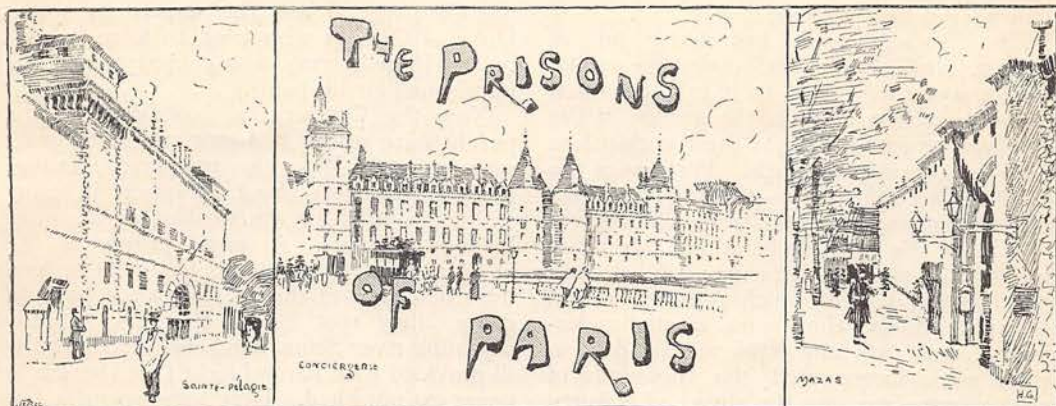


THE PRISONS OF PARIS

A NOVICE AT ST. LAZARE.

THERE are in all nine prisons in Paris—six principal, three secondary. In the first rank are the Depôt of the Préfecture, Mazas, La Santé, the two Roquettes, and St. Lazare; in the second are Sainte Pélagie, the Conciergerie, and the Cherche Midi. Every one of them has its own particular purpose, its special uses, although some of them are inter-dependent, with functions overlapping. I will deal with them all in turn—for convenience, working backward, taking the least important and disposing of them first.

The Cherche Midi—so-called after the street in which it stands, the "Seek South" Street—is a military prison only, for offenders under the military code. It is governed under the War Office by a major from the army; its warders are sergeants, its *régime* is military, and its inmates are treated as soldiers, not criminals. Sainte Pélagie is a very ancient edifice, in parts three hundred years old. It is called after that Sainte Pélagie whom readers of Kingsley will remember in "Hypatia," the dancer who was converted, lived an austerely pious life, and was eventually canonised. The prison was first intended as a female retreat, but it was filled with aristocrats during the Reign of Terror. To-day it is a common gaol for offenders serving short terms of a year or less. But it was and still remains the "literary" prison, the chosen place of durance of journalists who have offended against arbitrary press laws under the various despotisms that have forbidden plain speaking in France. It still receives a few editors and writers, but they are only minor offenders, with occasionally some politician gone wrong, even in outspoken Republican France. Time was when the Pavilion or isolated central building allotted to this class of prisoners was kept full, and many famous men found their way to it. The poet Beranger was once confined in Sainte Pélagie, so was Proudhon, and such men as Ranc, Yves Guyot, and Clemenceau.

In the old days a very free and easy discipline was maintained in the Pavilion. Its lodgers were allowed to see any number of friends, to give fêtes and parties inside, even to go out themselves without escort, but on strict parole, permitted to take an airing in the streets, pay visits, go to the theatre, all with the clear understanding that they came home to be locked up at the right time. This easy rule was much what obtained with us at the old Fleet debtors' prison. There were and are still debtors in Sainte Pélagie, but only those who will not pay judicial fines or damages.

The curious relaxations so long existing in this prison were withdrawn in 1889, mainly because they were abused. It was found that certain pernicious caricatures circulating in Paris had been prepared in Sainte Pélagie. About that time, too, a rather well-known painter imprisoned in this gaol created a laugh by asking leave to take away his cell door with him on release. He had painted a picture on the back of it which pleased him. It was in those days that the irrepressible spirits of these Bohemian inmates found a vent in the nicknames they gave their chambers. The "letter-box," "big and little Siberia,"

the "greater" and "the lesser tomb" are still remembered among these.

The Conciergerie is historically full of interest. It is some seven hundred years old, and its name was given to it in 1302, when a prison was first built in the garden of the *concierge*, or gate-keeper, of the King's palace in the *cité*, or centre of Paris. Portions of the ancient edifice still survive—three tall "pepper-box" towers and the noble façade on the river front over the Quai de l'Horloge. Some of its dungeons and *oubliettes* may still be seen; the noisome dens in which prisoners rotted in feudal times; the rooms mostly underground, and dark and fetid to this day, in which were incarcerated the thousands of victims immolated on the shrine of Liberty during the Revolution; Danton's cell, Robespierre's last resting-place, and, chief of all, the dungeon in which poor Marie Antoinette was imprisoned, and from which she walked straight to the guillotine holding her head so high, says a contemporary record, that she struck it against the low doorway. A later and less romantic occupant of the Conciergerie was Napoleon III., when, as Louis Napoleon, he had made his first abortive attempt to re-establish himself in France by landing with a few followers at Boulogne. A still more recent and in his way illustrious inmate of the Conciergerie was the impetuous young Duke of Orleans who tried to force himself in the French army as a conscript, and was imprisoned for his pains.

Now the Conciergerie has fallen from a purely state prison to lower and more gruesome usages. It is the temporary resting-place of prisoners about to appear in court and to be tried for the smallest or the most heinous offences. A small prison of the modern type with 76 cells has been wedged into the cellars of the ancient palace—a dark, damp, dirty spot below the level of the adjoining river Seine, barely ventilated, and so ill-provided with natural light that the gas is never extinguished. Here some spend a few hours only, some a whole month. The first are those summoned in petty police cases, many of them cabmen, for the rules govern cabmen more strictly in Paris than in London, and a part of this Conciergerie was called "the coachmen's quarter"; the second are murderers and great criminals whose heads are the stake in the judicial game, and who, if not acquitted, will either leave the court under sentence of death or of long expatriation. We shall come across these unfortunate wretches directly when dealing with La

"ITS LODGERS WERE ALLOWED . . . TO GIVE FÊTES" (*p.* 897).

Santé and La Grande Roquette. So narrow are the limits of this little prison that it is often necessary to lodge two or more accused persons in the same cell, with very corrupting results. This part of the Conciergerie is not only a place of passage for offenders, it is also a museum, a permanent receptacle for the various tools and weapons that have been employed in criminal affairs, articles which the French call *pièces à conviction*, and which have become evidence or have helped to prove the case. There is a very heterogeneous collection: revolvers, knives, life-preservers, "jemmies," centre-bits, and false keys—enough of the latter, it has been calculated, to open every lock in Paris. Some time since these keys, which are usually sold for old iron every six months, were allowed to accumulate for two or three years, when a weight of several tons (1,500 kilogrammes) was found heaped up in a corner. A dozen detective stories from real life might be manufactured from among these curious materials.

We come now to the larger prisons, those in greater request or fulfilling more serious ends. The criminal as he passes along his dolorous and misguided road begins at the Depôt of the Préfecture and finishes at the Grande Roquette. The first-named receives almost everyone who makes crime his profession, both as a recruit and afterwards as a veteran obstinately fixed in his bad courses. The shadow of the guillotine constantly broods over the latter, for the last penalty, the terrible crowning of a criminal career, is worked out in the dreary little square before the gates of the Grande Roquette. The whole business, of course, is transacted between these extremes.

The candidates for imprisonment, transportation, or the scaffold are brought to the depôt in vans which have made the rounds of the police stations. These vans are identical with our "Black Maria," only the French call them the "prefect's calèche," or the *panier à salade*, the salad basket, from the shaking a traveller gets, and which is akin to the flourish a good cook gives the lettuce to get rid of all moisture before dressing the salad. The collection is very varied, and includes all of whom the police have fallen foul during the previous night: poor vagrants and drunkards, lost children, waifs and strays of all sorts, and with them undoubted evil-doers either taken in the act or very strongly suspected of crime. I have seen the contents of a van decanted, so to speak, into the inner courtyard and pass one by one through a lane formed by police officers into the great hall where the particulars and description of each are taken, and they are roughly sorted out by sexes, ages, and obvious or external characteristics. It is a sad procession of rags and wretchedness, and suggests very strongly to the philosophic mind how closely poverty is associated with vice and crime. Very old men in the last stage of decrepitude and destitution; pale, sickly youths, whose evil countenances and impudent self-possession show that with them crime is no stigma, that they glory in their misdeeds; now and again a well-dressed well-to-do person who may be either a prosperous pickpocket or burglar in a good way of business. Yet the bulk of these are but commonplace offenders. The greater criminals, the hero of a *cause célèbre*, the murderer at last tracked down, the big thief or forger on a large scale, these are generally arrested by warrant (*mandat d'amener*, or "order to bring") and taken on at once to Mazas after a short interview with the "instructing judge." The depôt deals rather with the rank and file, the ragtag and bobtail of daily offenders whose lapses are more misfortunes or breaches of minor regulations than real crimes.

Only here and there among the rubbish lies a nugget. The police inspector who carries out a sort of preliminary examination sometimes comes across an old friend, an old convict, a *cheval de retour* (returned horse) who has escaped from "La Nouvelle," from New Caledonia, the far-off French penal settlement in the Antipodes, or someone very much wanted for a big affair. He has a quick eye and a portentous memory this inspector, and I have often admired his readiness, his nearly unerring instinct in fixing his man. But now the process of identification is greatly assisted by the famous Bertillon system which is constantly at work upstairs on the top floor of this very same building, under the personal supervision of the inventor, or rather discoverer of the strange fact that every individual human being can be ticketed by certain unalterable bodily measurements. "Bertillonage," as it is called, has already been so fully described that it is hardly necessary to do more than remind the reader that by the process various parts of the human frame are minutely measured and recorded on a card, which by an admirably ingenious method of classification is put by to be easily got at hereafter, if required. I have sat for hours with M. Bertillon in his large, well-lighted atelier (it looks like a great workshop) filled with a great crowd—newly-arrived prisoners from the depôt below, each in turn taking his place under the callipers or on the measuring stool, a dozen or more deft-fingered assistants, police officers, and prison warders, but all arrayed in a long white blouse and looking very much like marble masons in a sculptor's studio come, and go, busily employed

taking new measurements or making the searches among the card records. The latter, patiently accumulated for years, lie in cabinets within innumerable drawers and pigeon-holes so arranged that a search of two or three minutes suffices to bring to light the one that is required. Stupefaction, to say the least of it, sits on the face of the prisoner, who has been energetically declaring that he has never been in trouble before; that he is a man quite without criminal antecedents. He is quite taken aback when he is confronted with his own photograph, and told his real name. The measurements just taken are found to exactly correspond with those on a card already registered, and after that the most obstinate criminal surrenders at discretion. The system is never, or hardly ever at fault.

be made at the Préfecture. There is one little room set apart for the better dressed of the captures brought by Black Maria; this is called the "Salle des habits noirs," the room for decent coats, to which are sent the outwardly respectable; these favoured folk who have the privilege of being crowded to the number of thirty or forty in a very limited space are mostly clerks charged with fraud, seeming swells who are really adventurers,

THE *PANIER À SALADE* (*p.* 899).

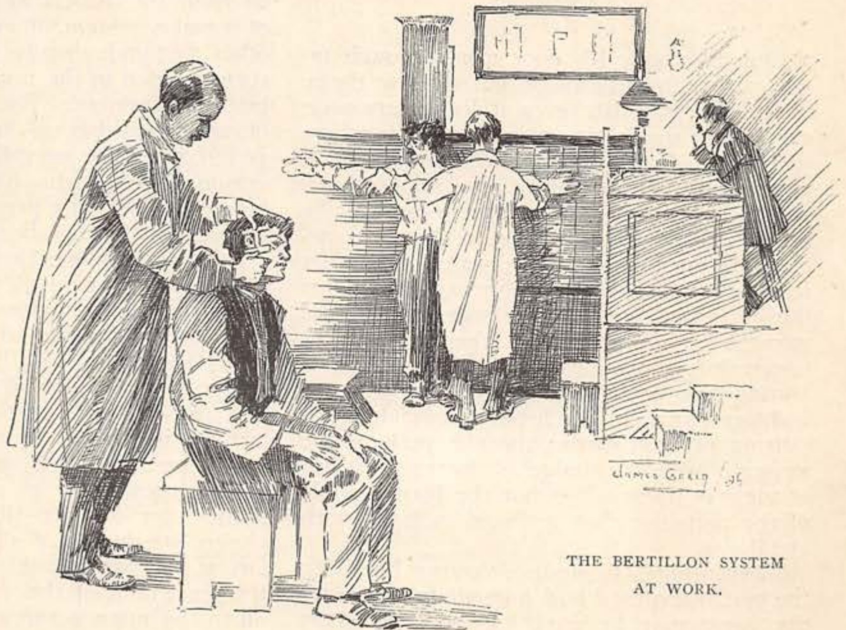
The prison premises at the Depôt of the Préfecture are very insufficient, and it is a blot on Paris that such a place continues to exist without improvement. Anyone almost might be obliged to pass through the ordeal of a night at the Depôt. Mistakes have been made before now by the French police; persons of undoubted respectability and perfect innocence, foreign visitors in particular, have been arrested, and when once in custody they cannot go free until all the formalities have been fulfilled. In France an accused person is deemed guilty until he proves himself innocent, and as this principle may press very hard at times better arrangements should

forgers, embezzlers, and the like. There are a few separate cells, seventy-six for males and as many for females, set apart for the top sawyers in crime or those brought in under a judge's order, but the rest of the day's "takings" are herded together sometimes to the number of two hundred or more in one great arched hall, with stone floors and wooden benches, a big, dark, dreary, and ill-ventilated chamber nearly always crammed with a dirty, ragged mass of wretched humanity. One or two narrow exercising yards give some relief, but in bad weather the hall is always full, and at night the prisoners lie closely packed on mattresses on the floor.

The moral contamination must be worse even than the physical; here where vice engrained meets with vice in embryo the only result can be terribly rapid deterioration. In no country has the theory of cellular separation for convicted prisoners been more warmly espoused than in France. Yet it is in the French capital that the seeds of such complete demoralisation are sown that they can never be eradicated by the most careful subsequent treatment. The mischief has been done at the Depôt; the horse has been stolen before the door is closed.

The prison system in Paris improves directly the Depôt is done with. An accused person must either be released within twenty-four hours or sent to Mazas, the "trial" prison, where all thus committed await appearance in court. The improvement means that he is now lodged alone in a small separate cell where his friends and his advocate may have access to him and he may prepare his defence. Only in certain cases he is kept "*au secret*," in absolute isolation—that is to say, seeing no one, speaking to no one; the hand of justice is thus heavy upon him, for fear he should escape conviction by planning some subterfuge or manufacturing an alibi and false evidence to support it. Whether "*au secret*" or not, he is continually harassed by the judge who "instructs" or prepares the indictment, and whose business it is, by repeated questionings, to elicit confessions or admissions of guilt. This, to English ideas, is taking an unfair advantage of him, but in France the system is carried still further, and it is the custom for the chief of the detective police to visit accused persons in Mazas once a week and talk matters over with them. I have assisted at some of these "Mondays in prison," as M. Macé, an old chief, calls them in his book on the subject. They appear quite friendly unofficial interviews; all sit cosily together, the prisoner and the police, cigarettes are produced, and the conversation is at first quite general. But woe to the prisoner who is not on his guard; a simple hint, a word dropped casually, a change of face when some doubtful detail in the affair is mentioned, will serve to give strength to mere suspicion and perhaps complete the case. At one time a still more indefensible practice obtained; if an accused person continued obstinately dumb, he was given a cell companion, a false friend, some other prisoner known in slang talk as the *mouton*, or *la musique*, whose *rôle* is that of the spy to worm himself into the other's confidence, obtain revelations, then betray him to the authorities. Occasionally a disguised detective has performed this dangerous and rather disgusting duty. Nowadays right-thinking French judges are found who disapprove of the practice, and it is seldom if ever tried. The double cells used for the purpose still exist, but the association of two prisoners is generally reserved for cases where one of them shows suicidal or other mania.

Mazas, which stands in the boulevard of the same name just opposite the Lyons railway station, is barely fifty years old, but its faded grey stone-work and the abundant masses of ivy which relieve its native ugliness would give it a much earlier date. It is a nearly exact copy of our Pentonville prison, the famous "model" erected in 1842 by Sir Joshua Jebb and now imitated all the world over. Six long galleries or halls radiate from a common centre like the spokes of a wheel from the felloe, and in each hall are two floors of cells of precisely the same pattern, with yellow-washed walls. One high-barred window, the



THE BERTILLON SYSTEM AT WORK.

regulation hammock, a cell stool on a short chain so as to be movable without making a weapon, water-can, wooden spoon, a few books, and a spittoon complete an inventory which is much the same in any modern prison. A peculiarity in Mazas and in many foreign prisons is the high altar raised above a glazed rotonda, the lower space being used as a general office and gazeebo while the topmost is the chapel. Every cell door in the galleries opens towards the centre, and by this arrangement the altar can be seen by each prisoner

M. BERTILLON.

sitting close up to his door ajar, although no one can see his fellows or be seen by them. This desire to isolate (even at divine service) is carried out also in the exercising yards, where each individual has a little slice of shut-in ground all to himself, and ranges up and down it like a bear in a pit. Loneliness must be severely felt by the inmates of Mazas, especially during the long night watches, from six to six, twelve dreary, possibly wakeful, hours during which conscience makes play, and worse still than remorse is the ever present uncertainty and anxiety as to his ultimate fate. During the daylight there are books to be had, employment in list-slipper making or putting pins on cards; there is perhaps the struggle with the judge of instruction, but at night a Mazas cell is not the least terrible of the penalties that go hand in hand with evil doing.

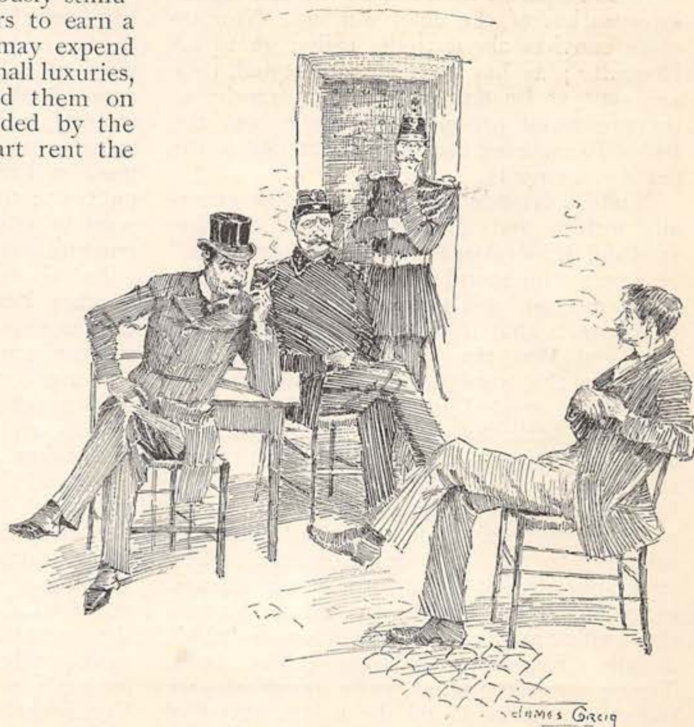
After Mazas the accused knows his fate; the best is acquittal and immediate freedom; the worst may be anything between short imprisonment and transportation or death. A short term must be undergone at La Santé prison, which also takes convicts awaiting transfer to the Antipodes. This prison, called after the out-of-the-way street of La Santé not far from the Observatory, is of comparatively recent construction; it was barely three years old when it lodged the few German soldiers taken prisoners during the siege of Paris, and when in the reign of the Commune General Chanzy found himself here under lock and key. It is a bright, spacious prison of pleasant aspect, with its courtyards full of trees and flowers, its cells large, well lighted, and with oak parquet floors, its workshops airy and extensive; for convenience in the transport of food and materials a small tramway circulates round the buildings; the lavatories and baths are ample, the ventilation and warming of the prison perfect.

Two distinct systems of prison treatment are in force at La Santé: that of strict cellular seclusion, of unbroken "separate" confinement; and that of daily labour in association, with a single cell for each individual in which he sleeps apart. The first is applied to offenders still deemed free from the criminal taint—those in their first sentence. It is also the rule with the convicts already mentioned. It is enforced with every precaution; yet it cannot be always depended upon to prevent intercommunication, for prisoners are as cunning as Red Indians and as skilled in reading signs that to ordinary eyes are invisible. The "separate" side of La Santé is altogether cut off from the associated, and the two classes of inmates seldom, if ever, come across each other, but undoubtedly news passes between them, carried in the mysterious ways known best to prisoners. The second system—that of associated labour—is the rule with the *récidivistes*, what we call in England habitual criminals, those who have been often in gaol before, and who are presumably beyond doing each other harm. But this free intercourse certainly encourages further crime, and many a fresh *coup* is organised by the acquaintances made at the work-tables of La Santé. They are very interesting, these great ateliers in which some five or six hundred prisoners are always busily employed and at work in which the neat-handed, ingenious Parisian is especially skilful, those *articles de Paris*, as they are known in trade, which include bonbon boxes, paper boxes of all kinds, paper lamp shades, fan cases in silk and lawn, buttons, chains, ornaments of all kinds. When I was last at La Santé, not a couple of years ago, the great bulk of the workmen were turned on to the manufacture of papier-maché dolls,

and I could follow out the whole process from the first preparation of the pulp to the completed puppet painted and dressed ready for sale in the streets of Paris. It was really delightful to watch the work grow as it passed from hand to hand, brought forward by groups each concentrated upon one particular job. One set was first shaping the figure roughly, the next giving symmetry to the limbs, the next applying the first coats of enamel, and so it went on through the various stages of painting the cheeks, mouths, eyebrows, adding the eyes, the hair, and finally the clothes, whether those of a Punchinello, pioupiou (soldier), or baby pure and simple. We were presented with specimens of each type of doll. Mine I put into my pocket, and later the same day found a strange use for them when visiting the prison nursery at the female prison of St. Lazare. Here there were dozens of little ones, whose only crime was to own a mother in trouble, and these mothers, many of them evil-visaged creatures to whom vice and misconduct were unhappily all but second nature, showed for a moment in a better light as they thanked us cordially for presenting our prison-made toys to their children. There was a quaint side to the situation too, for when grave officials pay a visit of inspection to a foreign prison they are not supposed to produce penny dolls out of their pockets.

Industry at La Santé is judiciously stimulated by permitting the prisoners to earn a small wage, part of which they may expend immediately in the purchase of small luxuries, the rest is put by to be paid them on discharge. The money is provided by the contractors who for the most part rent the prisoners' labour from the administration, and make what they can out of it. We do not apply the system in English prisons, believing that the inconvenience of allowing outsiders with no real official responsibility to have free access to the prison is not balanced by the profits it makes. But the *pécule*, as these prison earnings are called, is much valued by prisoners, and is no doubt a strong incentive to effort. Nor do we in England permit the inmates of our gaols actually doing time to add to their daily diet at their own expense. In France this is carried rather far. No doubt the regular allowance is somewhat meagre; the daily rations are limited to two meals, soup in the morning and soup in the afternoon, with a due proportion of dark coarse bread, and extras are in much request. There is a canteen attached to every prison and its list of prices is hung up in every cell alongside the rules and regulations and the prison almanack, prices that are not exactly cheap and that extend to many and various articles, such as garlic, matches, fresh and salt butter, Gruyère cheese, red herrings, onions, Spanish liquorice, cooked ham, Bologna sausage, potatoes, pepper, mustard, eggs, fresh and hard boiled.

Another prison in which considerable activity prevails is that of La Petite Roquette, the place of durance for the criminal youth of Paris, always a large contingent, for depravity is precocious in the gay city, but happily new methods, especially that of agricultural or reformatory colonies are being tried for all boys but the most perverse. A prison is the wrong place for the young, generally hardening and demoralising, while prison life with its cellular confinement, silence, the absence of fresh open air, is a cruel infliction. This prison of La Petite Roquette was first appropriated to child offenders in 1836. It can hold five hundred of them, but the number usually imprisoned seldom rises higher than a hundred and fifty, and it is in consequence a half-empty, gloomy wilderness, except where



A VISIT FROM THE DETECTIVE.

the labour of artificial flower making, recently introduced, is in progress. The buildings are grouped round a central tower which is used as a school or lecture room ; the boys sit each in a separate box, or stall, with only their little heads showing above, and here they get education and religious and moral instruction. It is a dull dreary existence, without much play or pastime, although a gymnastic course has now been added as well as various industrial employments.

Immediately opposite the Small is the Great Roquette, a prison famous in criminal records as the temporary home of the worst offenders. It is still the terminus, the last stage or resting place in a criminal career. For many years it was used for all convicts awaiting expatriation, and I visited it at that time. I remember well how I was deprived of my umbrella before entering the body of the prison, lest this harmless instrument might be deemed a weapon of offence and irritate the human savages herded together in the yards. They were no doubt a truculent-looking lot, and plainly proved the wisdom of the rule that prevents the unlimited association of the worst criminal elements. The danger of this was seen at this very prison in 1886, when a serious disturbance broke out in one of the workshops, and the governor of the prison would have been sacrificed to the fury of these desperate men but for the courageous intervention of the chief warder. Now no more convicts about to be exiled go to La Roquette ; as has been already stated, they are kept at La Santé until their transfer to the provincial prisons of Avignon and the Isle of Ré, whence they are despatched to the penal settlements.

Now La Grande Roquette would be generally forlorn and forsaken but for the few youthful *récidivistes* and some "short term" prisoners who spend their time there. The great interest still surrounding La Grande Roquette is that it contains the condemned cell, and that the guillotine, on the rare occasions that capital punishments are carried out, is erected just in front of the prison gates. A little before midnight on the eve of an execution the scaffolding and timbers, all painted a deep red, the knife which in falling severs the culprit's neck, the basket which is to receive his corpse, all these are brought to La Grande Roquette. The apparatus is set up with the most minute care, every joint is tested by the executioner, he tries the knife edge and the machinery by which it falls. Everything is ready before dawn. Troops arrive, mounted *gens d'armes* who are to keep the ground, and already the riffraff of the neighbourhood realising at last what is about to happen, collect around the sinister instrument now plainly showing against the morning sky.

It is not the custom in France to give a condemned convict long notice of his doom. He may be kept weeks, nay months after sentence, buoyed up by hope of a reprieve, always in ignorance of what will befall him, or when. He spends this period of suspense in a large cell guarded by warders, and treated with much consideration. He is not now, as was once the rule, kept in a strait jacket, unless he is violent and intractable. He is continually visited by the *aumônier* or chaplain of the prison, and he may converse freely with the attendants, who never leave him night or day, may play chess or draughts or cards with them, he may have any quantity of library books, and many in this dread situation are voracious readers, devouring from choice novels of adventure ; he eats heartily, anything almost that he fancies, and he generally sleeps long and soundly to the very last. This last moment arrives when the head of the detective police accompanies the priest and the governor into the condemned cell, and one of them, the last named usually, wakes the still sleeping convict with the ominous words : "Courage, you must get up, it is for to-day." The priest adds a few words of consolation, and the executioner proceeds to the "toilette," the preparation for the scaffold, the cropping of hair, and the adjustment of certain straps and thongs to prevent a struggle at the supreme moment. Little time is lost between this dread awakening and the end, the leap into eternity. There are many painful, even cruel features in the carrying out of capital punishment in France, but its abruptness and the publicity, the permitting of heartless sightseers to witness the death-throes of a fellow creature, are the worst.

La Grande Roquette was the theatre of another but illegal execution during the Commune, and the memory of that official murder is carefully preserved within the prison. At one corner of the garden within the walls is a marble slab, always surrounded by flowers and evergreens, on which a simple inscription asks "respect for the place that witnessed the death of the noble and sainted victims of the 24th May, 1871." These were the Archbishop of Paris, Darboy, and the other hostages held by the Communists, and who were shot ruthlessly here within the walls of La Grande Roquette. It was done at the instigation of Raoul Rigault, one of the most profligate and reckless of the Communist leaders, just when the French troops from Versailles had nearly recovered Paris. The archbishop fearlessly addressed his murderers,

promising them pardon for their crime, but he was silenced by rude and profane abuse. All met their fate exhibiting great calmness and courage. After death the bodies were thrown into the common ditch at the Père la Chaise burial ground, but later, being recovered, they were laid in the Nôtre Dame Cathedral after an imposing funeral service.

Only one prison remains to be described, Saint Lazare, the gaol for women of all classes and categories, young and old, the novice and the hardened offender, those awaiting trial, those sentenced, and those who, leading depraved lives, come under the strict administrative laws of Paris. Great complaints were at one time made, and justly, against the indiscriminate herding together of such utterly diverse elements, with the inevitable result that the purest and most innocent left Saint Lazare after only a short stay as vicious and corrupt as the most abandoned of her sex. It was once said that every girl who passed those gates was lost utterly and for ever. But this deep reproach has been to some extent removed. Great and laudable efforts have been made to separate the classes ; a number of "sides" or divisions have been created, so the new hands no longer mix freely with the old. All still have the same chapel, but the unconvicted exercise apart from the convicted. There are different hospitals for them, and if the number of cells is still few the washhouse and the workshops are used only by the criminals.

Young girls sent to prison by parents who find them unmanageable are not now received at St. Lazare, but they go to what was once called the "coachmen's quarter" in the Conciergerie ; short-termed women are sent to the central prison at Doullens ; the females accused are ere long to be retained in an improved part of the Depôt of the Préfecture. The great difficulty with St. Lazare has been the utterly unsuitable character of the buildings for the purpose it has served so long. It is an ancient worn-out edifice which might have done for a convent, but as a prison it is detestable. With its rambling courtyards, dark, irregular buildings, wide wooden staircases, endless corridors and passages, high roofs and garret rooms, it is the very opposite of the modern prison so formal, so spick and span, yet so stiffly plain and unpicturesque. Its lofty walls bear the dates 1681 and 1682, and the present chapel, built on the very site of the oratory of St. Vincent de Paul, tells of the time when that early philanthropist inculcated the care of prisoners upon his disciples and followers. St. Lazare, in spite of the unsatisfactory provision it affords, has been the scene of many meritorious efforts at reclamation. From the time when our estimable fellow countrywoman Mrs. Fry first came to Paris and organised a mission of combined Protestants and Catholics to St. Lazare, that prison has been constantly visited by pious and charitable ladies of all persuasions. The prison itself, like most female

THE CONDEMNED CELL.

prisons in France, is under the supervision of nuns, the Sisters of Mary-Joseph, who carry out all the discipline and control. What their troublesome charges think of them may be read in an inscription in a prison cell :—"The Sisters are always good to us, even when we do them harm."

Great changes and improvements are contemplated and already started in the prisons of Paris. The most important is the building of a large and imposing edifice, which will take, when completed, nearly all the inmates of Mazas, La Roquette, and St. Lazare. The land has been purchased on the banks of the Seine, some way out of the city, and the prison is to be built by prison labour, very much on the same lines that our Wormwood Scrubbs prison was constructed on the outskirts of London.

ARTHUR GRIFFITHS.