A TALE OF A CONSULATE.

(13)

The fog rolled up in billows from the yellow waters of the Garonne as the shivering boy stepped from the little barque which had come to his aid. He was on land if it was a strange land. For nearly thirty days he had been on the ocean. What mattered it now if he were cold, wet and hungry, and knew not a word of the language? Surely the people of France were not savages. He would find some one to give him a piece of bread--he thought he could show by signs that he was hungry--and perhaps the sun would come out by and bye and dry his clothes. Anyway "the perils of the deep", the kicks and curses of the crew of the "Mary L. Troup" were over.

As he stood on the bank the fog lifted a little and through the gray mist he could see dimly the church spires of a city which must be Bordeaux, and he knew by following the course of the river, he would reach the harbor and possibly among the shipping at the quais, he

might see the American flag. Delusive hope! He did not know that though a hundred years ago this harbor was crowded with the adventurous crafts of the infant Republic, now that the nation had become great and strong, the starry banner is never seen flying a-peak among the vessels of almost every country under the sun in this busy roadstead. If he had comprehended this fact, his steps might have lagged a little instead of the brisk pace he took as he turned his face toward the many tall spires now fast coming into view. He thought he hardly needed this early morning walk to get up an appetite for the breakfast he hoped to find--where he did not know. From the United States here somewhere. For half an hour he plodded briskly along meeting many blue-bloused workmen leisurely munching great hunks of bread. How hungry it did make him to see them eat! He thought he must ask for a share --but--but he had never begged, and how could he a proud American boy, ask a French laborer to divide what seemed to him a very insufficient breakfast? He would wait awhile. The shipping became more numerous.

He heard orders given and conversation going on in all kinds of tongues, but not a familiar word. At length a big steamer on which he noted much activity as though preparing to leave her moorings, arrested his attention. He stopped and listened.--Yes,--the words were English, but almost as unintelligible as those he had heard all the morning. Then he saw the name, "The Albatross, London." Just then a burly sailor came hurridly down the ladder and seeing the boy standing there, exclaimed heartily:

"'Ello, shipm'te! Looking out to see who we are, eh?"

"I thought I might find a ship from the United States here somewhere. I have just come over and don't want to go back on the same boat.--Indeed, they won't let me," he answered timidly, casting down his eyes.

"Been up to some tricks, hev ye, and they've turned ye off, eh? Well, there aint none o' that kind o' craft about here these days, though in my time I've seen lots o' 'em in this ere harbor. Better

find the American consul. Maybe he'll do something' fer ye;out I'm in a hurry and can't stop to talk now,fer we go out on this tide. Good by an' better luck next time.--Yes,boss,I'm comin'," he called to a man who appeared at the head of the gang-plank,"I'm a comin'!"

On the other side of the street,the boy saw the sign "Café Americain." Perhaps some one there spoke English and would show the way to the Americain consulate? He crossed over,dodging the trams and drays,as everything seemed to be alive on these docks that morning. A good-natured lounger at one of the tables outside to whom he made known his desire,understood enough to offer to pilot him to the haven he sought.

A half hour or so later,the consul's wife,opening the window to let in the soft morning air,was attracted by a pathetic figure sitting on a bench in front of the consulate. Though that bench was almost always occupied,and she had become accustomed to seeing tramps of

almost every description resting there to whom she gave no heed, there seemed something familiar in this one, and as she looked again she saw the boy's eyes were intently fixed on the office door, not yet open. Just then he turned his face toward her with such a look of woeful misery upon it, that, not waiting to summon the maid, she ran hastily down the long flight of stone stairs, opened the door and beckoned the boy to come in. He needed no second bidding.

"Can I see the consul?" he asked before she had time to question him.

"The office will not be open for an hour, and the consul has not yet had his breakfast. What is it you want? Perhaps I can help you."

"I want to see the consul,--but I am very hungry. Could you give me something to eat while I wait for him?"

This was a request not often made at the consulate in that language. "J'ai faim" was a familiar sound, but not so "I am hungry." Not waiting for more the boy was ushered up the two flights of winding stone stairs to the quaint French kitchen, presided over by white-

coiffed Clotilde. The situation was explained to her, who had a tender heart for all "marins" having an only son in the French navy. A steaming cup of coffee was soon placed before the half-famished boy with half a dozen "petits pains", and at her mistress' suggestion she fried eggs and bacon--enough as the maid intimated for a dinner for two men.

Two months before, this lad, Charles Dobson by name, possesed with the spirit of "Wanderlust", had left a pleasant country home in Michigan to see something of the world outside the prairies of his native state. His mother whose youngest child he had been, had died the year before and a new mistress had come to take her place, and the time seemed auspicious to carry out a plan he had had in mind ever since he had seen his beloved mother laid in her narrow bed. Putting on his Sunday suit which was quite new, making a bundle of his everyday clothes and a shirt or two, and emptying out the contents of his little tin bank, containing some ten dollars or so, he stole away

from beneath the roof which had tendely sheltered him for nearly sixteen years. He would see the world. He had read of other boys even younger who had started out thus to seek a fortune and found it. Why not he? If a sort of pang shot through his heart as he thought of his kindly old father, who must milk the cows alone in the morning, he smothered it, saying to himself, his father could get that strange woman he had brought home to help him. He would be far away then, and he never expected to milk cows again, anyhow. If tears came into his eyes as he thought of the now green mound just over the hill, he brushed them away as unbecoming a boy nearly sixteen who had started out in the world to make his fortune.

It was many a mile to the station where he meant to take the train--where to, he had not really made up his mind; but he trudged bravely on and just as the first gleams of morning showed in the east he reached it. Seeing a milkman coming out of a house, he bought a pint of milk, drank it and ate a couple of doughnuts he had brought

from home. He felt rested then, and very brave as he sat on the steps of the station, waiting for the office to be opened when he would buy a ticket,--yes, he would get a ticket to Chicago! He had been taken there once when a small child, and it seemed a great way off, but he thought he had money enough. But that city was not the goal of his ambition. He was going to New York--that he had decided upon--that wonderful place with its high buildings--and the Statue of Liberty! He felt he knew what liberty meant now. It had been but a word before. Now, he knew that it had a definite meaning. Did he not have his liberty--ten dollars in his pocket and was he not starting out to see the world in the way he chose to go--and nobody to tell him to do this or not do that? Yes, he would go to New York and see that world-renowned statue,--and--his heart thumped so at the thought he felt quite faint--he might find a ship there and cross the ocean. The wonderful possibilities that opened before him drove away all fatigue, doubt for the future or regret for what he had done.

The local train came lumbering in. His ticket was bought. Not being on the main line, he was told by the kindly disposed ~~ticket~~ agent at what station he must get off after a couple of hours ride, to take the train for Chicago. After getting aboard and seating himself in an almost empty car, he proceeded to count his change and was surprised that he had so much of his ten dollars left. Chicago, to his mind, being so far away, he thought it would take a lot of money to get there. But now possibly he might have enough to take him all the way to New York. His mind full of happy thought and lulled by the unaccustomed motion, he soon fell asleep, and thought he had not been aboard more than ten minutes when the conductor shook him telling him he must get off as that train did not go farther.

Another long wait for the express, but in the middle of the afternoon, Chicago was reached. He was hungry by that time, though he had disposed of all his doughnuts, and his first thought was to find a place to get something to eat. This was soon accomplished, but he was sur-

prised that it cost so much, and concluded he could not stay there long if he were going to have money enough left to pay his way to New York. Then he started out to see the sights and wandered about thinking, if New York were greater than Chicago, it must be great indeed. After a couple of hours he sat down on a bench in one of the parks, and was soon joined by a decently dressed, fair-spoken lad of apparently his own age, who he thought he had seen several times before in the course of the afternoon. With the comraderie of youth, they were soon chatting familiarly, and the country boy, being glad of companionship, told all his plans, how much money he had which he thought would take him to New York, where he hoped to get a chance to cross the ocean. His companion showed much interest and said he had been thinking to do the same thing, but the ticket to New York would cost more money, but he thought he had enough and would lend him what was lacking for his ticket; that he knew a cheap place where they could sleep that night and they could take the morning train for New York.

Considering himself most fortunate in having found such a pleasant companion, they went together to a restaurant, his new friend paying for their frugal meal, after which he took him to a vaudeville performance, which seemed quite shocking to our country bred boy, who concluded he did not care to go again to such plays. Being quite exhausted by his long tramp the night before, the unaccustomed sights and sounds of the great city, he was glad to lie down without undressing on the hard couch where his companion had taken him, in a room of a house in a dark and evil-smelling alley, of which he had the key, the door of the room opening on the street--with his bundle of clothes for a pillow. When he wakened in the morning, it was to find himself alone--his bundle gone, also his pocket-book, one his mother had given him the Christmas before she died, which he had carefully placed there with all his money!

For a moment the lad was stunned with what had come to him. Alone in a great city with no money! Robbed by his pleasant, obliging com-

which he carefully wrapped in a piece of paper and put in his vest

panion he had thought himself so fortunate to find! He stood up and pressed his hands to his throbbing temples. The door was unlocked and he walked out. The tumble-down old house was dark and empty and the smells of the alley nauseated him, and he feared he might faint. The thought of what this condition might entail--probably to be found lying on the sidewalk and dragged off to the police station as a drunk --no that should not be! He hurried along until the air seemed purer, and asked of a passing fruit vender, the way to the railroad station. He thought he might earn a quarter or so by carrying suit cases and bundles for travellers as he had seen boys doing the day before--enough to pay for his breakfast at least. Then he would think what to do next. He must get to New Yorksomeway. This disastrous experience should not deter him from seeing that statue of Liberty of which he had dreamed so many years.

As he was in time to meet the incoming morning trains, was courteous and obliging, he reaped quite a harvest of nickles and dimes which he carefully wrapped in a piece of paper and put in his vest

pocket, buttoning his coat over it. When the rush had ceased, he had more than enough money to pay for a hearty breakfast of ham and eggs and rolls. He asked for a glass of milk when the waiter suggested coffee which he had never drank, but the milk was so unlike any of which he had ever tasted, that he concluded hereafter he would save his nickle and drink only water. He was learning that there was a difference between the city and the country in more ways than one. He made no acquaintances except that of "Uncle Ned", an old colored porter engaged about the depot. When he was a small boy his father once had a colored man work for him, to whom the child had became greatly attached, often leaving his trundle-bed to be found in the morning snuggled up in the black arms of the hired man. He thought Uncle Ned looked like this friend of his childhood of whom he had such affectionate remembrances, and despite his unlucky experience, he trusted the old negro, who took him at night to his neat little home nearby, where he was given a clean bed and made much of by its presid-

ing genius, Aunt Persis.

He stayed about the depot for ten days, uncle Ned putting many an odd job in his way which swelled his little earnings until he had more than enough money for a ticket to New York after supplying some underclothes which had gone in his bundle. Aunt Persis had given him a neat little pocket-book, and had put an inside pocket in his vest where he was instructed he must always keep his money. After much planning and consulting with his humble friends, he was ready for another start, and it was with a real heartache at leaving them that he said good by to the kindly old couple.

In course of time New York--clamoring, insistent, overwhelming New York--was reached. The boy had learned something--he thought he was not quite so green as to the ways of the world as when he left his father's roof, which seemed a long while before, though really it was hardly three weeks. He soon found his way to the wharves and watched with wide-open eyes the great liners coming and going and the

bewildering array of shipping. One day he was accosted by a man--one of those vampires of the docks who lie in wait for just such prey--who said he was a ship-broker, asking the lad if he was looking for a berth. On an affirmative reply being given, he was taken to an office, where after answering a few questions, he signed a contract for three months as seaman on the "Mary L. Troup"--an English tramp steamer about sailing for Bordeaux and Mediterranean ports, with a miscellaneous freight cargo. He was to receive forty dollars a month, and the so-called ship-broker was paid twenty dollars on the first month's wages to buy the sailor's kit, going with the lad to a near-by store where this sum was nearly all expended for what was deemed necessary clothing for such a voyage.

The next morning the ship left her dock with the happy boy a full-fledged sailor in appearance, aboard. It was early and he saw the Statue of Liberty holding her still lighted torch. He could scarcely believe that it had come true--that he really saw with his own eyes this wonderful thing which seemed to have been in his mind ever since he could remember.

He thought the officer who instructed him in his new duties as they steamed down the bay, was unnecessarily rough. He only wanted to know what they were and how to do them, then he would fulfill them to the very best of his ability. A stiff breeze was blowing when they got outside and the white caps were dancing in the morning sun--but what was this? He grew sick and faint and could hardly stand.--The "mal de mer" had him in its grip! Then the misery which followed! He was kicked and cuffed about like a dog--made to shovel coal in the stifling engine rooms until ~~it seemed~~ he thought his head would burst. The sea became rougher and rougher--storm followed storm--the old craft trembled and groaned and wrenched until it seemed she would be torn assunder. To walk the deck was an effort for experienced seaman and the poor sea-sick country lad was in great danger of being washed overboard in every attempt made to obey orders. He had a companion in misery--a German lad of about his own age, shipped under like conditions, who did find a watery grave on the third day out when a great wave

struck the ship. The cry of "Man overboard" was unheeded--and many times in the days that followed he envied his companion his undisturbed repose on the ocean bed.

After weeks of buffeting with unceasing storms, the steamer finally lurched through the choppy seas of the Bay of Biscay, the faint gleam of Cauderan light showing through the fog. Then, after a few hours more of misery, it entered the river Garonne and went up with the tide. Anchoring in mid-stream some miles below the city, the American boy was told he must leave the ship as he was only a nuisance aboard. On asking for the remainder of his month's wages, he was laughed and jeered at and told that he could not have his sailor's kit either. On his insisting that he should have his money, and that the kit was his, having been paid for out of his own money, which was his, he was seized by the burly captain and thrown overboard. As a number of small craft was about the ship, there was no danger of his drowning.

This was the tale heard in the consul's private office, that

bright September morning. The consul's wife wiped many a tear from her eyes as she listened to the pathetic story, told with great simplicity and evident truthfulness. As the boy had been fed, the next thing was to cloth him. He could wear the consul's shoes, but was lost in any other of his garments. When the office opened and the French clerk came up with the mail, wearing a new suit,--being about the size of the would-be sailor--was asked what he would take for the old clothes. On the situation being explained, he cheerfully donated them to the destitute boy.

For a week or more he stayed at the consulate, winning all hearts by his gentle helpful ways and gratitude for all that was done for him. He came in one day from a stroll on the quais, which despite all he had suffered on the stormy seas, seemed to hold great fascination for him. He was accompanied by the captain of one of the boats of the cod-fleet about sailing to "the Banks" for their fall catch, and asked the consul if he did not think he better go with this man, who wanted

a cabin boy. Perhaps they might run across a ship going to the United States. The captain spoke a little English and seemed kind-hearted and much interested in the boy and his desire to get home, answering all the consul's questions in a straightforward manly manner. As there seemed no other way, a reluctant consent was given. The next day the captain came to the consulate with papers to be signed and to pay the boy in the consul's presence, the agreed upon wages.

"Now, Monsieur le Consul, what does I owe for all dees--de big seals and de rubans?" the captain asked after the signing was done to an array of papers--quite unnecessary--but dear to ~~the~~ a Frenchman's heart.

"Oh, be kind to the boy, captain, and help him get a berth to Boston or New York, and when you come back bring me a fresh salted cod --and we'll call the matter square," was the laughing reply.

Weeks passed and the incident was quite forgotten, when one day the consul was called below to the public office, where was the cap-

tain, accompanied by two brawny sailors bearing between them on their shoulders, an immense cod-fish. After thanks and congratulations on the fine catch, the captain who seemed to have something on his mind, was asked up to the private office for a smoke. He was hardly seated-not waiting to light his cigar--when he said:

"I verra sorree, monsieur le consul--I bring ze feesh--ze b-e-e-g feesh--ze beggest feesh I ever catch,--mais--ze leetle poy--monsieur le consul,--I so regret--ze leetle poy--he stay behin'.--I could not bring heem--he die!--One day we out in ze b-e-eg storm--he get verra wet an' de cold--an' he get seeck wiz what you call--ze beeg word--'tis hard to spik--ze pneumony!--I get le medicin--I do all I can.--He say he go to see hees muzzer--dat she be gone an'lef' heem,— now he go to her.--I verra much sorree, monsieur le consul, mais in two day--he be dead!" The bronzed old sailor brushed the sleeve of his jacket across his eyes.--"He tell me he no Catholic,--but he die so quicck--I could not get ze priest.--I so verra regret, monsieur le

consul--but I put ze leetle cross to hees grave--an' I go see it when I am next time there. Monsieur le consul will 'scuse me--I bring ze feesh--ze be-e-eg feesh, but he see I could not bring ze leetle poy.--He die."

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(3000 words)

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