his work, every guard presented arms. At that moment we flung away our caps and pickaxes, scaled the rugged bit of cliff on which we had been toiling, dropped into the ravine below, and made for the mountain passes that lead into the valley. Encumbered still with the iron anklets to which our chain had been fastened, we could not run very swiftly. To add to our difficulties the road was uneven, strewn with blocks of fallen granite and tortuous as the winding of a snake. Suddenly, on turning a sharp angle of a projecting cliff, we came upon a little guard-house and a couple of sentries. To retreat was impossible. They presented their pieces and called to us to surrender. Gasparo turned upon me like a wolf at bay.

"Curse you!" said he dealing me a tremendous blow; "stay and be taken! I have always hated you."

I fell as if struck down by a sledge-hammer; and, as I fell, saw him dash one soldier to the ground, dart past the other, heard a shot, and then—all became dark, and I know no more.

When I next opened my eyes I found myself lying on the floor of a small, unfurnished room, dimly lighted by a tiny window close against the ceiling. It seemed as if weeks had gone by since I lost consciousness. I had scarcely strength to rise; and, having risen, kept my feet with difficulty. Where my head had lain the floor was wet with blood. Giddy and perplexed, I leaned against the wall and tried to think.

In the first place, where was I? Evidently it is no part of the prison from which I had escaped. There, all was solid stone and iron grating; here was only whitewashed lath and plaster. I must be in the little-guard house; probably in an upper chamber. Where then, were the soldiers? Where was Gasparo? Had I strength to clamber up the window, and if so, in what direction did the window look out? I stole to the door and found it locked. I listened breathlessly, but could hear no sound either below or above. Creeping back again, I saw the little window was at least four feet above my head. The smooth plaster offered no projections by which I could raise myself, and there was not even a fire-place in the room from which I could have wrenched a bar to dig out holes in the wall for my feet and hands. Stay! there was my leathern belt, and on the belt the iron hook which used to sustain my chain when I was not at work. I tore off the hook, picked away the lath and plaster in three or four places, climbed up, opened the window, and gazed out eagerly. Before me at a distance of not more than thirty-five or forty feet, rose the rugged cliff under whose shelter the guard-house was built; at my feet lay a little kitchen-garden, divided from the base of the rock by a muddy ditch which seemed to run through the ravine; to the right and left as well as I could judge, lay the rocky path along which our course had been directed. My

decision was taken at once. To stay was certain capture; to venture, at all hazards, would make matters no worse. Again I listened, and again all was quiet. I drew myself through the little casement, dropped as gently as I could upon the moist earth; and crouching against the wall, asked myself what I should do next. To climb the cliff would be to offer myself as a target to the first soldier who saw me. To venture along the ravine would be, perhaps, to encounter Gasparo and his captors face to face. Besides, it was getting dusk; and, under cover of the night, if I could only conceal myself till then, I might yet escape. But where was that concealment to be found? Heaven be thanked for the thought! There was the ditch! Concluded next week.

## Bound to Stick.

Many years ago Robert Treat Paine father of the (poet.) was one of the Judges of the Massachusetts Supreme Court. He was very old and the bar desired him to retire from the bench; so they appointed Harrison Gray Otis, who was very polite and accomplished, to go and see the Judge and talk to him upon the subject. He suggested to the Judge that it must be very inconvenient for him to leave home so often and so long.

"Oh! he was always ready to sacrifice his personal preference for the good of his country."

"But," suggested Otis, "you are not in good health—you are infirm—are you not afraid this excessive duty will kill you?"

"Yes," said he but a man could not die in a better cause than administering justice."

"Do you see as well as you used to?"

"Yes," he replied, "I can see with my glasses very well."

"Can you hear as well as you used to do?" (for it was notorious that he could not hear unless yelled through a trumpet.)

He said, "Yes, I hear perfectly; but they don't speak as loud as they did before the revolution."

## A Real Romance.

A St. Louis fair one hearing that her lover was going to a ball with another girl, made a bargain with the hackman by which she drove the hack in his stead, and in place of taking the pair to their destination, she took them several miles out of the city. Then inducing them on some pretence to get out she whipped up the horses and drove back, leaving the unfortunate—the lady in a low-necked muslin ball dress—exposed to a rain in the midst of a lonely wood. After wandering in the mud for a number of hours—a performance for which neither the cavalier's thin boots nor his companion's kid slippers were particularly well fitted—they found shelter in a farm-house, where, finding a priest and the mutuality of their misadventures inspiring love, they were united in the holy bonds.

An old negro named Pete was very much troubled about his sins. Perceiving him one day with a very down cast look, his master asked him the cause.

"O, massa! I'm sich a great sinner!"

"But, Pete," said the master, "you are foolish to take it so much to heart. You never see me troubled about my sins."

"I know de reason, massa," said Pete; "when you go out duck-shooting and kill one duck and wound another don't you run after the wounded duck?"

"Yes, Pete," and the master wondered what was coming next.

"Well, massa, dat is de way wid you and me; de debil has got you sure; but as he am not sure of me he chases dis chill all de time."

## For the Times.

ELMIRA, N. Y., April 22, 1872.

Mr. Editor—Having been a reader of the "Times," and thinking a few items from this vicinity might be interesting to its readers, I will endeavor to give a partial, and perhaps imperfect description of this place.

Elmira, the county seat of Chemung county, is on the right bank of the Chemung river, 8 miles from the line between Pennsylvania and New York, and about 274 miles by railroad, from New York city. It is a real pretty, and quite level city, and contains about 17,000 inhabitants.

The Northern Central, Erie and Lehigh Valley Railroads pass through the place, and almost any hour you can hear the shrill scream of the "iron horse," as it thunders along with its ponderous load of coal or merchandise. There is also a street Railway from Elmira to Horseheads, a town about 6 miles above this place.

Except in the business part of the city. Water, Lake and Baldwin streets—the houses are, generally, built back from the street, with pretty yards in front, filled with flowers, fountains, evergreens, shade and ornamental trees. A great many of the houses are two-story frame structures, with four-sided roofs—sometimes flat or else cottage style, very steep. Along Water, Lake and Baldwin streets, there are some large, three, four, and five story brick buildings. The pavements are either stone, plank, or Wyckoff—no brick pavement.

There are a good many churches, Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist and Roman Catholic, no German Reformed, and I think no Lutheran. Also, the Park church, where the Rev. Beecher officiates. He sometimes preaches in the Opera House, where his average congregation is about 1400.

The N. C. R. W. shops are located a short distance below the city, and employ a number of men.

Believing that "to be pungent you must be brief," I will close, Yours &c.

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April 5, 1871.

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