

TWO SURPRISES.

THE name of Journot is historic in France, belonging to one of those ancient families who have maintained, even to the present day, the honor of a proud name, though the representatives have passed through all manner of vicissitudes attendant upon revolution and loss of property, and we may add life itself, since more than one who bore the name died by the guillotine.

It was near the close of the reign of Louis XV., one January afternoon, that a crowd might have been seen gathered upon one side of the Rue de la Paix, Paris. There stood in the midst of the group a woman, neatly but simply dressed, with an infant in her arms, while hard by a couple of officers of law were forcing a man away from the spot. A few busy hands were loading a cart with furniture and other domestic articles.

It was not an unusual scene in Paris in those days. A creditor had this power over his debtor when the debt due amounted to a certain sum. He could seize upon his debtor's personal property, even to the bed he slept upon, turn wife and children into the street, and could also send the father to prison.—Such was the explanation of the scene to which we have referred as now occurring in the Rue de la Paix.

In vain the wife's tears. An advocate, as he was called, had been employed to enforce the law, and he stood there as rigid and cold as marble. Hard by a good cure was trying to comfort the wife, and interceding, but fruitlessly, with the agent of law, who acted for the creditor. In the struggle with their prisoner, the coat of the husband had been torn from his back, and he was now being borne away to the prison through the cold January atmosphere in his shirt sleeves.

The wife, also shivering from exposure to cold, could only press her infant to her breast and sob aloud.

At that moment there rode down the Rue de la Paix, a young and handsome man in an open carriage. As the vehicle came opposite the throng it was stopped by the crowd, so that the driver could only draw up his horses and wait for it to disperse. The occupant of the vehicle leaned forward to ascertain the cause of the interruption. His eyes caught those of the good cure, who instantly came forward, saying:

"It is a poor unfortunate family, Monsieur, who are being driven from their home by a heartless creditor. They are worthy and good people, as I well know."

"And cannot pay the debt?" asked the young Marquis Journot, for that was his name.

"The man cannot pay."

"And how much is the debt?"

"Fifty louis, Monsieur."

"Is that all?"

"A small sum to you, perhaps, Monsieur, but quite too much for this poor man to attempt to pay."

The marquis was a young spendthrift, a gay, dissipated sprig of nobility, scarcely yet of age, but he was not without generous instincts, and, indeed, he was known to have a good heart. He lived in a dissolute period, when few young men of his rank escaped the contamination of vice. Gambling was a daily pastime, and the honor of women was held of light account.

The young Marquis had taken out his pocket-book as he remarked, "Is that all?"

"Here, my good priest," he said, "you seem to be the friend of this unfortunate family. Take this money, pay the creditor, and restore them to their home."

"But this is a hundred louis, Monsieur. The debt is only fifty," said the cure.

"Never mind, there will be some extra expenses in getting the family to once more."

"May Heaven bless you, Monsieur," said the cure, solemnly lifting his cowl and looking up to the sky. "Such disinterested charity must be recorded above."

"Drive on, Antoine," said the marquis to the coachman, as the crowd who readily interpreted the generous act, sent up a ringing shout of "Vive le Marquis!"

The priest settled the account and took a receipt upon the spot. The advocate and his officers slipped away, and the crowd vied with each other in energetic efforts to replace the poor man's articles once more within doors. He was a modest trader, who had trusted out too much in small sums to his customers, and, being unable to collect it all in at the day and hour when he required it, had been thus summarily dealt with by a hard creditor.

"And who was that generous man?" asked the wife.

"It was the young Marquis Journot," replied the cure.

"He shall be remembered in my prayers," she said.

"Amen," said the husband, as he kissed the baby.

"And these fifty louis over?" suggested the cure.

"Aye, what shall we do with them?"

"It is the very sum I need to set me all right in my small business," said the tradesman.

"That is just what the marquis suggested."

And so the priest handed over the money to the happy man and departed.

In the meantime the Marquis Journot was being driven towards his hotel, which was situated on the Rue Rivoli. Scarcely had his coachman turned out of the Rue de la Paix when he was once more suddenly brought to a standstill by the body of a man lying across the horses' path.

"Well, Antoine, what is the trouble?" asked the marquis a little petulantly.

"A drunken man beneath the very feet of the horses," said the driver, striving to keep the animals off the body of a man just in front of them.

"Egad, that won't do," said the marquis, with more energy than one would have supposed him to possess, and at the same time jumping out of his vehicle, he seized upon the insensible man and by sheer physical strength dragged him out from under the horses' feet.

"Oh, Monsieur, it is my husband," said a pretty young woman coming out of an humble abode.

The coachman having handed his reins to a citizen, took hold of the inanimate body of the man, and together they bore him into the house.

"Does he get often in this way?" asked the marquis.

"No," said the young wife. "But he has been sadly disappointed today."

"In what way?"

"Nobody would be godfather to our baby."

On the bed lay a sweet little infant, clothed in very poor attire to be sure, but yet very neat and clean.

"Is that your baby?"

"Yes," said the young mother.

She too was very pretty and neat.—These poor people had no one to befriend them.

"How old is the little fellow?"

"Only ten days."

"Indeed?"

"And oh! we want him christened, because you know, Monsieur, if he were to die by any accident before he was christened, why he would go to purgatory."

"Do you think so?"

"Of course," added the pretty little mother. "And what an awful thought it is!" she added, clasping her hands in an attitude of unconscious grace and earnestness.

"Bring your baby with me, you dear little woman," said the marquis.

"Whither, Monsieur?"

"To Notre Dame."

"To church?"

"Aye."

"But we have no one for godfather."

"I will see to that."

"Do you mean so, Monsieur?"

"Jump right into my carriage. Here, wrap up your baby," said the young marquis, entering fully into the spirit of the affair. "We'll have him christened before your husband awakes from his stupid condition."

Ten minutes later the little party entered the open doors of Notre Dame, and the Marquis Journot gave his name to the humble child. He was not a person to do anything by halves. Mother and child were put into his carriage and driven back to the humble quarters from whence he had taken them. He emptied his purse of some thirty or forty louis into her hands, and bade her good-bye after wishing her much good fortune with her baby. The young mother seized his hand, and pressing her lips to it, said the baby should be brought up to rever his name.

The Marquis Journot drove to his hotel, and in half an hour had forgotten both episodes of that January day.

And now we must ask the reader to pass over a period of twenty years—twenty years of French history, crowded with incidents, with tragedy written in letters of blood. Twenty years of checkered Parisian life. Louis XV. was dead. The new king, Louis XVI., had appointed the Marquis Journot to an important local civil office. He had married. His wild oats were long ago sown, and he had become a worthy and useful member of the government.

Political France was at that time in a ferment. Jacobinism began to rear its head. "Human equality" (socialism) was asserting itself, the same spirit which in later years showed itself under the name of the Commune. Even nature seemed to lend its hand to the turbulence of the period, for just then occurred the awful hurricane of July, 1788, by which all France was devastated, and

banditti ravaged the country, the precursor of the revolution which followed so soon after.

Then came the great uprising—the destruction of the Bastille, the attack upon the Tuilleries, and the reign of terror.

This reversal of the wheel of fortune found the Marquis Journot stripped of everything. Fortune, place, all was gone, and according to the popular verdict he was a traitor. True, he had been a traitor so far as to defend his king against to attack of the Red Republicans. He freely risked his own life to protect that of the royal family, and consequently he was denounced, seized upon, thrown into prison, and condemned to death.

Journot was a brave man. He did not fear death. Yet still he could not forget that he had a wife and two lovely children dependent upon his protection. Indeed, he knew not what had become of them, what had been their fate in this terrible confusion and uprising. He was permitted no intercourse with any one, but was kept under strict guard in that famous prison, the Conciergerie, upon the banks of the Seine.

It was midnight. Journot was awakened from a deep sleep by a sound which at first he was disposed to think was the fabrication of a dream, but at last the sound became so regular and distinct that he got up from his straw bed listened intently. It was all darkness in his lonely cell. The sound evidently came from beneath the floor, until presently it came nearer and nearer. What could it possibly signify? Was some fellow prisoner trying to make his escape? He could only wait patiently and see.

Soon a large stone which formed part of the pavement of his cell floor was removed, and a light from a lantern burst full upon his eyes. In another moment the body of a man came up through the floor and stood in the cell.

"Be silent," said the new-comer.

"Who are you?" demanded the marquis.

"Listen, and I will tell you."

"I am all attention."

"I am a jailor here."

"Then you have the keys?"

"Of course."

"Why seek entrance to my cell after that extraordinary fashion if you have a key to the door?"

"You shall be informed."

"Or why have you come at all?"

"You shall know. Citizen Journot, do you remember twenty years ago when you were riding through the Rue de la Paix, of stopping and freeing from the officers a man who had been turned out of his house for debt?"

The marquis thought for some moments before he could recall the circumstances.

"I do remember something of the sort."

"I am that man! I have never lost sight of you or yours, and I have sworn if ever I had the chance, let it cost me what it might, I would repay that generous act, so noble and so disinterested."

"What do you propose?"

"You are condemned to die to-morrow."

"I know it."

"You shall live!"

"But you will sacrifice yourself in freeing me."

"I will take the risk, at all events."

"I now see why you enter my cell after this style."

"Exactly. I would have it appear that you effected your own escape."

"Excellent."

"Now follow me."

"Instantly," replied the marquis.

In one minute later the jailor and Journot disappeared through the aperture in the floor, and after passing through one or two dark passages, they emerged at a gateway guarded by a single sentry.

"Journot," said the jailor, "here is your god-father. You understand all. I can trust you."

"What does this mean?" asked the marquis.

"Another surprise," said the jailor.

"You called him Journot?"

"I did."

"Explain."

"Do you not remember that upon that same January day when you released me from the minions of law you also befriended an unfortunate young mother, gave her baby your name in the church of Notre Dame, and supplied her with money to feed it?"

"I have a dim recollection of some such event."

"This lad is the one to whom you gave your name, and now he is ready to befriend you in turn."

"Strange that we should meet thus, and after twenty years."

"You cast your bread upon the waters and it has returned to you," answered the jailor.

Then turning to the young man, the jailor continued:

"Lead him to a place of safety,

Journot; give me your gun, and I will keep this post until you return."

"Come on, Monsieur," said the young man.

"Whither do you lead me?"

"You shall soon learn, but be sure it is a place of safety, since I have sworn it to my mother."

"Go on, then; I will follow," said the marquis.

The young man led the fugitive down to the river's bank, where they embarked and were soon on the opposite side of the Seine. Here, after landing, he conducted him by back lanes to the rear of a house on the Rue St. Honore, where, after knocking gently, they were admitted by a fair young girl about the same age as the young man who bore the marquis' name. She was so pretty, indeed, that the fugitive gazed admiringly on her charming features.

"Citizen Journot," said a matronly woman, as the marquis entered a large and comfortable room, "do you not remember me?"

"I do not."

"Well, it is not strange. But when we last met it was in the Rue de la Paix, twenty years ago. This young woman was then an infant in my arms, and you saved my husband from going to prison."

"Ah! yes, he has just recalled the fact," said the marquis.

"He is temporarily in charge of the Conciergerie. But from that hour, with means you furnished, he has prospered in trade, and we have been abundantly blessed. Pauline, my daughter, is about to wed this young man, another of your proteges. And now please to step into the next apartment."

The Marquis Journot obeyed, and instantly found himself in the presence of his wife and children. His kind but humble friends had secreted them in the hour of their great peril, and now brought them in safety to each other. Could gratitude have had better expression.

That very night the marquis and his family were conducted in safety outside the walls of Paris, and sought and found in the provinces a place of safety until the Reign of Terror had ceased, and the demon of discord had drunk his fill of blood.

Truly the kindly deed of the young marquis twenty years before had proved to be "Bread Cast upon the Waters," and had furnished him two surprises of an agreeable nature.

A Parrot Story.

Two sailors who had a parrot with them, went into a magician's show, in an upper room in some foreign city.—The three constituted the audience. After each feat of the magicians, one of the sailors would remark, "that's pretty good; wonder what they'll do next."—Finally one of the sailors asked permission to smoke, which the magicians granted, forgetting that in the room beneath was an immense quantity of gun-powder. The Jack tars and the parrot continued to enjoy the show, one sailor adding the pleasure of his pipe, and the other remarking after each trick, "That is pretty good; wonder what they'll do next."

A spark from the smoker's pipe chanced to drop through a crack in the floor into the powder, and something suddenly occurred. Sailors and magicians, parrot and all, "rose above party prejudice," and were all blown to kingdom come, in a million fragments, all except the poll-parrot. He landed in a heap of bruised flesh and burnt feathers in a potato patch, four miles away. He was utterly demoralized. It took some moments to collect himself, and when he had partially done so he hopped limpingly upon a fence rail and remarked: "That's pretty good; wonder what they'll do next."

An Irishman chanced to be present at a jumping match, and seeming much interested in the contest, he was invited to try his skill. He gladly consented, and taking off his long black coat, laid it across a fence near by. Three dandies who had just halted to witness the sport, thought it was a good chance to play him a trick. Accordingly, when his back was turned, one of them procured a piece of chalk and drew an ass' head on the back of Pat's coat, and waited to see the fun when he discovered the trick. He soon returned for his coat, with a smile on his comical face. As his keen eyes glanced at the profile on the back of his coat, one of the dandies laughingly asked how he liked jumping. "Oh! I like jumpin' well enough," said Pat; "but iv ye'll tell me which av ye had the chalk on yer face, an' left the print av yer jaw on my coat, I'll tell yees if he took a gud likeness."

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