

PARLEY THE PORTER,
AN
ALLEGORY:

SHOWING HOW ROBBERS WITHOUT CAN NEVER GET INTO AN
HOUSE UNLESS THERE ARE TRAITORS WITHIN.



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PARLEY THE PORTER.

THERE was once a certain gentleman who had a house or castle situated in the midst of a great wilderness, but inclosed in a garden. Now there was a band of robbers in the wilderness who had a great mind to plunder and destroy the castle, but they had not succeeded in their endeavours, because the master had given strict orders to "watch without ceasing." To quicken their vigilance, he used to tell them that their care would soon have an end; that though the nights they had to watch were dark and stormy, yet they were but few; the period of resistance was short, that of rest, eternal.

The robbers however, attacked the castle in various ways. They tried at every avenue: watched to take advantage of every careless moment; looked for an open door or a neglected window. But though they often made the bolts shake, and the windows rattle, they could never greatly hurt the house, much less get into it. Do you know the reason? It was because the servants were never off their guard. They heard the noise plain enough, and used to be not a little frightened, for they were aware both of the strength and perseverance of the enemies. But what seemed rather odd, to some of these servants, the gentleman used to tell them, that while they continued to be afraid, they would be safe; and it passed into a sort of pro-

verb in that family, 'happy is he that feareth always.' Some of the servants however thought this a contradiction.

One day when the master was going from home, he called his servants altogether, and spoke to them as follows: 'I will not repeat to you the directions I have so often given you; they are all written down in "The Book of Laws," of which every one of you have a copy. Remember, it is a very short time that you are to remain in this castle: you will soon remove to my more settled habitation, to a more durable house, not made with hands. As those houses are never exposed to any attack, so they never stand in need of any repair, for that country is never infested by any sons of violence. Here you are servants, there you will be princes. But mark my words, and you will find the same truth in "The book of my Laws," whether you will ever attain to THAT House, will depend on the manner in which you defend yourselves in THIS. A stout vigilance for a short time will secure you certain happiness for ever. But every thing depends on your present exertions. Don't complain and take advantage of my absence, and call me a hard master, and grumble that you are placed in the midst of an howling wilderness without peace or security. Say not, that you are exposed to temptations without any power to resist them. You have some difficulties, it is true, but you have many helps and many comforts to make this house tolerable, even before you get to the other. Your's is not a hard service, and if it were, 'the time is short.' You have arms if you will use them, and doors if you will bar them, and strength if you will use it. I would defy all the attacks of the robbers without, if I could depend

on the fidelity of the people within. If the thieves ever get in and destroy the house, it must be by the connivance of one of the family. For it is a standing law of this castle, that mere outward attack can never destroy it, if there be no traitor within. You will stand or fall as you observe this rule. If you are finally happy, it will be by my grace and favour; if you are ruined it will be your own fault."

When the gentleman had done speaking, every servant repeated his assurance of attachment and firm allegiance to his master. But among them all, not one was so vehement and loud in his professions as old Parley the porter. Parley indeed, it was well known was always talking, which exposed him to no small danger; for as he was the foremost to promise, so he was the slackest to perform. And to speak the truth, though he was a civil spoken fellow, his master was more afraid of him, with all his professions, than he was of the rest who protested less. He knew that Parley was vain, credulous, and self-sufficient; and he always apprehended more danger from Parley's impertinence, curiosity, and love of novelty, than even from the stronger vices of some of his other servants. The rest, indeed, seldom got into any scrape of which Parley was not the cause in some shape or other.

I am sorry to be obliged to confess, that though Parley was allowed every refreshment, and all the needful rest which the nature of his place permitted, yet he thought it very hard to be forced to be so constantly on duty. "Nothing but watching," said Parley, "I have to be sure many pleasures and meat sufficient; and plenty of chat in virtue of my office, and I pick up a good deal of news

of the comers and goers by day, but it is hard that at night I must watch as narrowly as a house dog, and yet let in no company without orders, only because there is said to be a few straggling robbers here in the wilderness, with whom my master does not care to let us be acquainted. He pretends to make us vigilant through fear of the robbers, but I suspect it is only to make us mope alone. A merry companion and a mug of beer, would make the night pass cheerily." Parley, however, kept all these thoughts to himself or uttered them only when no one heard, for talk he must. He began to listen to the nightly whistling of the robbers under the windows with rather less alarm than formerly, and was sometimes so tired of watching, that he thought it was even better to run the risk of being robbed once, than to live always in the fear of robbers.

There were certain bounds in which the gentleman allowed his servants to walk and divert themselves at all proper seasons. A pleasant garden surrounded the castle, and a thick hedge separated this garden from the wilderness, which was infested by the robbers, in which they were permitted to amuse themselves. The master advised them always to keep within these bounds. "While you observe this rule (said he) you will be safe and well; and you will consult your own safety, as well as shew your love to me, by not venturing ever to the extremity of your bounds: he who goes as far as he dares, always shews a wish to go farther than he ought, and commonly does so.

It was remarkable, that the nearer these servants kept to the castle, and the farther from the hedge, the more ugly the wilderness appeared. — And the nearer they approached the forbidden

bounds, their own home appeared more dull, and the wilderness more delightful. And this the master knew when he gave his orders; for he never either did or said any thing without a good reason. And when his servants sometimes desired an explanation of the reason, he used to tell them they would understand it when they came to the other house: for it was one of the pleasures of that house that would explain all the mysteries of this, and any little obscurities in the master's conduct would be then quite plain.

Parley was the first who promised to keep clear of the 'hedge,' and yet was often seen looking as near as he durst. One day he ventured close up to the hedge, put two or three stones one on another, and tried to peep over. He saw one of the robbers strolling as near as he could be on the forbidden side. This man's name was Mr. Flatterwell, a smooth civil man, 'whose words were softer than butter, having war in his heart.' He made several low bows to Parley.

Now Parley knew so little of the world, that he actually concluded all robbers must have an ugly look which should frighten you at once, and coarse brutal manners, which would, at first sight, shew they were enemies. He thought like a poor ignorant fellow, as he was, that this mild specious person could never be one of the band.—Flatterwell accosted Parley with the utmost civility, which put him quite off his guard, for Parley had no notion that he could be an enemy who was so soft and civil. For an open foe he would have been prepared. Parley, however, after a little discourse drew this conclusion, that either Mr. Flatterwell could not be one of the gang, or that if he was, the robbers themselves could not be such

monsters as his master had described, and therefore it was a folly to be afraid of them.

Flatterwell began, like a true adept in his art, by lulling all Parley's suspicions asleep, and instead of openly abusing his master, which would have opened Parley's eyes at once, he pretended rather to commend him in a general way, as a person who meant well himself, but was too apt to suspect others. To this Parley assented. The other then ventured to hint by degrees, that though the gentleman might be a good master in the main, yet he must say he was a little strict, and a little stingy and not a little censorious. That he was blamed by the 'Gentlemen in the Wilderness,' for shutting his house against good company, and his servants were laughed at by people of spirit for submitting to the gloomy life of the castle, and the insipid pleasures of the garden, instead of ranging in the wilderness at large.

"It is true enough," said Parley, who was generally of the opinion of the person he was talking with, "my master is rather harsh and close. But to own the truth, all the barring, and locking, and bolting is to keep out a set of gentlemen, who he assures us are Robbers, and who are waiting for an opportunity to destroy us. I hope no offence, Sir, but by your livery I suspect you, Sir, are one of the gang he is so much afraid of."

Flatterwell. Afraid of me? Impossible, dear Mr. Parley. You see I do not look like an enemy; I am unarmed, what harm can a plain man like me do?

Parley. Why that is true enough. Yet my master says, that if we were once to let you into the house, we should be ruined soul and body.

Flatterwell. I am sorry, Mr. Parley, to hear so sensible a man as you are so deceived. This is mere prejudice. He knows we are cheerful entertaining people, foes to gloom and superstition, and therefore he is so morose, he will not let you get acquainted with us.

Parley. Well; he says, you are a band of thieves, gamblers, murderers, drunkards, and atheists.

Flatterwell. Don't believe him, the worst we should do, perhaps, is, we might drink a friendly glass with you to your master's health, or play an innocent game of cards just to keep you awake, or sing a cheerful song with the maids; now is there any harm in all this?

Parley. Not the least in the world. And I begin to think there is not a word of truth in all my master says.

Flatterwell. The more you know us, the more you will like us. But I wish there was not this ugly edge between us. I have a great deal to say, and I am afraid of being overhead.

Parley was now just going to give a spring over the hedge, but checked himself, saying, "I dare not come on your side, there are people about and every thing is carried to my master. Flatterwell saw by this, that his new friend was kept on his own side of the hedge by fear, rather than by principle, and from that moment he made sure of him.—
 "Dear Mr. Parley, (said he) if you will allow me the honor of a little conversation with you, I will call under the window of your lodge this evening. I have something to tell you greatly to your advantage. I admire you exceedingly. I long for your friendship; our whole brotherhood is ambitious of being known to so amiable a person."
 —"O dear," said Parley, "I shall be afraid of

talking to you at night. It is so against my master's orders. But did you say you had something to tell me to my advantage?"

Flatterwell. Yes, I can point out to you how you may be a richer, a merrier, and a happier man. If you will admit me to night under the window, I will convince you that 'tis prejudice and not wisdom which makes your master bar his door against us; I will convince you that the mischief of a *robber*, as your master scurrilously calls us is only in the name, that we are your true friends, and only mean to promote your happiness.

"Don't say *we*" said Parley, "pray come alone. I would not see the rest of the gang for the world, but I think there can be no great harm in talking to you through the bars if you came alone; but I am determined not to let you in. Yet I can't say but I wish to know what you can tell me so much to my advantage; indeed if it is for my good, I ought to know it.

Flatterwell. (*Going out, turns back.*) Dear Mr. Parley, there is one thing I had forgot. I cannot get over the hedge at night without assistance. You know there is a secret in the nature of that hedge; you in the house may get over to us in the wilderness of your own accord, but we cannot get to your side by our own strength. You must look about to see where the hedge is thinnest, and then set to work to clear away here and there a little bough for me, it won't be missed, and if there is but the smallest hole made on your side, those on ours can get through; otherwise, we do but labour in vain. To this Parley made some objection through the fear of being seen. *Flatterwell* replied, that the smallest hole from within would be sufficient for he could work his own

way. "Well, (said Parley) I will consider of it. To be sure I shall even then be equally safe in the castle, as I shall have all the bolts, bars, and locks between us, so that it will make but little difference."

"Certainly not," said Flatterwell, who knew it would make all the difference in the world. So they parted with mutual protestations of regard.—Parley went home charmed with his new friend.—His eyes were now clearly opened as to his master's prejudice against the Robbers, and he was convinced there was more in the name than in the thing. "But, (said he) though Mr. Flatterwell is certainly an agreeable companion, he may not be so safe an inmate. There can, however, be no harm in talking at a distance, and I certainly won't let him in."

Parley in the course of the day, did not forget his promise to thin the hedge of separation a little. At first he only tore off a handful of leaves, then a little sprig, then he broke away a bough or two, It was observable, the larger the breach became, the worse he began to think of his master, and the better of himself. Every peep he took through the broken hedge, increased his desire to get out into the wilderness, and made the thoughts of the castle more irksome to him.

He was continually repeating to himself, "I wonder what Mr. Flatterwell can have to say so much to my advantage? I see he does not wish to hurt my master; he only wishes to serve me." As the hour of meeting, however, drew near, the master's orders now and then came across Parley's thoughts. So to divert them he took THE BOOK. He happened to open it at these words, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." For a mo-

ment his heart failed him. "If this admonition should be sent on purpose?" said he but no, 'tis a bugbear. My master told me, that if I went to the bounds I should get over the hedge. Now I went to the utmost limits, and did not get over." Here conscience put in. "Yes but it was because you were watched."—"I am sure, (continued Parley,) one may always stop were one will, and this is only a trick of my master's to spoil sport. So I will even hear what Mr. Flatterwell has to say so much to my advantage. I am not obliged to follow his councils, but there can be no harm in hearing them.

Flatterwell prevailed on the rest of the robbers to make no public attack on the castle that night.— "My brethren, (said he) you now and then fail in your schemes, because you are for violent beginnings, while my soothing insinuating measures hardly ever miss. You come blustering and roaring, and frighten people, and set them on their guard. You inspire them with terror of you. while my whole scheme is to make them think well of *themselves* and ill of their master. If I once get them to entertain hard thoughts of him, and high thoughts of themselves, my business is done, and they fall plump into my snares. So let this delicate affair alone to me. Parley is a softly fellow: he must not be frightened, but cajoled. He is the very sort of man to succeed with; and worth a hundred of your sturdy sensible fellows. With them we want strong arguments, and strong temptations; but with such fellows as Parley, in whom vanity and sensuality are the leading qualities (as, let me tell you, is the case with far the greater part) flattery, and a promise of ease and pleasure, will do more than your whole battle ar-

ray. If you will let me manage, I will get you all into the castle before midnight."

At night the castle was barricadoed as usual, and no one had observed the hole which Parley had made in the hedge. This oversight arose that night from the servants neglecting one of the master's standing orders---to make a nightly 'examination' of the state of the castle. The neglect did not proceed so much from wilful disobedience, as from having passed the evening in sloth and diversion, which often amounts to nearly the same.

As all was very chearful within, so all was very quiet without. And before they went to bed, some of the servants observed to the rest, that as they heard no robbers that night, they thought they might soon begin to remit something of their diligence in bolting and barring. That all this fastening and locking was very troublesome, and they hoped the danger was now pretty well over. It was rather remarkable, that they never made these sort of observations, but after an evening of some excess, and when they had neglected their private business with their master. All, however, except Parley went quietly to bed, and seemed to feel uncommon security.

Parley crept down to his lodge. He had half a mind to go to bed too. Yet he was not willing to disappoint Mr. Flatterwell. So civil a gentleman. To be sure, he *might* have bad designs. Yet what right had he to suspect any body who made such professions and who was so very civil. Besides, 'It is something for my advantage, (added Parley) I will not open the door, that is certain, but as he is to come alone, he can do me no harm through the bars of the windows. And he will think I am a coward if I don't keep my word; no, I will let him

see that I am not afraid of my own strength; I will shew him, I can go what length I please, and stop short when I please.' Had Flatterwell heard this boastful speech, he would have been quite sure of his man.

About eleven, Parley heard the signal agreed upon. It was so gentle as to cause little alarm—So much the worse. Flatterwell never frightened any one, and therefore seldom failed of any one. Parley stole softly down, planted himself at his little window, opened the casement, and spied his new friend. It was pale star light. Parley was a little frightened, for he thought he perceived one or two persons behind Flatterwell; but the other assured him it was only his own shadow, which his fears had magnified into a company. "Though I assure you, (said he) I have not a friend but what is as harmless as myself."

They now entered into earnest discourse in which Flatterwell shewed himself a deep politician. He skilfully mixed up in his conversation, a proper proportion of praise on the pleasures of the wilderness, of compliments to Parley, of ridicule on his master, and of abusive sneers on the book in which the master's laws were written. Against this last he had always a particular spite, for he considered it as the grand instrument by which the master maintained his servants in allegiance, and when they could once be brought to sneer at the Book, there was an end of submission to the master. Parley had not penetration enough to see his drift. "As to the Book, Mr. Flatterwell, (said he) I do not know whether it be true or false, I rather neglect than disbelieve it. I am forced indeed to hear it read once a week, but I never look into it myself if I can help it."—"Excellent, (said Flat-

terwell to himself, that is just the same thing— This is safe ground for me. For whether a man does not believe in the Book, or does not attend to it, it comes pretty much to the same, and I generally get him at last.”

“Why cannot we be a little nearer, Mr. Parley, (said Flatterwell) I am afraid of being overheard by some of your master’s spies. The window from which you speak is so high; I wish you would come down to the door.”—“Well, said Parley) I see no great harm in that. There is a little wicket in the door through which we can converse with more ease and equal safety. The same fastenings will be still between us. So down he went, but not without a degree of fear and trembling.

The little wicket being now opened, and Flatterwell standing close on the outside of the door, they conversed with great ease. “Mr. Parley,” said Flatterwell, “I should not have pressed you so much to admit me into the castle, but out of pure disinterested regard to your own happiness, I shall get nothing by it, but I cannot bear to think that a person so wise and amiable, should be shut up in this gloomy dungeon, under a hard master, and a slave to the unreasonable tyranny of his ‘Book of Laws.’ If you admit me, you need have no more waking, no more watching.” Here Parley involuntarily slipped back the bolt of the door. “To convince you of my true love,” continued Flatterwell, “I have brought a bottle of the most delicious wine that grows in the wilderness. You shall taste it, but you must put a glass through the wicket to receive it, for it is a singular property in this wine, that we of the wilderness cannot succeed in conveying it to you of the castle, without your hold out a vessel to receive it.”—“O, here is a

glass," said Parley, holding out a large goblet, which he always kept ready to be filled by any chance comer. The other immediately poured into the capacious goblet, a large draught of that delicious intoxicating liquor with which the family of the Flatterwell's have for near 6000 years gained the hearts and destroyed the souls of all the inhabitants of the castle, whenever they have been able to prevail on them to hold out a hand to receive it. This the wise master of the castle well knew would be the case, for he knew what was in men, he knew their propensity to receive the delicious poison of the Flatterwell's, and it was for this reason that he gave them 'the Book of his Laws,' and planted the edge, and invented the bolts, and doubled the locks.

As soon as poor Parley had swallowed the fatal draught it acted like enchantment. He at once lost all power of resistance. He had no sense of fear left. He despised his own safety, forgot his master, lost all sight of the house in the other country, and reached out for another draught as eagerly as Flatterwell held out the bottle to administer it. "What a fool have I been," said Parley; "to deny myself so long."—"Will you now let me in?" said Flatterwell. "Aye, that I will," said the deluded Parley. Though the train was now increased to near a hundred robbers, yet so intoxicated was Parley that he did not see one of them except his new friend. Parley eagerly pulled down the bars, drew back the bolts, and forced open the locks, thinking he could never let in his friend soon enough. He had, however, just presence of mind to say, "My dear friend, I hope you are alone." Flatterwell swore he was—Parley opened the door—in rushed, not Flatterwell only, but the

whole banditti, who always lurk behind in train.—
The moment they had got sure possession, Flatterwell changed his soft tone, and cried out in a voice of thunder, “Down with the castle. Kill, burn and destroy.”

Rapine, murder, and conflagration, by turns took place. Parley was the very first whom they attacked. He was overpowered with wounds. As he fell he cried out, ‘O my master, I die a victim to my unbelief in thee, and to my own vanity and imprudence. O that the guardians of all other castles would hear me with my dying breath repeat my master’s admonition, that “All attacks from without will not destroy unless there is some confederate within.” O that the keepers of all other castles would learn from my ruin, that he who parleys with temptation is already undone. That he who allows himself to go to the very bounds, will soon jump over the hedge; that he who talks out of the window with the enemy, will soon open the door to him; that he who holds out his hand for the cup of sinful flattery, loses all power of resisting; that when he opens the door to one sin, all the rest fly in upon him, and the man perishes as I now do.”

THE END.

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