



### Chose of Other Days



The following letter was received by a member of the faculty from Dr. Gerig, who is now studying in Paris:

"Dear Prof. ————

"Please do not begin to berate Duff when you receive this sample of the wretched education that you inculcate: for I, while guilty of many wicked acts, am yet in no way responsible for this effusion. I write in order to inform you that I am still able to totter about, in spite of my emaciated condition. Pounds of flesh are dropping off me at a rate that would make old Shylock's eyes gleam with envy. I weigh only 165 pounds, and from present indications, threaten to fall down to 170. Parisian life is too much for me. I am working too hard. Why I am expected to be up by 10 o'clock every morning! Furthermore, the demands upon my time are something outrageous. The King and Queen of Italy were first up to pay a call on me. But in spite of it all, I have managed to visit the city. I have been through it from cellar to attic; in jail and out; down in the Seine, and up on the heights of Montmartre—in fact, everywhere, but in church—a malicious habit that I acquired from you.

No, honestly, I have been to church about thirty-five times—I, e., I walked into thirty-five different churches, looked around, and then, walked out again. As for the services, I am unable to say just how they are conducted; for despite the fact that I watched them three or four times, I failed to understand or imbibe a word of what was going on. To render my mortification even greater, I was green enough to take a seat almost under the pulpit. My French has received several hard knocks since I set foot in this country; and at that moment, I must confess that 30 cents and 6,000,000 years looked the same to me. However, I sidled sheepishly up to a certain parishoner with whom I am acquainted, and ventured to question if he thought the sermon was good. He looked at me pityingly and replied: "Oh, we never pay attention to them. They talk so fast we can't understand them." I feel relieved to say the least.

I visited a French convent a short time ago. A lady from New York whose husband is a professor in Columbia university, invited me to accompany her and her daughter to the large convent of St. Germain. I had no idea what the trip might involve, but, realizing that I would have the daughter all to myself in the interim, it did not require an hour for me to make up my mind to accept. I can't imagine how they managed to get me inside the portals of that stately old edifice, but, nevertheless, I found myself within the large walls, built mainly as a protection against me. Well, I was at once surrounded by 50 or 60 nuns, to whom a man and especially a domesticated Nebraskan, was a curiosity of the first water. They examined me in much the same way as a scientist examines a strange bug. As that was the first time, I was ever a 'whole show' to a bevy of women, I wasn't slow in making the most of my opportunity. I swaggered about like a Gascon, and lied most shamefully. They asked me at once if I ever killed any Indians or Negroes. If you had seen me straighten up then, extend my chest, and assume an expression of ferocity, you would have vowed it was Wild Bill's ghost. My conscience still troubles me because of the lies I told those pretty creatures! But that's another bad habit I acquired from you.

I went over to the Palais de Justice a few days ago with the intention of getting a glimpse of the interior workings of French justice—to see whether I shall have any chances of escaping. I stopped in a clerk's office and asked him where was the court of criminal correction.

"Oh, you want to be tried?" he asked.

"No, indeed, I want to visit it," I said.

But he had already gotten the papers and a big sargeant had stepped up to my side, ready to assist me in signing. It took me ten minutes to explain that I was simply a visitor and not a habitue. Then the clerk began to rage.

"Do you know that you are in the office reserved for condemned crim-

inals?" I realized then the narrowness of my escape.

I am located at the Hotel Jacob, where my friend D'Artagnan, of the Three Musketeers, used to reside. They relate that you can see his ghost on dark night. But that doesn't prevent the house from being dreadfully uncomfortable, as are Parisian homes. It is next to impossible to heat the rooms. There are cracks under the doors large enough for Jeff to crawl through and the floors run through the musical scale every time you walk across them. Windows, even in the newest houses, are always double and open inwards. Bathtubs are a luxury. Marat was the last Frenchman who ever took a bath; and, as he was killed in the act, all Frenchmen tear his fate. Gas and electricity are not to be found in houses, the candle being the only means of lighting. My friend and I managed, however, to find a lamp. But coal oil is 60 cents a gallon. Coal is displayed in handsome fruit jars in the windows of tobacco and fruit stores. Candy and cakes are very high. In other words living is as high as it is in New York, and is far from being comfortable.

But the French are surely peerless consumers of liquid refreshments. As soon as a child is old enough to make known its wants, they begin to feed it on wine, etc. As a result it is not an uncommon thing to see toppers as young as 14. Wine is drunk at every meal; and workmen have usually a recess in the morning and afternoon, which they generally devote to a wine feast. Absinthe in comparison with which whisky is non-poisonous, is drunk by all, young and old. In a certain restaurant where we often go for our supper, we haven't yet failed to find an aged father and his two sons with their absinthe before them. The French government has posted large placards on all of its public buildings, warning the people against the evils of alcoholism, which, it claims, is undermining the nation. But that is a mere cry in the desert; the cafe seems to be the prosperous business of France. I am becoming more and more of a prohibitionist the longer I stay here. My friend and I, in spite of the fact that we are laughed at wherever we go, still limit ourselves, as far as possible, to water and coffee.

Why this city will rank among the most wicked of the world is doubtless due to that fact that the life of the young is so colorless. They are blasé to Paris—do not take enough interest in it to visit the unknown and remote parts. We have met numbers who are glad to spend an afternoon in the most common-place conversation with two ignorant foreigners, inasmuch as they have nothing else to do. There are no athletic games to absorb their attention. The only diversions they have are orgies and theatres. Debauchery is such a common thing that it is considered a necessary part of a young man's education. So I don't think we can hold them responsible for their training and environment. If they were brought up under a different system of training and in a different environment, they result would, without doubt, be entirely different.

All the Parisians live beyond their means. Suicides and poverty are common. Beggars are on all sides. As for religion, there is none. True there are many magnificent churches, one now in process of construction will cost about \$15,000,000, but religion is a mere form and usually a subterfuge. The streets are always thronged with corpulent Jesuits, and sated priests, all men parasites, living at the expense of the people and government. The more I see and learn of them, the more I am in sympathy with the French government ousting them.

But I must drop this rambling. Dr. Burman, a former friend of mine, now professor in Latin in the University of Cincinnati, is just two blocks away. I have also met W. I. Knapp, formerly a professor in the University of Chicago, who is now living here.

I must stop. With kindest regards to you, I am as ever, Yours truly,

GERIG.

P. S.—Excuse illegible writing.

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