

FOR EVER.

"Oh, never kiss me; stand apart; My darling, come not near! Be dear for ever to my heart, But be not over dear!"

And while she spoke her cheek was flame, Her look was soft and wild; But when I kissed her, she became No stronger than a child.

Ah, love, what wilt thou then apart? Thy home is thus and here,— For ever dearer to my heart, But never over dear.

A GREAT COUNTERFEITER.

Now in Prison at Brooklyn, N. Y. for "Six Stretches."—His Own Story of Adventures in Shoving the Queer. New York Dispatch.

The most skillful engraver and the most eminent counterfeiter in the world, a man who has left the impress of his misdirected genius on the currency of America, of a half a dozen European countries, and even of Africa, is now an inmate of the Kings county penitentiary, undergoing a long term of imprisonment, or, as he himself puts it, "six stretches" (years), for attempting to issue spurious bills of the Bank of France. This monarch of the "shovers of the queer" is Carl Becker, born in Rhenish Prussia some forty years ago. He was apprenticed to the trade of an engraver early in life, and within two or three years his skill with a needle and a plate astounded veteran workmen. In Germany, while almost yet a youth, he was recognized as a leader in his art, and had his talents been turned to good account he would years ago have amassed a handsome competency. But Becker was not satisfied with the prospect of becoming rich by slow degrees and patient toil with head and hand. He became a counterfeiter, was arrested and served two or three short terms in jail in his native land. Thence he turned his attention to Italy; easily counterfeited the coarse paper money of that country, with the enormously depreciated currency again fell into the hands of the Philistines and was sent to jail in Tums. He escaped; went to Sicily, where he was rearrested and confined at Palermo. There he broke jail again, and came to the United States. It is claimed by those who ought to know that he has escaped from at least a half-dozen European prisons. In his adventurous career at the other side of the Atlantic he somehow managed to escape English prisons, which are claimed to be the strongest and best guarded in the world, and for the reason, no doubt, that he never attempted the difficult task of counterfeiting British bank notes.

After his arrival in the United States, Becker and his companion conceived a gigantic scheme to put money in their pockets at the expense of the Egyptian government; and it was afterwards carried out with partial success.

It was nothing less than to counterfeit the Turkish currency in circulation in the dominions of the Khedive.

The plates were prepared here and the trio sailed from New York to the Mediterranean. They made their headquarters in the city of Alexandria, and had already begun to flood the country with paper money, which was easily manufactured because of its coarse character, when they were captured. They were sentenced to a long term in the penitentiary at Constantinople, but all three escaped after a few months. They again returned to the United States and separated.

Nothing daunted by previous prison experience, Becker hatched a plan to counterfeit billets de banque on the bank of France, the government financial institution of that country. This was the most delicate of all the plots he had undertaken, because of the extremely fine nature of the bank paper and of the "water mark" made in the process of manufacture under government supervision. But Becker was equal to the occasion. He spent months and months perfecting his paper, and the writer saw a specimen of his work during his recent trial in Brooklyn, which was fully equal to the French bank paper.

Experts expressed their amazement at his skill. He completed the plate for one side of the note, having taken up his residence in an unfrequented suburb of the City of Churches. When this part of the job was finished he took a constable of East New York into his confidence, and to this man's custody the nearly completed plate was entrusted. Meanwhile Detectives Boland and Mooney, of this city, had somehow got on Becker's track. With Detective Edward Looney, of the Brooklyn police force, they made a raid on his residence in East New York. Becker was taken completely by surprise, and after a desperate resistance was safely lodged in Raymond street jail. The beautifully finished plate was found hidden between the leaves of the family Bible in the constable's house. The Messrs. Couderc brothers, the lawyers for the French government in this city, took up the case, and Becker was tried in the Court of Sessions of Brooklyn, before Judge Moore and a jury. The constable turned state's evidence, and the king of the counterfeiters was promptly convicted and sentenced to six years in the Kings county penitentiary, which he is now serving out. The point was raised during the trial by his counsel that the state had no jurisdiction in the case of attempted forgery on a bank of a foreign country and of course he could not be extradited by France for a crime against the French laws committed in the United States. Becker had evidently carefully studied out this legal difficulty and relied upon it to save him, as will be seen from what he himself says regarding his escape from the Constantinople jail. In fact, it has always been part of his plan to so conduct his crooked work that knotty law points can be raised in his behalf. An old statute, however, was found by District Attorney Catlin, of Kings county, under which Becker was indicted and successfully prosecuted. The evidence was damning, and Becker's only hope left him when he found that there was a law of which he was ignorant to meet his case. He took his sentence

philosophically, and was led from the court into the prison van outside smiling. During the trial a handsome middle-aged woman sat by his side. She was said to be his wife, and when the verdict of guilty was pronounced by the foreman and the Judge briefly gave the prisoner the full term of the law allowed, she broke down and sobbed hysterically. The story in the court-room was that she had been a performer in one of the variety theatres in this city, where Becker met her and made her his wife. Since he was sent to the penitentiary she visits him as often as Warden John Green allows, which is now seldom, by reason of Becker's attempt to escape.

Becker went to Crow Hill to serve out his six years last spring. He was apparently one of the quietest and best-behaved convicts in the prison, and was rapidly winning the confidence of his keeper, though Warden Green, knowing his record in European jails, kept a sharp eye on him. Within a few months Becker became intimate with two desperate burglars who were undergoing long sentences. The trio of worthies elaborated a plan of escape. Becker's wife was in the habit of visiting him constantly on Sunday and on week days during the dinner hour of the convicts. One day it was found that the key of a gate leading from the prison yard was missing. A search was made and the key was found in the ventilator of the cell occupied by one of the burglars in league with Becker, named Kelly. Becker it was found has taken an impression of other keys, and by the help of confederates outside everything was in readiness for a jail delivery of the three when the key of the yard gate was missed. Warden Green made up his mind at once that there was nothing for it but to put Becker in irons, which was promptly done. He was transferred to the first cell on the ground tier of the long-term prison, and he has since been almost directly under the eye of the keeper. The Warden also issued orders that he was only to be allowed to see his wife once every month and then in the presence of a keeper, when she visits the penitentiary he is obliged to stand by her side, Warden Green being determined that Becker should not be able to boast that he got away from the Kings county penitentiary.

The writer visited "the pen," as the criminal classes of the sister city call it, one day last week, and by the courtesy of Warden Green, saw this distinguished prisoner.

"You will find him in heavy irons," said the Warden; by way of preparation, "but if I didn't keep them on him I don't believe this fellow would, three feet away from the cell door and a keeper, spend six months in jail. He hasn't nerve enough to take desperate chances, but he beats all the other prisoners I ever saw, and I have seen a good many, so far as ingenuity is concerned. He is sharper than any steel trap, and while he is talking to you with an apparently innocent smile on his face, he is taking your measure by the inch."

Here Warden Green approached the first cell and said: "Here, Becker, here's a gentleman who wants to speak with you if you will speak with him."

The reporter heard a clinking of irons as he neared the cell door. The prisoner had just finished his midday meal and was taking a siesta after dinner. He rose apparently with some little difficulty from his bed and came to the cell door with that same innocent smile which the Warden described. If ever there was a counterfeit presentment of the smile of innocence, so perfect as to deceive the most expert judge of human character this was it, indeed, and Becker must be admitted to be an artist of the best school that teaches how to hide one's thoughts. His blue eyes fairly beamed with good nature, his rather thick lips puckered with humor, and his heavy, dull, Teutonic features lighted up with an expression which seemed to say: "What an outrageous absurdity it is to put irons on a harmless poor fellow like me. It's a little joke of the warden's, you know; but he will have his joke." This look of mild deprecation, as he put his plump hands between the bars of his cell to welcome his visitor, was simply indescribable. Looking at Becker closely, the writer saw, in a rapid glance, that around his waist was an iron belt, in the front of which there was a ring. To this ring two chains were fastened. Reaching down to each ankle, and around each ankle was another iron ring. Quick as the writer's glance, Becker caught it and followed it, and if possible his smile became still more beaming as he looked down at the insignia which marked him as the most distinguished inmate of the prison.

At the trial Becker weighed 220 pounds. To-day he looks as if he weighed 170. He is squat in figure, and decidedly Teutonic in appearance. The keen blue eye is the feature that would attract the attention of an observer in the rather coarse and sensual-looking face. No one would recognize in this cleanly-shorn convict of no particular age, with closely cropped hair and coarse raiment, the gentlemanly-looking man, about forty years old, with well-kept beard and mustache and elegant clothing, who sat in the court of general sessions last spring.

The writer remarked, by way of opening conversation, that Becker looked pretty well, all things considered.

"Oh, no, don't say that," said the convict, in a deprecatory tone. "I have lost all this," and he spread his hands out on his paunch. "I was out that way at my trial," and he described the segment of a circle in front of his stomach with his outstretched hands. "I have lost fifty pounds," he added, with the same imperturbable smile that would have delighted the heart of Mark Twain. "You are having rather a rough time of it?" said the writer.

"Yes," said Becker, smilingly, with a glance swift as lightning at Warden Green, who stood a little distance off in the corridor, so as not to embarrass the prisoner. "Yes, it is about time that I was through, isn't it? I have had it in the four quarters of the globe—in Europe, Asia, Africa and America. Well, I am through," he added, with a tinge of weariness in his voice. "When I get out of here, I mean to work for an honest living."

"How did you manage to strike Asia?" asked the writer.

"I was arrested for counterfeiting in Alexandria, Egypt, with two others. We were taken to Smyrna in Asia for trial. In Smyrna we were sentenced to do time in Constantinople in Europe, and now," said Becker, smilingly, "I am doing time in America. That covers the four quarters of the globe. I have heard that Alexandria has been destroyed by the British guns. It is a great pity. It was a beautiful city. I lived a little way off the Grand Square, which I hear has been completely ruined."

"Becker," said the writer, will you honestly tell me how you ever got away from the Constantinople jail? There are various stories about, and I would like to get the true version from your own lips."

"Well," said Becker, "the story was to the effect that we bribed the kitchen steward to let us go, but there is not a word of truth in that. I don't mind telling you how we got away. It can't do any harm now, and I am done with the business for good. There were four in all arrested at Alexandria and sent from Smyrna to Constantinople to do time. The fourth man had no more to do with it than you had. We three never saw him until we saw him at the trial in Smyrna. I was employed painting the inside of the prison, which is right in the heart of the city of Constantinople. My two comrades were employed around the store-house. One day I saw the pass key which the keeper laid down just by the door of my cell. I took an impression of it quick as a flash."

"With what?" asked the writer, in blank amazement.

"With a piece of soap, of course," said Becker, with a perfectly angelic smile. I had the soap nearly all the time, and I was only waiting for the opportunity. When I got the impression, there was no trouble in getting out into the yard afterward. I made the key myself, with a piece of strong iron wire. My two companions were notified, and they managed to secure some pieces of rope, about sixty or seventy feet in all. At night we got out into the yard with the pass-key. We broke into the clothes-house, and got three suits of clothing and three Turkish caps.

"With the end of the rope we got over the wall."

"How high was it?" inquired the writer.

"Well that wall," said Becker, planning at the stone wall which surrounds the Kings county penitentiary, one which cost the Brooklyn taxpayers so much, "is thirty feet high." This was said in a tone that made it evident to the writer that Mr. Becker had been "sizing up" the wall in his mind's eye, so to speak, with a possible view of future contingencies. "The wall of the Constantinople prison," he continued, "is ten feet higher than that. It is forty feet high."

"Well, but how did you get over?" asked the writer.

The most harmless of smiles played around the corners of Mr. Becker's mouth as he hesitated to give the secret away.

"Well," he said, after apparently making up his mind that the recital could do him no injury, "it was this way: There were embrasures or eyelets in the wall, about equal distance apart and about ten feet from the ground. One stood on a stooping position, while another got on his back to reach the embrasure. The third man threw the rope over the wall exactly in front of the embrasure. The man standing on the other's back reached through the hole for the rope and brought it inside."

"To the end brought in we fastened a bar of wood, which lay across the wall inside. Then, of course, we had leverage on the rope to climb to the top of the wall. The last man who came up fastened a cord about the bar of wood, and when we were all on top of the wall we pulled up the bar and made it fast to the end which we had climbed up. Thus, you see, we had the rope through the embrasure and fastened in the top of the wall. We had only to go down hand over hand on the outside and drop ten feet, when we were free. I tell you, when I struck the ground there was not half an inch of skin left on the palms of my hands. We ran for a first class cafe, which was open all night, in the city. There we ordered coffee and cigarettes, and stayed until morning."

"In fifteen minutes after our escape we heard the old fellow giving the alarm on the streets. I forgot to tell you that before leaving the prison we had prepared three paper lanterns, as anybody caught in the streets of Constantinople after dark without a lantern is arrested. All night long the city was scoured, but the keepers evidently came to the conclusion that we had confederates outside who had a boat ready for us on the Bosphorus, and who hurried us out of the city. Next morning, after daybreak, we made the best of our way into the country, and buried ourselves for about three months. We had plenty of change, and we got away one by one into Austria. Then we went to London without any concealment. I knew the Turks did not want to get us back, for our sentence would not stand in law. How can a man be tried in Asia for a crime committed in Africa, and sent to do time in Europe. It was all wrong. From London we came to the United States, and here I am," said Mr. Becker, with the same old smile, that would win the heart of the sharpest Wall street operator.

"Do you think you will serve out your full term?" asked the writer.

"Oh, I think I will get out next year," was the reply.

"In what way?" asked the writer.

"I think," said Mr. Becker somewhat sententiously, "the governor may interfere. When I get out of here I am going to devote all my energies to a new motion."

"A new what?" asked the writer.

"A new motion," said Mr. Becker. "A motive power. I think I can easily perfect it," he added with perfect gravity. As the writer was about to take his leave, Becker said with an unchangeable smile:

"I wish you would speak to the Warden about taking these things off," fingering his irons.

"I have to stand at work, and the weight gives me indigestion. They are destroying my health, I assure you."

Becker told his story with a slight German accent and, with apparent reserve. There was no motive for him

to lie, and the above may be accepted as the true story of his remarkable escape from Constantinople, the first, it is said, on the record, of that institution. Before leaving the prison the writer asked Warden Green if he thought there was the slightest chance that the governor would pardon Becker. The Warden replied, laughingly: "These fellows with years of prison life before them grasp at straws. In this respect they are children."

Playing 233 Degrees of Masonry on a Wife.

A middle-aged lady, with a black alpaca dress worn shiny at the elbows, and a cheap shawl, and a cheap bonnet, and hands puckered up and blue, as though she had just got her washing out, went into the office of a prominent Mason, a few mornings since, and took a chair. She wiped her nose and the perspiration from her face on a blue checkered apron, and when the Mason looked at her with an interested look, as though she was in trouble, she said:

"Are you the boss Mason?"

He blushed, told her he was a Mason, but not the highest in the land. She hesitated a moment, fingered the corner of her apron and curled it up like a boy speaking a piece in school and asked:

"Have you taken the whole two hundred and thirty-three degrees of Masonry?"

The man laughed, and told her there were only thirty-three degrees, and that he had only taken thirty-two. The other degree could only be taken by a very few who were recommended by the Grand Lodge, and they had to go to New York to get the thirty-third degree.

The lady studied a minute, unpinned the safety pin that held her shawl together, and put it in her mouth, took a long breath and said:

"Where does my husband get the other two hundred degrees then?"

The prominent Mason said he guessed her husband never got two hundred degrees, unless he had a degree factory. He said he didn't understand the lady.

"Does my husband have to set up with a corpse three nights a week?" she asked, her eyes flashing fire. "And do they keep a lot of sick Masons on tap for my husband to set up with the other three nights?"

The prominent Mason said he was thankful that few Masons died, and only occasionally was one sick enough to call for masonic assistance. "But why do you ask these questions, madame?" said the prominent Mason.

The woman picked the fringe of her shawl, hung her head down and said: "Well, my husband began to join the Masons about two years ago, and has been taking degrees or sitting up with people every night since. He has come home twice with the wrong clothes on, and when I asked him how it was, he said it was a secret he could not reveal under penalty of being shot with a cannon. All he would say was that he took a degree. I have kept a little track of it and I figure that he has taken 233 degrees, including the grand Sky Fugle degree, which he took the night he came home with his lip out, and his ear hanging by a piece of skin."

"Oh, madam," said the prominent Mason, "there is no Sky Fugle degree in Masonry. Your husband has deceived you."

"That's what I think," said she, as a baleful light appeared in her eye. "He said he was taking the Sky Fugle degree and fell through the skylight. I had him sewed up and he was ready for more degrees. After he had taken a hundred and fifty degrees, I told him I should think he would let up on it, and put some potatoes in the cellar for winter, but he said when a man once got started on the degrees he has to take them all, or he didn't amount to anything. Sometimes a brother Mason comes home along with him in the morning, and they talk about a full flush, and about their pat hands, and raising 'em out. One night when he was asleep I heard him whisper 'I raise you ten dollars,' and when I ask him what he meant, he said they had been raising a purse for a widow. Another time he raised up in bed after he had been asleep, and shouted: 'I stand Pat,' and when I asked what he meant he said he was ruined if he told it. He said he had spoken of the pass word, and if the brethren heard of it they would put him out of the way, even as Morgan was put out of the way. Mister, is 'I stand Pat' your pass word?"

The Mason told her it was not. That the words she had spoken was an expression used by men when playing draw poker, and he added that he didn't believe her husband was Mason at all, but that he had been lying to her all these years.

She sighed and said: "That's what I thought when he came home with a lot of ivory chips in his pocket. He said he used them at the lodge to vote on candidates, and that a white chip elects and a blue rejects a candidate. If you will look the matter up and see if he has joined the Masons I will be obliged to you. He says he has taken all the 233 degrees, and now the boys wants him to join the Knights of Pythias. I want to get out an injunction to prevent him from joining anything else until he can get some underclothes for the winter. I'll tell you what I will do. The next time he says anything about Sky Fugle degrees I will take a washboard and make him think that there is one degree in Masonry that he has skipped, and no good-by. You have comforted me greatly, and I will lay awake to-night till my husband comes from the lodge with his pat hand, and I will make them think he has forgot his ante."

The lady went out to buy some bar-soap, and the prominent Mason resumed his business with a feeling that we are not truly good, and there is cheating going on all around.—Milwaukee Sun.

Ismail, the ex-Khedive, is going to live in England. He has purchased, Caen Powers, Highgate, a luxurious mansion with twelve acres of ground, for \$450,000.

Arunan Huntington, who died recently at Brentford, Ontario, bequeathed \$200,000 to the state of Vermont, without directing how the munificent gift should be applied.

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