

The Grateful Prisoner

In 1902 in the French West Indies Mr. Cyparis was in prison awaiting trial for drunkenness. He was detained longer than he expected, was neglected, and was left without food and water. Yet when he was released, he was grateful to have been in prison. Why should this be so?

(This is a true story)

Clues

He did not meet someone or learn something in prison.

He was not better off when he left prison than when he went entered it.

He was not cured of some disease or illness.

His offense is not relevant.

He did not enjoy being in prison.

He avoided something by being in prison.

Solution

Monsieur M. Cyparis was the sole survivor, out of 30,000 people, of the volcanic eruption of Mont Pelee, which destroyed St. Pierre, capital of Martinique in the West Indies on May 8th, 1902. He had been locked in a strong underground jail cell. All the other people in this once-prosperous town were killed by lava, fire, or poisonous gases.