

Rochester

BY S. B. ROW.

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ALL THAT'S BRIGHT MUST FADE.

All that's bright must fade,
The brightest still the fleetest;
All that's sweet was made
But to be lost when sweetest;
Stars that shine and fall,
The flower that droops in spring;
These, alas, are types of all
To which our hearts are clinging.
Who would seek to prize
Delights that end in aching?
Who would trust to break their
That every hour is breaking?
Better far to be
In outer darkness lying.
Than be blest with light, and see
That light forever dying.

LADY GUILFORD.

The following story is derived from the authentic work of M. Fenichel, Les Archives de la Police de Paris. The period to which the narrative refers is that of the reign of Louis XIV. Monsieur de la Regnie had filled for several years, to the general satisfaction, the functions of Lieutenant-General of Police, when, on a sudden, terror spread itself through Paris in consequence of the extraordinary disappearance of several persons. In the course of four months, twenty-six young men, the youngest seventeen, and the oldest twenty-five years of age, had been spirited away from their comfortable families. The most extravagant and contradictory rumors were in circulation upon the subject, particularly in the Faubourg St. Antoine, which had to deplore the loss of four or five young men, the sons of rich and respectable upholsterers residing in that quarter of the city. Among other gossiping stories whispered about upon this subject, it was pretended that a princess, who was suffering from a dangerous liver complaint, had been advised by some foreign charlatan or quack doctor, to make use from time to time, as a means of cure, of a bath of human blood, and that the unfortunate missing persons had been immolated for the purpose. Another equally horrible surmise was, that they had been made away with by the Jews, who, out of hatred and derision of the crucified Messiah, were accustomed to put Christians to death upon the Cross. Fortunately for the poor King, this latter opinion took no hold of the public mind. Whatever the secret cause of these disappearances might have been, terror and desolation reigned in Paris. The Duke de Gèvres having mentioned the facts to the King, his Majesty sent for the Lieutenant-General of Police, and reproached him with suffering the existence of such a system of kidnapping, which, in all likelihood, he added, must have been followed by violent means, as none of those missing had ever been heard of afterwards. Monsieur de la Regnie, in despair at the displeasure of his Majesty, returned in very bad humor to Paris, and sent immediately for one of his most experienced agents, named Lecoq, a man whose services on many different occasions he had good reason to value. To him he made known the embarrassments in which he found himself, told him of the king's answer, and held out to him the prospect of so great a reward that Lecoq, carried away by his cupidity, exclaimed, "Ah, monsieur! I see that, in order to take you out of trouble, I must renew the sacrifice of Abraham. I ask you to allow me eight days, in which time I hope to give you a good account of the affair." Lecoq said no more; and Monsieur de la Regnie, who looked upon him as his best agent, dismissed him with a sign which gave him to understand that he had at his disposal all the resources of the police. At that time it was the custom in the police department to make use of mute signs on extraordinary occasions of which was known only to the principal and most confidential agents.

Lecoq, who was not married, had a natural son, to whom he was greatly attached, and over whose conduct and education he carefully watched. This lad, called by his companions L'Eveille, from the precociousness and sprightliness of his disposition, was gifted with no common intelligence. Though little more than sixteen years of age, nature had not only given him reason beyond his years, but had also given him a handsome appearance like his father's, and besides possessing a handsome face, was tall, and so well and strongly formed, that he looked more like a man of five-and-twenty than a youth of sixteen. L'Eveille, whose real name was Expere, obtained from his father all that could flatter the vanity of a young man; for his handsome person was always set off by costly and modish clothes. He, however, quitted the house but seldom, for the elder Lecoq knew but too well the danger to which a handsome young man like his son were exposed in the streets of Paris; and on the rare occasions when Expere was allowed to go abroad, he was always accompanied by one or the other of the police spies whom his father had at his back.

Lecoq, on returning from his interview with Monsieur de la Regnie, shut himself up with his son, and had a long conversation with him. In the first place, he commended the way in which he was quitting the house alone and splendidly dressed. Around his hat and suspended from his neck were gold chains; he wore two watches; and, from the clicking of his purse as he walked, it was evident that it was filled with good broad pieces of gold coin. But what still more surprised the neighbors (for the profession of the elder Lecoq was unknown to them), was to see the handsome and finely-dressed L'Eveille go and return home several times during four consecutive days, without being accompanied, as had always been the case before, by his uncle (in reality his father), or some friend. It has been already stated that L'Eveille, besides the remarkable comeliness of his face and person, was endowed with a lively intellect, courage, prudence, and savoir faire. The confidential conversation he had with his father had awakened his ambition; and he earnestly understood that he might acquire both honor and profit should he succeed in discovering, for the Lieutenant-General of Police, the cause of the extraordinary disappearance of so many young persons. Accordingly, in the rich dress befitting a young man of family, he walked about the streets, on the quays, in the gardens of the Tuilleries and Luxembourg, and in the Salle des Pas Perdus at the Palais de Justice, and then a favorite haunt of the gay and idle among the Parisians.

Lecoq the elder had conjectured that the young men who had disappeared had been ensnared to their ruin by the seductive charms of some frail beauty; and he advised that, by putting his son in the way to meet such a creature, he exposed him likewise to a similar fate; but, reckoning upon his being forewarned, he hoped he might escape the snare that had been fatal to so many others. The fifth day, towards three o'clock in the afternoon, young Lecoq, in all the splendor of his fine clothes, was sauntering on the terrace of the garden of the Tuilleries next the river, when a remarkably beautiful young woman passed close by him. She was walking alone, but was followed at some distance by a kind of humble friend, or gouvernante. She appeared to be about 25 years of age, was elegantly dressed, and had not only much beauty in her face and shape, but a certain foreign grace or piquancy in her air and manner. L'Eveille gazed, or pretended to gaze, with great interest upon the fine form and striking features of the unknown fair one. His glances were not thrown away, but were answered by timid and half-downcast looks. He drew himself up, arranged the fringe of his shirt, disposed in better order his lace ruffles—in a word, gave himself the airs of a man who had the presentiment of an adventure, hoping all the time that it was that for which he had his instructions already. To make sure of this, he passed and repassed several times before the lady, and at length took a seat upon one of the benches of the labyrinth which then existed in front of the library of the Tuilleries. He had not been there many minutes when he saw the friend, or gouvernante, of his beauty approach the spot where he was, and, after a few turns, seat herself on the same bench. He took off his hat, as was the custom, and soon after entered into conversation; and, thinking the game already in his hands, he asked the *suivante* who the young lady was, in whose service she appeared to be. "Sir," replied she, "the mistress of my mistress is a young woman, who came to Paris incognito, and whilst she was forming a connection with the daughter of a tradesman in the Rue St. Denis; a child (my mistress) was the result of this intercourse. The prince quitted Paris, and never returned. It was said that he had been set upon by brigands and murdered. The King of Poland, however, having been made acquainted with the unworthy conduct of the prince, wished to repair, as far as in him lay, the evil he had done; and for that purpose, sent a confidential agent to Paris. But, alas! before his arrival the mother of my mistress had died of a broken heart, and he found her infant orphan alone in the world. The King of Poland, on being informed of the circumstances, caused the child to be declared heiress of the vast wealth of the prince. Happy the woman who shall call her father! "Happy, indeed!" exclaimed L'Eveille, "the man who could entertain even a hope of pleasing her!" at the same time heaving a deep sigh. "Ah, young man, to please, you must sometimes dare—!" "To do what?" asked L'Eveille. "How should I know?" to be amiable. "And how is that to be done?" "Oh, your question me too closely; and, for an intelligent youth, as you appear to be, you ask singular questions. Adieu, monsieur."

"One word more," cried L'Eveille; "one word more, I conjure you." The *suivante*, who had risen, sat down again. It was now L'Eveille's turn to speak; and he told the old woman, with as much apparent ingenuousness as he could muster up, that he was the son of a wealthy physician of Mans, and that he had been sent to Paris to attend the course of lectures at the university; and added, "Here I have been for the last ten days, and, as you see not ill provided; for my father is generous, having no other child but me; and, besides watches, chains, and rings, I have two hundred pistoles in my purse, and leisure and disposition to devote myself to the study of pleasing so charming a person as your mistress." The old governess checked and smiled, with a mingled expression of pleasure and contemptuous pity. She then took L'Eveille by the hand, and said, "You have entirely won my heart, and I feel a kind of motherly affection for you, of which I will give you proof. Liek back to me. You have not escaped my mistress's notice. She was struck with your person and manners, and desired me to find out who you were. I am charmed that her choice should have fallen on one so worthy of her. Station yourself, this evening, a little before nightfall, in front of the principal door of the church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois. I will meet you there, and bring you, I have no doubt, good tidings. Take care to come well dressed, and with all your finery; for it might spoil the guise you to appear before my mistress as the guise of a third-rate-coated, pennyless student." This point being settled they separated.

L'Eveille, in his joy, scarcely touched the ground along which he hurried home, as he felt convinced that he had discovered the decoy that had lured so many young men to their ruin. On acquainting his father with what had taken place, Lecoq shared in the suspicions and hopes of his son; but, as the hour of trial drew nigh, paternal tenderness filled his heart with fear, and he trembled at the danger the young man was about to encounter. However, in order to diminish that danger as much as possible, he summoned a number of his most trusted police agents, to whom he briefly explained the nature of the service, and recommended them to keep close to his son, without, however, compromising him by their too near approach, or the success of the *conceit main* he intended to attempt. He himself was to walk a short distance before them, resolved that, as far as in him lay, the expedition should not fail. A little before nightfall L'Eveille, still dressed in the rich of the morning, preceded by means of a young man who had the appearance of being clothed when an old woman meekly clad, and with her face nearly concealed under a hood, emerged from the church, and after throwing a furtive glance about her, recognized L'Eveille, and made a sign to approach her. "I should never have known you," cried L'Eveille. "What a strange figure you have made of yourself! In order, it is a necessary precaution, my son, in such a situation, as you are, to guard against the eyes of the numerous adherents of my mistress, who, hoping to gain some interest, betse me. Good gracious! these puppies are as numerous around our house as bees are about a hive. Let us hurry on; but first put this bandage on your eyes. This is a delicate attention shown by our Parisian gallants to their mistresses, and with which I know Mademoiselle Jeborowski (for so my mistress is called) will be not a little pleased, and will reward you for it. "No, by my faith," replied L'Eveille, "I shall not bandage my eyes. My father expressly forbid me ever to do so." "Well, then, let us proceed," said the woman, "without it, since your papa has forbidden you. I shall explain that to Mademoiselle." They walked forward, the old woman a few paces in advance of L'Eveille, and the police agents following at a cautious distance. They entered the Rue de l'Arbrece, de la Monnaie, and after various windings, those of Betezy, Lavandieres, Mauvaises Peroles, Deux Boules, Jean Lambert, and at length stopped in the Rue des Ortolans, not the least hideous street of that infested and black mud-covered quarter of Paris. There near the chapel of St. Elio, and opposite a tolerably good looking house, the old woman halted, and said, my dear sir, my mistress does not reside in this poor place, but the house belongs to her, and it was her wish to receive you here first. I shall go up and let her know you are here."

The old demoness entered the house, leaving L'Eveille at the door. His father to encourage him—though he trembled himself—crossed the street and squeezed his hand. He had scarcely moved away from a room lighted with wax tapers and richly furnished. At one end of the room, upon a crimson-colored sofa, fringed with gold lace, reclined, in a most seductive dabbish, the daughter of the Polish prince, Mademoiselle Jeborowski. At the sight of the stranger, her hand sparkled with brilliants, (no doubt from the Polish mines,) readjusted over her half-disclosed bosom the two open folds of her robe, and after saluting her visitor with an encouraging smile, she made a sign to her attendant to retire, and she advanced toward the young man, and, though conscious of the infamous and dangerous nature of the place where he was, he could not resist taking a seat on the sofa near so charming an object. So that it might have been said of him that he had completely fallen into the power of her whom he had come to surprise, and deliver into the hand of justice.

The young man forgetful for the moment of the object of his mission, felt as if under the spell of enchantment, and fascinated by the beautiful person before him, he had scarcely power to speak or move. She, seeing his embarrassment, arose from the sofa and held out her hand which he eagerly seized and kissed. This but served to put more completely to flight his presence of mind; and, though conscious of the infamous and dangerous nature of the place where he was, he could not resist taking a seat on the sofa near so charming an object. So that it might have been said of him that he had completely fallen into the power of her whom he had come to surprise, and deliver into the hand of justice.