

A MOTHER'S SIN.

BY LIEUTENANT MURRAY.



N a bright Sunday morning I stood lingering on the Pont des Invalids in Paris, and looking at the interesting view that lay to the eastward.

Turning suddenly, I grasped the arm of a lad at my side. He struggled for a moment to escape from me, but when he found this impossible he stood silent and sulky.

I knew not why, but as I regarded the little rogue I did not feel the least anger at his audacity, but watched him with not a little interest.

Neither of us had spoken a word while I was making these observations, and I was rather surprised that the fellow did not show fight, or at least struggle to get away.

'You are hurting my wrist,' he said at last. 'Very likely,' I replied. 'You put it where you had no right to just now.'

'I didn't take anything.' 'No; I was too quick for you.'

'What are you going to do with me?' 'Hand you over to the police.'

'Don't do that,' said he, drawing closer to my side. 'You are not a hard man—I can see that.'

'You deserve punishment.' 'Ab, but you will also punish those at home; they are not to blame, poor things.'

'I was interested at once, and told the lad that I would like to see his home. If he would show me to it, and promise not to run away, I would let go his wrist and not hand him over to the police.'

'You have a right to make terms. I don't see what good it will do, but I promise, and you can follow me.'

I released his wrist and followed him across the bridge to the other side of the Seine. After crossing the boulevard St. Michael we struck into a labyrinth of streets that lie in this part of the city, the famous St. Giles of Paris, and finally stopped before a tumble-down house, into which my guide entered, and I followed him up a narrow flight of stairs to the garret.

'There is reward somewhere for such kindness.' As I looked upon her now it seemed impossible that this was the pickpocket of the Pont des Invalids, the dirty lad in a blouse, whom I had detained by force.

'Keep your resolve and the secret of the past,' I said to her, in a low voice. 'With Heaven's help, I will,' she said.

'I had hardly made these observations when the door opened again, and there entered the room a young woman, scarcely more than twenty years of age. She was rather delicate in appearance, and quite pretty, not to say handsome; her dress, like that of the children, was coarse, but neat, and as she sat down upon one of the chairs, after placing the other for me, the two children ran to her knees with the instinct and affection of offspring of their tender years.'

'Did you not suspect my sex?' she asked, after a moment. 'I certainly did not.'

'It is my one resort,' she said, sadly, 'and never adopted until I am driven to it to fill those little months!'

'Dangerous business—you might have fallen into very different hands, as you must be aware.'

'True, but I work by instinct. I saw your face, and I said I must have money. He is not a hard man; if detected I may, perhaps, appeal to his mercy.'

'Why do you not ask for aid in place of being thus a thief?'

'That is a hard word, but it is merited. Do you not know that beggars are treated in Paris like thieves? The law punishes both nearly alike.'

'I fear that you speak truly. Are these your children?'

'Yes,' and she kissed them both tenderly. 'Are you married?'

'Monsieur.'

'I mean no reproach.'

'I am a widow.'

'How did you lose your husband?'

'He was one of the Commune, was tried, condemned, and fell by the muskets of the soldiery.'

'Alas, for these civil wars!'

'Ah, but he was right,' said she, with all the obstinacy of conviction and loyalty to memory. 'I then listened to her story. Her husband had been an engraver with good wages, and had been able to support his little family comfortably until the war, which was fol-

lowed by the intestine trouble. He was arrested with the Communists, and suffered the punishment of death. Since then she had lived and supported her children by selling off everything that would bring money; had got some work to do with her needle occasionally, but at last all seemed to fail her, and by means of disguising her sex she had successfully consummated several small robberies of money, and once or twice had made attempts similar to that which had failed in my instance.

'She reasoned with me very coolly, and said: 'If it were not for these dear children I should cease to suffer very soon, for,' said she, 'the Seine is always there with open arms.' She said, tenderly: 'My husband is in heaven, but he is my husband still, and I shall live and die faithful to him.'

'Notwithstanding her noble sense of honour in this respect she felt no compunctions as to stealing.'

'The world owes me and my children bread. I take nothing from the poor, only from such as can well afford to lose it.'

'Honesty, as a matter of principle, she could not recognize. 'Have you no friends?'

'None here.'

'Have you any elsewhere?'

'I have a sister at Rouen, the wife of a farmer. If I could get there she would give me a home for myself and children in return for the work I could do for her.'

'You shall go there,' said I. 'Monsieur.'

'I saw you shall go to your sister.'

'It will cost fifty francs.'

'Just about.'

'You will pay this for me, who would have robbed you half-an-hour since?'

'I will. But I exact from you one promise.'

'She looked at me suspiciously for a moment. 'What is it?'

'That you will learn to be as honest and true in relation to the rights and property of others as you are with regard to your own honour.'

'I believe I understand you,' she said, thoughtfully, 'and I will promise to try and do as you have said.'

'That is all I can ask.'

'She came toward me, now leading the children, and said: 'Monsieur, let them kiss you. I believe, after all, that there is disinterested benevolence in the world. I have been more than once offered assistance, but it has been coupled with conditions so hateful that I have felt insulted. Kiss him, Marie—kiss him, Gustave; he is good—good, like your papa.'

'I had been surprised at the excellent manner in which she expressed herself, while, as she stood there now, her cheeks suffused with a slight colour, and her eyes lighted up by animation and a feeling of trust and gratitude, I thought that she was extremely beautiful.'

'I am going to Havre to-morrow, by the way of Rouen,' said I; 'can you be ready so soon with your children?'

'I can be ready in one hour.'

'Pack up whatever is necessary for you to carry. Here is money to get you a good-sized trunk. Be ready to-morrow at noon, and I will come for you.'

'She attempted to thank me, but her lips quivered, and she turned away to hide the tears that coursed down her cheeks. As I passed toward the door she followed, and taking my hand between her own pressed it earnestly as she said:

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'I had looked at her but a moment before I discovered that the pickpocket of the Pont des Invalids was a woman!'

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OF

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INFANTS' CARRIAGE BLANKET.

ONE yard of white eider-down flannel one yard wide; paint a spray of wild roses a little at the right of the centre, and drop toward the centre of blanket, having the stems of the spray about three or four inches from the top. Place a cluster of three buds at the left, and a single bud below, at the right, having the effect of dropping from the spray; turn the edge in all round on the wrong side and baste it down. Line it with China silk, blind stitch or felt it on to the wool. Finish with a white silk cord; or, if you prefer, knot pink and green worsted fringe corresponding to the colours in the spray.

A PIANO LAMP SHADE.

FOUR a yard and a half of wide China silk twice, cut to make three pieces exactly alike. Sew two pieces together, and turn a hem two and a half inches deep for the top, overcast the bottom. Run a shirr next the hem, another two inches below, and one one inch below that. Place on the shade frame, and draw the top shirr string to fit the frame, allowing the wide hem to arrange itself into a graceful puff; draw the other shirrs to fit the frame. Now take the other piece of silk and cut into exactly three parts for the ruffle. This allows a whole breadth extra to fall. Sew the three pieces together and 'pink' both edges. Shirr about one inch from the top, and sew to the bottom of the shade. A handsome spray of flowers, and a lace ruffle over the silk one, adds to its beauty, but it is very handsome without these. If the frame is not large enough, a small wire may be looped around it very easily, making any size desired.

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