

A LODGING FOR A NIGHT

ROBERT L. STEVENSON.

"A thief!" cried one old man. "I a thief! If you understood your words you would repent them."

Villon turned out his hands with a gesture of immitable impudence. "If your lordship had done me the honor to follow my argument!" he said.

"I do you too much honor in submitting to your presence," said the knight. "Learn to curb your tongue when you speak with old and honorable men, or some one hastier than I may reprove you in a sharper fashion." And he rose and passed the lower end of the apartment, struggling with anger and antipathy. Villon surreptitiously refilled his cup.

"Tell me one thing," said the old man, pausing in his walk. "Are you really a thief?"

"I claim the sacred rights of hospitality," returned the poet. "My lord, I am."

"You are very young."

"I should never have been so old," replied Villon, showing his fingers. "If I had not helped myself with these ten talents. They have been my nursing mothers and my nursing fathers."

"You may still repent and change."

"I repent daily," said the poet. "There are few people more given to repentance than poor Francis. As for change, let somebody change my circumstances. A man must continue to eat, if it were only that he may continue to repent."

"The change must begin in the heart," returned the old man solemnly.

"My dear lord," answered Villon, "do you really fancy that I steal for pleasure? I hate stealing, like any other piece of work or of danger. My teeth chatter when I see a gallows. But I must eat, I must drink, I must mix in society of some sort. What the devil! Man is not a solitary animal—Cui Deus faeminam tradit. Make me king's pantier—make me abbot of St. Denis; make me bailly of the Patarae; and then I shall be changed indeed. But as long as you leave me the poor scholar Francis Villon, without a farthing, why, of course, I remain the same."

"The grace of God is all-powerful."

"I should be a heretic to question it," said Francis. "It has made you lord of Brisetout and bailly of the Patarae; it has given me nothing but the quick wits under my hat and these ten toes upon my hands. May I help myself to wine? I thank you respectfully."

The lord of Brisetout walked to and fro with his hands behind his back. Perhaps he was not yet quite settled in his mind about the parallel between thieves and soldiers; perhaps Villon had interested him by some cross-thread of sympathy; perhaps his wits were simply muddled by so much unfamiliar reasoning; but whatever the cause, he somehow yearned to convert the young man to a better way of thinking, and could not make up his mind to drive him forth again into the street.

"There is something more than I can understand in this," he said at length. "Your mouth is full of subtleties, and the devil has led you very far astray; but the devil is only a very weak spirit before God's truth, and all his subtleties vanish at a word of true honor, like darkness at morning. Listen to me once more. I learned long ago that a gentleman should live chivalrously and lovingly to God, and the king, and his lady; and though I have seen many strange things done, I have still striven to command my ways upon that rule. It is not only written in all noble histories, but in every man's heart, if he will take care to read. You speak of food and wine, and I know very well that hunger is a difficult trial to endure; but you do not speak of other wants; you say nothing of honor, of faith to God and other men, of courtesy, of love without reproach. It may be that I am not very wise—and yet I think I am—but you seem to me like one who has lost his way and made a great error in life. You are attending to the little wants, and you have totally forgotten the great and only real ones, like a man who should be doctoring toothache on the Judgment Day. For such things as honor and love and faith are not only nobler than food and drink, but indeed I think we desire them more, and suffer more sharply for their absence. I speak to you as I think you will most easily understand me. Are you not, while careful to fill your belly, disregarding another appetite in your heart, which spoils the pleasure of your life and keeps you continually wretched?"

Villon was sensibly nettled under all this sermonizing. "You think I have no sense of honor!" he cried. "I'm poor enough, God knows! It's hard to see rich people with their gloves, and you blowing in your hands. An empty belly is a bitter thing, although you speak so lightly of it. If you had had as many as I, perhaps you would change your tune. Any way I'm a thief—make the most of that—but I'm not a devil from hell, God strike me dead. I would have you to know I've an honor of my own, as good as yours, though I don't prate about it all day long, as if it was a God's miracle to have any. It seems quite natural to me; I keep it in its box till it's wanted. Why, now, look you here, how long have I been in this room with you? Did you not tell me you were alone in the house? Look at your gold plate! You're strong, if you like, but you're old and unarmed, and I have my knife. What did I want but a jerk of the elbow and here would have been you with the cold steel in your bowels, and there would have been me, linking in the streets, with an armful of golden cups! Did you suppose I hadn't wit enough to see that? And I scorned the action. There are your damned goblets, as safe as in a church; there are you, with your heart ticking as good as new; and here am I, ready to go out

again as poor as I came in, with my one white that you threw in my teeth! And you think I have no sense of honor—God strike me dead!"

The old man stretched out his right arm. "I will tell you what you are," he said. "You are a rogue, my man, an impudent and black-hearted rogue and vagabond. I have passed an hour with you. Oh! believe me, I feel myself disgraced! And you have eaten and drunk at my table. But now I am sick at your presence; the day has come, and the night-bird should be off to his roost. Will you go before, or after?"

"Which you please," returned the poet, rising. "I believe you to be strictly honorable." He thoughtfully emptied his cup. "I wish I could add you were intelligent," he went on, knocking on his head with his knuckles. "Age! age! the brains stiff and rheumatic."

"God pity you," said the lord of Brisetout at the door.

"Good-bye, papa," returned Villon with a yawn. "Many thanks for the cold nutton."

The door closed behind him. The dawn was breaking over the white roofs. A chill, uncomfortable morning ushered in the day. Villon stood and heartily stretched himself in the middle of the road.

"A very dull old gentleman," he thought. "I wonder what his goblets may be worth?"

THE END.

GUNNERY PRACTICE.

An Occasion When Quickness of Action Prevented a Fearful Disaster.

An officer of the United States navy relates the following as illustrating some of the perils of gunnery at sea:

"I came very near going up into the air in small bits on this last squadron cruise. We were at heavy gun practice at sea and but for the quickness of a gunner's mate would never have returned. As you probably know, the heavy guns in the turrets are fired by electricity, the gun being discharged simply by pressing a button. The officer in command of the forward turret on our ship during rapid firing practice was just about to press the button to fire one of our big guns when a gunner's mate was seen to grab at something on the wall of the turret and then fall in a heap on the floor. The officer pressed the button, but the gun was not discharged. When the mate came to, he was asked what had happened, and he informed the officer that the breech of the gun had not been locked and that what he grabbed at on the wall was the wires forming the electric firing circuit.

"When he saw that the officer was preparing to fire the gun and at the same time observed that the breech of the gun was not locked, the only thing that occurred to him to prevent the gun being discharged was to destroy the circuit, which he did promptly and effectively. When all this occurred, there was a charge of 250 pounds of powder in the gun, another charge of the same size in the turret ready to be served, and the passageway leading to the powder magazine was wide open. But for the quickness of the gunner's mate the gun would have been blown out inside the turret, the gases from the burning powder would probably have ignited the charge lying in the turret, this explosion would have ignited the powder in the magazine, and the chances are that the whole ship, crew and all, would have gone up in the air. A thought that has occurred to me is this: Suppose the accident had occurred, what do you imagine the verdict of a board of inquiry as to the cause of the loss of the ship would have been? Since his experience the department has adopted electrical means to prevent the discharge of any of the large guns until the breech is locked."—San Francisco Chronicle.

WOULDN'T BURN HIS BOOTS.

Though He Didn't Mind the Effect on His Stomach.

After he had sold his load of wood and had received \$4.25 for it he strolled over to the little combination billiard parlor and barroom on the other side of the square. His faded old eyes lighted up and his new cowhide boots, larded generously in grease, squeaked exultantly as he thought of that drink he had been planning to get ever since he left the farm at daybreak.

"Just one old snifter of that good old liquor," he cooed to himself, "and I'll be primed ter start fer home."

"About one finger of that old red eye will do the bizness, I calculate," he

condemned to the bartender, as he pulled a feverish red mitten from his right hand and jammed it down in his "pants" pocket. "I ain't a drinkin' man—never was—but when it's so cold outside yer breath freezes ter t'waggin' wheels ye's got ter resort ter some powerful remedy ter thaw it out."

The bartender agreed with him. For months he had watched the old farmers come in, order just one finger of whiskey and drink a whole handful of fingers for the manifestly unfair expenditure of 10 cents. He had decided to put a stop to it, and the farmer with the new cowhide boots was the first victim.

The remedy he placed before him was powerful enough to thaw the Yukon. The old man poured his glass full—just as the bartender knew he would—and gulped it down in one big swallow. The effect was instantaneous. The victim gave one convulsive shudder, looked reproachfully at the bartender and whirled around four times. Then he sat down and hastily began to pull off his cowhide boots.

"What the mischief are you doing that for?" inquired the astonished bartender.

"Can't ye see them's brand new boots?" gasped the victim. "D'ye think I'm goin ter let them burn up tew?"—New York Press.

Sick Fish.

When a fish in an aquarium is ailing or injured, it is put into a reserve tank, out of sight of the visitors, and where it can be looked after at any time. The circulation of the tank is adjusted with great nicety to give the fish the greatest possible amount of water, and with the constant renewal of water the greatest possible amount of fresh air. A fresh water fish may be treated with salt water baths. The fish is fed on the food best suited to its condition or most likely to suit its fancy.

It may lie on the bottom of the tank motionless for hours, like a sick person in a bed. It may sometimes seem to be dead, but a closer inspection will show a feeble movement of the gill covers, which marks the fish's respiration. After all, the fish may die; oftener, under treatment, it recovers, and then it goes back to its place in the display tanks.—New York Sun.

How They Looked to Her.

I was visiting a friend's house with my little girl of 5 years. On being shown a photograph of English choir boys with their surplices on she exclaimed, "Oh, mamma, look at all these gentlemen waiting to be shaved!"—People's Friend.

Welsh mothers put a pair of tongs or a knife in the cradle to insure the safety of their children. The knife is also used for the same purpose in some parts of England.

An adult perspires 28 ounces in 24 hours.

MESSAGE TO MEN

Proving that True Honesty and True Philanthropy still Exist.

If any man who is weak, nervous and debilitated, or who is suffering from any of the various troubles resulting from youthful folly, excesses or overwork, will take heart and write to me, I will send him confidentially and free of charge the plan pursued by which I was completely restored to perfect health and manhood, after years of suffering from Nervous Debility, loss of Vigor and Organic Weakness.

I have nothing to sell and therefore want no money, but as I know through my own experience how to sympathize with such sufferers, I am glad to be able to assist any fellow-beings to a cure. I am well aware of the prevalence of quickery, for I myself was deceived and imposed upon until I nearly lost faith in mankind but I rejoice to say that I am now perfectly well and happy once more and am desirous therefore to make this certain means of cure known to all. If you will write to me you can rely upon being cured and the proud satisfaction of having been of great service to one in need will be sufficient reward for my trouble. Absolute secrecy assured. Send 5c silver to cover postage and address Mr. G. Strong, North Rockland, Mich. 135 p & w.

Big reduction in all winter goods, all ladies' astrakhan jackets, muffs and collars, men's fur coats, dress goods and wool squares. Call for bargains.—W. A. Weeks & Co.

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BEE BUZZES.

In wintering it is always best to take away all but one queen.

Very late swarming out is good evidence that the bees are starved out.

Keep the brood as near the center as possible and the honey nearest the outside frames.

The queen, no matter how prolific, should be confined to the space occupied by the cluster.

A queen bee lays both fertilized and unfertilized eggs, alternating from one kind to another in rapid succession.

The hives should not be shifted around from one place to another, as the bees will get confused and it will often incite robbing.

If a colony is left queenless for some time and there is no young brood from which to raise a queen, worker bees often perform the duty of laying eggs.—St. Louis Republic.

POINTED PARAGRAPHS.

Uncasy lies the face that wears a frown. The closer money is the harder it is to get hold of.

It is easy to find fault, but it's hard to tell what to do with it.

Some people use very poor material when they make up their minds.

No wonder the ocean waves get angry when the wind is continually blowing them up.

The most popular female in the United States is the blond lady whose face adorns the \$20 goldpiece.

The average man never fully realizes at midnight how very sleepy he is going to be at 7 o'clock the next morning.—Chicago News.

DIAMOND DUST.

A dual system of baseball umpires is good. No matter how big or obnoxious a player may be, two of them should be able to put him out.—Philadelphia Times.

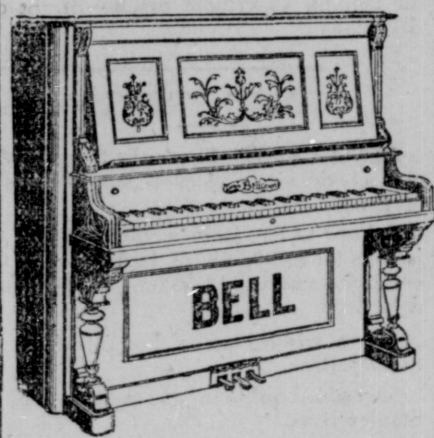
The National league is wise in adopting the double umpire system. The chances are always favorable that one of them will be able to go through the game.—Detroit Journal.

The meeting of the baseball magnates in Philadelphia seemed to be similar to an old-fashioned "swapping" bee, with this difference, that men were the commodity instead of horses.—New York Herald.

Seems as if consumption always picks out the brightest and best. Fully one-sixth of all the deaths that occur in the world are caused by consumption. Many things were once considered impossible. It would be strange if medical science did not make some progress. The telegraph and telephone, the phonograph, the electric light—all were once impossible, and once it was impossible to cure consumption. That was before the time of Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery. Taken according to directions, the standard remedy will cure 98 per cent. of all cases of consumption. Consumption is caused and fostered by impurity in the blood. It is cured by purity and richness in the blood—surely, certainly cured by the "Medical Discovery." It builds up solid healthy flesh and vigorous strength.

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