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THE LIFE OF

JUDGE JEFFREYS

WITH THREE PORTRAITS

AND A FACSIMILE

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

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STUDIES OF FRENCH CRIMINALS
OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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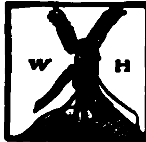
STUDIES OF
FRENCH CRIMINALS
OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

BY

H. B. IRVING

AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE OF JUDGE JEFFREYS"



LONDON
WILLIAM HEINEMANN
1901

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PREFACE

"The annals of criminal jurisprudence," wrote Edmund Burke, "exhibit human nature in a variety of positions, at once the most striking, interesting, and affecting. They present tragedies of real life, often heightened in their effect by the grossness of the injustice, and the malignity of the prejudices which accompanied them. At the same time, real culprits, as original characters, stand forward on the canvas of humanity as prominent objects for our special study."

The last sentence in this passage applies directly to the cases set out in this volume, which have been selected from the French criminal records of the nineteenth century. They are studies of real culprits, whose guilt is, in all but one instance, beyond the suspicion of a doubt. As studies of character, and as examples of the administration of criminal justice in France, they may be of some interest or value to those who look to the human document for specimens of human character as it actually is, or for suggestions on which to build some work of fiction.

The study of the criminal on the Continent has in recent years attained to some dimensions, under the style

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of Criminal Anthropology. But the results of this particular science have been disappointing in the extreme. The attempt to connect, by a process of atavism, the criminal with the savage, has broken down for want of any sufficient evidence to establish a real similarity between the two. As Mr. Goldwin Smith has pointed out,[1] the persistent criminal has his status in nature and society, as an organism to whom "altruistic pleasure" simply does not appeal; who, for his own satisfaction, pursues "a congenial, though conventionally reprobated, walk of life"; and whom, it may be added, society has a perfect right to destroy by its own superior strength and for its own particular convenience. However great may be the diminution of crime by means of social reform, there will always be amongst us persons of the kind instanced in this book, of whom Lacenaire is the supreme type, who can only be dealt with in a destructive fashion, their pleasures not being those which, by the process of evolution, have been elevated into a sixth sense. These non-altruistic pleasures, though they may be gratified in absolute security from legal punishment by a Borgia or a Dubois, or the living prototypes of the Marquis of Steyne, in less exalted walks of life are bound, from a necessarily more crude and violent form of expression, to lead to the prison or the scaffold.

The careers of real culprits such as these must always be, in Burke's words, striking, interesting and affecting, either in the pages of history or of the *Causes Célèbres*. But, as they are narrated in the reports of a French

[1] *Guesses at the Riddle of Existence*, pp. 218—220.

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criminal trial, such stories are given with a completeness and wealth of detail, unequalled by any other form of history. If men like Cæsar Borgia or King John had appeared before a Cour d'Assises, how complete would be biographies that must ever remain tantalizing and unsatisfactory for lack of materials. Whatever its faults —and they are fully recognized by more than one French critic[1]—the French system of criminal procedure possesses one supreme merit from the point of view of the student of character. At the cost of much that is to our notions trivial and irrelevant, it tells in every trial not only the bare details of the actual crime that is the object of inquiry, but the story of the life of the accused person. By inquisitorial methods, often startling to us, that story is dragged into the light of day, and the criminal confronted in the most poignant fashion, with the whole record of his past. The struggle that ensues in the Assize Court is almost invariably an exciting one, the national character responding with unfailing spirit to the stimulus of what must always be a dramatic situation. Some of these strange stories are told in this book. The author, in compiling them, has endeavoured to make them neither too short to interest, nor too long to hold the attention of the reader, to keep throughout to the actual facts of the cases as given in the various reports, to select the careers of criminals who by their social circumstances or individual characters are removed from the category of ordinary malefactors, and to indicate in a general way by examples occurring in the course of the various cases the

[1] See Jean Cruppi, *La Cour d'Assises*. Paris, 1898.

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chief points of difference between criminal procedure in France and England.

In confining these studies to French crimes, some of them sufficiently atrocious in character, the author has no intention of thereby suggesting that French crime is in its general complexion any more atrocious than English, or than that of any other civilized nation. It is not; it is only more interesting, both from the individuality of its perpetrators, and the methods of legal investigation that are applied to it by the French Criminal Code.

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I

LACENAIRE

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I

LACENAIRE

I

"EVERY human society has what is called in theatres a third sub-stage. It is the grave of the depths. It is the cave of the blind. . . . What crawls in the third sub-stage is no longer the stifled demand for the absolute. Man there becomes dragon. Hunger and thirst are the point of departure; Satan is the point of arrival. From this cave comes Lacenaire."—Victor Hugo, *Les Miserables*, Bk. vii., chaps. i. and ii.[1]

In this passage from his tremendous description of the sub-stages in the human theatre, Hugo has immortalized the name of Lacenaire as the supreme type of human villainy. Théophile Gautier has devoted some elegant lines to a description of the assassin's thin, cruel hand, covered with a reddish down, which the poet saw lying on a cushion, after it had been severed from its lately executed owner. Gautier stigmatizes Lacenaire as a false poet, but a genuine murderer, and terminates his verses by conferring on him the not inglorious title of the "Manfred of the Gutter."

Whatever the justice of these literary appreciations of Lacenaire's attitude towards life, they are sufficient evidence of the fact that he powerfully, if unpleasantly, affected the

[1] See also *Les Châtiments*, Bk. v., "Le Sacre," in which Lacenaire, and other famous French criminals, are described as being raised to Imperial honours by the coronation as Emperor of the French of their co-mate in infamy, Napoleon III.

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minds of his contemporaries, and has left behind him a more distinct and original notoriety than generally falls to the lot of criminals. It may at once be said that his reputation is not based on his professional achievements. As an assassin of real executive ability he cannot compare with Troppmann or John Williams; in sheer brutal atrocity he must yield the palm to many another. But as a cold and reasoned assassin, arriving at crime as the logical outcome of his own attitude towards society, as a man of unfaltering insensibility, disliking his fellow-men with a dislike the more deadly for being free from any trace of passion, as a man of more than ordinary ability, well educated, sensible and rational, and above all, capable of fully recognizing the impossibility of his own proceedings from a general point of view, Lacenaire stands alone among criminals. No French criminal, except perhaps Cartouche, has left so distinct an impression on the minds of his countrymen. He embodies in its most mischievous form that cynical materialism, that deliberate philosophy of entire selfishness, which if it usually stops short of murder, does so from motives of convenience, and not from any respect or pity for human suffering. Lacenaire is the embodiment of reasoned cruelty; the exercise of murder gratifies his feelings and opinions, without, however, disturbing his equanimity; revenge gives him pleasure, but it is a calm and temperate enjoyment that its gratification affords him. He is not without those inconsistencies that lie at the root of all character; he looks for loyalty in his associates, and the candour of a Chef de la Sûreté finds its way to his heart; he can be touchingly sentimental at times, as only really unfeeling people can; but these are mere transient gleams in the almost impenetrable darkness of a black soul.

"To kill without remorse is the highest of pleasures," said Lacenaire. A selection from his published sayings will fully illustrate his views on this subject.

"It is impossible to destroy in me my hatred of mankind. This hatred is the product of a lifetime, the

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outcome of my every thought. I never pitied any one who suffered, and I don't want to be pitied myself."

"I considered myself in a state of 'legitimate defence' against society. He who has nothing has a right to despoil any one who possesses anything. At the same time I cannot conceal from myself the fact that society could not exist on this principle."

"I was always serious. I ought to have been a philosopher, never an artist. The follies of the studio make me pity an art so thoughtlessly practised."

"Whilst I had the capacity to write a play, I had also the capacity to kill. I chose the easiest."

"I am not as the ant, I am rather as the grasshopper."

"I kill a man as I drink a glass of wine."

"I want people to know me as I am, and I don't deny that I consider myself unique. If I had not been educated, I should have been an ordinary criminal like all the rest. As it is, I doubt whether in all history there can be found two criminals like myself."

One last extract from this philosophy of the third substage and we have done.

"I kill without passion. Before killing, as after killing, I sleep equally well, and always peacefully. I am about to make an animate being inanimate, that is all. I see a light, I breathe on it, it goes out. I change a man into a corpse, that is to say, into some kind of thing, and after I have done that I am no more concerned with it than with a piece of furniture, in the presence of which I can carry on a robbery without fear or hindrance. I love life and its pleasures; but if it ends, what does it matter? The punishment of death? A contradiction in terms: it is no punishment to send a being back again to insensibility and nothingness. When I die, I am nothing again; nothing, as I was before, matter subject to eternal motion and modification. The soul, what is it? a breath—intelligence? a meteor. And what are breath and meteor but mere passing phenomena which have existed nevertheless? After the rapid motion which has disclosed them is passed,

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what remains of them? But no soul, no God; for if He existed, He would be irrelative to man. Since He is not present to our senses, we should have to assume the existence of relations other than those organically possible, and such a perception has no foundation in reason. Therefore there need be neither apprehension nor expectation with regard to the future beyond the grave, and, consequently, in the present we should only seek absolute self-satisfaction. For the man who injures me, death, if need be; enjoyment is to the first comer, to the first man who thinks of overcoming his fellow. The object of life should be enjoyment. I am an inferential atheist and logical materialist. I make my acts conformable to my thought and speech; do as I do, if you dare."

This defiant invitation is, fortunately, not likely to meet with any considerable response. Whatever the possible justification of Lacenaire's "logical materialism" as a system of moral philosophy, or an explanation of the great problem of man's relation to the universe, it is too opposed to the requirements and necessities of man as a social being to be permitted to acquire any appreciable degree of influence; and the whole weight of the penal code will be unhesitatingly brought into play to depress, and, if occasion require, to exterminate its disciples. It must, however, be admitted that in skilful and subtle hands the Lacenaire principles might be worked out into a very pretty, polite and logical justification of murder, as plausible and as logical as many other speculative moral systems.

But the first quality that we have a right to look for in any man, be he philosopher or assassin, is sincerity; and at the outset one is prone to inquire whether Lacenaire is an ordinary criminal talking for effect, feigning convictions in order to appear more interesting to the public, or whether he is speaking from sincere conviction and is honestly practising villainy, because villainy is to him personally a logical and satisfactory way of life. Fortunately, we are not left in doubt on this point. Such testimony as we can command, is unquestionably in

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favour, not only of Lacenaire's intellectual sincerity, but of his good faith in other respects. The Judge who presided at his trial said—"My impression is that his statements have every appearance of truth. He is endowed with great talents." The Avocat-Général who conducted his prosecution was of a similar opinion—"I always found Lacenaire simple, never seeking to make an effect, or pose as the hero of a tragedy. His faculties are of the highest order." And M. Allard, the Chef de la Sûreté, made the remarkable statement that "he always trusted to Lacenaire's honour." The two magistrates were not men likely to be deceived or imposed upon by intellectual charlatanism; the head of the Detective Department cannot have been a man who was in the habit of placing unsuspicious reliance on the honourable protestations of criminals. If Lacenaire considered himself unique, his opinion was shared by those well qualified to decide on his claims to solitary eminence.

2

The Descent to the Third Sub-Stage

However unique the personality of Lacenaire, the method by which he descended from educated gentility to the third sub-stage in Hugo's singular world-theatre was anything but original. His Memoirs, if they are authentic, tell a very ordinary story of a young man, the son of well-to-do parents, who is intelligent and idle, and consequently spends his boyhood and early manhood in fitting himself for no occupation save that of a studious loafer. His father dies suddenly, and is found to have dissipated his fortune in bad speculations. The son is thrown on his own resources. He has brains and ambition, but no application. Gambling turns out unfortunately, literature is poorly paid. He is short of cash, and fond of temperate

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pleasures; at least he hates an empty pocket, "j'ai l'horreur du vide dans ma poche." He steals, and is sent to prison. There he associates with the denizens of the third sub-stage. From that moment the descent into the sub-stage itself is alarmingly rapid. He conceives a reasoned hatred of his fellow-men, he is a logical materialist, he recollects the absolute insensibility with which he watched the dying struggles of a man he had killed in a duel, he becomes a murderer.

The facts of the career of Lacenaire, previous to his public appearance as a criminal celebrity, are given at some length in that portion of his Memoirs which was published after his death. But, as these Memoirs are of doubtful authenticity, they must be received with caution.

The real name of Lacenaire was Pierre François Gaillard; Lacenaire was a *nom de plume*, assumed after his arrival in Paris. He was born in 1800 at Francheville, near Lyons. His father was then a prosperous merchant in the iron trade. According to the Memoirs, both his father and mother slighted Pierre François from his birth, and neglected him in favour of his elder brother, an unworthy creature upon whom they lavished inordinate affection. This neglect made the boy solitary and morose; he read and brooded a great deal more than was good for him. When he was sent to school he had, according to the Memoirs, pronounced views on religious subjects, chiefly derived from Voltaire, which not unnaturally brought him into conflict with his spiritual teachers. But from a letter written by one of his professors at the Alix Seminary, he would seem, as a school-boy, to have been docile and popular. "Without being very intimate," says the professor, "with any of his companions, who were overwhelmed by his superiority, he got on well with them, and, generally speaking, left behind him an agreeable impression. Far from his being in a state of open hostility towards his masters and purposely distressing them, I found him in my class remarkable for his love of work, his gentleness, his success, and, above all, for the affection

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he always showed for me. I never remember to have punished him during the whole time he was under me."

As soon as Lacenaire had completed his education he went to Paris to study for the bar; but his father, who was becoming gradually involved in pecuniary embarrassments, due to unfortunate speculations, found himself unable to afford the money necessary to the completion of his son's legal studies. By this circumstance, according to Lacenaire, he was deprived of the one career for which his gifts and his inclination eminently fitted him. But it will remain an open question whether, had he been successfully called to the bar, he would have had the perseverance that is requisite to acquire fame as an advocate. Obliged to relinquish a forensic career, Lacenaire tried a merchant's office, a solicitor's office, a bank; all were equally distasteful to him, and he threw up the last to join a military expedition to the Morea in aid of the insurgent Greeks. He returned to France in 1829, to find that his father had left the country a bankrupt, that his family were dispersed, and that he was penniless. Shortly after his return, he did not increase his popularity among his Parisian acquaintances by killing in a duel a nephew of Benjamin Constant, the then celebrated orator and politician. Lacenaire had not provoked the encounter, but the result was as fatal to himself as to his adversary. The equanimity with which he found himself able to regard the latter's dying agony, convinced him that he was endowed with a peculiar insensibility to the sight of human suffering. This peculiar insensibility he was ere long to turn to mortal account. In the meantime, having exhausted every available resource, he brought the disasters of 1829 to a harmonious conclusion by being sentenced to a year's imprisonment for swindling.

From his release in 1830 till the summer of 1833 dates the period of Lacenaire's literary activity. It was during these three years that he wrote the songs, lyrics and satirical verses which, though they remained unpublished at the time of their composition, were unearthed after his

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final arrest and given to the world as illustrations of the extraordinary assassin, who was at the same time both philosopher and poet. It will be sufficient to say at this point that these lucubrations are not of such astonishing beauty as to call for immediate notice; they can well afford to wait until we are able to place Lacenaire in a situation in which his claims to poetic distinction can be considered, apart from the stress and inconvenience of a rapidly progressive criminal career.

Unpublished verse, though admirable reading for a friendly audience, is not a means of livelihood. Lacenaire had to live. His year in gaol had not acted as a deterrent; at its expiration he resumed the pursuit of fraud, and for three years held on in the pursuit without detection, and with some, though not a very considerable, measure of profit. But in the July of 1833 his activity was for a second time suspended. On this occasion the Correctional Tribunal of the Seine department considered thirteen months' imprisonment an appropriate expression of the resentment of society against the swindling propensities of "Gaillard, *dit* Lacenaire," and the prisoner was sent to Poissy gaol to serve his time.

Whilst awaiting his trial in the prison of La Force, Lacenaire had attracted the attention of a fellow-prisoner, M. Vigouroux, editor of a radical journal called the *Bon Sens*. M. Vigouroux was at La Force as a political offender, responsible for the too pronounced opposition of his newspaper to the existing government. But, in the then shocking condition of the French prisons, all classes of prisoners, from the guiltiest felons to the over-zealous radical scribbler, were herded together in promiscuous fashion. It was under these circumstances that M. Vigouroux, the journalist, made the acquaintance of the swindler, Lacenaire. He was impressed with the young man's talents, and grieved at his disgraceful situation. He promised him that, if he would mend his ways, he would, on his release, endeavour to find him occupation as a journalist. To judge from the terms of

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a letter written by Lacenaire to his benefactor from Poissy gaol, the former was sincerely grateful for the helping hand that was held out to him, and on his release gave proof of his appreciation by writing for the supplement of M. Vigouroux's newspaper, an article "On the Prisons and the Penitentiary System in France." In this he describes from personal experience the vices of a system which, by the carelessness and ignorance of those directing it, was at that time nothing more than a forcing house for criminals, the great promoter of that recidivism which it has been the chief object of later prison reformers to combat. Some parts of Lacenaire's article may be regarded as autobiographical. After drawing a very real picture of the youthful first offender who, new to crime, and therefore still open to reformation, finds himself thrown among the most hardened and abandoned criminals, he continues—

"In this atmosphere of licentiousness, of cynicism in act and speech, of hideous and revolting stories of crime, for the first time the wretched youth finds himself blushing at the last remnant of innocence and decency which he had still preserved when he entered the prison; he begins to feel ashamed that he is less of a scoundrel than those about him, he dreads their mockery and their contempt; for, make no mistake, there are such things as respect and contempt even in the galleys, a fact that explains why certain convicts are better off in gaol than in a society which has nothing for them but contempt; no man will willingly consent to live surrounded by those who despise him. Thus it is that our young man, unable to endure such a life of contumely, models himself on the best specimens he sees around him, the best of this particular kind. He adopts their tone and manners; he imitates them; in two days he finds himself able to speak their jargon. From that moment he is no longer a poor simpleton, his friends can grasp his hand without feeling compromised. . . . The first step is taken; why should he pull up, now that he has started on such an

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easy path? His education, which has just made such a promising beginning beneath the vaulted roof of the Prefecture of Police, will be continued at La Force, and completed at Poissy or Melun."

Graphic as a history of the descent of a beginner in crime into the "grave of the depths and the cave of the blind," autobiographically Lacenaire's sketch only tells half the truth. In Poissy gaol Lacenaire had realized himself, he had at last found a career which, if it was likely to be short, would at any rate gratify his spleen and fulfil his logical-material conception of the universe. In Poissy gaol, for the first time in his life, Lacenaire found himself an object of awe and admiration. He had not been long in out-Heroding the Herods of the prison; and they, even the most hardened and experienced of them, had learnt to bow before the reserved, cold cynic, who, with the perpetual sneer on his lips, presented assassination to them by the light of reason, without violence or passion, and seemed to them the incarnation of that most serviceable and hardest to attain of all wickedness, the wickedness that knows not the voice of conscience. It is little to be wondered that these rude gropers in the darkness of the third sub-stage were vividly impressed by the elegant gentleman in light-blue, whom they had at first regarded with roughly expressed mistrust. That gentleman, after a few years of drifting and uncertainty, had arrived at that state of mental development which is, according to some philosophers, the necessary prelude to perfect moral or immoral conduct. "The only development," says Green,[1] "in which the capabilities of man's heaven-born nature can be actualized, lies in the direction of union between the developed will and the developed reason," and, as Green goes on to point out, it is only by a similar union that the capabilities of his hell-born nature can be in the same degree actualized. Lacenaire had at length achieved in

[1] *Prolegomena to Ethics*, Bk. iii., chap. i, paragraph 177.

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his own nature such an harmonious union of will and reason as would permit him to actualize his own hell-born faculties in the most hellish fashion possible to man. Lacenaire's will to commit murder, the highest form of crime, lay in his settled hatred of his fellow-men, his insensibility to human suffering, his preference for the guillotine over suicide as a means of quitting the theatre of life, and his desire to make himself remarkable in an unpleasant sort of a way before the fall of the curtain. His reason was satisfied as to the rational fitness of the course he was about to pursue by that logical materialism which was to him the true philosophy of life. Ethically speaking, Lacenaire was perfectly attuned to any form of evil-doing which he might be pleased to adopt. Conscience, the most obstinate opponent to complete villainy, even in the most cruel and determined criminals, was in him entirely set at rest.

In this complete harmony of will and reason in the pursuit of crime lie those characteristics which go to make Lacenaire almost supreme among the world's criminals. His actual progress towards crime has in it little that is original; it is rather the conventional decadence of the lazy good-for-nothing. His achievements in crime may not unfairly be described as those of a determined amateur. It is by the personality which he brings to the course he has adopted, by his mental attitude towards crime, and by the consistency with which up to the very last he maintains that attitude, that he is entitled to rank as perhaps the highest realization yet known to man in his not inconsiderable efforts to probe the depths of the Satanic.

Lacenaire's article on the "Penitentiary System" was the only fruit of M. Vigouroux's kindly efforts to place the young man in the way of earning an honest living. The young man had already decided, before leaving Poissy gaol, to risk everything on a new and startling departure in crime. The life of a struggling author, obliged to keep himself on such paltry sums as could

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be earned by writing articles for newspapers, was to Lacenaire no life at all.[1] Better die than live thus. Suicide was, of course, the obvious method of giving effect to such a determination. But Lacenaire, in the seclusion of Poissy goal, had proposed to himself a means of bringing his life to a more or less speedy conclusion, which should partake of the nature of a game of chance played between society and himself. This novel game would enable him to gratify his invincible dislike of his fellow-men, and would at the same time, as was cnly fair, give society an opportunity of taking his head as a forfeit, should he be the loser. In short, Lacenaire proposed to murder till he should be found out. According to this plan the proceeds of assassination would, for the time being, bring him in more profit than writing articles for M. Vigouroux; and, when detection came, he would have a gratuitous opportunity afforded him of quitting this harsh world by a method more certain, more expeditious and less personally inconvenient than suicide.

When Lacenaire visited M. Vigouroux after his release from prison he rather startled that benevolent gentleman by coolly informing him that he was not "an unlucky object of compassion, but a professional thief." This profession it was now his fixed intention to exercise to the pleasing accompaniment of murder.

We are now in the third sub-stage, on the eve of the vindication of "logical materialism" as a rule of conduct.

[1] He had also tried to earn money as a copyist; but his literary taste was too fine for such an employment. Two dramatic authors gave him a play to copy. The next day he brought it back to them. "I've read it," he said, "and I can't do it. It's too stupid."

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3

The Head and the Arm

" I was the Intelligence, Avril the Arm "

When in the year 1834 Lacenaire had determined to give practical expression to his philosophy of life, he took in a partner, or rather, as he put it, " engaged a domestic," for, in the sub-stage in which he was obliged to look for an accomplice and in which he prided himself on being unique, he was not likely to find any one capable of really appreciating his mental attitude or sharing his intellectual pleasures. Pierre Victor Avril the chosen one, the Arm, was an ex-tiler and joiner. For vulgar reasons he had abandoned tiling and joining, and taken to crime. Lacenaire had met him in Poissy gaol, where they were both graduating for higher things. He had first attracted Lacenaire's notice by nearly killing a warder with a file. The philosopher pronounced him to be a " man of character," and kept his eye on him with a view to future business.

Not until the November of 1834 did circumstances permit the realization of this happy union of mind and matter. The Mind had been now for some time made up, and the Matter, being penniless, was ready for anything.

Lacenaire was, at this period, dark in colour of the Napoleonic bilioso-sanguine temperament, with dark-brown hair turning grey in places. His forehead was broad and high, his face not handsome but refined and distinguished. His mouth, covered by a light moustache, was described as always seeming on the point of launching a sarcasm. His eyes grey-brown, his look that of an eagle.

Avril had reddish-grey eyes, cat-like in their expression. This was the only distinctive feature in his pale and insignificant countenance. Ordinarily quiet and lazy, " in action he was a tiger," difficult to screw to the sticking point, but "all right once you got him there" ; in the opinion

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of Intelligence "a little lacking in discretion and the power to refuse wine."

This promising combination of the Eagle and the Cat was not long in setting to work. Lacenaire, as befitted the Intelligence, was quite ready with a plan. This consisted in taking a cheap lodging in an assumed name and character, decoying a bank-messenger there under pretence of cashing a forged bill, and killing him on his arrival. As these bank-messengers not infrequently carried in their bags about 100,000 francs, the advantages of the plan are obvious. Three times and in three different lodgings did Lacenaire essay to carry out his design; but on all these occasions something occurred to frustrate the scheme. So annoyed was he at these repeated failures, that, on the last occasion, for want of any worthier booty he stole the window-curtains of the hired apartment, and made off in disgust.

The Eagle-Cat paused to consider. Things were getting critical; a month at work and nothing done! It was now the beginning of December.

4

No. 171 Rue St. Martin, in the Passage of the Red Horse

PARIS, *December 14th*, 1834

ONE Chardon lived here in the Rue St. Martin with his bed-ridden mother. Chardon's moral habits were very infamous, too infamous even for the third sub-stage, so infamous that there was a general feeling in the sub-stage that it would be unmanly to kill him. At the same time it was whispered among those interested in such things that he was possessed of gold. Chardon attempted to vindicate his character by selling religious images and

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tokens in the street, and conciliated unwary philanthropists by calling himself a Brother of the Charity of St. Camille. By the aid of a hired scribe the brother drew up charitable petitions to distinguished people, some said to Queen Marie-Amélie herself, and it was rumoured among the same interested parties that these petitions had been freely responded to. But, in spite of images and tokens, Chardon had some time before the present occasion been sent to Poissy gaol by the guardians of public morals, in which retreat he had made the acquaintance of Lacenaire. This was in 1829, five years back. Lacenaire's account of their acquaintance is brief—"We became enemies, certain matters of business bred hate between us." Five years have elapsed since then, and the poor Chardon creature has probably forgotten these differences, but not Lacenaire. "I have overcome," he once said, "all my passions, save one, revenge. When a school-fellow surpassed me in my class, I could have killed him. If I was beaten in our games, I would have killed the victor with delight." Chardon could hardly be expected to have known this. If he had known it, he might have been more fearful of quarrelling with his fellow-prisoner. When Lacenaire heard, soon after the failures in the hired apartments, that gold was to be found elsewhere, and that elsewhere was No. 171 Rue St. Martin, the residence of Chardon, he did not forget the quarrel at Poissy five years ago; on the contrary, it came back to his recollection in most appropriate fashion.

At eleven o'clock in the morning, on December 14th, 1834, the Eagle and the Cat, Lacenaire and Avril, breakfasted together at a wine-shop by the Chopinette barrier. They had business to transact, rôles to distribute. Lacenaire carried a little three-cornered file sharpened at both ends, with a lump of cork stuck on at one end to serve as a comfortable handle.

At No. 171 Rue St. Martin, situated in the passage of the Red Horse, on this morning of December 14th, Chardon, charitable Brother of St. Camille, had risen late;

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his mother being as usual ill in bed, he had turned up his shirt-sleeves, and was busy dusting and cleaning the Chardon lodging. This consisted of two rooms opening into each other, situated at the top of a flight of stairs leading up from the passage. Madame Chardon was in bed in the inner of the two rooms.

A little before one o'clock two men entered the passage of the Red Horse and inquired for Chardon. They were told that he was at home. We may now follow Lacenaire's succinct account of the proceedings. "Avril and I went up-stairs and knocked at the door. Receiving no answer we came down-stairs and met Chardon, still in his shirt-sleeves, in the passage." "We have just been up to your place," says Lacenaire. "Then come up again with me," amiably replies Chardon. "We did so. As soon as we got into the outer room, a kind of kitchen bedroom, Avril caught Chardon by the throat and simultaneously I stabbed him with my dagger" (the three-cornered file already mentioned). "Chardon fell, and in his struggles upset the plate-chest. Thereupon Avril finished him off with a hatchet which was hanging on the wall, and the blood spurted all over him. I then went alone into the mother's bedroom, the door of which had been open all the time. She was in bed. I struck her on the face, the eyes, the nose with my triangular file, with the cork handle. The cork got pierced as I struck, and the blade wounded me slightly." Recovering quickly from this momentary annoyance, Lacenaire stuffed the mattress over the mother and pulled out the bed to get at the cupboard. This he opened as the clock struck one—he heard it—and took out 500 francs in silver. After the rumours of the sub-stage this was a very paltry sum. But perhaps there was more in the other room. No, the researches of Avril had only resulted in four silver dish-covers, a soup-ladle, and a black silk cap—no more, and it was time to be off. A momentary delay while Lacenaire grabbed at a bronze-coloured cloak with a fur collar, and Avril caught up an ivory image of the Virgin Mary, and they were

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on the landing. Here they met two callers asking for Chardon. To avoid disappointment Lacenaire with some readiness told them that he had gone out. So he had, poor wretch, beyond all avail of Promethean heat! Luckily the callers had no reason to suspect a euphemism, in spite of the fact that Lacenaire was all the time trying to shut the door, which stuck open in a most inconvenient fashion. Chardon was at home sure enough and ready to receive any friends, but the callers had faith and departed.

At the tavern of the Reaped Ear—under the circumstances a very fitting sign—Lacenaire, wrapped in the bronze cloak with the fur collar, and Avril with the black silk cap on his head, sat down to refresh themselves. But they had not much time to eat and drink, for there was blood on their hands, and there were also spots on Avril's clothes. Luckily there was a Turkish bath on the other side of the way, where they soon got rid of any traces of Chardon and his mother. And so to dinner and the play afterwards. Then home to bed—at least Lacenaire, for he always slept well after the day's work was done. But Avril was not so domestically inclined; he was a gallant youth, and took his pleasures under all circumstances.

At No. 171 Rue St. Martin, on the evening of December 14th, one who lodged over the Chardons thought he heard death-rattlings, but having no reason to anticipate such things, decided it must be the person who snored at the baker's down the passage.

On the 16th, when a commissary of police entered the premises, the body of the bed-ridden woman was still warm under the heap of mattresses. Those must have been her rattlings that the lodger heard on the 14th. How long stricken and powerless, with that stabbed face and nose and eyes, had she lain slowly dying under the mattresses? Had she guessed what those sounds meant that she had heard through the open door about one o'clock on the 14th, after her son had come up-stairs? If she had, she was too weak to move the mattresses to see.

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5

No. 66 Rue Montorgueil

December 31st, 1834

On December 15th, morrow of the Chardon misfortune, two law students hired a room at No. 66 Rue Montorgueil. One of them called himself Mahossier, and chalked his name upon the door. But the study of the law had only lasted five days when one of the young students mysteriously disappeared. In spite of his studies, it appeared that the young man had committed a breach of the law, and the law had undertaken to remedy this omission in his studies, free of charge, and by its own peculiar method of instruction. A curious observer, dwelling in the caves, might have recognized in the pseudo-student, so suddenly suspended in his labours, Avril, the Cat, now murderer, deeply stained in Chardon blood. His gentle fellow-student, Mahossier according to the chalk on the door, is Lacenaire, the Eagle, philosopher and murderer, man of blood and letters; Imbert he calls himself at his little private lodging in the Rue St. Maur, where he reads so studiously and quietly. He is reading Rousseau's *Social Contract* just now, and is very much engrossed in it.

Lacenaire and his friend had been well pleased with the success of the episode in the Rue St. Martin. It had not been lucrative, but the method had been highly successful, and the police baffled. It seemed to promise great things. Accordingly they had assumed the rather fantastic guise of law students, and hired the room at No. 66 Rue Montorgueil. Here they had intended to revert to the old scheme of decoying a bank-messenger with his bag of valuables by means of a forged bill. All had been prepared, the room taken, when the Cat got into trouble. Cats will be wilful at nights, and Avril was feline to the backbone. He got locked up over some nocturnal adventure. The Eagle did his best to save him, but it was of

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no avail. The Cat was lost, immured beyond all hope, and the Eagle left with the hired room in the Rue Montorgueil on his hands. He must find another "law student."

Lacenaire had a friend, a supernumerary at the Opera Comique, tailor and criminal to boot. To this man he suggested the waylaying of the bank-messenger, but the supernumerary held back. He did not want principal rôles, he preferred to carry a harmless banner on the sub-stage of crime; but, he said, he had a friend who would undertake leading parts at a very moderate figure. He knew a man with red whiskers who would kill another man for twenty francs. This sounded very promising to the philosopher, though circumstances ultimately proved the salary asked to be more than adequate. Lacenaire had an interview with Red Whiskers, whom he found to be a tall ex-soldier, with a countenance that was quite sympathetic, except for the enormous red growths. His name was François. Lacenaire and he discussed matters. Red Whiskers was at first a little doubtful of his new acquaintance, and asked the philosopher for testimonials. Lacenaire curtly informed him that he was the murderer of the Chardon couple. That was enough; the bond was sealed, and Monsieur Mahossier, law student of No. 66 Rue Montorgueil, ready once more for business.

On December 27th, Lacenaire called on a banker in the Rue du Faubourg Poissonière, and negotiated a bill drawn on a certain M. Mahossier at No. 66 Rue Montorgueil, payable on December 31st. On December 31st, Mahossier, *i.e.* Lacenaire, and Red Whiskers were betimes at No. 66 waiting for the bank-messenger; to welcome him Lacenaire had put on his best coat of light-blue. But the bank-messenger did not come all the morning. This was disappointing. However, the amiable philosopher betrayed no signs of impatience. He went down and borrowed some straw from some of the lodgers with which he filled a sack that was in his room. He had conceived a pleasant scheme by which this straw, a portmanteau, a secluded villa in the suburbs, and an entirely private cremation

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were awaiting the harmless bank-messenger as soon as the firm of Mahossier had finished their business with him. Pending the arrival of the tardy messenger, Lacenaire smoked his pipe with unruffled mien, and read the *Social Contract*, which he had thoughtfully brought with him. He continued in this happy and improving state of mind until three o'clock, when steps were heard on the stairs. These are the steps of Genevay, bank-messenger, aged eighteen, tender youth anxiously awaited by the reader of the *Social Contract* and friend. Genevay reads "Mahossier" chalked on the door, and knocks. The door was opened by Red Whiskers. Genevay stepped in, bag in hand, and advanced to the table. As he bent over it to open his bag, he felt a sharp pain behind his shoulder. This pain was caused by that same file, with the cork handle, which had done such ugly work on Madame Chardon. Lacenaire was at work again. Before Genevay could turn round, Red Whiskers was at his throat, or should have been, but he missed his coup. Genevay shouted, yelled, struggled, his cries were loud enough to reach the street. Red Whiskers took alarm and made off. Down the stairs he bolted, closely followed by the philosopher. They reached the front door. François opened it, got into the street, and then shut the door in his comrade's face. Honour among thieves? Not for twenty francs! Lacenaire fumbled at the latch, succeeded in pulling it back, and ran out into the street shouting "Stop thief!" Under cover of this cry he got away unobserved, and breathless, arrived at the house of his friend, the supernumerary at the Opera Comique. There in due course of time Red Whiskers arrived also. "Ah, my dear friend, I was afraid you had been taken!" he exclaimed, on seeing the philosopher. "It is no fault of yours that I wasn't," answered that worthy, with a not unnatural feeling of annoyance. Red Whiskers was more than dear at twenty francs, quite the worst investment the philosopher could have made, more especially in the light of subsequent proceedings.

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The enterprise of the Rue Montorgueil had ended in complete failure, the invincible theories had proved very vulnerable in practice. A man cannot live on theories alone; accordingly on January 4th the philosopher stole a clock. It is sometimes necessary to descend from the sublime to the ridiculous; even the highest minds must stoop to heed the bare necessities of life. But the philosopher was soon to be spared any further humiliations of this kind. By February 2nd, Lacenaire and François had joined Avril in that enforced seclusion where the necessaries of life are "found"; François, shorn of his memorable whiskers, Lacenaire, with his shattered system, reduced to the miserable exigencies of petty larceny. The latter had been arrested at Beaune for a peddling forgery committed under the name of Jacob Levi.

The police had no idea that in these three criminals they held in their hands the assassins of the Chardons, and the would-be assassins of the young Genevay. And they might have remained in ignorance of their good fortune had it rested with Lacenaire to enlighten them. If there is such a thing as honour among thieves and murderers—and it is not only with criminals that honour has been made acquainted with strange bed-fellows—then Lacenaire may be celebrated as a high example. Provided that his colleagues were true to him, he would never have betrayed an accomplice; he never in his frankest moments confessed anything that could possibly inculpate another; he was rigid in his good faith to those who had shared with him in his misdeeds. In some men such a quality might have raised them to a position in which they would have secured the admiration and devotion of even such creatures as inhabit the third sub-stage, and it would have meant disgrace, perhaps death, to the follower who betrayed them. But not so with Lacenaire; he was no brigand chief, no Cartouche or Robin Hood. He was *among* thieves and murderers, but not *of* them; he despised them as "domestics," as mere servants of his necessities, who were incapable of appreciating his own mental situation;

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he stood aloof, cold, reserved, cynical; he employed them, and dropped them as soon as they had done his work; he took no share in their grosser pleasures, he preferred his pipe and his book to drink or debauchery, and the denizens of the third sub-stage hated him for it, with all the jealousy and suspicion of lower natures that find themselves awed and constrained by something they cannot understand. If he had kicked and beaten them they might have worshipped him for his prowess, but Lacenaire only made them feel stupid and uncomfortable, dimly conscious of their own vulgarity, the surest method of alienating the affections or incurring the dislike of one's fellow-creatures. Lacenaire might have fared better as a statesman than a criminal. The multitude has no objection to being fooled and despised by astute politicians; they have been known before now to worship and pay honour to a contemptuous ruler. He is ruling and governing and making laws and doing all sorts of clever things which they can only half understand, and consequently they admire him reverently from afar. But in their own homely arts, be they respectable or criminal, they have a way of mistrusting any one who is a bit above his work and tries to raise it out of the commonplace by the light of reason and philosophy. They have been known to fall upon such men and destroy them.

To a person of the temperament of Red Whiskers, Lacenaire was peculiarly exasperating. Not only did the former hate Lacenaire for his intellectual superiority, but he hated his courage, his resolution and his fidelity, for these were the very qualities in which Hippolyte Martin François, with his high-sounding names and his soldierly bearing, was deficient. His offer to kill a man for twenty francs may well have deceived Lacenaire as to his real value. Seemingly a desperado, his low price was a very exaggerated measure of his worth. He failed to collar his man, he bolted at the first opportunity, and did his best to bring about his partner's capture. But he had a sympathetic face, a sentimental nature, and a ready

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command of tears when the necessity arose. Natures of this kind are peculiarly spiteful in their hatred of anything stronger and more daring than themselves. François was enraged against his stoical master, whose firmness was a reproach to him, and whose contempt he had deserved.

A rumour was spread in Poissy gaol, where François and Avril were lodged, that a prisoner had given important information about the murders in the Rue St. Martin. The rumour was true. In a self-exculpatory kind of way François and Avril had betrayed their master to Monsieur Allard, the Chef de la Sûreté. The latter at once informed Lacenaire of the fact. "Ah, they have betrayed me," cried the philosopher, "very well, you shall know all." "But that will finish you, Lacenaire," said Allard. "Oh, I know," was the laughing reply. All the philosopher cared about now was revenge, sure and speedy, on the comrades who had betrayed him. For himself his mind was made up, he was prepared to die. "As soon as I became a murderer, between me and the scaffold there was a bond, a contract. My life had ceased to be mine. It belonged to the law and the executioner. It is no expiation, it is a consequence, the discharge of a gambling debt."

But full payment will not be exacted until the philosopher has had an opportunity of passing from that third sub-stage where his doings are obscure, his philosophy unappreciated, his personality wasted upon creatures of darkness, into the presence of those beings of light whose destruction he has sought, but whose magnanimity is sufficient to enable them to do fulsome justice to their systematic foe.

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6

The Philosopher emerges from the Third Sub-Stage amid some Applause

A FEW days after his confession Lacenaire awoke to find himself famous. Paris, not more particular than any other great capital in the choice of its passing sensations, seized upon the Philosopher-Assassin as a rare excitement. The Philosopher, tongue-tied so long among the "social Ugolinos" of Victor Hugo's theatre, was not unwilling to expound his philosophy, by word of mouth, to intelligent auditors. The necessities of his intellectual situation were most feelingly acknowledged by the authorities. His chains were removed, and he was lodged in more comfortable apartments in La Force. Red Whiskers, hearing of these indulgences, was convulsed with impotent rage. He broke into malediction, rolled his eyes, and smashed the furniture, after which he grew depressed and wept in discreet atonement for his excesses. Avril, with greater activity, incited his fellow-prisoners to attack the pampered philosopher when he took his airing. This they did, whilst Red Whiskers looked on approvingly from an upper window. But Lacenaire was speedily rescued from their clutches and removed to a more remote part of the building. He wished to be quiet, he said, for the rest of his life. He had his Memoirs to write, his philosophy to expound, his poetic reputation to vindicate, for was he not a poet also?

Paris had not been long in finding that out. Songs he had written in his youth were unearthed, ballads à la Beranger. It was pleasant to dwell on the gentler aspects of the assassin's nature. Lacenaire considered that an early effort called the "Sylphide" was the truest expression of his mind and feelings. It runs something after this fashion—" Divine Being, so tender and pure in thy beauty, dream of my earlier years, whatever thou art, spirit or

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mortal, list to my dying accents! Midst the rocks of a troubled sea thou, mysterious lighthouse, hast been my guide, the harbour is in sight, and soon my enchanted soul will meet thee once again in the heavens." Continuing in the same confident strain, the murderer invites the "immortal Virgin to await him in the skies." He dreams of her in wild grottoes, in oriental palaces, and rustic hamlets, awake and asleep, until he hears the stern voice of death, when, having nothing to hold him to earth, he gladly goes aloft to join the "capricious child."

In spite of the vicissitudes of a criminal career, Lacenaire still held in his last hours to the accuracy of this poem as the truest expression of his being. The real Lacenaire is in the lines of the "Sylphide," the Lacenaire of the Rues St. Martin and Montorgueil is but the dross of that celestial nature whose only happiness lies in the ultimate embrace of the "immortal Virgin."

Other poems of Lacenaire's are less visionary and of a satirical nature. The "Petition of a Thief to a King, his Neighbour," is typical.

"Sire, listen to me. I have just left the galleys. I am a thief, you a king. Let us work together like good brothers. I hate rich people. I have a hard heart and a brave soul. I have neither pity nor honour. Ah, make me a policeman!"

"Well, now I am a policeman, but it is a poor reward, the more one has the more one wants. Come, sire, just a little indulgence; I am as surly as a cur, I have the malice of an old monkey. In France I should do quite as well as Gisquet,[1] make me Prefect of Police."

"I hope I am a good Prefect, I find all the prisons too small, but I feel I was not made for this. I can swallow a budget, I can falsify accounts. I will sign myself, 'Your subject.' Ah! sire, make me a minister!"

[1] Henri Gisquet, Prefect of Police under Louis-Philippe, 1831–1836. A jovial songster in private life, he rendered himself unpopular as an official by his rudeness and severity, and incurred grave suspicion of corrupt dealing in the affair known as the "fusils Gisquet."

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"Sire, dare I ask once more? Don't be angry, though I know very well that the desire I am going to express will be displeasing to you. I am knavish, miserly, wicked, mean, pitiless, rapacious. I hanged my father. Sire, get off your throne and make room for me."

It is for the literary critic to decide on the exact degree of merit to be bestowed on these effusions. He will probably, however, readily acquiesce in Gautier's description of Lacenaire as "vrai meurtrier et faux poête." With that line we may safely dismiss the further consideration of the imaginative side of the temperament of the Manfred of the Gutter. A serious and critical pursuit of the subject might be attended with some danger. The number of unknown, unappreciated poets is beyond a doubt considerable. If they should be encouraged by a grave appreciation of Lacenaire's poetic efforts, to adopt Lacenaire's method of calling the attention of society to their own neglected genius, the critic might have to answer for a very alarming sacrifice of human life.

Poet or no poet, October and November were to the caged philosopher months of peaceful exposition. At length he could declare himself to intelligent beings and explain, calmly and quietly, the attitude he had adopted towards society. Paris was ready to lend an attentive ear to his discourses. His literary achievements, whatever their value, were sufficient to render him an interesting object for those who, in the capacity of students of character, are always pleased to enjoy the society of criminals in the comparative safety of a gaol. Men of letters, doctors, and advocates, visited La Force where Lacenaire was confined and, seated round the stove in the infirmary, where for greater quietude the philosopher had been lodged, talked with him of high themes and social problems. He himself displayed an amiable readiness to gratify their curiosity, and charmed them by the depth of his thought and the correctness of his ideas. Those who heard him, speak with some enthusiasm of his

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"gentle, polite, and Attic manner," and his stoical unconsciousness of his dreadful situation; they looked in vain for any trace of the traditional fierceness of the assassin.

Here is a short account of himself given by Lacenaire in the course of conversation—

"I was born at Lyons of respectable parents. I enlisted. I never picked quarrels in the regiment, but I was not afraid if one was unavoidable. I fought many times. I was very skilful in the use of all kinds of weapons, and always came off victorious. I went to the Morea. On my return in 1829 I found that my father had spent all his fortune, or rather involved it in bad speculations. I had been accustomed to independence. On finding myself destitute, I took to swindling, and was sent to prison for it. There, in the midst of convicts of every kind, I learnt the technique of crime. When I came out I led an honest life for two years.[1] I wanted to write for the *Bon Sens*. M. Vigouroux, the editor, an acquaintance of mine, offered me five francs an article. That was not enough to live on, for one's articles are not always accepted, and, even if he had accepted four a month, that would only have come to twenty francs, which were quite insufficient for me to live upon. From that moment I took to theft and murder, whenever they were the only means by which I could get hold of other people's property. I kill a man just as I drink a glass of wine. At La Force I had a little cat. It made a mess on my bed. I threw it on to the ground with such force that it was killed. I watched the death agony of this animal with an interest and pity I had never felt towards any human victims. The sight of a death agony in a human being does not affect me at all. In 1829 I fought a duel with a nephew of Benjamin Constant. The spot was a moat on the Champ de Mars. I did all I could to avoid the meeting, to come to some arrangement; but my opponent rejected every attempt, and fired the first shot. From the aim of his

[1] There is a little pardonable exaggeration in this statement.

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pistol and the help he must have derived in taking his aim from the two walls of the moat, I thought myself a dead man ; but he missed me. I fired in my turn, and he fell at once. The sight of his death agony caused me no distress, from which I argued that my nature was peculiar, my insensibility extraordinary.

"I have been a good friend, and should never have betrayed my accomplices if they had not first betrayed me. I had warned them that, if we worked together, they had better not betray me, or they would be lost.

"I am a materialist; I believe that matter is endowed with a certain feeling of life. If I touch this table, for example, I believe it feels. As soon as we die our bodies serve to produce other objects, and become part of these objects ; it is a kind of metempsychosis. I do not believe in a God, for, if everything has a primary cause, what is the primary cause of God? If I have any dominant passion, it is the passion for gold. I have a horror of empty pockets, 'ut natura horret a vacuo.' Women have deceived me, like all the rest, and their deceptions have wearied me of them. I have gambled, but without any enthusiasm. My favourite pursuit is literature. I could spend all my day writing, but I can't exist without money.

"I want to be sentenced to death, for I couldn't live in prison. My spirit is bent in prison, for, as you know, 'cito rumpes arcum, si semper tensum habueris.'

"Death is the pain of a moment. I have never dreaded suffering. I never pitied the suffering of others, and I don't want them to pity mine. If I had not been caught I should have ended by making a fortune and living in France without fear or remorse, a respectable father of a family,[1] though I admit such an ending would have been rather unjust. I have never in the course of my crimes experienced remorse or emotion. My sleep has never been disturbed. I sleep so peacefully."

[1] An ambition to end his days in this fashion was one of the motives that actuated Troppmann in his murder of the Kinck family, 1869.

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Thus graciously did the philosopher entertain his hearers and stamp with his own individuality such questions as they chose to raise for his better manifestation. Politics, he declared, to be like gambling—you must be either a fool or a knave. When asked to explain how it was then that people fought and died for great causes, he replied, "What is there wonderful in that? Politics are a passion like anything else, and one will always risk one's head for a passion."

One of the doctors, arguing with him on the subject of the existence of matter and the possible sensations experienced by tables and chairs, was labouring the point that, after death, the senses no longer transmit impressions to the brain. To illustrate his point he thoughtlessly exclaimed—"Take for example the case of a man whose head has just been cut off——" then he paused; there was a painful silence, and every one looked at Lacenaire to see how he was affected by this unfortunate allusion to his not improbable fate. But the philosopher betrayed no signs of mental disturbance at the doctor's maladroit remark, and soon passed into another room, followed by his audience.

He led them to the dormitory in which he slept and, seated on his bed, resumed the conversation. In an adjoining bed lay a young thief dying of pulmonary consumption, the result of infamous debauchery. Lacenaire looked at him. The audience wondered what the two moribunds would have to say to one another. "Lacenaire," said the consumptive, "I am so sorry I cannot be present at your execution to see if, when you mount the scaffold, you will be as cool as you are here." "I promise you," replied Lacenaire, "as the guiltiest I shall be executed last. Before I die I shall see the heads of my accomplices fall, if they are condemned."

After this dismal interlude the conversation was continued in a sympathetic spirit of polite inquiry; indirect compliments were paid to the fascinating murderer by his interlocutors. His powers of mind and intelligence were feelingly deplored. Under these congenial surroundings

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Lacenaire unbent and confessed that he was not cruel by nature, but that the means must be in harmony with the end, and that as he had become an assassin " par système," it was part of his system to get rid of any sensibility he might have experienced to the sufferings of others. Death he regarded quite calmly and with some satisfaction. Though thirty-three years old, he had lived more than his life, and preferred to die whilst he had all his faculties unimpaired.

Asked if he believed that death was the absolute end of all, he replied, " I have preferred never to think of that. I have such a power over my imagination that I can create a world for myself. If I wish, I shall never think of my death until it arrives."

Lacenaire then for the first time asked a question of his hearers, which for the moment throws down the intellectual barrier that has divided him from his gaol-bird associates, and reveals at a stroke that inexorable vanity which is such a powerful motive with many great criminals. " Do you think people will despise me ?" he asks. There is a becoming deference in the reply of one of his auditors : " A man such as you can only inspire terror." " Ah, it is their hatred I want. To my thinking, the contempt of others and contempt for oneself are the only things quite unendurable," saying which Lacenaire raised his glass, and, with a rather irrelevant quotation from Horace, drank to his hearers. His audience went away immensely impressed by a man who could quote Horace at the foot of the scaffold, though, if one is not very particular about the appropriateness of the quotation, the feat cannot be so difficult as it may at first appear.

When not engaged in dialogues of this kind, Lacenaire was busy writing his Memoirs. He continued in this employment until the day before his death, only to be interrupted in his task by the exigencies of his approaching trial. This, to him unnecessary infliction, he rather resented as a waste of precious time.

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7

Lacenaire and his Domestics

The Eagle and the Cat make their last public appearance but one before the Cour d'Assises of the Seine department, held in Paris, November 12th, 1835.

Day anxiously awaited by an expectant Paris! Day of feasting of many eyes on the mysterious enemy of mankind, hitherto revealed only by word and deed to the horror-struck and the inquisitive! Lacenaire appears in the dock, looking young and fresh, and bears himself with becoming elegance. He is wearing his light-blue coat, and his small moustache is fashionably curled. The Domestics, Avril and François, suffer by contrast; they look sullen, vulgar and conscious of their situation. Lest their sense of their own inferiority by the side of the master should become too acute or paroxysmal, warders separate them from the delicate figure in light-blue.

Save for occasional lapses of inattention and the perusal of the newspaper, Lacenaire tolerated his trial with a gentlemanly forbearance. With precision and accuracy he told the whole story of his crimes, and smiled at the vain denials and fierce expostulations of the Domestics, who were most indecorously anxious to save their precious heads at the expense of the master. It was a sensational moment for François when Bâton, the supernumerary who had recommended him to Lacenaire as the killer of men at a low figure, made an unexpected appearance in the witness-box. Red Whiskers felt the inconvenience of the situation bitterly, and averted his eyes; but the philosopher, smiling with satisfaction, took the witness in hand himself and dragged from him the proofs of his comrade's guilt. The latter broke into exclamations of jealous rage and cried, pointing to Lacenaire—"Ah, it's only for him to speak, you only listen to him! You won't let me speak!" These exclamations were very

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acceptable to Lacenaire; it was his pleasing purpose to make things as hot as possible for Red Whiskers.

Indeed this was the only pleasure or satisfaction he seems to have derived from the proceedings. He did not, like many criminals, make use of the opportunities afforded by French procedure for immaterial self-display; he took the whole affair in a quiet and resigned spirit, and did his best, by strictly confining himself to whatever was relevant, to bring the trial to a speedy termination. And, very thoughtfully, he took similar care to ensure an equally speedy result for his two friends.

In the case of Avril these efforts seemed likely to be successful. The Cat was really rather a simple, unattractive creature, and so, unlikely to appeal to the hearts and imagination of a French jury. But François, with his sympathetic countenance and ready command of sentimental indignation, was able to pose with some success as the high-minded illiterate, debauched by unscrupulous intellect.

The evidence disclosed little that was new, the speeches of the advocates were worthy of the occasion. Lacenaire was defended by a former school-fellow at the Alix Seminary. The unfortunate man was seriously ill at the time of the trial, and did not survive his client. Lacenaire had for some time refused to be defended at all, but eventually yielded, quoting Pilate's words—"I wash my hands of it."

It was seven o'clock on the evening of November 14th, the third day of the trial, when, after the speeches of the advocates were concluded, the President asked the prisoner, Lacenaire, if he had anything to say in his defence. Amidst profound silence Lacenaire rose and, in quiet tones, without emotion or declamation, without a note of any kind, addressed himself to the jury. He began by saying that he had no wish to defend himself, he only wished to clear their minds of any doubt as to the truth of the declarations he had made in regard to the facts of his crimes; and, true to his promise, the greater part of his speech was devoted to a careful recapitulation of these facts,

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and an attack on the defences raised by the advocates of his Domestics, which evoked the admiration of all present. Only in conclusion did he momentarily abandon his cold and deliberate attitude. It had been suggested that he had been paid for the revelations he had made. "Never," he cried, "never have I concealed my motive in making these revelations: it was revenge! revenge! My accomplices denounced me, I had proof of it. I denounced them. You have been told, gentlemen, that I have made these revelations in the hope of receiving favour at your hands. A mistake, gentlemen. What favour can you show me? Spare my life! Ah, that is a favour I do not ask of you. If you were to offer me the pleasures of life, wealth, good fortune, I might accept it. But life! For a long time now I have been living in the past. Every night, for the last eight months, death has been sitting at my bedside. Those who have told you that, after my condemnation, I would accept a reprieve are deceived. Mercy? You cannot show it me, I do not ask it of you, I do not expect it at your hands. It would be useless."

With a bow to the judges Lacenaire resumed his seat. A crowd of young advocates surrounded him and warmly congratulated him on his achievement. The philosopher did not conceal his satisfaction at these professional testimonies to his skill.

But Red Whiskers was beside himself with rage, transported with jealousy and hatred of his intellectual superior. "Here's a pretty orator," he cries. "Gabbler! gabbler! How they all listen to Lacenaire! They'll be applauding him soon!" François had not been listening himself, he had been reading a newspaper; but this outburst was part of his defence. With a vulgar eloquence, born of rage, sentiment, and a blundering appreciation of the weakness of the national character as soon as it gets into a jury-box, he turned to Lacenaire, who was provokingly unmoved by his fury, and cried—"Wretch, scoundrel, who would like to kill every human being on this earth, it is you

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who seek to drag me to the scaffold. I know you; you are brave and eloquent here, you are admired and listened to, these gentlemen would like to applaud you. You fear the justice neither of God nor man; you believe in nothing. But one day you will appear before the Great Judge, you and I, and the gentlemen of the jury here, and the judges. You will have to render an account also. We shall all be there together. There, Lacenaire, your bleeding victims will await you. If I am to accompany you thither, my conscience will not reproach me. You play the courageous, but I have no less fear of death than you! Twenty times have I fought against the enemies of my country."

With teeth clenched, this cunning rascal, who would "kill a man for twenty francs," and betray his accomplice for nothing, continued—"I did not fear death then; I do not fear it now, but I do fear death on the scaffold! I have been wounded in five different places. I have had my fingers cut, my arm pierced by a bullet, two sabre cuts! At the foot of Atlas I saved the life of an artilleryman whom the enemy would have made prisoner. I bore him on my shoulders, I carried him back to the camp, I laid him at the feet of General Berthezène.[1] See now, Lacenaire, I do not fear! But you, vile assassin! coward! you wish to bathe your hands in my blood"—Lacenaire smiling scornfully through all this. "Dirty wretch, I can yet raise my hand, for the last time, perhaps, but I raise it. Hear my oath, Lacenaire, hear it! I will go to my death, if I am condemned, but I will go without fear. I will die as an innocent dies. But you will show the white feather when you are to die! Coward!"

The audience shuddered at this sickening rhodomontade; its only effect on Lacenaire was to make him thirsty; he asked for a glass of wine and water.

[1] Pierre Berthezène commanded under Marshal Bourmont in the Algerian War, 1830–1832; to his efforts the success of the war was largely due. After the conquest of Algiers he was appointed Governor.

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The poor, unattractive Cat followed his sensational companion with a dull address which could do nobody any good, except to give François time to think of another handle whereby to pump up the emotions of his jury. He obtained leave to speak a second time. "Gentlemen, yet one word! Last Thursday when I last appeared in the dock I was no criminal. To-day I am, for I have killed my father and mother! My mother! the best of mothers! I have killed my father, a venerable old man, whose hairs have grown white in the paths of honesty. You, gentlemen, men of business yourselves, why need I speak to you of my father? The false calumnies of Lacenaire have brought him dishonour. You can understand it, for his hairs have grown white in honesty and virtue. But Lacenaire is capable of anything." It is not likely that Lacenaire would have had any rooted objections to murdering François' parents, if only for the sake of their son; but that would perhaps have been a more honourable termination to their earthly careers than to have their white hairs shaken at a susceptible jury by their abandoned offspring. The impudent fellow concluded—"I repeat I have no fear of death. Condemn me, and I shall walk quietly to the scaffold, but do not forget what I am about to say to you. Eight days after this conviction he will reveal other accomplices to prolong his life. The coward! he will denounce others to obtain the pleasures of life, to prolong his life. You see if I lie! I do not fear death, I await the final authority of your verdict. For life I care little, but at this supreme moment I place my reliance on the consciences of my jury."

He seated himself with a grand assumption of emotion; the audience murmured their astonishment; Lacenaire smiled satanically. Did he foresee the effect of this pitiable harangue? Did he read in the faces of the jury the gravest confirmation of his contempt for his fellow-creatures?

At eleven o'clock the jury retired. At two o'clock in the morning they returned into court. Lacenaire and

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Avril were found guilty, François also, but with extenuating circumstances. It may well be asked, what were the extenuating circumstances? the mother? the white-haired father? the battles? the laying at the feet of the general? the extremely low figure at which the poor man was willing to earn a bloody living? What were these circumstances so powerful in mitigation? Certainly François had not killed his man, but the French criminal code punishes attempted murder with death, unless the jury return extenuating circumstances. If ever attempted murder deserved the extreme penalty, if ever a jury were justified in giving full effect to the severest provisions of the law in such cases, François should have been the object of such severity. The fact that the jury were out three hours in a case in which the evidence was conclusive, justifies a hope that they were not unanimous in yielding to the blandishments of one of the poorest criminals that ever figured in a dock.

Lacenaire was depressed on hearing the verdict, and well he might be. He had done his best that day to bring to justice as great a rascal as himself; it was perhaps the one good action of his life, and it had been scorned.

François, with his face in his handkerchief, murmured a grateful "Thank you!" Lacenaire and Avril were condemned to die, François to penal servitude for life.

Lacenaire said in his Memoirs that he foresaw the fate of François from the beginning of the trial. That may be, but it can have been none the less depressing at the time. Lacenaire added that he found his trial very wearisome. It must certainly have been tiresome to a literary man, whose time on earth was necessarily limited, to have to give up three days of it to proving in dull, legal fashion what he already admitted to be true. The only possible satisfaction he had looked forward to was that of bringing under the knife the heads of his two treacherous accomplices, and this satisfaction had, in one instance, been denied to him.

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But all things considered he was cheerful. "I don't value my life at more than a halfpenny," he said on leaving the court, after which modest appreciation he partook of a good meal. It is a curious fact, but none the less a fact founded on some observation, that nothing seems to give a man such a hearty appetite as a conviction for murder. Burke of Edinburgh fame, Troppmann and others have been similarly affected in a like situation.

8

Seclusion

The Prison of the Conciergerie, November 1835—January 1836

Two months elapsed between the condemnation of Lacenaire and Avril and their day of execution. Part of this time was taken up by their appeal to the Court of Cassation from the judgment of the Assize Court. Lacenaire had at first refused to avail himself of this pretext for postponing the fatal day. But, when he heard that Avril had given notice of appeal, he did the same, in order that he and his friend might not be divided in death, that he might have the pleasure of the latter's companionship in his journey to the Unknown.

The trial had greatly increased Lacenaire's notoriety, the outer world eagerly sought for news and tokens of the imprisoned celebrity. The philosopher-poet, once freed from the restraints of the strait-jacket, usually placed on prisoners in his situation, which had prevented him from sleeping in his wonted sublime fashion, responded to the public curiosity through the medium of his muse. In elegant verses he expressed his confidence that after death as a "light sylph" he would dwell in the skies with the Sylphide of his earlier poem, and declared himself delighted to die, as he would then have an opportunity of appearing at the bedsides of his friends in the character

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of an amiable sprite, only to be chased away by the light of dawn. He also confided to the public that a secret was killing him, a secret which he concealed from the curious. In Lacenaire they would only see a statue, his soul was hidden from all men. Then, lest the public, under the influence of these engaging but strictly poetic moods, should form any misapprehension as to his real sentiments towards his own kind, he reassured them in "A Moment of Despair," wherein he declared what a pleasure it was to see an enemy writhing in pain, how hatred and revenge were the only things he loved, and how much pleasanter it was at night to see the spectre of a victim in a winding sheet at the side of your bed, than a tear of pity shining out of the darkness.

So greedily were Lacenaire's verses swallowed, that poets, who had found it difficult hitherto to obtain a hearing by legitimate means, assumed his name to catch the public attention, and, under the now familiar signature of Lacenaire, described the feelings of the condemned. The murderer, on hearing of these impostures, felt it his duty to declare himself. This he did in a letter to the publisher of the spurious verses. He thanked one unknown author for his modesty and self-denial in putting aside his own name in favour of that of Lacenaire, but added that he was bound in honesty to declare to his fellow-men his real thoughts and not to allow those of other people to pass for his. If at times in his verses he expressed himself in a fanciful or exaggerated manner, he claimed the licence of a poet; but, in his prose Memoirs which he was engaged in writing, people would read nothing but the plainest truth. "I do not wish," he added, "to set myself up as a professor of atheism and materialism, as some would have you believe; I have always had too much respect for the opinions of others. But that the public may be warned against deception, I feel bound to state that my opinions, whatever they are, have never changed and never will change." In conclusion he invited those who doubted him to come and visit him in prison, and assured

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them that there, under bolts and bars, with the scaffold staring him in the face, he was happier than he had ever been in their society.

But great as was Lacenaire's notoriety at this time, he did not make use of it for purposes of self-glorification or to gratify the curiosity, in some cases almost the admiration, of society. If Lacenaire was vain, his vanity was strongly tempered by a coldness and a reserve which saved him from displaying it in a foolish or undignified manner, and gave him a power of self-suppression and an austerity that kept men at a proper distance. Of affectation he was ignorant, all who came into contact with him immediately recognized his absolute sincerity. Those who approached him with light or trivial purpose were summarily disposed of. A young man of twenty wrote to ask for an interview. Lacenaire declined to answer the letter, as it seemed to him dictated by mere curiosity. To most visitors—and they were a veritable throng—he was rude, brusque, sometimes almost savage. Three wealthy English ladies drove up in their carriages to see the murderer. On receiving their request for an audience, he exclaimed—"They bore me; they come here as if they were coming to ask M. Geoffroy St. Hilaire[1] for a card to see the elephants. Tell them to be off."

M. Gisquet, the Prefect of Police, brought him one day a note from a certain Madame D——, well known in Parisian society. "Madame D. begs 'le sieur' Lacenaire to write a few lines to her on some imaginative theme; she is making a collection of autographs, and would be pleased to place among them that of 'le sieur' Lacenaire." Lacenaire read the note with a frown, and hastily penned the following reply—"*Monsieur* Lacenaire has received Madame D.'s note; he has but little time remaining to devote himself to imaginative themes; but, as he also is making a collection of autographs, he will place among them the handwriting of Madame D."

[1] Isidore Geoffroy St. Hilaire, 1805–1861, eminent French zoologist, charged with the supervision of the Jardin des Plantes.

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Gisquet pleaded for a more amiable reply. "No," answered Lacenaire, with unwonted animation of voice and gesture, "no! not another line. I am not at the beck and call of these fashionable people. Amenable to the law, I have received my punishment. The prison has transformed me, my condemnation purifies me, I am no longer the Lacenaire of crime and the gutter, I am no longer 'le sieur' Lacenaire, I have become once again *Monsieur* Lacenaire."

Lacenaire was all very well in his way, but he had no sense of humour. He thought he had, when he replied to a long homily in verse sent him by a philanthropic countess, by an unblushing proposal of love. But, like the efforts at fun of most serious persons, the vulgarity of the retort is more striking than the humour.

Thus sternly or coarsely did Lacenaire reply to the advances of rank and fashion. To those of religion, if less stern, he was in no way sympathetic. His distressing condition of mind on religious matters had attracted the attention of no less a person than the Archbishop of Paris. The Abbé Cœur was chosen to visit the atheist in prison, and endeavour to convince him of the error of his opinions. But the Abbé Cœur was what his name betokened, one whose strength lay in his heart rather than his head, a man of deep earnestness of feeling and purpose, an ex-soldier who had left the profession of arms at the call of a sudden revelation, a priest well fitted to cope with a simple intellect like that of Avril, but the very last man to convert Lacenaire, who prided himself on his invincible reason and the infallibility of his intellectual convictions.

Lacenaire received the Abbé with courtesy, but at once took care to warn him that he would listen to no "banalités du prêche." "Take me as I am, a man standing on the threshold of death, cut off from all the conventions of this world—for, the moment you cease to appeal to my reason and begin to deliver a homily, I can listen to you no longer." These words spelt failure for the earnest Abbé,

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the friend of the simple and illiterate. His first attempt at reasoning was to quote to Lacenaire the names of a number of illustrious men of genius who had believed in the Catholic Faith, Descartes, Pascal, Bossuet, Massillon, and others. The murderer caught at his illogical argument, and crushed the witless man with a retort, no less illogical, but confusing to the unready priest. "That's enough, Abbé, that's enough! I ask you to lead me to God by truth and persuasion, and you quote to me as an authority in matters of faith an intriguer like Massillon, who, to obtain the rochet of a bishop, had the cynicism to consecrate Cardinal Dubois. It is impossible to believe in a God when one admits into His service a lackey so stained with vice as Dubois!"

The Abbé retired in confusion, being no more than a zealous Abbé, and from that moment religion ceased to trouble itself with Lacenaire.

Phrenology was more persistent, and even went to the length of taking a plaster-cast of Lacenaire's face, a proceeding that caused the latter intense annoyance and discomfort, but which, perhaps with an eye to immortality, he endured. He also suffered the questions of the phrenologist, and replied to them with freedom. Asked if he felt any remorse for what he had done, "Not for my crimes," he replied, "but I can never forgive myself for having so far forgotten myself as in certain times of distress to beg for help and to have been refused." These sentiments are carefully explained by the learned phrenologist as due to an excess of the bump of self-esteem and an insufficiency in the bump of justice. Asked if he was as insensible to the claims of charity as to those of friendship, "No," was the answer, "when I saw a fellow-creature suffering or in trouble, I willingly shared what I had with him."

"But how is it that with your intelligence you gave yourself up to crime?"

"I had to live. I wanted to enjoy myself, and for that I wanted money. I had none, and I did not know

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how to get it. History has taught me that the end justifies the means, that kings have seen the murders they have committed go unpunished, and have even found apologists for them, if after their commission they knew how to preserve their authority. In war men kill each other, without even knowing one another, for the sake of some religious or political opinion. In July[1] didn't we see those who had killed the greatest number of the Swiss or the Royal Guards receive offices, pensions, decorations, in order to make their lives more pleasant for them? I think I acted in just the same fashion as they did, or else there is something in the organization of society which I fail to understand."

The day fixed by society for the practical exposition of those purposes of its organization, which it is just possible that Lacenaire had not entirely comprehended, was now close at hand. The Court of Cassation had offered every facility to a speedy settlement by rejecting the appeals of Lacenaire and Avril.[2] At the coming of the New Year, 1836, Lacenaire realized that his days were numbered, and his thoughts turned to the companion who was to share his fate.

A banquet seemed to him the most appropriate expression of his sentiments, to which, with the permission of the complacent and admiring authorities, he bade his friend Avril. The latter was very penitent by now, but not too penitent to dine; he accepted the invitation with cordiality. Roast mutton, a chicken, a sweet, dessert, two bottles of wine, coffee, brandy, and an Ode by the poet formed the repast. There were no servants at the table,

[1] Lacenaire alludes to the Revolution of July 1830, when Charles X. was driven from his throne, and Louis-Philippe became King of the French.

[2] The case came also before the King, Louis-Philippe, who insisted on personally supervising every sentence of death. When approving the sentence, he invariably signed the report with his initials, "L. P." But, in the case of Lacenaire, to mark his sense of the atrocity of the criminal and the justice of the punishment, he signed himself in full, "Louis-Philippe." Maxime Du Camp, *Paris*, Vol. III., pp. 171 and 173.

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but two gendarmes and four soldiers with bayonets attended at the request of the host, who explained as an apology for troubling them, that his guest was of an uncertain temper, and tigerish in the agility of his movements. The banquet was cheerful; the underdone condition of the chicken afforded a pleasant reminder to the revellers of the conditions under which they feasted. All went well until the arrival of the coffee, when the guest was observed to grow on a sudden serious, and to play carelessly with his fork. On his following up this amiable mannerism by remarking to his host, in a suppressed tone, "It's all very well, Monsieur Lacenaire" (with a sarcastic inflexion on Monsieur), "but it's you who are bringing me to the scaffold," the intervention of the armed retinue became necessary to prevent the present ceremony from encroaching in any way on the more public one, to which it was not intended to be more than a homely prelude.

9

Last Public Appearance of the Philosopher and Friend

January 9th, 1836

On the night of January 8th, 1836, Lacenaire slumbered as peacefully as ever. He had that evening, conscious that the end could not be far off, translated into verse certain doubts which he felt at this supreme moment, in regard to the certainty of logical materialism as a sufficient explanation of the universe. He had never been bigoted in any of his beliefs, and it was not unnatural that on the threshold of the guillotine he should admit the possibility of error in regard to a subject on which, philosophically speaking, certainty is impossible. His verses he entitled, "A Prayer to God." After expressing a conviction that, if God exists, He will pardon his crimes, he concludes—"God, whom I invoke,

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listen to my prayer, dart into my soul a ray of faith, for I blush to think that I am only matter, and yet in spite of myself, I doubt. Pardon me if in my presumption my eye has failed to detect Thy hand in Thy creation. God—annihilation—the soul—nature—these are secrets —I shall know them all to-morrow."

Lacenaire, after writing these lines, had retired to bed early; for it was only nine o'clock when the governor of the Conciergerie prison entered his cell, and roused him from his sublime repose. "Come, Lacenaire, I didn't think we should part so soon. Dress yourself, for you are to be transferred to Bicêtre." It was from this prison that the condemned travelled the last stage to the guillotine. "So much the better, so much the better," was the reply, "it is better sooner than later. To-morrow by all means, if to-morrow it's to be."

He dressed himself, and taking up his unfinished Memoirs, wrote the following lines—

"*January 9th*, 1836,
at the Prison of the Conciergerie.
10 *o'clock at night.*

"They have come to fetch me to go to Bicêtre. To-morrow for certain my head will fall. I am therefore obliged in spite of myself to close these Memoirs which I entrust to my publisher. Farewell to all who have ever loved me, farewell even to those who execrate me, for they have good cause to do so. And you who read these Memoirs, whose every page runs blood, you who will only read them when the executioner has cleaned his knife, reddened with my blood, keep me a place in your memories. Farewell!"

Monsieur Allard, the Chef de la Sûreté, who seems to have conceived a measure of sympathy for Lacenaire singular in a person of his unemotional character, was strangely moved at this hour of departure. "Courage, Monsieur Allard," said the murderer, "we must all get there some day. To-morrow or another day? What

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matter? My turn now. Come! take it cheerfully as I do! But thanks all the same for putting yourself so considerately into my place!" and he laughed loudly at his sneering pleasantry.

In the small hours of the morning of the 9th, the prison van brought the two men to Bicêtre. They were cheerful, and had beguiled their journey with song and chorus. Avril had written a note to Lacenaire, asking him to write a song, that he might sing it on the scaffold. On the back of it Lacenaire wrote—"I will not compose a song for you. People sing when they are afraid, therefore I hope we shall not sing, neither you nor I."

During the few hours of waiting, Lacenaire was wrapt in thought. When they interrupted him to take him to the service in the chapel, the burden of his thoughts was revealed. "M. Hugo," he said, "has written a very beautiful book called *Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné*. But if I had time, I could have beaten him hollow."

It was half-past six when Lacenaire and Avril entered the chapel, to hear the service for those at the point of death. It had been a cold, frosty night. Lacenaire was pale, he stood during the service, silent and respectful, "like a well-bred man taking part in the rites of some strange religion." Avril prayed, calmly and seriously.

At the end of the service Lacenaire asked for some coffee and a glass of brandy, and lit a cigar. "Fetch my blue coat," he said, "I want to wear it to-day." Then he sat on a stool whilst the executioner cut his hair and tied his hands behind his back.

A doctor watched Lacenaire as he stood waiting for the "toilet" of Avril to be completed, and thought he saw in his changes of colour, his wandering eyes, his parched lips, the struggle of flesh and spirit. Avril was very composed, "body firm, mind calm or apathetic," according to the doctor.

"At present it's the horses' business," said Lacenaire, as they stepped into the vehicle which was to take them to the guillotine.

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A pale dawn and a cold thaw had succeeded to the frosty night. Arrived at the place of execution,[1] the light of the torches discovered to the condemned men the guillotine, the uniforms of the National Guard, the vague outlines of the crowd, some five or six hundred strong, the coming and going of the executioners, for Monsieur de Beauvais had reinforced Monsieur de Paris for the occasion. All these things Lacenaire noted with a curious eye as he stepped from the cart, and stood aside to make way for his friend: he was still pale and calm, his light-blue coat thrown over his shoulders. He heard his friend mount the scaffold, he heard him ask the executioners to remove his cap lest it should be in the way, he heard him call to him a last adieu, he heard the knife fall, and he would have turned his head to look; but the Abbé by his side whispered—"No, Lacenaire, not that, they will think it bravado." Lacenaire obeyed the Abbé.

His turn had come. "Courage!" said the Abbé. Lacenaire looked at him as saying—"Nothing simpler; I am not afraid."[2]

Silently he mounted the scaffold, and placed his head in the "lunette" still red with the blood of Avril. And then a horrible thing came to pass. The knife would not fall in its groove. For twenty seconds it baulked the efforts of the executioners, and not until the head of Lacenaire had turned in the "lunette," and those standing round saw in his eyes for the first time the great horror of untimely death, did the tardy knife descend. It was then thirty-three minutes past eight o'clock.

[1] During the reign of Louis-Philippe, Parisian executions took place at the St. Jacques barrier, on the south side of the city.

[2] One or two newspapers of the day represented Lacenaire as having altogether lost his composure at the place of execution. But these accounts would seem to have been drawn up at the instigation of the Minister of Justice, in order to prevent the public from knowing the undesirable fact that "a man who had lived so criminal a life could die with the serenity of an honest man." Fouquier, *Causes Célèbres*, Vol. I. p. 32.

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II

TROPPMANN

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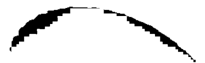

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II

TROPPMANN

"I WILL do something that shall astonish the world."

This, his juvenile promise, Jean Baptiste Troppmann made good in the year 1869, when he astonished the civilized world by one of the most cruel and diabolical murders ever perpetrated by a sane man. No crime of the nineteenth century has created a sensation comparable with that caused by the wholesale assassination of the Kinck family by their young friend, Troppmann. In France the prevalent restlessness and discontent that marked the closing months of the Second Empire found a means of indirect expression in the wild apprehension and fierce resentment excited by the ghastly crime. It is hardly an exaggeration to say, with a French historian of the case,[1] that, had the Parisian jury accorded to Troppmann extenuating circumstances, or the Emperor remitted in his case the extreme penalty, such leniency would in all probability have been followed by an insurrectionary outbreak. The crime was then, and has been since, made the foundation for the most extravagant charges and suspicions. Some asserted at the time of its perpetration that the murder had been organized by the tottering government of Napoleon III. in order to distract public attention from their own rotten condition. After the disastrous war with Germany, the hatred of Bismarck

[1] H. Escoffier, *Troppmann*, Paris, Flammarion.

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found vent in the story that Kinck had been a Prussian spy, that he had become dangerous to the great Chancellor, and that, in consequence of this, Bismarck had procured, at the hands of his agent Troppmann, the destruction of the entire family. As a matter of fact, however, the crime of Troppmann is well capable of a less sensational, if hardly less terrible, explanation than that of political expediency.

Between seven and eight o'clock, on the morning of Monday, September 20th, 1869, a farmer of the name of Langlois was on his way to his work in the vicinity of Pantin, a suburb some mile and a half north-east of Paris, when he was suddenly stopped by observing on the path in front of him some stains of blood, dotted here and there with what appeared to be portions of brain. Following up these gruesome indications, the farmer found that they led him to a neighbouring field, the soil of which bore traces of recent disturbance. At the edge of the field he noticed a handkerchief that was projecting from the ground. On lightly moving the earth about this spot, Langlois came on a human head. Without proceeding any further in his investigations, he immediately warned the police, who arrived upon the scene and commenced to dig up the field in the part indicated by the farmer. In a short time six human corpses, still warm, were dug out from a ditch, some ten feet long and two feet deep, in which they had been interred. They were the bodies of a woman and five children, four boys and a girl, who had evidently but a few hours before met with a violent death in this deserted spot. The bodies seemed to have been trodden down into their shallow grave, and an attempt made to give the soil above the same appearance that it had worn before it had been disturbed. There were no marks of a struggle, death must have come on its victims unawares, for the ground was but little trodden ; they had offered little resistance to their assassin ; only on the hand of one of the children was there any trace of an attempt to stay the fall of a weapon.

Medical examination showed that the woman had been

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first stabbed in the neck with a long knife, and that, though this stab had been sufficient to cause immediate death, the murderer had inflicted thirty other wounds with the same weapon on the body of his victim. The two youngest of the children had been put to death in a similar fashion. The other three had been battered to death by a heavy and pointed instrument, and two of them strangled as well. Their faces, horribly smashed and disfigured, betrayed the ferocity of their murderer. In another part of the field were found a knife that had broken off at the handle, a shovel, and a pick.

The general excitement caused by these horrible discoveries was not slow to furnish the judicial authorities with a satisfactory clue to the identity of the murdered woman and the five children. On Sunday the 19th, the evening preceding the discovery of the crime, a woman with five children giving the name of Kinck had called at the Railway Hotel of the Northern terminus. She said that she had come from Roubaix, a town in the Nord department, not far from Lille, and asked for her husband, whom she believed to be staying at the hotel. On being told that he was not there, she had gone away, and had never returned. The hotel servants, however, were able to identify these fugitive visitors with the bodies at the Morgue, and further evidence from Roubaix proved beyond a doubt that these bodies were those of Madame Kinck and her five children, and that she had left that town on Sunday the 19th to go to Paris and there rejoin her husband, Jean Kinck, and her eldest son, Gustave. The Kinck family numbered eight in all, the father, mother, and six children, ranging in age from the eldest Gustave, who was sixteen, to the little girl Marie-Hortense, only two and a half years old. At the time of her murder, Madame Kinck was about to again become a mother.

Such evidence as could be collected showed that Jean Kinck some time before the murder had left home for Alsace to transact some important business, that his eldest son had soon after followed him there, that they had

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together gone to Paris, and that from Paris Kinck had summoned his wife and children to join him. It was further proved that a man, giving the name of Jean Kinck, had entered his name on the books of the Railway Hotel, at which Madame Kinck had called; but this man had disappeared since the discovery of the crime. Of Gustave Kinck, the son, no trace could be found.

Was the father the author of this awful assassination? Had the eldest son been his victim or his accomplice? For three days the mystery seemed wrapped in darkness. On the 23rd, however, light was shed on the affair by an accidental occurrence at the port of Havre.

On the evening of the 20th, a man giving the name of Fisch of Roubaix had arrived in Havre and put up at a hotel. He had attracted the attention of the police by attempting to procure a passage to America without being furnished with the necessary papers, and then endeavouring to fraudulently purchase such papers. A gendarme, who met him on the 23rd and asked him some questions as to his identity, was so dissatisfied with his replies and his attempts to conceal a recent wound on his hand, that he decided to take him before a magistrate. As they were passing by the edge of the harbour, the prisoner suddenly jumped into the water. But a courageous seaman who witnessed the scene, jumped in after him, and in spite of the ferocious efforts of the prisoner to drown both himself and his rescuer, succeeded in bringing him to land, and so frustrating what was obviously a determined attempt on the part of the mysterious captive to escape further interrogation by suicide.

The prisoner, who was in a state bordering on insensibility, was taken to a hospital. There he was searched, and concealed about different parts of his person were found a number of deeds, bills, receipts, and other legal documents bearing the name of Jean Kinck. He had besides 210 francs in five-franc pieces, two watches, one gold the other silver, and various articles afterwards identified as having been the property of the Kinck family.

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When the prisoner came to himself, he at first declined to answer the questions that were put to him, and pretended to be still in a half-fainting condition. But as soon as he learnt from the conversation of those around him that he was suspected of being one of the authors of the murders at Pantin, he admitted that the papers found on him had come into his possession by the murder of the Kinck family, and gave his name as Jean Baptiste Troppmann. He declared that Jean Kinck and his eldest son, Gustave, were the actual assassins of the rest of the family, that he had merely acted as the passive agent of his two friends in the commission of the crime, and that he had not seen the Kincks since the night of the murder, nor knew anything of their whereabouts.

The arrest of Troppmann created the greatest sensation not only in Paris, but throughout France. M. Claude, the celebrated Head of the Detective Police during the Second Empire, left Paris immediately for Havre, in order that he might himself superintend the prisoner's journey to the capital. This commenced at a quarter to twelve on the morning of September 25th, and at twenty minutes to five M. Claude and his prisoner arrived at the Gare de Lyon. Troppmann, who had been thrown into a state of intense irritability by the persistent efforts of the large crowds that had gathered at every station to catch a sight of his face, had baffled their attempts by hiding his features behind a bandana handkerchief. At the Paris terminus the police cleverly eluded the mob, and Troppmann was driven with almost phenomenal rapidity to the Morgue. It had been decided by the judicial authorities that before the prisoner should have had time to thoroughly grasp the situation, he should find himself suddenly confronted with the six bodies discovered at Pantin.

With that object in view he was met at the Morgue by the Juge d'Instruction, who had been entrusted with the case, and two of the prosecuting magistrates of the Imperial Court. "Troppmann," said the Juge d'Instruction, pointing to the marble slabs on which lay the

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bodies of Madame Kinck and her children, "do you recognize any of these dead persons?" Without a tremor of emotion in voice or figure, and without taking off his cap or showing the least trace of pity or surprise, the prisoner, pointing to each corpse with his finger, replied, "That one there, that's Madame Kinck, that's Emile, that's Henri, that's Alfred, that's Achille, and that's little Marie." After some further interrogation, Troppmann was taken to the Mazas prison, where he was entered in the books as Jean Baptiste Troppmann, aged twenty-one, a native of Cernay in Alsace, and a mechanist by profession. In appearance Troppmann was about five feet high, slightly, rather than powerfully built; except the eye, which was shifty and restless, there was nothing about his face that could be called repulsive, or indicative of cruelty or ferocity; his hair was brown, his complexion sunburnt. The most remarkable feature about him were his thumbs. They were peculiarly long, reaching almost to the end of the first finger, and disproportionately powerful as compared with the rest of his hand. There was about his whole bearing a youthfulness, almost a boyishness, that seemed strangely inconsistent with the horrible crime of which he was suspected.

The very day following Troppmann's arrival in Paris, Sunday, the 25th of September, a butcher's dog running about the field at Pantin, where the bodies of Madame Kinck and her children had been unearthed, was instrumental in the discovery of a seventh body, that of Gustave Kinck, the eldest son, whom Troppmann had represented as his father's accomplice in the murder of his family. This new discovery was kept from Troppmann during Sunday, which he had spent in assiduously reading successive numbers of the *Picturesque Magazine*; but on the Monday morning he was again taken to the Morgue, and confronted with the corpse of Gustave. On this occasion he seemed for a moment startled, and covered his face with his handkerchief. "Ah, the poor fellow," he exclaimed. "Take down that handkerchief,"

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said the Juge d'Instruction, "you needn't pretend to cry. Look at this body. Do you recognize it?" "Yes, it is Gustave." "And you killed him?" "No, it was his father, who was afraid he would reveal the crime." "Come," pursued the magistrate, "you're changing your line of defence; you must be well aware that we can't believe you." "Ah!" replied Troppmann, "I wish I was in his place." During the rest of the interview Troppmann was perfectly self-possessed. An expert examination of the body of Gustave established the fact, fatal to Troppmann's story, that Gustave had been killed and buried before his mother and the little children.

The fate of Jean Kinck, the father, still remained a mystery.

The career of Troppmann up to the date of the murder, and his relations with the Kinck family were now made the subject of judicial investigation. It appeared that his father was an Alsatian artisan, skilled in the setting up of machinery, himself something of an inventor. Jean Baptiste was born at Cernay in 1848. He showed himself, as he grew to manhood, to be gifted with a superior intelligence and a profoundly vicious disposition. His education had been neglected, but he was a greedy reader of sensational novels and fabulous stories of famous criminals. "From perpetually living in this imaginary world," writes the Abbé Crozes, who attended him to the scaffold, "he had lost all sense of right and wrong, and become filled with a burning desire to emulate those heroic criminals who rehabilitate their characters by giving the fruits of their crimes to the poor and suffering, and end their days by devoting to charitable objects an income that has been derived from the exercise of dagger and poison." The Abbé even goes so far as to suggest that Jean Valjean was the model that had most probably served as an example to the distorted imagination of Troppmann. Whether that was the case or no, Troppmann's ignorant vanity inspired him with the idea that he was eminently fitted to realize in actual life a type

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of career hitherto confined to the pages of fiction. This intelligent young Alsatian of one-and-twenty, with his boy's face and pleasing voice, the youthful baritone that gently smote the ears of Tourgeneff as he watched him in the condemned cell, knew sufficiently well how to render himself attractive, could be gentle and docile as occasion demanded; but at heart he was a sinister creature—vain, idle, inordinately ambitious, and of a sombre and brooding temper, capable of violent and ferocious outbursts, in one of which he had tried to kill his brother with a mallet. In spite of these unfavourable indications, his mother spoilt him, letting him have his own way in everything. His father had taken him into his business, but found him an indifferent worker, who preferred chemical experiments to the study of machinery.

In December 1868, Troppmann was sent by his father to Pantin, there to set up some machinery that he had sold to a Parisian manufacturer. He remained at Pantin some six months, residing close to the spot afterwards selected for the extermination of the Kinck family. The few persons who were privileged to intrude on his solitary existence were most impressed by his overpowering desire to become a rich man. Shortly after he left Pantin, his father sent him on a similar errand to Roubaix, a prosperous manufacturing town near Lille. It was during his visit to this town that he made the acquaintance of Jean Kinck. Kinck was a compatriot of Troppmann, a hard-working, industrious man, who from the position of an ordinary workman had risen to be the owner of a prosperous business as a manufacturer of spindles for looms. He was devoted to his wife and children; indeed with the former he had throughout all their married life had only one cause for amiable disagreement. He had purchased a small property in his native province of Alsace, and was anxious to extend it with a view to making it his home, when he should retire from business. His wife, whose whole life had been passed in or about

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Roubaix, always did her best to dissuade him from this project.

Troppmann, on the other hand, as soon as he had insinuated himself into the good graces of this happy and united family, exerted all his powers of persuasion to stimulate Kinck's desire to return one day to his original home. Though Troppmann was only twenty and Kinck about fifty, the two men became very intimate, and held long and private conversations, which, from remarks let fall by Kinck, were devoted to schemes for acquiring further property in Alsace. About this time Troppmann uttered the prophecy that he would one day astonish the world ; he declared openly his passion for wealth, and expressed the sentiment that all means were justifiable for acquiring it, provided that its owner afterwards made a beneficent use of it in America or some other distant country.

As a result of their frequent confabulations Kinck and Troppmann had planned out a journey to Alsace. On August 18th Troppmann left Roubaix, carrying in his pocket an itinerary drawn up in the handwriting of Kinck. On the 21st he arrived at his parents' house at Cernay. The same day he wrote to Kinck, telling him to meet him at the railway station of Bollwiller, a small Alsatian town, some miles north-east of Cernay. "Set your wife thoroughly at rest," he wrote, "and tell her to expect you home again between ten and eleven on the morning of September 2nd." Kinck accordingly left Roubaix on the 24th, and arrived at Bollwiller about eleven in the morning of the following day. He carried with him a small sum of money, and a number of blank cheques on a banking firm at Roubaix. Troppmann met him at the station, and the two men got into an omnibus which took them to the neighbouring village of Soultz. After inquiring what time in the evening the coach left for Guebwiller, a town a few miles distant where Kinck intended to visit some relatives, the travellers walked off quickly in the direction of the village of Wattwiller.

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From that moment no traces could be found of Jean Kinck, except such as were furnished by the doubtful statements of Troppmann.

Troppmann had on the 25th returned alone to Cernay. He appeared to be excited, spoke of a gentleman with whom he was concerned in an important enterprise, and spent a certain quantity of money and bank-notes in organizing pleasure-trips and attending race-meetings.

In the meantime Madame Kinck was impatiently expecting news of her husband. On the 27th she received a letter which, though purporting to come from him, was in the handwriting of Troppmann. Kinck explained in the letter that he had met with an accident to his hand that prevented him from holding a pen, and was therefore using his friend Troppmann as an amanuensis. This letter enclosed a cheque for 5500 francs, dated from Guebwiller, August 25th, and signed by Jean Kinck, which his wife was directed to cash at the bank; she was then to send the money to her husband in a stamped and addressed envelope that was also enclosed. On the 28th Madame Kinck cashed the cheque and sent off the required sum, and at the same time the elder son, Gustave, wrote to his father announcing the dispatch of the money. On the 31st Troppmann presented himself at the Guebwiller post-office and asked for the money, describing himself as Jean Kinck, and producing papers to prove his identity. The postmaster distrusted his youthful appearance, whereupon Troppmann stated that he was Jean Kinck, *fils*. The postmaster was still dissatisfied, and when one of the relatives of Kinck, living at Guebwiller, whom he confronted with Troppmann, declared that there was no such person as Jean Kinck, *fils*, he positively declined to give up the money. Troppmann resigned any further attempt to personally obtain the money, and decided on a new plan of operation. On September 4th, travelling *viâ* Paris and Lille, he suddenly presented himself at Roubaix at the house of the Kincks. He informed the family of the refusal of

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the postmaster at Guebwiller to pay out the money. Urgent affairs, he said, had called Jean Kinck to Paris, but he brought them a letter which the former had dictated. It ran—

"My dear Family, the time has come when I must declare to you the business that is occupying me. I have sent Troppmann to receive your registered letter as I am detained in Paris. He will explain how it is I cannot write in my own hand. You must all of you come to Paris for two or three days. Don't fear the expense, as Troppmann has given me half a million. I insist on your coming. You, Gustave, must go at once to Guebwiller to draw out the money. I enclose a power of attorney which you must get signed by the mayor. I send you cheque for 500 francs. I have given all the necessary directions to Troppmann, which he will explain to you, and you must be sure and do all that he tells you."

The power of attorney and the cheque did not accompany the letter, but Troppmann said that they would arrive by the next post. He made Madame Kinck and her eldest son promise to carry out his instructions, and departed after they had taken an affectionate leave of him as he got into the cab. The next day they received the power of attorney and the cheque, both dated from Paris, and purporting to be in the handwriting of Kinck. As a matter of fact they were in the handwriting of Troppmann, and had been sent from Lille, where Troppmann was proved to have purchased a form of a power of attorney. On leaving Roubaix Troppmann had returned to Paris and taken a room at the Northern Railway Hotel, giving his name as Jean Kinck. On September 5th Madame Kinck received a letter from this address, purporting to be signed by her husband, repeating his directions as to her visit to Paris, and saying, "Our business is going on very successfully." Madame Kinck did not conceal from those about her her uneasiness as to her

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husband's unusual proceedings, and his continued inability to use his hand. However, she had full confidence in Troppmann, and did implicitly as she was directed. In accordance with these directions Gustave had left home for Guebwiller, where he arrived on the 7th, and awaited the power of attorney which his mother was to forward to him after she had fulfilled the necessary legal formalities. Repeated letters from Jean Kinck charged Gustave on no account to come to Paris unless he had the money, while at the same time he wrote to his wife, telling her to be ready to start, and not to worry herself, "as to-day we are rich."

The mystification of Troppmann's parents as to their son's proceedings were only partially allayed by occasional letters, in which he spoke of some mysterious business that was going on well, and would, when finally executed, make them all independent for the rest of their lives; but the only address he gave them in Paris was "Poste Restante."

In the meantime Gustave was getting tired of waiting at Guebwiller. When at last his mother sent him the power of attorney, and he presented it at the post-office, he found that she had neglected to have it properly drawn up, and that consequently the postal authorities refused to give him the money. Without awaiting further instructions, he telegraphed to Paris on September 16th to "Jean Kinck, Northern Railway Hotel. Arriving to-morrow, twenty minutes past five in the morning." But he missed his train, and did not arrive until half-past nine on the evening of the 17th. Troppmann met him at the station and took him to the hotel. There he told him to write immediately the following letter to his mother—"Sept. 17th—Just arrived at Paris. You must come too. Leave Roubaix 2 p.m. Sunday, and Lille at 4.10, second-class. Bring all papers.—Gustave."

This letter dispatched, Troppmann and young Kinck hurriedly left the hotel. They did not return that night. In the morning Troppmann returned alone; his com-

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panion was never seen again. Between nine and ten on the morning of the 17th, previous to the arrival of Gustave, Troppmann had purchased at an ironmonger's a garden shovel and a small pick.

Madame Kinck received Gustave's letter on Saturday the 18th and, in spite of her repugnance to the journey, rapidly made her preparations, and left Roubaix for Paris at mid-day on Sunday the 19th, accompanied by her five little children, all in high spirits at the prospect of seeing their father again. At Lille Madame Kinck found that there was an earlier train leaving for Paris than the one indicated to her in her husband's instructions. She decided to take the earlier one, with the result that she arrived at the Gare du Nord some hours before she was expected. She went straight to the Railway Hotel, and was told that M. Jean Kinck had gone out. She declined to stay and take some refreshment, saying she preferred to go and wait at the station, where her husband would be expecting to meet her by the last train.

Troppmann would seem to have considered the purchase of gardening implements an indispensable preliminary to welcoming the members of the Kinck family to Paris. At five in the afternoon of this same Sunday, the 19th, he had called at a tool-maker's in the Rue d'Allemagne and bought a pick and shovel of a larger and stronger make than those with which he had greeted Gustave. He did not take the implements away with him at the time, but said he would call for them later on in the evening. He returned about eight o'clock, carried off his purchases, and took the Aubervilliers omnibus as far as the Cross Roads, the point on the line of route lying nearest to Langlois' field at Pantin. Later in the evening he returned to Paris, and at ten minutes to eleven, accompanied by a woman and five children, he hailed a cab stationed on the rank in front of the Gare du Nord, and told the driver to go to the Porte de Flandre. They started, and the cabman was struck by the high spirits of the party, who chatted gaily of their approaching

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meeting with the head of the family. On their arrival at the gate Troppmann offered the driver an increase of fare if he would take them as far as the Cross Roads. The latter agreed to do so, and after some difficulty succeeded, with the help of Troppmann's directions, in finding the destination—a lonely building at the side of the road. As soon as the cab stopped, Troppmann got out with Madame Kinck—for it was she—and the two youngest of the children. He told the other three to await his return, and followed by the mother and her two little ones, went down a narrow path leading to the fields. Five-and-twenty minutes passed, whilst the children prattled to the cabman of their long journey, their first visit to Paris, the kindness of their friend, Troppmann, and their joy at the prospect of so soon seeing their father. It was a dark night, and the wind rather high. At the expiration of nearly half-an-hour Troppmann returned alone. "We have decided to stay the night here, children," he said. He then paid the cabman, and accompanied by the three children disappeared for the second time down the narrow pathway. It was a quarter to one. The cabman drove back to Paris. He had heard no sound proceeding from the direction of the fields; but the watchman at a neighbouring warehouse thought he distinguished, somewhere about midnight, feeble cries of "Mamma! mamma!" lasting only a short time. Troppmann did not return to the Railway Hotel until Monday morning, when he hurried to his room, made a rapid change of clothing, and left the hotel for good. Some clothes he left behind him were found to be stained with blood. The same night he reached Havre, where, after vainly attempting to sail for America, he was arrested on the 23rd.

When justice had established this long series of facts regarding the connection of Troppmann with Jean Kinck, there was only wanting one other fact to prove him conclusively to be the sole murderer of the entire family, namely, the discovery of the remains of Jean Kinck; for there could now be little doubt that the latter had not dis-

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appeared after murdering his wife and children as Troppmann had alleged, but had himself been the victim of a crime conceived and executed by his friend. On November 13th when preparations were already being made to send Troppmann before the Assize Court, the prisoner removed all doubts as to the actual perpetrator or perpetrators of the crime, by confessing that he alone had murdered Kinck, his wife, and their six children. Troppmann's confession confirmed the suspicions of the magistrates that Jean Kinck had been the first of his family to be assassinated, and that he had met his death in the neighbourhood of Guebwiller, where he and Troppmann had been seen together for the last time.

"On the 25th of August last," said Troppmann, "I met Jean Kinck at the Bollwiller railway-station, and we went together by omnibus as far as Soultz, where he deposited his luggage. After taking some refreshment we walked to Wattwiller, there we bought a bottle of wine and started for the ruins of the castle of Herinfluch. I was carrying in my pocket a phial of prussic acid, which I had myself distilled. Taking advantage of a moment when Kinck was looking the other way, I emptied the contents of the phial into the bottle of wine. When we had got to the top of the hill, I offered Kinck the wine. He took some, and dropped like a log. It was now four o'clock in the afternoon, the spot quite deserted. I dragged the body a few yards away from the road, dug with my hands in the earth, which thereabouts was soft and crumbling, and made a ditch at the foot of an oak in which I buried the body. I had previously emptied the dead man's pockets and taken away all his papers, including two cheques and two hundred-franc notes. I then returned to my own people, with whom I stayed till September 3rd, when I left for Paris."

After describing his proceedings between the death of Jean Kinck and the arrival of Gustave at Paris, which tallied with the account of them already compiled by the magistrates, Troppmann continued—"I met Gustave at

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the station at half-past nine on the night of the 17th. He told me that he had not been able to get hold of the 5500 francs; I said I would take him to his father. We went by omnibus as far as La Villette, and then walked to Pantin. When we had reached a lonely part of the fields (it was then about half-past ten), and were walking side by side, I stabbed him in the back with a knife I had bought the day before. Without a cry Gustave fell on his back and lay absolutely motionless. If I inflicted other wounds on him, of which however I have no recollection, they would have been with the object of rendering him unrecognizable. I don't remember what I did with the knife, but I understand it was found in his neck." Gustave was buried with the help of the pick and shovel which Troppmann had purchased that afternoon.

Then followed the account of the murders of Madame Kinck and her children, in which Troppmann made perfectly clear the method by which, unaided, he had disposed of six people. He had first taken with him to the field the mother and the two youngest children, aged eight and four. He had suddenly stabbed the mother in the back; she had fallen without a cry, and he had then struck the two little children, who died no less rapidly. He had then returned to the cab and fetched the other three children. But before reaching the place of the murder, he made them stop and accompany him one by one to join their mother. On some pretext or other he slipped a comforter round the neck of each child as they went along, and as soon as they came to the spot where the mother lay dead, strangled them.

"I murdered the father," said Troppmann, "to get possession of the money which he said he had in the bank, and which would have been paid out to his order. That order I proposed to forge by copying his signature. Having murdered him it was almost a matter of necessity to me to kill all the rest of the family, since they all knew that Kinck had gone with me to my home."

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The truth of Troppmann's confession was borne out by the discovery on November 25th of the remains of Jean Kinck in a forest near the ruins of the castle of Herinfluch, at the spot indicated by Troppmann as the scene of the crime. Some crows feeding on the decaying body of the unfortunate man first attracted the attention of those who, for some days, had been vainly searching for what would be a practical confirmation of the truth of Troppmann's narrative. This narrative may be accepted as giving a substantially trustworthy account of the crime, though Troppmann afterwards saw fit to retract it, and to declare that he had committed the murders in association with three accomplices. A letter from his father gave him the first suggestion of such a defence. Shortly after his arrest the former had written to him expressing the conviction that his son could not have done such an atrocious deed by himself, and entreated him to name his accomplices. Troppmann, probably from a desire to mitigate the horror attaching to his guilt and branding with eternal disgrace his father's name, adopted the suggestion. He would seem to have always had a certain regard for his family; he declared that one of his chief motives in the extinction of the Kinck family was his desire to enrich his own parents, that he hated to see his father and mother poor and dependent, working merely to make money for other people. During the progress of the crime he had constantly written them letters full of the hope and promise of making them wealthy, and so independent. It was in all probability a desire to relieve them of some portion of the terrible odium attaching to his crime, that induced him to maintain even to the foot of the scaffold the story of his mysterious accomplices, a story that was entirely unsupported by any evidence worthy of the name.

Such was the crime of Pantin, perhaps the most diabolical murder of the nineteenth century, not excepting the Ratcliffe Highway murders celebrated by De Quincey. Though John Williams disposed of two entire families,

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they were not families of whom he had been the intimate and trusted friend, nor were his crimes as broadly conceived and carefully premeditated as that of Troppmann. Williams was a man of mature years, hardened, no doubt, to crime by a career of progressive evil; Troppmann a boy of one-and-twenty. Neither of them succeeded in escaping detection, but Williams enjoyed over Troppmann the great advantage that his victims were absolute strangers to him, whereas Troppmann's known intimacy with the Kincks severely handicapped him in the successful execution of a project far more elaborate and unconventional than the bloody brigandage of De Quincey's hero. Troppmann's was a bold stroke, but happily the postal regulations at Guebwiller, and the passport regulations at Havre, were efficacious to vindicate society in the face of such a monstrous outrage against one of the most elementary conditions of its organization.

The trial of Troppmann was, as may be imagined, a considerable event. Every class of Parisian society had, since his arrest, eagerly sought for a sight or details of the young assassin, from the Prince Imperial, then a boy of thirteen, one of whose juvenile sketches of Troppmann is reproduced in Dayot's illustrated Album of the Second Empire, down to the workman who bought the catchpenny accounts of the crime sold in the streets. So great was the public curiosity that the Minister of the Interior was obliged to issue a circular, in which he pointed out that, though the Mazas prison had been besieged by such celebrities as the English Ambassador and the Members of the Institute, by doctors and men of science, no one had been allowed to see the culprit. But he added, by way of consolation, that by calling at the lodge of the prison visitors could see a life-size portrait of Troppmann, which was said to be a very good likeness.

The trial commenced before the Parisian Assize Court on December 28th. Its result was a foregone conclusion, its proceedings shed no new light on the crime. It terminated on the 30th with the full conviction of the prisoner,

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and he was condemned to death. Throughout the trial Troppmann had obstinately, at times fiercely, adhered to his story of the accomplices, and this, with a plea of insanity, had formed the basis of the eloquent defence that the famous advocate, Lachaud, had urged on his behalf. The interval between his condemnation and execution Troppmann spent in endeavouring to persuade different officials of the prison to procure him the means of suicide; in sending, through the intermediary of a detective whom he had won over, letters to the Empress, that purported to come from one of the mysterious accomplices; and in addressing rhymed effusions to his warders and a chemist in acknowledgment of trifling services rendered him. But as soon as he perceived that all hope of mercy was at an end, he became obstinately silent and morose; and not even M. Claude, for whom he had conceived a liking, was able to persuade him to abandon his attitude of sullen reserve.

The execution of Troppmann, which took place at seven o'clock on the morning of January 19th, 1870, on the Place de la Roquette, has been immortalized by the pen of the great Russian novelist, Tourgeneff. Maxime Du Camp had persuaded him to be present along with Sardou, Albert Wolff, and other celebrities. It is seldom that literary genius is applied to the description of such a spectacle; it has certainly never been applied to it with more poignant effect. The seven hours of waiting, the preparation of the scaffold, the Parisian crowd that attends these public executions, the nervous and uneasy conversation of the few privileged spectators permitted to wait within the walls of the prison, all these things have been many times described, but never before or since with the observation and imagination of a man of genius. The short boyish figure, the fine muscular development, the soft baritone voice and dignified politeness of Troppmann; the way in which he raced along the passage from his cell to the pinioning-room, taking four steps at a time, at a speed that resembled a flight rather than a procession; the

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executioner's assistant bungling with gouty fingers as he cut the hair and bound the legs of the prisoner; the momentary shudder of the victim at the sight of the guillotine, to be immediately conquered by the self-possession that then for the moment, and only then, had failed him, these and other features of the scene become strangely vivid and human when set down by one of the greatest masters of the analysis of human motive and character.[1]

Tourgeneff was not alone in being impressed by the self-possession and dignity of Troppmann. He quotes a remark made by one of his companions—"It seemed to me," he said, "as though we were in 1794 instead of 1870, as though we were not ordinary citizens escorting to the scaffold a common assassin, but Jacobins hurrying to his execution a ci-devant marquis." That in the hour of his execution so monstrous a criminal as Troppmann should be able to give such an impression of his own superiority over the spectators of his expiation may not be an argument against capital punishment, but it is a very strong argument against the publicity of executions. Troppmann's case only goes to show that a dignified bearing and a polite acquiescence in what cannot be avoided are quite consistent with the most complete absence of all moral sense. The courteous boy with the youthful baritone was vain, greedy and cunning, callous and ferocious, a black-hearted murderer of little children.

[1] This striking description of Troppmann's execution has not been included in Mrs. Garnett's admirable translation of Tourgeneff's novels and tales. There is a French translation of it in Pavlovsky's *Souvenirs sur Tourguéneff*, Paris, 1887.

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III

BARRÉ AND LEBIEZ

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III

BARRE AND LEBIEZ

In the year 1878 a woman of the name of Jeanson let furnished lodgings at the house in Paris, No. 42 Rue Poliveau. On March 23rd in that year two young men called on her about six o'clock in the evening, and hired a room, paying eight days' rent in advance. One of them, in entering his name in the register of the house, described himself as "Emile Gérard, medical student, aged twenty-six, born at Blois, where he habitually resides." The two young men declared their intention of moving in on the following day, and took their departure. About six o'clock in the morning of the 24th, before it was daylight, the new lodgers returned, and went up to their room, carrying each a parcel. In a short time they came down-stairs and went out again, leaving the key of the room with the concierge; but the key of a cupboard up-stairs in which they had left the two parcels they took away with them. Neither of the lodgers ever returned to No. 42 Rue Poliveau.

On April 6th Madame Jeanson re-let the room that had been occupied for so brief a space by the "medical student, Emile Gérard," and in preparing it for its new tenant set about opening the cupboard, the key of which had disappeared with the two fugitive lodgers. Inside the cupboard lay the parcels that had been left there on March 24th. Madame Jeanson opened one of them, and

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to her surprise and horror, found that it contained the arm and thigh of a human being, wrapped up in some old blue shirts. The contents of the other parcel were similar, the arm and thigh in this case being wrapped in a black petticoat. Madame Jeanson communicated with the police. The Rue Poliveau being in the neighbourhood of the surgical theatres, and Emile Gérard having described himself as a medical student, it was at first thought that this discovery was the outcome of a gruesome practical joke. The police happened at the time to be engaged in investigating the mysterious disappearance of an old woman; accordingly they were at first inclined to believe that an unpleasantly facetious medical student had placed the remains there, with a view to starting the detectives on a false scent.

The old woman, whose sudden disappearance was engaging the attention of the police, was a seller of milk. She lived at No. 10 Rue de Paradis-Poissonière. In the morning she sold milk in the entrance to the courtyard of the house, and during the day she went out as a charwoman. Though poor in appearance the woman Gillet, for that was the name she was known by, was of a saving disposition, having some £500 invested in various securities. She had been last seen by a neighbour about ten o'clock in the morning of March 23rd. Since then she had never returned to her room in the Rue de Paradis-Poissonière, nor could any trace of her be discovered. A great deal of her property had also disappeared, for, on her room being searched, hardly £20 in securities and cash could be found there. This made it seem as if the old woman had been the victim of robbery, if not of something worse.

An inquiry into the case had been opened under the skilful conduct of the Juge d'Instruction, Guillot. The remains found in the Rue Poliveau, which the police had first regarded with suspicion as a practical joke at their expense, were declared, on examination, to be those of a woman, and certain marks upon them identified them as

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being in all probability those of the missing woman, Gillet. Immediately all those who had been intimately acquainted or had at any time had business transactions with the old woman were summoned before the examining magistrate. Among the latter was a young man, aged about twenty-five, of the name of Barré, who, in his capacity of broker, had been in negotiation with the woman Gillet immediately before her disappearance. He, among others, was interrogated by the Judge, but his replies were in every respect satisfactory. On April 18th, however, in the course of the investigation, Barré was sent for by the magistrate, and confronted with the woman Jeanson, who kept the furnished lodgings in the Rue Poliveau, where the human remains had been found. The latter on seeing him declared that his figure was similar to that of the man who had taken her room on March 23rd, and entered his name as Emile Gérard, medical student; but, she added, that man had worn a beard, whereas Barré had none. Pressed by the Judge, Barré admitted that at the time spoken to by the woman Jeanson he had been wearing a beard, which had been only quite recently removed. The Judge asked him to sit down and write a few lines on a piece of paper. He did so, with a firm hand. On comparing this specimen of Barré's handwriting with the entry made by Emile Gérard in the register of lodgers kept at No. 42 Rue Poliveau, M. Guillot was astonished at the close resemblance between the two. He decided to provisionally detain M. Barré. The latter accepted his decision with composure.

This composure was before long rudely shaken by certain information which came to the knowledge of the Juge d'Instruction. At Barré's home in the Rue Rochebrune, a number of shirts were found identical with those in which the remains of the woman Gillet had been wrapped. The mark L. M. on one of them was identified as that of Barré's mistress, a woman of the name of Léontine Morin. A list of the woman Gillet's securities, found in her room, enabled the magistrate to trace them,

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and it was discovered that on the 23rd, 25th, and 27th of March these securities had been negotiated with various brokers either by Barré in person, or through the medium of a friend of his named Demol, who had been his fellow-clerk in a notary's office.

This accumulation of evidence proved too much for Barré's powers of resistance. Pressed by the Judge he stammered out a confession. He said that the head and trunk of the murdered woman would be found in a portmanteau that had been dispatched on March 25th from the Montparnasse terminus, by passenger train to Mans. He further asserted that he had an accomplice, and gave his name as Lebiez, a medical student living at No. 3 Rue des Fossés-Saint-Jacques. This last statement explained the skill with which it had been observed that the arms and thighs found in the Rue Poliveau had been severed from the body. On the night of April 20th the medical student Lebiez and his mistress were hurried out of bed and removed to a place of safety, where they would be at the complete disposal of M. le. Juge d'Instruction.

The first meeting of Barré and Lebiez after their arrest is described in the official report of the proceedings before the examining magistrate—

"We ordered Barré to be brought before us. His countenance, which had changed considerably on the night of April 20th, is now marked by a far more profound transformation. It expresses terror and stupefaction. His colour is livid, his haggard eyes seem as if they saw in front of them some insupportable spectacle. As he comes into the office, his legs give way beneath him, and the warders are obliged to hold him up. Beads of sweat roll down his cheeks, and we are compelled to render him some assistance before he is strong enough to answer our questions. We point out to him that his present condition is such as to reveal the full horror of the crime he has committed, and that it is no longer in his power to frustrate justice by lying statements. For a time he hesitates; then, lowering his head and with his eyes fixed on the

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ground, in a low voice and broken sentences he makes the following answers to the questions which we address to him, and which we have been obliged to repeat to him many times over."

The murder of the woman Gillet by Barré and Lebiez had, according to the former's statements, been committed about ten o'clock on the morning of March 23rd, at Barré's rooms at No. 61 Rue d'Hauteville.

Juge d'I.—What time did the woman Gillet arrive, and what did you do ?

Barré.—She came at ten o'clock in the morning with the milk. I was not alone; Lebiez was with me. She went into the dining-room. I hit her on the head with a hammer. She fell down. I ran frightened into my study. He, the other one, finished her off. She cried out. He came into the study and took my ink-eraser, which is shaped like a lance. I think he stuck it into her heart. I wanted to get away. When I hit her, the blood had spurted all over me ; there was some on my shirt, so I burnt it.

J. d'I.—You are not telling the whole truth. Since you were capable of striking the first blow, you were surely able to see the matter through ?

Barré.—No, monsieur, believe me. It's Lebiez who urged me to the crime. . . . He came back during the day to cut up the body.

J. d'I.—You were present at this ghastly operation ?

Barré.—No, no, don't say that ; I got away. . . .

" At this point we suspend the interrogatory of Barré and send for Lebiez. His emotion, though apparently more violent, seems to us less real than that of Barré. He is a prey to convulsions, twists his arms about, and pulls out his hair ; but as soon as physical fatigue obliges him to desist, it is easy to see that he has a perfect mastery over himself. His eyes preserve an intelligent and, at times, ironical expression. His chief feeling seems to be one of extreme irritation against Barré, of whom he says—'A fellow I ought to have had nothing to do with ! If I am here, it's through him ! He, my college chum !

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My friend! He accuses me! What a future he prepares for me! What motive had I to commit this crime? Tell me that! If there is no motive, how can I be guilty?'"

J. d'I.—For some days you had been jointly making preparations for this crime?

Lebiez.—I had known for some days that he wanted to commit it. He asked me to help him, but I wouldn't. I am innocent. He did it all by himself; it's awful to be treated in this way!

J. d'I.—It is time you came to yourself. Nobody is affected by your cries and gestures. You committed this crime in concert with Barré, and now it only remains for you to suffer the expiation.

Lebiez.—Oh, the wretch! If you really knew everything! Do what you like with me! I'll say nothing more.

He falls into a chair. It is as much as two people can do to restrain him.

Lebiez.—And Barré! It is you who have done this! Ah, I have always been too good to you, I have done whatever you wished. But that's just like me; I have too much heart! Ask my friends and they will tell you that I have never been able to refuse them anything. I have deprived myself to give them money. Fool, idiot that I am! Such is life! One is too good—one does kindness, and this is the reward!

J. d'I.—It would be more just to say, "I have done wrong, and this is the punishment."

Lebiez.—Ah, Barré! the wretch!

J. d'I.—Do you admit the truth of his statements?

Lebiez.—I can tell you nothing!

J. d'I.—Silence is of no avail, the time has come when you *must* speak.

He continues to struggle, then, throwing down his hat in a fit of rage, he cries in a loud voice—"Very well then! Yes—yes—yes!—I did it!"

J. d'I.—How did you strike her?

Lebiez.—As if I could remember! The whole thing disgusts me! A beastly business! And to think that he

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has brought me to this! But for him I should never have done it!

"The prisoners are then taken together to the room at the Morgue where the post-mortems are held. There the portmanteau containing the body of the woman Gillet, which has been sent from Mans, is opened in their presence, and the remains are placed on the table for examination by the surgeons. Barré turns away his head. Lebiez is calmer and follows the details of the post-mortem with evident curiosity. We ask Barré to assist the surgeons by pointing out the place where he struck the woman. Placing his hand on her head he shows us by a gesture, but without speaking a word, the exact spot. . . . We invite Lebiez to say where he struck and with what weapon. He answers—'In the heart, with an ink-eraser which I took off Barré's writing-table, after the woman had been knocked down.' The doctor, remarking that there are six perforations at the spot indicated, Lebiez adds—'Very likely, I struck like this!' and he imitates the movements of a man who is rapidly striking a number of blows one after the other."

The Judge and his two culprits go from the Morgue to Barré's rooms in the Rue d'Hauteville, where the murder had taken place.

"After narrating in detail the circumstances of the crime, Barré concludes by saying—'The whole thing was arranged between us.' As they are being taken away Barré turns to Lebiez and says—'You're not angry with me, Paul, are you?' Lebiez replies—'No, I'm not angry, give me some tobacco.' In going down the staircase and through the courtyard of the house, Barré lowers his head; but Lebiez looks quite calmly at the people, who, in spite of the precautions taken, crowd him as he passes, and utter threats."

The mystery of the Rue Poliveau, as the discovery of the parcels of remains had come to be called, was solved. Aimé Thomas Barré, broker, aged twenty-five, and Paul Louis René Lebiez, medical student, aged twenty-four,

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were proved on their own positive admissions to be the murderers of the old woman Gillet. They had deliberately done her to death, that they might possess themselves of the few hundreds of pounds that she was reputed to have saved. On both their parts hers was a brutal and sordid murder, presenting no circumstance that could be considered, even by a French jury, as extenuating their guilt. But, in spite of the commonplace nature of their crime, there was that about Barré and Lebiez in respect of their circumstances in life, their bringing-up, their abilities, their education and their opportunities, which singles them out from among the common herd of assassins, and makes their crime an instructive example of moral obliquity, which is rather intensified and rendered more deliberate and callous by the advantages of intelligence and education.

Aimé Thomas Barré was born in the year 1853 at St. Georges-sur-Loire, which lies in the department of the Maine-et-Loire near the city of Angers. His father, who had begun life as a working carpenter, had, by dint of honesty and industry, been enabled to start a business as a timber-merchant. He was devoted to his son, and, with increasing prosperity, took pleasure in the opportunity it afforded him of bringing up the boy to some genteel occupation. The lad's wits justified the father's hopes. His career at the Lycée at Angers, whither his father had sent him in 1865, was exceptionally distinguished. During the four years he remained there he obtained prizes for French, English, Arithmetic, Geometry, History, Geography, and received honourable mention in Natural Science, Writing and Book-keeping. At home, though he had lost his mother, the boy experienced nothing but affectionate care from his father's second wife. From his earliest years everything that wholesome family life and a polite education could do to inculcate rectitude and industry, was employed in the moulding of Barré's character. The very admiration, perhaps at times excessive or injudicious, with which the

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father regarded his promising son might have been expected to have acted as an incentive to continued progress. Unfortunately it is a matter of common experience that innate viciousness is only too frequently proof against the seduction of good precept and good example, and derives pleasure from turning to its own mischievous uses those advantages of training and education which are supposed to stifle it. At his school, Barré, gifted but idle and immoral, had taken prizes by force of his gifts, and contracted friendships in accordance with his natural desires. The prizes proved barren of consequence; of the friendships, there was one that was to endure until it found a worthy termination under the knife of the guillotine.

It was at the Lycée at Angers that Aimé Barré first made the acquaintance of his fellow-scholar, Paul Lebiez. The latter was the son of a photographer. He was the same age as the young Barré. He, like Barré, was a most promising student, "le drapeau de l'école" according to a contemporary. He had developed a natural aptitude for science, and that chiefly in the direction of anatomy. But he had not, if independent testimony is to be accepted, been as fortunate as his friend in the circumstances of his home life. His mother for some reason or other disliked him. His earlier education had been neglected. He came to the Lycée in a cynical, discontented frame of mind, insufficiently grounded in that rudimentary morality which children can best acquire from their mothers. "At the Lycée at Angers," said one who had known him, "his moral education was not further advanced. Moral and religious teaching are too often wanting in the Lycées." Lebiez, precocious cynic and materialist, was not the most propitious companion for the young Barré, who, having no fixed principles of his own, was only too likely to adopt those of his friend that would coincide the most happily with his own selfish ends.

To a youth loving ease, greedy of gold, and loose in

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his habits, a clerkship in a notary's office at Angers, at rather less than thirty shillings a month, could offer practically no attraction. During four years the young Barré essayed to comply with the restrictions which his father's respectable ambition placed on his unruly desires. The only results of his efforts were that, when in 1876 his father sent him to Paris for a holiday as a reward for his exertions, he left Angers with a reputation which he himself admitted to be none too good, took with him as his mistress a married woman of evil reputation, the mother of two children, and formed a steadfast resolution that, having once set foot in the capital, nothing should induce him to return to his native city.

In pursuance of this plan Barré started housekeeping with Léontine Morin, for that was his mistress' name, in the Rue Granges-aux-Belles. At the same time, to satisfy his father's scruples at his continued absence, he entered the office of M. Engibault, a notary, and, in frank and simple missives, described to his anxious parent the solitary, studious existence he was leading, the little purchases of wood and coals with which he warmed his secluded chamber on the fifth floor, and the occasional visits of his friend Paul Lebiez, the only excitement in his otherwise quietly laborious way of life.

As a matter of fact, Barré's way of life was neither quiet nor laborious. He seems to have done nothing except to spend such remittances as he could squeeze out of his apprehensive father by various false pretences, and to contrive by his unkind treatment to make his mistress thoroughly unhappy. In letters written to a friend in Angers, Léontine Morin described life in the Rue Granges-aux-Belles. "Aimé," she writes, "has gone back to the old evil ways that he had when you knew him; indeed he is even worse than he was at Angers." He refuses to let her go out; her only distractions in the evening are scenes of jealousy with her lover. He is unkind to her little girl, who hates and fears him. Their silver, such as it is, is pawned. She thanks her friend for

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twenty francs with which to redeem their dish-covers. "In short," she writes, "when I step into the train that is to take me home again, I shall feel like a prisoner freed from his cell." There were, however, occasional gleams of happiness in the midst of Léontine's disappointed hopes. Her spirits seem to have risen as quickly as they were depressed; the least attention or act of kindness from her lover were sufficient to make her forget, for a time at any rate, his previous ill-treatment. He buys her a pair of earrings. She writes to her friend, "Now we have a moment to ourselves, I want you to share my happiness. You can't think what a delightful surprise Aimé had in store for me on my birthday. Picture to yourself a pair of brilliant earrings. Don't you think it was sweet of him? You could have knocked me down this evening, it gave me such pleasure to see them glittering in the sunlight." On another occasion he takes her out to a ball, the only time in three years; she is beside herself with joy. Again she writes to her friend at Angers, "I wouldn't write to you till I had been to Saturday's ball. We didn't get home till seven in the morning, after we had had some onion soup and cheese. I thought of you all the time I was enjoying myself, saying to myself, 'Wouldn't Marie open her eyes wide if she were here.' The dresses were dazzling in their splendour. There were about fifty musicians in the orchestra. Aimé had his hair curled and wore a dress-coat and white tie. He was charming." Léontine Morin was easily pleased, the more easily that her pleasures were few and far between.

In the meantime Aimé, idle and embarrassed, had accosted his evil spirit and taken him to his heart. He had purchased some stock, he had sold it again at a profit, he had purchased some more, and, a victim to the fascination that the Bourse offers to idle people who have either too much or too little money, had become a confirmed and unscrupulous gambler. "This game of speculation," said the Judge who presided at the trial

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of Barré, "is the exact counterpart of your whole career." From this time forth Barré was wholly absorbed in schemes for making a speedy fortune by means of speculative transactions. His father was of course invited to take part in the commercial enterprises of his son, who drew for his benefit elaborate and grossly exaggerated pictures of the wealth that was in store for him. In two years the father's modest estate was bled to the extent of some £300. M. Barré could not refrain from expressing his misgivings at Aimé's new departure—"I would prefer," he writes, "to see you settled in an orderly and serious profession." But being a simple man he had confidence in his son's superior intelligence, and yielded to his repeated solicitations.

As the excitement of his financial operations increased, Barré drifted further and further from the orderly and serious profession of a notary, for which his father had designed him, until at length in the October of 1877 he finally abandoned his clerkship in the office of notary Engibault, and resolved to set up as a financial agent. To this end he removed from the Rue Granges-aux-Belles, and took a more expensive lodging in the Rue d'Hauteville. A letter from his mistress to her friend at Angers gives a lively description of the move, the woman's pride in her new surroundings, and her occasional doubts, which are ultimately conquered by her faith in the future, her confidence in Aimé's skill and intelligence.

"I must tell you that Aimé has now finally given up his intention of being a notary; he is now a man of business. And Tuesday at the latest we move into our new home, No. 61 Rue d'Hauteville. Aimé has ordered a thousand cards; we shall get them on Monday, when I will send you one. It is very tiresome having to move. I shall miss the terrace, but I shan't have to mount up five floors; we shall be on the third now. It's opulent to be on the third floor in Paris, but it is also very opulent to have to pay £36 rent. It makes me shudder to think of it. However, when one is in business in Paris, one must

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make a good show, and live in a good part, or else one gets no business to do. Our accommodation consists of a study, a bedroom, a dining-room, and a kitchen with a gas-stove for me to do my cooking on, and two windows look out on the Rue Paradis-Poissonière, one of the busiest streets in Paris. . . . In the new order of things I am to act as chief clerk; if, later on, we can both find employment, so much the better, but one must make a beginning, as they say; and we hope that this is going to turn out well. God send that it does, for after going to such expense, it would be a pity to fail. However, for my part, I have good hopes of it. You see Aimé is very clever, and it will give him greater energy to be working on his own account." And playfully she signs the letter, "Léontine, Chief Clerk."

That fatal cleverness of Aimé was to bear dead fruit. It was not by its broking transactions that M. Barré's opulent premises in the Rue d'Hauteville were to become the talk of Paris. Those two windows looking out on the Rue Paradis-Poissonière commanded the view of a portico beneath which an old woman named Gillet, reputed a miser by inquisitive neighbours, sold milk to the passers-by. The old lady little dreamt as she sat under her portico that in some five months' time she was to be the unwitting victim of the boldest, not the least profitable, and certainly the most notorious of the speculations undertaken by the financial gentleman who had just rented the third floor at No. 61 Rue d'Hauteville.

If Léontine Morin had cherished hopes of wealth and prosperity, as the outcome of her lover's new departure, such hopes were doomed to a speedy disappointment. At the beginning of 1878 Barré's business affairs were in a parlous state, from which nothing could extricate them save paternal intervention. On January 9th Léontine writes to her friend—"Ah, my poor friend, would that the time were come when I could have you near me, and tell you my story at length. The cup of weariness

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is full almost to overflowing. But it's too long to tell in a letter; one would never finish. All I can say is this, dear, I have got more than my deserts. Aimé thought he was going to make a position for himself, but business is bad, things don't go as he thought they would. You needn't ask who it is that has to bear the burden of all this; it's I, always I!"

There was some idea of a separation. If Barré could get the money from his father, he was to set up Léontine in a small milk-shop or creamery, and that was to be the end of their liaison. Léontine was thoroughly disgusted with her lover's conduct. "You, dear friend," she writes, "who know what wretches men are, will of course understand that for a man to live for two years with the same woman is much too great a trial to his constancy, especially when he wants to be off somewhere else. However, in giving me back my liberty, he will have his, and on the whole I don't think I shall shed many tears over him, but I don't mean to go away empty-handed."

With Barré everything depended on his success in procuring fresh supplies from his father. But in the latter's case, both the will and the means to give had been tried to their utmost limits. To his son's repeated appeals M. Barré now turned a deaf ear. "The thought," he wrote, "that I have squandered so much money on a son who is only a thorn in my flesh is enough to kill me." Aimé tried forgery. He wrote his father letters purporting to come from his creditors, peremptorily asking M. Barré to meet his son's liabilities by prompt payment. Even these fabrications met with no response. Aimé had come indeed to a desperate pass. He had no money with which to settle his differences on the Bourse; certain bills he had negotiated were becoming due. In the course of the previous year he had taken the savings of two servant-girls, amounting in all to about £200, and under pretence of investing them for their benefit, had squandered them in his own speculations; the two women were now pressing him for an account of their

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talents. Lying and forgery were played out as means of rehabilitation. Without a glimmer of compunction the ready youth turned to swindling and blackmailing. In the former department of crime he made a sufficiently modest beginning by purchasing some books on credit and selling them at a low price. In the latter, he selected certain married women of his acquaintance to be the recipients of letters threatening to divulge to their husbands some intrigue or indiscretion. These operations were not, however, very lucrative. He tried to steal a watch from a woman of the town, but was detected in the act and obliged to restore it to its owner. The situation continued to be desperate.

In his more recent exploits Barré had not acted alone. He had a friend in a state of impecuniosity as acute as his own, a friend who, in his quiet way, was as unscrupulous as he, not so adventurous perhaps, but certainly of stouter heart, very obliging, modest in his requirements, content to play a subordinate rôle, a bit of a Darwinist, holding anything but reassuring views on the moral aspect of the struggle for life. This friend was no other than Paul Lebiez, Barré's chum at the Lycée at Angers. Since their school-days they had never quite lost sight of each other. Their lives in Paris had run on somewhat parallel lines. They had both gone to the capital with the object of enjoying greater freedom for idleness and dissipation, taking with them from their native city the indispensable mistress. They had both flung on to the Bourse as much money as they could wring from their relations, until they had drained dry the parental stream. They were both at the end of their resources, penniless, discredited, ready for anything that would put a few francs into their empty pockets. Let us hastily retrace the career of Lebiez since he left the school at Angers.

From Angers he had gone to the College at Nantes, where in 1872 and 1873 he took his degrees of Bachelor in Letters and Science. He then returned to Angers, and studied at the College of Medicine in that city. He

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obtained a diploma and distinguished himself as an anatomist and dissector, after which he went to Brest with the object of entering the naval medical service. But the authorities there formed an unfavourable judgment of his character; he was declared to be "difficult and unruly," and sent about his business. After a short stay in Paris, Lebiez fell ill and was obliged to return to Angers, where he remained nearly a year. At the expiration of that time Paris claimed him for her own; he returned to the capital and set up housekeeping with his mistress, a woman of the name of Lebeugle, whom he had brought away with him from Angers. This was in 1875. At first he made an attempt to earn an honest living as a teacher in an elementary school, but he only pursued that avocation for two months. Lebiez complained that the pay—£1 a month, board and lodging found—was too low. The head-master, on the other hand, whilst admitting that his assistant was good and kind to the small boys, was constrained to get rid of him owing to his regular unpunctuality, an almost insuperable obstacle to success in the scholastic profession.

On coming to Paris, Lebiez had been prompt to renew his boyish friendship with Aimé Barré, and the latter had not been less prompt in initiating his friend into the joys and excitement of the Bourse. With equal ardour Lebiez plunged into the game of speculation, and with equal pertinacity fleeced his parents and relatives of as many francs as they could spare. By the beginning of 1878 he had been as uniformly unsuccessful as his friend and colleague. Every convertible article of property down to his mistress's plait of false hair had gone to the pawnshop; the couple were in a constant state of moving, to avoid paying the rent of their different lodgings. Finally Lebiez had been reduced to the sore extremity of stealing odd volumes out of his fellow-students' libraries on which to raise a few francs. His state was, if anything, even worse than that of Barré, except that his requirements were considerably less. He had never, owing to the

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very limited resources of his parents, had command of as much money as his friend, to whom he occupied a very secondary position in their financial operations, acting rather as his clerk or assistant.

The friends of Paul Lebiez—and he seems to have had not a few—were divided in their judgments of his character. There were those who found him "a gay, laughing, jesting companion, an eloquent speaker, something of a cynic and materialist, ambitious to make a name for himself in the political world, generally an attractive and promising young man." Such friends were shocked and surprised when he burst on their astonished gaze as a cold and deliberate assassin. But to one at least of his friends the charge of murder was no surprise at all. This friend, a fellow-student, Lequeux by name, had seen anything but a pleasant side of Lebiez' character. He declared that on one occasion, when he had declined to oblige Lebiez with a temporary advance, the latter had behaved to him in such menacing fashion that Lequeux was seriously alarmed by his demeanour, and formed an inward conviction that Paul was quite capable of murdering him at the corner of a street.

That Paul was capable of such an act was proved beyond a doubt within the space of a few weeks. At the root of his character lay a cold and cynical insensibility which, to oblige a friend or serve some temporary need of his own, would stick at nothing. Lacking the energy and enterprise of Barré, he was far less nervous and excitable than his friend; naturally averse to prolonged endeavour of any kind, he was only too ready to have recourse to a prompt and speedy assassination, which, to one holding his views on evolution, would be no more than a justifiable incident in the struggle for life. Lebiez' extreme application of the Darwinian hypothesis stood him in good stead as a criminal; it made him coldly insensible to that horror of murder which is engendered in mankind by a belief that they are fashioned in the likeness of a divinity: whilst at the same time it gave him that stoical fortitude

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in bearing the supreme expiation of his guilt, which an intellectual conviction of some sort goes such a long way to sustain.

Barré, on the other hand, clutched at crime merely as an expedient for mending his shattered fortunes. He was essentially the man of the world as opposed to the thoughtful student. While Lebiez was wandering in the woods, picking flowers for his botanical studies, or preparing a lecture on Darwinism, Barré was busy with all manner of schemes for setting himself up as a successful man of business. Destitute of moral sense, greedy of money and pleasure, crime was his last resort in the hour of failure; and the supreme temptation to murder found in his depraved character little scruple to overcome. But courage to execute and endure was not his, he quailed at the moment of accomplishment, and the collapse of his wicked career left him a trembling and fearful miscreant. Deprived of the excitement of gambling and speculation, in the hour of darkness he had nothing to fall back upon but those horrors of his situation, which the hurry and disorder of his bustling misconduct had till that moment successfully obscured. The struggle for life, according to Barré, was a very one-sided affair, chiefly intended for the greater advantage and security of Aimé Thomas Barré; and when it presented itself to him as a contest in which he did not enjoy a singular immunity from the consequences of defeat, it shook him to his very foundations.

Whatever their differences in character, Barré and Lebiez were a dangerous couple. In the words of M. Mathieu de Vienne, who presided at their trial, "I should describe you as worthy of each other; the one has the qualities and defects which the other lacks, each is the necessary complement of the other. If the conception of crime germinates in the one, the other readily falls in with it; if the one provides the plan and the manner of its execution, the other provides the determination requisite to carry it out; from first to last yours was a joint concern."

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The reader is already familiar with the letter written by Léontine Morin in which she alludes with satisfaction to the circumstance that one of the windows of Barré's new domicile in the Rue d'Hauteville commanded a view of the Rue Paradis-Poissonière, one of the busiest thoroughfares in Paris.

In an attic of the house, No. 10 in that street, lived the old woman Gillet, and it was in the entrance to this house that she sold milk every morning to her neighbours or to the passers-by. Barré, in the course of his financial operations, had made the acquaintance of a married couple of the name of Seurin who also lived at No. 10 Rue Paradis-Poissonière, a floor or two beneath the woman Gillet. They were familiar with the old seller of milk, and had learnt from her the fact that she was possessed of some £500 of savings, mostly in the form of negotiable securities. With these she was at one time anxious to purchase an annuity, and with a view to furthering this object, Madame Seurin had introduced her to Barré, as a man of business who could carry out her wishes in this respect. However, the old woman changed her mind, and the assiduous Barré was obliged to content himself with the hope that he might yet, by his persuasive charm, prevail on the cautious old woman to entrust her savings to his tender care.

We have seen that at the beginning of March 1878 the fortunes of Barré were at their lowest ebb, indeed so desperate seemed the condition of both himself and his friend Lebiez, that they had at one time contemplated a dual suicide. But at this critical juncture Barré received two letters from persons acquainted with his readiness to undertake any kind of broking transactions, one dated March 3rd, and the other the 17th, in which he was asked to raise loans and offered substantial commissions for doing so. Barré was readiness itself, if only he could find some one willing to advance him the amounts required by his clients. If he could bring off the business with success, he saw a prospect of relieving his most pressing

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liabilities. The defrauded servant-girls were now clamouring for a settlement which he, in his absolutely penniless condition, was quite unable to effect. He made a last appeal to his father to help him to oblige his new clients, but met with a determined refusal. In his eagerness he bethought him of the old woman at No. 10 Rue Paradis-Poissonière, and her £500. He asked her to advance him the necessary sum, promising a high rate of interest. She declined to entertain his offer. In doing so she had unconsciously sealed her fate.

Lebiez, as friend and colleague of Barré, had been cognizant of these futile negotiations, and was full of resentment at the unworthy reluctance of the old woman to comply with his friend's harmless request. Her grudging behaviour obliged him to regard the situation from the point of view of the struggle for life. He resolved the question of the old woman's right to exist, as Raskolnikoff in Dostoieffsky's great novel decided the fate of the old woman, Alena Ivanovna. "She's an old miser," he said to Barré; "what right has she to hoard up her gold when there are many others who could put it to some use? It's disgusting to see an old woman like that, who sits all day like a bear crouching in her chair, go on piling up a fortune that's no good to anybody." If Lebiez had satisfied his reason that miserly old women had no right to accumulate idle capital, Barré had no difficulty in regarding himself as a peculiarly happy medium for the free circulation of such unproductive treasure, and the only problem that remained to be settled was how it would be possible to circulate Madame Gillet's £500 in spite of herself. It was obvious that recourse to violence of some kind was unavoidable; it was only a question of degree. It was first suggested that the old woman should be poisoned, not fatally, but seriously enough to oblige her to go to the hospital, and that, whilst she was there, Barré and Lebiez should visit her attic and possess themselves of her securities. The only objection to this course was that as soon as the old woman recovered and found out the

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robbery, she would in all probability suspect Barré and give information that would ensure his detection. Again, if she were poisoned fatally, there was the danger of the poison being discovered by analytical examination and traced to those who had administered it. "Hit her on the temple," said Lebiez, "and she'll fall like a log." It was finally agreed that this was the shorter and better way of setting at liberty the old woman's "imprisoned angels." Such a method would have the additional advantage of enabling Lebiez, as he was careful to point out to his colleague, to prepare the old woman's skull after death and dispose of it to a medical friend for five-and-twenty francs.

According to the first plan formed by the two assassins for carrying out the murder, Barré was to visit Madame Gillet in her attic in the Rue Paradis-Poissonière, and there knock her on the head, after which Lebiez was to cut up the body, preparatory to its being disposed of by parcel. Two circumstances, however, necessitated a modification of the original design. In the first place the old woman's attic was difficult of access; the walls were so thin that any unusual sound would immediately attract the attention of the neighbours, and the room itself was too small to allow of that freedom of movement required by any one who is about to strike another on the temple with a hammer. In the second place, Barré had not sufficient nerve to commit the murder by himself, he required the reassuring presence of his deliberate friend. Three times he ascended to the attic bent on the murder, with the hammer hidden in a portfolio, and three times he had recoiled at the supreme moment and incurred the open contempt of his colleague.

In the face of these repeated failures a new plan was adopted. The old woman was to be invited to call with some milk at Barré's new lodging at No. 61 Rue d'Hauteville, where she would find the man of business and his medical friend waiting for her. Barré was now living alone. His mistress had left him, and was serving in a beershop in the Rue Charlot. His flat was the only one

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on his floor that was occupied. Madame Gillet would come to him without suspicion, for, as he himself said, he had invariably shown her great politeness, and had always opened the door for her. We are now at March 23rd.

At about eight o'clock on the morning of that day, Barré called on Lebiez at his lodging in the Rue des Fossés-Saint-Jacques. Lebiez was in bed. Barré asked him to get up and come with him, as there was a matter of business that required his immediate attention. "Is it really urgent this time?" asked Lebiez. "You've bothered me about it so often and all for nothing." "It's all right," answered Barré, "it's really coming off to-day." This veiled dialogue between the two conspirators was rendered necessary by the presence of the mistress of Lebiez, who was a stranger to the intended crime. The matter of business it need hardly be said was the murder of the old woman. Lebiez rose with alacrity, and the two youths started for Barré's lodging in the Rue d'Hauteville. On the way Barré made a slight detour by the Rue Paradis-Poissonière with the object of seeing the old woman and reminding her to call at his house with the milk. He found her after some search, and to ensure her attendance at No. 61 Rue d'Hauteville paid her twopence in advance. He then rejoined Lebiez at his flat, and the two men made their final preparations for bringing off the matter of business of which Barré had spoken. The table in the dining-room was moved back against the wall to prevent it from tumbling over in the course of the negotiation, and unnecessarily disturbing the neighbours. With a similar purpose, the front-door bell was disconnected. The dining-room table was cleared as for an operation of some kind, and at the end of the room furthest from the door a large white box was placed. These preparations completed, the medical student and the ex-notary's clerk took up their positions, Lebiez by the front-door; Barré, a hammer under his coat, in the entrance to the dining-room, which opened out of the hall.

It was half-past nine. They waited for half-an-hour.

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At ten o'clock there came a ring at the bell, or rather the bell-rope was pulled but gave no sound. Lebiez opened the door and let in the old seller of milk. "Your bell doesn't work," she said, as she entered, and then started at the unfamiliar face of the medical student. "I beg your pardon," she exclaimed, and stepped back. At that moment Barré came smiling from the dining-room. "Come in, please, Madame Gillet," he said in his wonted courteous fashion.

Re-assured, the old woman followed him into the dining-room. Suddenly, without another word passing between them, she fell, struck on the head by the hammer of her polite customer. She had but time to utter one cry for mercy and then, as she lay on the ground, she received another blow from the hammer, this time wielded by the more skilful hands of the medical student. A few stabs in the region of the heart from the lance-shaped ink-eraser in Barré's study, and Lebiez had completed this practical illustration of his conception of the struggle for life, though not without inflicting such damage on the skull of the old woman as to oblige him to relinquish his hope of disposing of it for professional purposes.

The murder accomplished, the two assassins set about clearing up the room, and removing all traces of the crime. The body was found to be too large to go into the wooden box intended for its reception; it was accordingly propped up against the wall pending an operation at the hands of the medical student which, it was hoped, would overcome the difficulty. After an interval spent for the most part in the café, the two youths returned to business, Lebiez to effect with the help of a razor the packing of the remains, Barré to visit Madame Gillet's attic in the Rue Paradis-Poissonière, there to gather the fruits of the crime. These amounted altogether to some £200; they would have been greater had not Barré been interrupted in his search by a noise and stir in the adjacent room, and obliged to make off for fear of detection. Shortly before five o'clock he met Lebiez again at a café in the Place de Château

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d'Eau. The booty was divided, Lebiez receiving £3, Barré the remainder. The latter justified this disproportionate allotment on the ground of his pressing debts amounting to some £250, and Lebiez seems to have acquiesced in the arrangement. It is none the less extraordinary that the medical student should have sullied his hands in blood for so paltry a remuneration. The circumstance goes some way to support his assertion that he was of so obliging a nature that he could refuse nothing to a friend, for beyond a desire to accommodate Barré, it is difficult to see what induced him to take part in this highly dangerous proceeding. Barré had by far the more urgent motives for the crime, but lacked the practical resolution to carry it out unaided; the callous indifference of Lebiez was at his disposal, and he could hardly complain that he was overcharged for it.

During the evening of the 23rd, Barré under the name of Emile Gérard hired the room at Madame Jeanson's in the Rue Poliveau. It was originally intended to take the body of the old woman thither in the wooden chest and there leave it. Lebiez correctly surmised that the proximity of the street to the surgical theatres would cause the remains, when discovered, to be regarded as a practical joke on the part of some medical student. But the plan had to be somewhat modified. It was found that the wooden box was insecure, it was therefore decided that two parcels containing the arms and thighs of the murdered woman should be left in the room in the Rue Poliveau, and the remainder of the body packed in a secure portmanteau and sent away by train to some place remote from Paris.

All Saturday night and into the small hours of Sunday the 24th, Barré and Lebiez, for the former refused to be left alone, sat up with the now dismembered corpse of the old woman at 61 Rue d'Hauteville, smoking incessantly; and at six o'clock on the Sunday morning, in a heavy fall of snow, they took the two parcels to the Rue Poliveau and left them in the cupboard of the hired room.

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Barré spent the remainder of Sunday with his mistress, with whom he was still on friendly terms, though they had ceased to live together. At different times, in money or jewellery, she received a considerable portion of the proceeds of her lover's crime, which had been represented to her as a robbery, not a murder—a distinction that was quite sufficient to satisfy her rather rudimentary moral sense. Barré was observed by more than one person to be drinking heavily during the greater part of this particular Sunday. On Monday the 25th, Barré, with the help of a middle-aged clerk named Demol, whom he had known in a notary's office and whose fidelity he seems to have attracted by that same politeness and condescension that had won the confidence of his victim, purchased a portmanteau and dispatched the rest of Madame Gillet's body by passenger train to Mans. With the help of the same Demol, he contrived during the next few days to realize the greater number of the securities stolen from the Rue Paradis-Poissonière.

On the 10th of April Barré moved from the Rue d'Hauteville to a lodging in the Rue Rochebrune. On the 13th he went to Angers, whither his mistress had preceded him. The mystery of the Rue Poliveau had begun to engage the attention of the Juge d'Instruction, Guillot. Mention had been made by some witnesses of a little short man who had often visited the old woman, Gillet, whose disappearance had coincided in point of time with the discovery of the two parcels of human remains in the Rue Poliveau. Barré thought it advisable to run down to Angers for a day or two to concoct with Léontine Morin a plausible explanation of the money and jewellery with which her acquaintances could not fail to have observed that she had been suddenly endowed. He returned to Paris, and on Ash Wednesday dined with his friends the Seurins. Madame Seurin was the person who had originally introduced Barré to the old seller of milk. She had been sent for by M. Guillot, and it was her evidenc t hat first directed suspicion against Barré. The very morning of

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the day that Barré dined with them, Madame Seurin had paid her first visit to the Judge. At dinner the conversation naturally turned on the murder. Something was said about the little man who had been seen going in and out of the woman's lodging. "That's bad," laughed Barré, "I'm a little man." "Ah, but all little men are not murderers," replied a lady. During dinner, Barré was gay and free, so careless and amiable that Madame Seurin had little difficulty in persuading him that as he had been acquainted with the murdered woman, he ought to go and see the Judge. Barré went to the Judge on Good Friday, but he never returned. M. Guillot pressed him to stay in a fashion that made refusal out of the question.

Lebiez had not seen much of Barré since the murder. He had been very busy. He had been successfully negotiating for his appointment as editor of an advanced radical newspaper that was just being started. On April 11th he delivered a lecture at the Salle d'Arras. He chose as his subject, "Darwinism and the Church." He gave full expression to his views on the struggle for life. "At the banquet of Nature," he said, "there is not room, there are not covers laid for all the guests; each one struggles to find a place; the strong push out the weak. Hence this struggle for life, family against family, species against species, a civil war without peace or truce, among animals and plants the same." Religion and Science he declared to be absolutely irreconcilable.

Was ever a more singular lecture? There is a grim irony indeed in this blood-stained assassin solemnly delivering himself on Darwinism and the Church. What would have been the astonishment of his audience if he had suddenly produced that trunk that was lying at the Mans railway-station, and exhibited its horrid contents as a practical example of an ousted guest at the banquet of life! A friend who was present spoke of the lecturer's self-confidence, his apt and ready speech. At the end of the lecture Lebiez went with him to a wine-shop, and,

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according to the admiring friend, positively scintillated with wit.

Lebiez had found time for writing verses as well as lectures. A poem discovered among his papers was entitled "Lines to the Skull of a Young Girl." It is a morbid effusion containing just such thoughts as one might have anticipated from a sentimental medical student who allows his imagination to clothe the bones which he is studying. At the conclusion of the poem, after the author has reflected on the cruel destiny that cut short the days of the young girl, the skull is made to retort, with an eye perhaps to a by no means remote contingency, "Beware, mortal, your turn will come to-morrow."

More instructive than the lines themselves is the manuscript note that Lebiez had appended to the poem. "Poor verses! Bad as they are, they are a true picture of my mind in moments of solitude. Among my fellow-men I am lively and cheerful, people would think me a careless scoffer. Did they but know that whilst my lips are laughing, my heart is weeping, they would not come and tell me that I scoff. My gaiety is but a mask to hide the bitter disappointment that now for many a day has been eating into my heart. If those, who have only seen me gay and laughing, could follow me in one of my solitary excursions in search of the plants and flowers that serve me for my botanical studies, and see me sit down and weep on a bank or the slope of a tree, and remain half-an-hour at a time with my head buried in my hands, they might take me for a madman, but they would not dare to say, as Barré does, that I don't care a curse for anything or anybody." This curious note was lying among the papers of Lebiez, side by side with a blackmailing letter drawn up by Barré and himself, intended to procure the two young men temporary relief by disturbing the married peace of Barré's hospitable friends, the Seurins.

On the Good Friday, the day that Barré was detained by M. Guillot, Lebiez went out into the country with his mistress to find frogs and tadpoles with which to prose-

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cute his scientific studies. On the Saturday Lebiez read of his friend's arrest in the newspapers. "Dear me," he exclaimed, "Barré is arrested." "Why, what's he done?" asked his mistress. "It appears," replied Lebiez, "that it's something to do witn that woman whose remains were found." His mistress's suspicions were aroused. "Ah," she exclaimed, "had you anything to do with that? If you know anything, for heaven's sake tell me; I have never been certain of what you were doing that night you spent away from home!" Lebiez answered her with perfect calm. "I swear," he said, "that I know nothing of the matter, and I will never believe such a thing of Barré. If I had done anything to be afraid of, is it likely I should have made my name public by editing a newspaper and giving a lecture? Be quiet like I am, and don't worry; a man who has done something wrong hides himself and changes his name." The poor woman's fears were entirely allayed by her lover's unruffled demeanour.

The same evening he took her out to see the illuminations. On Easter Sunday, April 20th, they spent the day in the country. But that night their slumbers were rudely disturbed by a visit from M. le Juge d'Instruction Guillot. The magistrate had come to arrest Lebiez; for in the course of the day Barré had made a full confession of his crime, giving the name and description of his fellow-murderer.

The trial of Barré and Lebiez for murder, and of Léontine Morin on a charge of receiving stolen goods, knowing them to have been stolen, commenced before the Cour d'Assises at Paris on July 29th, 1878. It lasted three days. Beyond the inevitable interest of a story told in the absorbing fashion peculiar to a French criminal trial, the proceedings were tame and uneventful. The male prisoners were silent and depressed, the result a foregone conclusion. A mutual desire to shift the weight of guilt from one to the other did neither of them any good in the eyes of the jury. The eloquence of the great Lachaud who spoke in defence of Barré, and of M.

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Demange who appeared for Lebiez, could not save them from their well-deserved fate. On the evening of the 30th the two men were condemned to death, and the woman Léontine Morin to three years' imprisonment. Barré received his sentence in a state of collapse, Lebiez with unaffected indifference.

On September 7th, Barré and Lebiez were guillotined in the Place de la Roquette, the latter meeting death with courage, the former almost insensible with fear. They were both penitent, and forgave each other their mutual recriminations.

We had occasion to compare the murder of the old woman Gillet by Barré and Lebiez with that of the old woman Alena Ivanovna by the student Raskolnikoff in Dostoieffsky's novel, *Crime and Punishment*. In the details of the crime the resemblance is startling, and would almost suggest that one of the two assassins was familiar with the Russian novel; the reasoning by which Lebiez justified to Barré the murder of the old miser is precisely that of Raskolnikoff previous to his crime. But between Dostoieffsky's hero and Barré and Lebiez there is a signal difference. Raskolnikoff commits murder under the influence of extreme cerebral excitement, ending in a violent attack of illness, the result of hunger and despair; his reason seems to be temporarily affected by the action of acute physical and mental distress on a highly sensitive temperament. But the assassination of the old woman Gillet by Barré and Lebiez is as deliberately planned and coolly executed a murder as any in the annals of crime. No excitement, unless it be the excitement of common fear on the part of Barré, is traceable in the proceedings of the two young men. No burning sense of injury, no unjust, undeserved misfortune could they plead as extenuating, if not justifying, their crime. They had enjoyed to the full all those opportunities that a good education affords to honest endeavour. But, in the words of the Avocat-Général Fourchy who conducted their prosecution, "the thought of a regular life, of

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working for their daily bread, oppressed them. They deliberately repudiated the exercise of that energetic and determined perseverance which can alone ensure success. They sought out and courted danger, and voluntarily abandoned themselves to perils they were not strong enough to withstand." The careers of Barré and Lebiez from the moment of their setting foot in Paris may be fitly described as leading cases in progressive crime.

In respect of psychological interest, Lebiez is superior to Barré. Greed was the prevailing element in the character of the latter; whatever his intellectual acquirements at college, they were speedily discarded and forgotten as soon as gold and pleasure could become attainable objects in life. Lebiez on the other hand preserved throughout his shady career a certain devotion to intellectual pursuits, which continued up to the last. He told M. Guillot that his only material temptation to take part in the murder of Madame Gillet had been the hope that he might get from it money enough to purchase a microscope and other instruments that would help him in his scientific studies. But a lack of moral sense destroyed any good result that might have proceeded from his respectable attainments. "It seemed to me," said one who had known him well, "that as far as morality was concerned, his education had been seriously neglected at college. Destitute of those principles which direct and fortify a man in the trials of life, he bore his privations with the bitter smile of a confirmed fatalist; he habitually read the most advanced newspapers, and seemed to regard life as little better than a term of pleasure which the bold and the cunning, whose example he took delight in instancing, always took good care, sooner or later, to enjoy to the full."

It cannot be said that either Barré or Lebiez offer very brilliant examples of the enjoyments to be derived from an unscrupulous indulgence in the pleasures of the struggle for life. Perhaps they were neither sufficiently bold nor sufficiently cunning.

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IV

THREE CRIMINOUS CLERKS—

THE ABBÉ AURIOL
THE ABBÉ BOUDES
THE ABBÉ BRUNEAU

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IV

THREE CRIMINOUS CLERKS

It is a commonplace of psychological reflection of an elementary kind that from the moment a woman has abandoned herself to crime, she far exceeds in her capacity for evil the evillest of men. The same may be said of the criminal priest. No sooner has he shaken himself free from the enforced scruples of the cassock, than he flings himself into the violation of the ten commandments with a reckless ardour, rendered the more callous and desperate by the ultimate certainty of a double damnation. From the consummate Riembauer, so graphically described by Feuerbach, through Mingrat and Contrafatto, down to the Abbés Boudes and Bruneau of our own day, the crimes of priests have possessed an atrocity all their own; and certainly the two last can never be reproached with having declined from the remarkable inhumanity of their predecessors. To a man of really wicked disposition the priesthood must always be a tempting state. Apart from the piquancy of gross crime committed in the sacerdotal habit, which might appeal to a more subtle intellect, the opportunities for indulging, preparing, and cloaking the various forms of crime which the priestly office affords, cannot fail to tempt a determined sinner. For this very reason, if for no other, one would expect that the authorities of the Roman Catholic Church in France would be careful to inquire closely into the fitness of those seeking

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orders, and prompt to immediately divest of their orders those priests who had once been guilty of criminal conduct. But in the three cases to be narrated a want of care in the admission to the priesthood and a mistaken, if honourable, relaxation of Church discipline in favour of an unreasonably Christian indulgence will be seen to have brought grave scandal to a Church, whose priesthood, however, is not to be judged by its passing monstrosities.

To those concerned with the welfare of the Church in France it is a matter of regret that the rural priesthood is recruited to a very great extent from the peasant class. The small farmer, dissatisfied with theoretical equality, seeks to raise the social position of his family by the easiest method open to him, that of making his son a priest. Invested with the sacred office the young hopeful will become a gentleman, and may, if he is fortunate, to use the expression of M. Bataille, "frôle l'aristocratie." Too often, however, the peasant-priest remains, in spite of his veneer of seminarial polish, rather more of the peasant than the priest, and it is not long before the wolfish instincts of some brigand ancestor break through the sheep's clothing, to the dismay of the faithful and the open rejoicing of the unbeliever. Auriol, Boudes, and Bruneau are all, in greater or less degree, instances of this ineffectual transformation.[1]

[1] The following passage from Dr. Laurent's *L'Année Criminelle*, 1889-1900, the work of an authority on the subject of the criminal classes, furnishes a striking explanation of the constant admission of unworthy men into the French priesthood :—"Owing to the difficulty experienced during the last fifty years in recruiting priests, the clergy have been compelled to admit into their ranks persons in every way deplorable in character. I am able to instance a small village which, during thirty years, has furnished four priests whom I will describe as A, B, C, and D. A is the son of a prostitute who had married as her second husband a man who had been two or three times imprisoned for theft and fraud. B is the son of a peasant who has undergone fifteen days' imprisonment for theft. C comes of a family enjoying the worst possible reputation, and repudiated by the whole village. His father, an incorrigible drunkard, has many times appeared before the Correctional Tribunal. D is the son of peasants in comfortable circumstances. Being greedy, idle, and unfit for any occupa-

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THE ABBÉ AURIOL

The entry of Joseph Auriol into the priesthood is characteristic. It is, in the first instance, the result of an emotional access, always a dangerous symptom, in an otherwise ill-ordered nature; ultimately the last refuge from prospective beggary. The scene of his life is the department of the Pyrénées-Orientales, on the extreme east of the Franco-Spanish border, a country the inhabitants of which are as much Spanish as French. Auriol was unfortunate in his antecedents. His father had been sent to prison by a Cour d'Assises, since which occurrence Joseph had been adopted by an uncle of the name of Garda, a farmer near the town of Prades. The boy's lively intelligence induced Garda to educate him with a view to his becoming a schoolmaster; but his rough and truant disposition obliged him to abandon this intention and devote Joseph to tilling the soil. In 1868—Joseph is now sixteen—an eminent and eloquent priest, the Abbé Pompidor, visited the village where Garda had his farm. From behind a pillar in the church Joseph Auriol heard the famous Abbé preach. Seized with a thoughtless desire for the power and fame of the pulpit orator rather than any real conversion to the service of God, Auriol declared his wish to become a priest. His superficial abilities impressed the Abbé Pompidor, and he was sent to the seminary at Prades. But the strict régime of this institution soon dissipated the thirst for a somewhat remote fame which could only be purchased by complete self-denial. Auriol relapsed into his rough and wilful habits, and

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tion, his father thought the best way to get rid of him was to make him a priest. Whilst still at the seminary he was often found in houses of ill fame. Would it not be better to leave a village priestless than give it priests of such a character? They preach immorality and bring the clergy into contempt."

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openly desired to be excused from the further prosecution of a religious career. But uncle Garda was by this time wearied of his shifting and intractable nephew, and replied that he must be priest or nothing. Confronted with destitution or the service of God, Joseph Auriol chose the latter. Excusable as is the impatience of uncle Garda, he even must have felt some misgiving in driving into the priesthood such an unwilling and obviously unfitted recruit, whilst the authorities who received him into it cannot have been wholly ignorant of his state of mind. At the same time Auriol was gifted with no mean powers of devout assumption, which he probably enlisted in his service as soon as he had made up his mind to the inevitable. Stern necessity had not dried up the fountains of his emotionalism. On entering the chapel of the seminary, shortly after uncle Garda had stopped him in a last attempt to escape to the army in 1870, he threw himself at the foot of the altar and exclaimed: "Oh, God! if it is my fate to be a false priest, grant that I may never rise up again!" Some time after this, the Abbé Auriol was appointed curate in the parish of Prats-de-Mollo.

Auriol remained at Prats-de-Mollo some four or five years, during which time there is nothing authentic known to his discredit. Gossip chattered of illicit gallantries pursued under cover of the night, but these were not sufficiently public to prevent the Abbé from being promoted, in 1880, to be parish priest of Nohédes, a sequestered village lying remote from any town in one of the gorges of the Pyrenees. The religious life of Nohédes was chiefly centred in two elderly ladies of independent means, the demoiselles Rose and Marie Fonda. Rose, the elder, was exceedingly stout and suffered from heart trouble; Marie thin, pale, and anæmic. Ill-health and good works occupied all their time; they watched over the priest with motherly care, ornamented his church, tended his flock, mended his linen, and in a thousand and one small ways tried to compensate him for the monotony of his out-of-the-way cure. Auriol returned their manifold kindnesses

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by administering to them various drugs, concocted out of roots gathered in the mountains, which he assured them were sovereign remedies for their several complaints. The two ladies were delighted with a priest who recognized their ailments, was kind and good-humoured, and played the organ divinely. Besides, Auriol was only twenty-eight and by no means ill-looking, though rather short and inclining to stomach. The upshot of it all was that the Curé soon acquired over Rose and Marie Fonda that undue influence which only attractive priests can exercise over elderly maiden ladies.

Alexandrine Vernet was a teacher at the village school. She was twenty-two years of age and comely after a bold and alluring fashion, perpetrated atrocious efforts at poetry, and had a pronounced taste for dirty literature. With this dangerous lady the Abbé Auriol was from the nature of his office thrown into frequent association ; and his priestly armour being of the thinnest, he now found himself, to use his own expression, "appalled by the passion which the sight of this young girl inspired in his breast." An intimacy grew up between them which was before long the talk of the village, patent to all except the two innocent old ladies who believed so faithfully in the good Curé. At the beginning of 1881 it was found advisable, on account of the growing scandal, to remove Alexandrine Vernet to Taurynia, another mountain village some distance from Nohédes. But by this time the attachment of the priest and the teacher had reached a degree of intensity which no consideration of miles could abate. Clad in a wide smuggler's hat, Auriol struggled over the mountain-paths in dead of night to reach his mistress ; and when, on one occasion, he was asked what took him to Taurynia at such an hour, he could only give the rather inadequate reply that he had gone to invite the mayor to a funeral. As soon as Taurynia became too inconvenient a meeting-place, the lovers changed their plans. They used to go by train to the neighbouring town of Prades. The Abbé would stand at the carriage-window until it was time to start,

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calling out "Full up!" to any one who tried to get in. As soon as the train had entered a convenient tunnel the priest would whip off his cassock and emerge at the other end in mufti, with beard and moustache, smoking a huge cigar. On arriving at Prades the lovers would betake themselves to a hotel and pass a happy day.

This furtive existence was continued into the summer of 1881, when Auriol, weary of concealment, and more than ever devoted to Alexandrine, made a determined effort to quit the Church and go to live in Spain, where they could be married and start a new life. To carry out their purpose money was necessary. Auriol applied to uncle Garda, whose heir he was. He told him that he felt himself more than ever unfitted to be a priest, and asked him to advance him a portion of his inheritance that he might resign his orders and adopt some other profession. But Garda was inexorable; he would countenance no change of state; once again Auriol must remain a priest or go forth a beggar. But this time it was not only a weariness of religion that the priest was commanded on pain of destitution to extinguish, but the urgings of a gross and consuming passion. Auriol was unequal to the attempt. He turned to his aunt for help; but she was powerless. He was desperate. He fixed his eyes on the maiden ladies of independent means, his affectionate parishioners.

In July, Auriol was seen in the mountains gathering the poisonous root of hellebore. On July 18th, Mademoiselle Marie Fonda, after breakfasting with her sister and the Abbé, was seized with violent sickness, and died within an hour. Rapid decomposition justified a prompt interment; extreme anæmia seemed a sufficient cause of death; her property she left to her sister.

A week later, the Abbé Auriol and Mademoiselle Rose Fonda went to the office of a notary at Perpignan, the chief town of the department, and there the good lady made a will leaving all her property to the Abbé Joseph Auriol.

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On August 28th, Auriol wrote to Alexandrine Vernet—

"My Love, my Beloved,—Rose has made her will in my favour. She has been ill for some time, the least exertion brings on fever. Write to me before you leave, and mind and don't fret about anything. Take care of yourself at all times for the sake of your beloved. Since yesterday a lot of my people have been ill, some kind of epidemic. Adieu to the moment of your starting.

"Ever yours,
"Joseph."

The account of a general sickness contained in this letter was not a fabrication. There was an epidemic of cholerine in the village of Nohédes, which kept the good priest busy. But he had time to mix a cup of tea for Rose Fonda on the 30th, and she died in inexpressible torments of pain and sickness twelve hours later. In her case the shock of her sister's death, excessive corpulence, a very failing heart, and the presence of an epidemic accounted for her sudden death. But when the Abbé Auriol appeared as her sole legatee, sold up all her property, lands, goods, and everything, and announced, at the end of September, his intention of taking a month's holiday with some 15,000 francs in his pockets, somebody wrote an anonymous letter to the judicial authorities at Prades, and the Abbé Auriol was arrested in that town. He had just arrived there to consult his lawyer as to the legality of testamentary dispositions made by a penitent in favour of her confessor.

On reaching the prison the Abbé was searched, and 11,000 francs in notes and a phial of prussic acid, which he vainly attempted to destroy, were taken from him. The next day, on his way to be examined by the Juge d'Instruction, he made a dash for liberty across some fields, but was retaken after an exciting chase of two miles.

Alexandrine Vernet, ignorant of her lover's arrest, was

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waiting for him at Carcassonne in the adjoining department of Aude. Impatient at his delay, she wrote to him, early in October—

"I am still at the Hôtel St. Pierre, where I am ready to wait for ever, but come quickly or I shall die of despair. Unkind and ungrateful that you are, what have I done? Have I loved you too well? is that my fault? Are these your promises, the oaths you have sworn to me?

"You mean to desert me? Then why did you allow me to leave my poor parents? Why have you dragged me away from their loving care to leave me to misery and the contempt of all men?

"Adieu for ever.

"God will punish you as you deserve; I go to tell all to a priest.

"ALEXANDRINE."

Receiving no reply to this appeal, Alexandrine Vernet, in fulfilment of her threat, on October 5th confessed to the Abbé Daries, and asked to be admitted into a convent. But, hearing next day of her lover's arrest, she disappeared from Carcassonne and was never heard of again.

The concern of the judicial authorities was to bring home to Auriol the murders of the two old ladies. But the evidence against him was hardly sufficient. The bodies of Rose and Marie Fonda were exhumed, but no trace of poison could be detected by analysis. Everything pointed to root of hellebore having been used in the one instance and prussic acid in the other; but the former is very rapidly absorbed into the system, while the latter leaves no trace at all. The doctors could not declare that either of the ladies had been poisoned. All the efforts of the Juge d'Instruction to draw an avowal from the prisoner were unavailing. At length the magistrate, in the exercise of those extraordinary powers conferred on Juges d'Instruction which involve nothing short of mental torture of a refined and protracted kind, resolved to try

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as a last resource solitary confinement. For thirty-seven days Auriol was shut up in complete isolation, with a result which proves the efficacy, if not the advisability, of such methods of investigation. On the thirty-seventh day, in the presence of the Procureur de la République, his assistant, and the Juge d'Instruction, Auriol made the following ample acknowledgment of his great guilt—

"To set my conscience at rest with God and man, and that my repentance may accord with the magnitude of my crimes, in full submission to human justice and the will of God, I confess myself guilty of having put to death by poison two holy ladies to whom I owed nothing but gratitude. I committed this sin in the sole hope of thereby acquiring a fortune that would have enabled me to gratify a guilty passion. I only pray that my present state may serve as an example to all my brethren in the priesthood, and that, above all, this declaration and my sincere confession may serve to efface the great scandal which my recent conduct has provoked and my ultimate condemnation will provoke yet further."

In the same copious strain he goes on to apologize to his relatives, to the general body of laymen, and to his dear parishioners at Nohédes. At the same time he addressed a long letter to the Abbé Pompidor, the eloquent priest whose rhetorical powers had first kindled in Auriol the desire to enter the Church. He expresses in his letter the deepest contrition for his sin, begs the Abbé to convey to his uncle and aunt his lively sorrow for the affliction he has caused them, asks them to leave to his cousin Joseph the inheritance that was to have been his, and concludes by declaring how he longs for the day to arrive when his condemnation will afford him the opportunity of publicly atoning for his offences against the priesthood. The day after he wrote these letters, Auriol repeated in fuller detail the confession he had already made, and so removed whatever obstacles had stood in the way of his conviction.

The solitary cell is paved with good intentions, but the

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light of day and human society are apt to dissipate them in unstable minds. Auriol, having done the honourable thing with commendable amplitude, had not the courage to stick to it. With the characteristic perversity of criminals, within a few days he entirely retracted all the confessions he had made. But it was too late; he had delivered himself securely into the hands of the enemy. All he could do was to put off the day of reckoning as long as possible by starting legal objections to his place of trial, and this he accomplished so successfully that it was not until July 29th, 1882, hardly less than a year from the date of his first murder, that Joseph Auriol was arraigned before the Cour d'Assises at Perpignan.

The severity of the presiding judge was perhaps the most remarkable feature of the trial. He seems to have passed even the customary latitude in hostile and sarcastic comment which French Presidents allow themselves in the Cour d'Assises. His interrogatory of the prisoner was interrogative only in name. It was rather a continuous and damning statement of the case for the prosecution, in the course of which the prisoner struggled to get in a word or two edgewise.

Auriol asserted his innocence in spite of his confessions. "I am innocent of the deaths of these two women," he said; "if I accepted the inheritance from Rose Fonda, it was only because I wished to administer it for the benefit of her infant nephews" (Murmurs in court). "And you proceeded to administer the property," retorts the President, "by selling the land as cheap as dirt, and leaving the country?" (Laughter). Auriol's explanation of his previous confessions excited mirth and indignation. "In accusing myself falsely I was prompted by a mistaken form of reasoning. I believed that these lies against myself would serve to expiate in the sight of God the immoralities that I had committed." As the prisoner continued to deny his guilt and began to question the accuracy of the statements he was said to have made to the examining magistrates, the President lost all patience.

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"What," he exclaimed, "you say that the judiciary lie? you reflect on the magistracy? You are capable of anything!" The prisoner's counsel rose and indignantly addressed the Judge. "I protest against your language. You are lacking in the consideration and impartiality it is your duty to show towards a prisoner."

The President.—You can explain yourself in your address to the jury.

The Counsel.—I claim the right of the defence to protest against language which impairs the rights guaranteed by the law to an accused person. Counsel has the right to speak at any time in the course of a trial.

The President.—No. (Prolonged stir in the seats reserved for Counsel.)

The Counsel.—Sir, if unfortunately it should occur to you to interrupt me again by such a statement, I shall withdraw from Court not only for this occasion, but for good. I shall pass from the bar with all my colleagues, and carry with me in the folds of my toga unimpaired, though temporarily dashed, the sacred right of a defending counsel. (A statement applauded *à outrance.*)

At this point the Procureur-Général, who, whilst conducting the prosecution, is present in a semi-judicial capacity and sits by the side of the judges, intervened and threatened the indignant advocate with punishment, but he refrained from calling on the Court to inflict it. The conduct of the President had exceeded even that measure of hostility towards an accused person, which is held to be hardly inconsistent with the function of a President of Assize.

The extent to which the French system of criminal justice allows irrelevant testimony to the prejudice of an accused person to be introduced into a trial is illustrated by the evidence of one of the doctors. Having left the box after declaring his opinion as to the causes of the deaths of the two ladies, he asked to be recalled, as he had thought of something else. His request was granted. He then told a story about a young man at Nohédes,

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who had been a suitor of Alexandrine Vernet. The young man it appeared had fallen ill, and the doctor was asked to bleed him. The doctor refused, on the ground that the operation would be fatal in the young man's then state of health. However, he had no sooner left than *on the advice of the Abbé Auriol* the youth was bled, and in consequence died, the doctor's inference being that the Abbé had deliberately advised what he knew to be a fatal course, in order to remove a rival suitor for the hand of Alexandrine Vernet. Thus, on the last day but one of a trial, and at the close of the evidence, a charge of this kind is suddenly sprung on a prisoner who has not the time or means at hand to combat the fresh accusation; and as cross-examination is a thing practically unknown in French trials, the witness is not subjected to any searching test of his veracity.

However, notwithstanding the severity of the prosecution, and the added suspicion of a third crime, at two o'clock in the morning of August 2nd, Joseph Auriol was found guilty of the double murder, but to the astonishment of the audience, with extenuating circumstances. As by French law these deprive the Court of the power of passing sentence of death, Auriol was condemned to penal servitude for life.

Auriol's is one of the many cases that have occurred within the last few years in France, in which the finding of a jury is a painful disappointment to those who believe in that wholesome moral indignation on the part of a community which demands that he, by whom blood is shed, shall with his own blood pay the penalty of his crime. It is this indignation which is the true justification of capital punishment and which makes its certain infliction a cause of legitimate satisfaction to a great number of people. The late Sir James Stephen lent the voice of authority to such a view of a much-vexed question, a view which has the merit of thrusting aside a great deal of statistical treachery and inconclusive argumentation about deterrent effect. The question becomes rather

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one of public feeling, and long may public feeling be strong in the direction indicated by the eminent judge.

The vicious consequence of allowing a jury, who decide by a majority and not as in England unanimously, to determine a question of penalty lies in the uncertainty which it introduces into the administration of legal punishment. Apart from the expediency or propriety of certain forms of punishment, it is certainty that is above all required in the punishment of crime. When a man feels that the full reward of his crime is dependent for its extent on the bare majority of an emotional and untrained body of men, he is well aware that his chances of receiving the extreme penalty in a case of murder are very problematical; and no one will deny that if there is one crime for which punishment should be sure and extenuation difficult, that crime is murder. Matthew Arnold may jest at the clinging to life of the suburban man of business, but the retort is obvious, the *tu quoque*, I think, conclusive. That the French jury is emotional, the national character and a succession of absurdly lenient verdicts are sufficient to prove, whilst the sensational atmosphere which is encouraged by the proceedings in a Cour d'Assises does nothing to brace jurymen to the necessity of a firm determination to close their minds to the influence of the irrelevant and the sentimental. They are untrained in the sense that with them the jury is not, as with us, an indigenous, historical development tried by long years of experience and gradual adaptation. French jurists are ready to admit that the jury has been so far a failure in France, and that it is an extraneous element, foreign to the spirit of their administration of justice.

At any rate the Abbé Auriol escaped the guillotine, a consummation to which, in all probability, the impatience of the President most largely contributed. The jury were no doubt also impressed with the fact that the priest had made a strong effort to disengage himself from his sacred calling before the commission of his crimes, though the

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failure of his effort can hardly be considered as extenuating the wilful murder of two gentle ladies.

Auriol is bad enough for a priestly criminal, but he is an emotional, unstable sort of scoundrel. For downright, uncompromising inhumanity, for crime on anything like a grand and comprehensive scale, we must look to the Abbé Boudes and the Abbé Bruneau. Auriol is their superior in intelligence; he had the capacity for interesting people in his future; but in the only department of human endeavour in which he made any sustained effort to accomplish anything, he must yield the palm to those more audacious and bloody-minded than himself.

THE ABBÉ BOUDES

The crimes of the Abbé Boudes have for their scene the departments of Aveyron and Tarn, which lie directly to the north of the department in which Auriol figured. The extent of Boudes' criminality is best realized by the adoption of a chronological method.

He is born about 1830.

In 1855 he is expelled from the Perigueux seminary for stealing a cassock and some candlesticks.

In 1856 he is expelled from an ecclesiastical college for immorality.

Here ensues an interval of two years, spent in Italy. He returns to France a priest, having been consecrated by an Italian bishop.

He is appointed by the Bishop of Rodez curate at Lagarde. Here he robs his parishioners on their death-beds, uses the confessional to supplant lawful heirs, extorts money from a dying man by frightening him, and is guilty of various forms of immorality. In 1860, afraid lest his priest should report him to the Bishop, he tries to get rid

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of him by poisoning the sacred vessels of the Church. Fortunately a choir-boy discovers the poison in time, and though some of it is traced to Boudes, his priest is too kindly to inform against him.

In 1865 he is curate of Viviers. He procures abortion on a young girl, lends money on usury, forges bills, swindles vendors of clerical garments, robs his priest, and offers for 600 francs to induce palpitations of the heart in a young man who is desirous of getting off his compulsory service in the army.

In 1871 he is transferred to Taurines as priest. Here he resumes the crimes of forgery and abortion, continues his usury, and steals a plough, and the sacred ornaments from the neighbouring churches. On the night of March 1st, 1875, the Abbé Alvar, priest of the parish of Saint-Circq, not far from Taurines, is found dead in his bed, covered with knife-wounds and the scratches of a human nail, the mark of a bloody hand on his shoulder. Some money which he had collected for repairing his church has disappeared. His sister declares that two men with blacked faces entered the house by a hole made in the wall under the dining-room window ; that after killing her brother they pursued her out of the house, and that she only saved herself by tumbling down a ravine. She has partially lost her reason since the night of the crime. It is proved that Boudes did not sleep at home that night. Having fled from Taurines, he is arrested on July 28th, 1876, in the Ardèche, and charged with the murder of the curé. He feigns madness.

From 1876–1886 he is shut up in the asylum at Montpellier. The object of Boudes in submitting to this enforced seclusion was to pass the time until his previous crimes should be covered by the legal period of prescription. He explained this to one of the warders who ultimately assisted him to escape : "They think I am mad because I have committed some trifling breaches of the sixth commandment, but I am not, and I mean to get out of this."

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In 1886, by bribing a warder, he escapes, and re-appears in the department of Tarn as an Alsatian priest, Jean Mary.

In 1888 the priest, Jean Mary, is admitted as a professor into the St. Marie school at Albi, the chief town of the department of Tarn. He ingratiates himself into the favour of one of the pupils, a boy named Calmels, who lives with his grandmother, an old lady of property, at the neighbouring Château of Pendaries. He contrives to win the esteem of the grandmother, is made private tutor to the boy, and acquires so considerable an influence over Madame Calmels that she sells him land, valued at 80,000 francs, at a paltry and inadequate figure. But he is recognized as the Abbé Boudes by a girl from his own country. The relatives of Madame Calmels, anxious for the old lady's property, inform the authorities of the real identity of Jean Mary, and the gendarmes are sent after him. Boudes takes to flight at the sight of the officers, but is captured after an exciting chase. "Kill me," he cries to those who seize him; "empty your revolvers into my head. You will be doing me a service."

On December 19th, 1889, the Abbé Boudes is brought to trial before the Cour d'Assises at Rodez.

Such is the brief catalogue of the crimes of the Abbé Boudes. This catalogue necessarily omits the odious offences committed on children of both sexes which accompany him at every step in his career, and form the burden of the indictment before the Cour d'Assises. There is hardly a felony of which, in one form or another, he is not guilty, and a considerable list of misdemeanours could be drawn up against him. The mere quantity of his crimes is in itself phenomenal, the length of his criminal career, for he is sixty at the time of his trial, uncommon. There are circumstances too connected with his story which show him to have been apt for dissimulation, and, loaded as he was with villainy, cunning and specious in address. To have successfully feigned madness under close medical supervision for ten years is no slight

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achievement. To so effectually smother innate viciousness, the constant habit of a lifetime, as to attract the regard of Madame Calmels and her grandson and obtain from the old lady grants of land is not unskilful. Who knows but that Boudes, having wheedled a comfortable competence out of his benefactress, may have looked forward to ending his days in rural dignity, like the burgomaster Mathias, "the most respected man in the province." It would have been a splendidly cynical termination to a most outrageous career.

The trial of Boudes presents few features of interest. He could not be charged, except by way of prejudice, with the attempted poisoning of the priest of Lagarde, as the crime was covered by prescription. The murder of the Abbé Alvar at Saint-Circq could only be similarly introduced, as the preliminary investigation was still incomplete, and the partial insanity of the curé's sister made it almost impossible to collect sufficient evidence against the prisoner. The greater part of the trial took place with closed doors, owing to the nature of the revolting charges which constituted the strongest part of the case for the prosecution.

The President of the Cour d'Assises animadverted with proper severity on the extraordinary immunity from punishment which Boudes had enjoyed at the hands of his ecclesiastical superiors. He tries to poison the Curé of Lagarde, but no complaint is laid against him. He robs right and left and nearly kills with grief and anxiety the Curé of Viviers, but still no complaint. At last his misconduct at Taurines becomes so flagrant that it reaches the ears of the Bishop of Rodez. Thereupon the Bishop writes him a letter which, if it were not for its dismal consequences, would be almost ludicrous in its mild and misplaced indulgence.

"RODEZ, *May 13th*, 1874.

"MONSIEUR LE CURÉ,—My poor Monsieur le Curé, if there are faults in your parishioners, have you not given

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them good cause to observe yours? And whilst they are within their rights in expecting guidance from their shepherd, have they not also the right to acquaint the lawful authority, their bishop, with behaviour which is contrary not only to the priestly character but to the absolute rules of a priestly life? They have, my good curé, not only the right, but it is their duty to do so, leaving to me the task of weighing and judging their allegations.

"And now what are these allegations which you ask to know?

"You are accused—

"1. Of often, if not habitually, neglecting to recite your breviary; certain of your parishioners who have travelled with you and had you continually in their sight declare that they have not seen you once open your book of prayer.

"2. You are accused of theft and embezzlement, and these charges you cannot well deny. It has been ascertained by the inspection of registers and accounts that you have in many cases embezzled sums that did not belong to you; of this there can be no doubt. With regard to the fees for special masses, you know better than I do, my poor curé, what traffic you have made in these and the liability you have incurred in this respect.

"3. You are accused of not confessing yourself, and it would be impossible for any one to say to what priest, in case of your serious illness, one ought to send to assist you. You know as well as I do whether this is the case or not.

"4. You are accused of shocking immorality, and, without dwelling on the past, I need only cite one fact brought to my notice; that is, the attempted violation of a little girl aged thirteen, of which you have allowed yourself quite recently to be guilty. I have no actual proof of this, but it could easily be established, and you well know that, if it were so, it would be a matter for the Cour d'Assises.

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"5. By your reckless language, threats, and sinister prophecies, a number of fires which have broken out in your parish have been laid to your charge, and many of your parishioners, I am told, keep guard over their houses, and intend to inform the authorities of the threats you have addressed to them.

"6. During your residence as curate at Lagarde, your conduct has given rise to more awful rumours still, which I refrain from alluding to, as there are limits even to crime, and by the blessing of God you have not yet passed beyond them.

"You ask me for facts, my good curé; here are some, and in all conscience grave enough! I do not judge you, nor is it my wish to ruin you; I would rather save you. But if you think my action can be of any avail, you must follow my directions and not offer me yours."

[The Bishop advises Boudes to resign his cure and leave the neighbourhood; and concludes—]

"I repeat, my dear Monsieur le Curé, the expression of my feelings of devotion towards you.

"P.S.—It is no use your coming to discuss these matters with me. I could not say any more to you than what I have written. Burn this letter that it may not one day be found in your possession and become for you a 'chirographum mortis.'"

The tender solicitude of the worthy Bishop that the crimes of Boudes should remain unpunished, and that he should seek amendment in a more congenial neighbourhood is simply disastrous. He merely recommends, he does not even insist that Boudes should follow his advice and quit his parish, with the result that Boudes prefers to remain at Taurines; and in 1875, a year later, his neighbour, the Abbé Alvar, is murdered in his bed. It is astounding that, in the face of such charges as his parishioners had made against the Abbé, charges which the Bishop appears to fully believe, no inquiry should have been held—in his letter the Bishop deliberately shirks

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investigation—and that Boudes should have been allowed to retain his orders. The President was more than justified when he remarked—"If your superiors had shown greater severity towards you, those who have a regard for religion would have been spared the shame of seeing you in the dock to-day."

It is not surprising that, when he found himself finally run to earth, Boudes should have written to his good friend the indulgent Bishop. His letter is singularly impertinent.

"MONSEIGNEUR,—Behold me in the Rodez prison, and about to appear before the Cour d'Assises. I am none the less innocent of the crimes laid to my charge.

"It is not I, I swear before God, who killed the Curé of Saint-Circq, and, if I did, I cannot be convicted, or even accused of this crime, since it is covered by prescription.

"They can then accuse me of nothing, *save a few trifling peccadilloes which I hardly remember.*

"I should be extremely obliged and grateful, Monseigneur, if you would come and see me, or at least send your secretary.

"When I have been acquitted by my judges, and I am absolutely certain that I shall be, my one and only desire is to withdraw myself into the privacy of a monastery, forgotten of all men, and where I may for my part forget them."

Boudes' desire for retirement, if not for entire oblivion, was gratified. On December 21st, 1889, he was found guilty of a large assortment of various crimes and sentenced to penal servitude for life. He was a large man, with the face of a malign eagle, entirely bald except for two tufts of hair over each ear.

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THE ABBÉ BRUNEAU

THERE is a certain flavour of the monstrous and extravagant about the crimes of the Abbé Boudes. The odious perversity of his nature which seems to stop at no form of immorality, however hideous in its character, suggests that in his ten years of feigned madness nature may have lent some assistance to art. But in the crimes of the Abbé Bruneau there is no element of uncertainty. They are the acts of a singularly wicked man, endowed with excellent capacity and a thorough education, but devoted to a life of gross indulgence which he deliberately endeavours to sustain by means of theft and murder. Here again the priestly habit, so easy to don, and unfortunately so easy to retain through every form of possible misconduct, operates as a convenient cloak for evil, and seems to whet in a really vicious character the appetite and the capacity for crime.

The trial of the Abbé Bruneau took place before the Cour d'Assises at Laval, the chief town of the department of Mayenne. Here, in the east of Brittany, a neighbourhood where religious feeling is stronger than in any other part of France, lies the area in which Bruneau passed his ecclesiastical career; and there were those who, even at the eleventh hour, were unwilling to believe that a priest could be guilty of the crimes imputed to the Abbé.

The trials of Boudes and Bruneau illustrate a difference between French and English procedure which ought to be made clear for the better understanding of such cases. In England, if a man be charged with a large number of different crimes, the prosecution select the one which is most heinous and best supported by trustworthy evidence, and he is tried upon that alone, the others to follow singly and in due course, if the first trial should result in an

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acquittal. Such a course seems the clearest, as simplifying the issue to be tried by the jury, and omitting the prejudice and confusion that must be caused by trying simultaneously a number of widely different charges. In France the opposite course is adopted. All the offences alleged against an accused person are lumped together in the indictment or "acte d'accusation"; the evidence in each one is laid before the jury, and they are expected to decide simultaneously upon all the various charges. Some they are not even asked to pronounce upon; these are introduced merely by way of prejudice. When the character of a petty jury is considered, and the fact that in France there is no summing up by a trained judge to help them in the unravelling of a many-headed and often complicated series of offences, the dangers of such a system must be at once apparent. But French criminal procedure seems to always avoid what is convenient and scrupulous in favour of what is telling and dramatic. And that is why a French trial, with all its apparent harshness and prejudice, is much better reading, and psychologically offers much more interesting material, than the English criminal trial, with its strictly limited issue and its exact rules of evidence. The French do their best, by their lively character and sensational procedure, to make a criminal trial a living and moving story of genuine human interest; the English, by exactly opposite methods, contrive to make it dull, decorous and severe, in fact everything which a legal proceeding ought to be. The consequence is that as soon as the proceedings in a French Court are of a nature involving strong contending passions, either political or otherwise, or delicate and difficult conditions of culpability, the ill effects of the loose rules of evidence, a powerless and almost unavoidably partial judge, an anomalous jury, the absence of cross-examination, and an undue licence in advocacy, combine to gravely imperil or frustrate the true purposes of justice.

Considerations of this kind are perhaps more fully

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illustrated in other trials than that of the Abbé Bruneau, for though tried for more than one grave offence, his guilt was so manifest that prejudice could do him no harm. He was charged before the Cour d'Assises with robbery of various kinds, arson, and the murders of the widow Bourdais, a keeper of a flower-shop at Laval, on July 15th, 1893, and of the Abbé Fricot, parish priest at Entrammes, on January 2nd, 1894. On the table devoted to the "pièces à conviction," the most gruesomely realistic feature of a French trial, were laid a lamp, blood-stained, the keyboard of the harmonium played upon by the prisoner after the murder of the Abbé Fricot, likewise fingered with blood, the remains of the Abbé's cassock, and several great logs of wood, the meaning of which will appear forthwith.

M. Bataille, a very candid critic of his country's justice, warmly commends the order and impartiality of the President in conducting this case. Consequently, as a model of what a critic considers an orderly and impartial interrogatory, and as telling better than any strange pen the story of Bruneau's crimes, we may safely adopt the words of M. le President Giron. He commences—

"You began to study for the priesthood with the Abbé Rénaudot, priest of Voutré, since deceased. Whilst you were at Voutré the Abbé was robbed of 1400 francs. Though he did not dare to lodge a legal complaint against you, the aged priest told his doctor that it was the 'little boy' who had taken his money. Later on, you were expelled from the small seminary at Mayenne for stealing from your school-fellows."

Bruneau.—That is not so. I was dismissed for having copied a Latin composition.

President.—However, the ecclesiastical authorities consented to admit you into the larger seminary at Laval. There you were ordained a priest and sent as curate to Astillé. Your parents, who are poor peasants and burdened with the education of their other son, have never given you any money; you have never had an

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income exceeding 1500 francs a year, including fees. How is it then that for five to six years you have been able to throw away money in dissipation and debauchery, besides taking long journeys on the least provocation, and even assisting your family?

Bruneau.—I should hardly have thought that my filial piety would have been made a cause of reproach to me.

President.—The deputy-mayor of Astillé, where you held your first cure, has stated that you were in the habit of leaving the commune at any hour of the night and day. It was just the same at Entrammes. You were always going to Laval, where you were seen lurking about after dark. What were you doing in Laval at such a late hour? I suggest to you that you were visiting houses of ill fame which you had the face to enter in your clerical attire.

Bruneau admits at some length that about ten times in four years he had forgotten his vows of chastity, but asks pardon of God and man, and asserts that he was always in mufti on these occasions.

The President goes at some length into the question of the Abbé's expenses over these amusements. Amidst considerable mirth he relates how on one occasion a young lady wanted to pull Bruneau's hair, but, as he was wearing a wig for purposes of concealment, he was obliged to ask her to desist; how at another time some butchers found the Abbé sitting in a public-house with a lady, and drove him forth with hootings; and how the fast ladies of Laval used to send cabs to the vicarage at Entrammes to fetch the gay curate. "And where did you get the money for all this?" asks the President. "When you had paid for your board, you had from 1000 to 1200 francs left to keep you for the whole year."

Bruneau.—I had drawn bills for 1000 francs; besides, a nun had left me 16,000 francs, and I had received a bonus from an insurance office.

President.—So you say; but the prosecution assert that these sums were nothing but the proceeds of swindles,

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breaches of trust, thefts, and assassinations (Prolonged stir in the auditory).

The President then takes the prisoner through various thefts committed on his priest at Astillé, and the story of two fires which broke out in the vicarage, following on insurances contracted by Bruneau. Suspicion fell on the priest, as well as the curate, and both were removed to different parishes, Bruneau as assistant to the aged Abbé Fricot, parish priest of Entrammes. Soon after the arrival of the new curate, 550 francs were stolen from a chest in the vestry, and the good Abbé, under a strict injunction of secrecy, confided to his servant Jeannette his suspicion that the curate was the thief.

We are at January 2nd, 1894.

President.—You spent the greater part of that day at Laval, and returned to the vicarage about six o'clock in the evening, rather the worse for drink. That's not the first time you have appeared in that condition (Laughter). Monsieur le Curé asked you to give the choir-boys their singing lesson. You said that you were too tired. The boys went away, and you were left alone with the Curé, who was writing at his desk. Half-an-hour later the Curé had disappeared. Search was made for him throughout the night, but in vain; and it was not until the following morning that he was dragged out of his well, covered with shocking wounds. But to return to the evening of the crime. Dinner was ready. Twice the servant, uneasy at the lateness of the hour, sent a boy called Lochain, who lived in the vicarage, to look for you, but neither you nor the Curé came to the dinner-table. We know, unfortunately, what had happened to the Curé. As for you, the servant, who was looking out of window, saw you in the neighbourhood of the wood-shed. What were you doing there at that hour?

Bruneau.—I was fetching wood to put on the fire in the study, where I had been playing the harmonium.

President.—But it was half-past seven; why didn't you go in to dinner?

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No answer.

President (resuming).—Not understanding the delay, the servant knocked at your door and called out to you. She declares that she found you in a state of fearful excitement. She expressed her astonishment at not seeing the Curé. You said, "He's gone out," and then ran up the staircase to your room. At eight o'clock the servant gave you your supper. The poor girl, astonished at the absence of the Curé, whose hat and wrap were hanging up in the dining-room, though it was freezing hard outside, spent the rest of the evening in hunting for her master through the village. You were then alone in the house, for you had got rid of the boy Lochain, who used to help Jeannette in the kitchen. Is not this the time when you threw some more logs into the well? It was six o'clock when the Abbé Fricot had been stunned and thrown into the well. But at eight he was not yet dead; his cries for help reached even the ears of the neighbours. You must have heard these cries, and you went to finish off your victim, either by hurling fresh logs on the top of him or by pushing the body back into the water with some poles, which were found afterwards and which are here (Sensation).

In spite of his wounds the aged priest had succeeded, by hanging on to the sides of the well and clutching the leadwork of the pumping-machine that crossed it, in keeping himself above water; but his murderer had returned and pitilessly completed his work. Next morning the Abbé Bruneau was busy preparing his neighbours for the news of Abbé Fricot's death. "The Abbé," he said, "has been very odd for some time; he is worried about family affairs. I should never be astonished to hear that he had committed suicide. If, as I very much fear, he has destroyed himself, there must be no scandal, for religion's sake. We will take him up and lay him on his bed without saying any more about it."

Bruneau.—I may have made a mistake in speaking in that way. But in any case there can be no doubt that, after everybody had been searching in the well without any

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result, it was I who ordered them to sound to the bottom of the well with a boat-hook.

President.—Yes; and whilst they were searching, you called out all of a sudden, "Stop a moment, my nose is bleeding." You had just seen that your handkerchief was stained with blood.

Bruneau.—It would have been very easy for me to have burnt my handkerchief, or thrown it, with a stone inside it, into the Mayenne, which runs near the vicarage.

President.—At length the neighbours drew out from the well some poles, logs of wood, a piece of cassock, and finally the body of the Abbé Fricot. Whereupon, turning to a nun standing by, you took her aside and said to her mysteriously and in a low voice, "Sister, I saw Monsieur le Curé close to the well last night. There can be no doubt that he has committed suicide, but, to save his memory, we have thrown logs over him so that people may think he has been murdered."

Bruneau.—I never said anything of the kind; the sister has entirely misunderstood me.

President.—The unfortunate Curé had been beaten to death. His head was smashed in, his nose a pulp, his face and hands covered with contusions. There were still some white hairs clinging to one of the logs taken out of the well. The old man had evidently made superhuman efforts to get out of the well. He had made his hands and feet bleed against the sides; they were covered with scratches. For two hours and a half he had called out and struggled against death. At the end of the two hours his murderer had returned and finished him off by striking him with logs of wood. That murderer, Bruneau, the prosecution holds to have been none other than yourself. If it had been the work of an outsider, he would not have come back after two hours and run the risk of being taken on the spot.

The murderer, whoever he was, had rifled the house. All the Abbé's money, his deeds, the fund for church repairs, even the fund for relieving the poor had dis-

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appeared. Some days after Bruneau's arrest the deeds were found in the granary, tied up in a handkerchief. As for the money, Bruneau was in possession of 1500 francs, of which he was unable to give a satisfactory account. He was likewise somewhat confounded by the bloods-tains on his handkerchief and the harmonium. But he soon pulled himself together, and said to the gendarmes, shortly after his arrest, "Bah! when my nerves are quieter, I shall tell my beads and let out nothing more."

This completed the interrogatory with regard to the murder of the Abbé Fricot. The President then went back in point of time to the murder of the widow Bourdais, the florist at Laval, whose throat was cut in her shop on the night of July 15th and 16th, 1893. The 5th of the previous February the widow's shop had been broken into. On that date Bruneau was proved to have been absent from his parish of Entrammes, and a key opening the florist's parlour had been found in his possession. He denied the charge.

President.—We are at July 15th, 1893. Towards evening some customers of Madame Bourdais remember to have seen in the shop a man whose features they did not observe with any great care. About ten o'clock cries for help awoke some of the neighbours, followed shortly after by the sound of hurried steps on the staircase. The florist's shop door was wide open; the police entered the house. The unfortunate woman was lying on the floor of the shop, her throat opened by a gaping wound extending to the vertebral column. One eyelid had been torn off and one eye put out. She had been struck with a knife in forty-three places. Her bed was soaked with blood. The murderer's weapon was picked up on the floor of her bedroom; it was a knife; its blade had been twisted by the violence of the blows inflicted. There was no trace of burglary on the doors or windows. The police formed the opinion that the murderer must have entered the house by means of false keys. Now I would remind you, Bruneau, that a key fitting the locks of the florist's doors

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has been found in your possession. What is more, in every case of theft charged against you, you have been found to have keys which fitted the locks (Sensation). The furniture of Madame Bourdais had been ransacked. Her two purses were found empty at the bottom of a cupboard. A number of shares in the Crédit Foncier which she was known to have had in her possession had disappeared.

Bruneau.—This is the first time that I have heard all the details of the murder of Madame Bourdais. I knew of the crime from the newspapers, but I was not aware of the actual circumstances (Murmurs in court).

President.—You were a frequent customer of Madame Bourdais, and often bought wreaths and flowers from her. Your carriage has often been seen at her door. Of the two ladies who saw the man in the shop the night of the murder, one recognizes you distinctly as that man ; the other, without positive recognition, describes him as being of your build and figure. A number of keys, some filed, were found in your house, and one of them fitted the drawer in the florist's counter. What were you doing with all these keys, which could have been of no use to you ? But that is not all. A number of forty-franc pieces had been stolen from Madame Bourdais. Now, in the following September you are found changing some forty-franc pieces at the booking-office of the Mans railway-station. Again, the night of the crime a cabman named Blin, whose deposition before the Juge d'Instruction was most precise, saw you in Laval. About half-past ten at night you crossed the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, coming from the direction of Madame Bourdais' house ; you were walking hurriedly. You hired Blin's cab to take you to Entrammes. The cabman has sworn to this time after time.

Bruneau.—It is false. I never left the parish all day, and was in bed by ten.

President.—The following day you made a curious remark to one of your neighbours who had told you about

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the crime, and expressed his astonishment that the police had so far discovered nothing. "There's nothing wonderful in that," you replied. "For instance, I, I could murder you in your chimney-corner with your wife and children, without any one suspecting me of it. If I had devoted myself to evil, instead of good, I should have made a terrible murderer" (Sensation).

So much for the two murders charged against the Abbé Bruneau. The disappearance of a lock-keeper at Laval, who had professed to know rather too much about the murder of Madame Bourdais, and had been thrown into the river Mayenne, was imputed to Bruneau; but the prosecution thought fit to abandon the charge.

Certainly, as a dramatic presentation of the case against the prisoner, the interrogatory of the President is an enthralling performance. It is only unfortunate that in the earlier portions of it he would seem rather to court than avoid a certain levity of treatment which is sadly out of place in a trial for murder. Judicial humour becomes simply indecent when it is allowed to escape in any form on such an occasion. That an educated man of mature years should not be able to keep serious for the few hours during which he is trying a fellow-creature for his life would seem incredible but for actual experience in England, as well as in France.

Substantially the facts stated by the President were borne out by the evidence.

Once again, in the evidence of the ex-Curé of Astillé, who had been dismissed through Bruneau's agency, we see that unthinking charity which would be proper in an anchorite, but is grievously mistaken in a man whose duty it is to consider the dignity of his Church and the safety of his fellow-creatures, to say nothing of his own good name. The Abbé Pointeau had been robbed, his house fired, his reputation vilified, and he himself sent to another parish (a culpable act on the part of his superiors if he were guilty, and grossly unjust if he were innocent), but he utters no word of protest, asks

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for no inquiry. "I did not rise up against this injustice," he said at the trial; "I bowed my head in a Christian spirit, and even to-day I would not accuse the Abbé Bruneau."

Bruneau.—And you are right, Monsieur le Curé; I have always had the greatest esteem and the deepest affection for you. We were persecuted together, and I have always tried to comfort you (Murmurs).

President.—What! when a letter of yours in reply to the Mayor of Astillé was seized in your house, in which you demanded for the good of religion the removal of this unfortunate priest! It was not enough to have robbed him and burnt down his house! but you must get him banished against his will from a parish in which he was beloved (Prolonged stir in court).

The evidence of the cabman Blin, who drove Bruneau from Laval to Entrammes the night of Madame Bourdais' murder, is interesting, and shows the extent to which anything approaching cross-examination is used in a French trial. One can imagine the length and zeal of the cross-examination of such a witness by a defending counsel at the Old Bailey.

Blin.—The night of the crime, about half-past ten, I was on the rank in the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, when I was hailed by a man dressed in grey and carrying a money-bag, who told me to drive him to Entrammes.

President.—From what direction did he come?

Blin.—From that of the widow Bourdais' shop (Stir in court). "You will stop, please, on the outskirts of the village of Entrammes," says he to me, "and I will go up the hill to it on foot."

President.—Turn towards the prisoner. Is that the man you drove that night?

Blin.—Most certainly, Monsieur le Président.

Bruneau.—I emphatically deny it. This cabman never drove me the night of July 15th and 16th of last year. I was not at Laval.

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Counsel for the Prisoner.—How is it that when you were confronted with the Abbé Bruneau for the first time last January you did not recognize him?

Blin.—I was all of a tremble; I didn't dare. And then I thought that I ought in the interests of justice to tell the whole truth, and I spoke.

President.—Come now! you are an honest fellow; you have taken an oath; you appreciate the gravity of your evidence. Was it the Abbé Bruneau or was it another man who took your cab on the night of the murder of Madame Bourdais?

Blin.—It was certainly he (Sensation).

The aged and broken father of Bruneau was called, for no particular reason but to fill up the picture. The boy Lochain described how, after the murder of the Abbé Fricot, Bruneau vented his excitement in playing the harmonium with bloody fingers; the servant Jeannette told how he tried to throw her into the well after her master; and a sermon preached by Bruneau in 1892 was remembered against him. This was the compromising passage—"I had an intimate friend, he was almost a brother to me, who was ruined by evil associates. He became a thief, and at last he mounted the scaffold. Here is a letter written to me on the eve of his execution." The words were regarded by the prosecution as having a personal application.

On July 12th the jury acquitted Bruneau of the charges of arson and the murder of the florist, but convicted him, and without extenuating circumstances, of the murder of the Abbé Fricot. He received his sentence of death in silence. On August 30th, at 4.55 a.m., he was guillotined. In his last moments Bruneau was composed, prayed devoutly, and received the Holy Communion; but maintained his innocence with unfailing determination until the fall of the knife. He is described as a man of about thirty, thin, lank, and angular, quite bald, cunning of eye and copious of speech, with a head like a sharp fox watchful of any trap. His rough hair,

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earthen in colour, and huge hands bespoke his peasant origin.

For sheer horror of circumstance the death of the Abbé Fricot has been seldom surpassed in the annals of murder. Beaten into the well, he is left for two hours struggling for life in the freezing air of the January evening, tearing his hands and feet in his efforts to climb up the sides of the well, while his assassin bangs at the harmonium with bloody fingers, and at the end of the two hours, pole in hand, pushes down into the icy water the last remnant of life in the body of the suffering old man. There was certainly some justification for the Abbé Bruneau's vainglorious boast of his great capacity for evil. Though the evidence of his having been the murderer of the Laval florist was lacking in that degree of certainty which would have justified a legal conviction, there is strong reason enough for believing Bruneau to have been guilty of the crime. Emboldened by one success, he tried a second throw; but this time his operations were carried out too near home, and he proved very conclusively that accident rather than skill had been his help on a past occasion; he lost his nerve, committed a series of consummate blunders, and showed that his capacity for evil lay in unfeeling practice rather than subtle design.

To Boudes the palm. The length of his career, the bulk and variety of his offences, his successful evasion of the guillotine by a ten years' assumption of insanity, his powers of address, his consummate impudence, and the offer of his body to the revolvers of the gendarmerie when he recognizes that the day of his battle with society is finally lost, these matchless qualities in a criminal carry him far beyond the weak resolution of Auriol and the nervous inhumanity of Bruneau. Auriol forgot the *obiter dictum* of the murderer Avinain, a household word among French criminals with a historical sense—"N'avouez jamais!" Bruneau suffered from an access of nerves at the critical moment of his crime. But Boudes betrayed

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no sign of weakness either in freedom or confinement, and if he did not end his days as a country gentleman or a monk, he received at sixty the wholly inadequate reward of penal servitude for life.

And every one of these odious exhibitions of hideous crime masquerading in cassock and surplice, might have been spared to the Church, and the masqueraders, stripped of their attire, sent to struggle with all the disadvantages of the lay as compared with the clerical criminal, by the exercise of an ordinarily stringent discipline on the part of the ecclesiastical authorities. Unquestionably, in the broader sense of the word, ecclesiastical charity should not begin at home.

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V

THE ADVENTURERS—

CAMPI, PRANZINI, AND PRADO

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V

THE ADVENTURERS

In Campi, Pranzini, and Prado we have three mysterious cosmopolitans, whose antecedents are shrouded in a more or less impenetrable obscurity. Out of their dim past they suddenly emerge into the light of day by some glaring act of murder, and, after a brief period of feverish notoriety, are cast forth into that outer darkness which has for its threshold the small, dark machine on the Place de la Roquette. Their cases have each of them a psychological interest of their own, and the type which is seen at its lowest in Campi, and which rises to a higher plane in Pranzini, finds its supreme and most remarkable exemplification in the daring and unscrupulous Prado.

CAMPI

But both Pranzini and Prado would in all probability have indignantly rejected any association with the dirty and bilious-looking robber of the Rue du Regard. They would have considered themselves as the true aristocrats of crime, they, the well-groomed darlings of adoring mistresses, whose adoration they contemptuously repaid

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by cutting their throats. They would have acknowledged no relationship with the shabby Campi, a ragged beggar without the shadow of an *amourette* to bless himself with. And yet for all their scorn, this Campi, sordid assassin as he was, had the right, by birth and education, to sit at the table of respectable people. "His respectability was such," said his advocate at his trial, "that previous to the murder of M. Ducros, the Avocat-Général and I would have invited him to our tables. Gentlemen, only the day before yesterday there sat in my study an unfortunate widow. I had just informed her that her son, whom she believed to be abroad, had been lying in prison for the last eight months under a charge of murder. She told me that she had another son, an officer in the army, who, if Campi were tried in his real name, would blow out his brains."

M. Ducros de Sixt was a retired advocate, living at No. 7 Rue du Regard. He kept house with his sister. They were both elderly people, already past sixty. M. Ducros was a benevolent gentleman, having something of an imaginative temperament that expressed itself in mild efforts at poetry. He gave substantial proof of his kindliness of heart by frequent acts of charity. These won for him the reputation of being a rich man, a reputation most unhappy in its consequence.

At three o'clock in the afternoon of August 11th, 1883, M. Ducros was taking his siesta. The only servant, Jeanne Pichon, had gone out, and Mdlle. Ducros was dressing herself to do likewise, when she heard a knock at the door. Going into the hall, she opened it to a shabby individual with a bilious face and a rough black beard. This same individual had already called an hour before, and inquired for the servant. Mdlle. Ducros had told him that she was out, and he, after a moment's hesitation, had gone away. Now he repeated his inquiry, and Mdlle. Ducros was about to give him a similar reply when a smashing blow from a stone-breaker's hammer brought her to the ground. Her brother, waking from his doze,

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came into the hall, only to be similarly struck down by the bilious-looking ruffian, who then proceeded to cut the throats of his two victims with a Spanish knife. He had hardly accomplished this when he was disturbed by the approach of the concierge, who had heard cries for help. The latter found on his arrival the two old people lying in a sea of blood. He summoned the police. They searched the house, and in a small attic found the distracted assassin hiding his head, ostrich-fashion, in some bed-clothes. He stammered out a full avowal; he had known M. Ducros before, had worked for him, had received kindness from him and a volume of his poems, from which he had discovered his address; he was in Paris starving, and without any means of subsistence: he thought that M. Ducros was rich, and he had killed him.

It would be impossible to imagine a case as clear as that against the man who gave his name as Campi. He had been caught in the act, he had fully confessed his guilt; it only remained, one would have thought, to try and punish him with all possible expedition. Yet in a case to all appearances so simple and conclusive, the preliminary instruction extended over seven months; and it was not until March 22nd, 1884, that Campi appeared before the Cour d'Assises. The whole of this time had been taken up in an investigation into the prisoner's antecedents which could not in the slightest degree affect his actual guilt or the heinousness of his crime. Campi, as soon as he recovered his presence of mind, elected to play the interesting drama of the Unknown. Everything about him, his birth, his family, his past, his relations with M. Ducros, the motives of the assassination, all these were to be unknown. He was Michel Campi, "the mysterious assassin of the Rue du Regard," as he wrote to M. Clémenceau; he was preserving by his silence the honour of his family, and he to some extent implied, the honour of his victim. And, strange to say, the instruction lent itself with the most astonishing complaisance to the fascination of the mysterious. M. Guillot, the Juge

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d'Instruction, and M. Macé, the Chef de la Sûreté, exhausted every wile, every threat, every cajolery, and every means of detection to solve the irrelevant problem raised by the accused; until at last he himself wearied of their pertinacity, and threatened to do them some injury if they prolonged their fruitless investigation. His letter to M. Guillot after six months of constant questioning, shows that even criminals are not blind to the absurdity of such a waste of time, trouble and ingenuity, the only conceivable motive for which must be an artistic desire on the part of the magistrate to send up a complete *dossier* to the Cour d'Assises. The following is the letter which Campi wrote to the magistrate:—

"MONSIEUR GUILLOT,

"Ever since last October you have told me every moment that my instruction is finished, but I find it is nothing of the sort. I am sick of being deceived. As you won't finish it, I will. From to-day I have no further wish to see you, and I will submit to no more confrontations. The series of idiots whom you have passed before me is now made up, and I have had enough of it. I can assure you that the only reason I had for submitting to it on the last occasion was to teach a lesson to busybodies who mix themselves up with other people's affairs. I, for my part, can't make out why people are so anxious to know who I am. My head belongs to me; take it; but my name, that is another matter. If I am, as they say, of good family, however remotely connected, I pity the man who makes my disgrace public, for it is more than likely that a blow from a hatchet will be the only reward of his information. On the last occasion—you didn't notice it, but you will easily call it to mind—there was nothing easier for me, while that person was examining my hands, than to have caught him by the beard, pulled it out by the roots, and, whilst his face was being held down, to have given him a violent blow with my knee that would have lamed him.

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It could all have been done so quickly that your policemen would have had no time to intervene. What saved that man was his extreme simplicity; it disarmed me.

"As for you, as this is my last communication to you, let us be frank. From the very outset you have trusted to your ingenuity, but now you are beginning to see your mistake. You don't yet know me, but I from my first interrogation knew the sort of man I had to deal with. Just at present you are drawing in your claws, but they peep out every now and then; I am not deceived by your amiability towards me. Do you think that, for all my seeming indifference, I have failed to observe the way in which you try to bring out into strong relief everything that can make me appear in the most hateful light? Nothing has escaped me, but I care little, since it is not my skin I am trying to save. You are clever, too clever, for one does not require to dot one's 'i's' to start you on a scent. The smallest indications, even those which would appear to have no foundation in reason, are the most serviceable to you, and your only mistake is in not giving others credit for the same adroitness as yourself. In my youth I learnt wrestling, in which, I remember, the greatest skill lay in making use of your opponent's strength to overthrow him. I called to mind this rule, and have found it of great service to me, with the result that I can tell you where at this very moment your detectives are cooling their heels.

"Do as you like. But as I am getting bored, I warn you that if by the 20th of this month my case is not sent up to the Court of Indictments, I shall make a disturbance. I know how to make it impossible for you to keep me a prisoner. You can use all your fine weapons, irons, strait-waistcoats and warders, and see what it will come to. Do your worst, but you will have to choose between killing me or seeing your detectives killed. I shall use every means in my power, and on you will rest the moral responsibility for whatever happens. You have spent six months over my instruction, that is

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more than enough. Under no pretext whatever do I wish to see you again.

"CAMPI."

This is assuredly not the letter of an ignorant or stupid man. It is a sensible, if brutal, appreciation of the circumstances, and emphasizes the ridiculous side of such investigations as M. Guillot was pursuing for no practical end. At the same time Campi cannot hide the wild beast within him, ready on the provocation of rage or want to break into some act of violence, nor his love of pose which he displayed at his trial in a most indecent degree.

This took place on March 21st, 1884, before the Cour d'Assises at Paris, when Campi had every opportunity for exploiting his mystery and truculence. The President asked him—

"Your name?"

"Campi."

"Your age?"

"Thirty-three."

"Your occupation?"

"Unknown."

"Your place of residence?"

"Unknown."

Mdlle. Ducros had recovered from her injuries, but her brother had succumbed a few hours after the attack. There was a question as to whether Campi had been seen lurking about the house the evening before the murder. "Mdlle. Ducros," said the President, "is too ill to be present. If she were here, she could enlighten us on this point, poor woman!" "Qui sait?" facetiously replied Campi, amidst the loud murmurs of the spectators.

The President made many and gallant attempts to pierce the mystery of Campi's motives and origin, but in vain.

"Why," he asked, "did you attack these two old people;—to rob them?"

"Certainly not."

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"From motives of revenge?"

"Perhaps."

"I cannot fix your motives, but it is in your interest to enlighten us."

"Never."

"But you have admitted that you meant to rob M. and Mdlle. Ducros?"

"Yes, I did, to put the police on the wrong track."

"As a matter of fact, you have committed an ordinary murder having for its object theft?"

"I told M. Macé (the Chef de la Sûreté) so, to be left in peace. I know M. Macé; he can't get the better of me. He spent eight hours trying to make me speak, and wheedling me with promises of wine and cards and tobacco; he even made me drunk. But all no good! I haven't told him who I am or why I killed M. Ducros."

The repeated efforts of the President to make Campi speak were no more successful than the singular arts of M. Macé.

"Did you know M. Ducros?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"That's my business."

"Did you know him well?"

"Perfectly."

"His sister?"

"A little."

"And the servant?"

"A little."

"And his house?"

"Very well."

"Has M. Ducros shown you kindness?"

"Never."

"Unkindness?"

"Perhaps."

"Who are you?"

"An Unknown."

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"Yes, an anonymous murderer. You are before the jury, your life is at stake."

"That's nothing to me. . . ."

"You have a father, a mother, brothers and sisters, for you have spoken of your nephews."

"I am considering their honour."

"You should have thought of that at the time of the murder. It is the crime that brings disgrace, not the expiation."

"The expiation? That is the scaffold? Very good. You want my head? I give it you."

"Have you an accomplice? You said you had."

"When I said so, I lied."

"Do you feel any remorse?"

"Sir, I am not the man to regret what I have done. But I should not do it again."

"You said to M. Guillot, 'I have taken life, and mine will be taken. Governments are always killing people; why shouldn't I?'"

"I wanted to shock M. Guillot."

"You even went so far as to throw your shoe at his head?"

"Certainly, one day he bored me. He had kept me there ten whole hours."

The President reminded Campi that at the moment of his arrest he avowed destitution to be the motive of his crime; "Then you were consumed with remorse, you had not yet recovered your presence of mind; that is the moment at which criminals always tell the truth."

"Exactly," retorted the prisoner; "that is why I replied to the first question asked me by giving a false name."

The Pres. (evidently nettled).—Anyhow, accused people never lie in the first surprise of their capture. I appeal to the experience of the Avocat-Général.

Campi (bursting out laughing).—The experience of the Avocat-Général! Oh, la! la!

By his persistency the President laid himself open to

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snubs similar to those Campi had already administered to M. Guillot and M. Macé, snubs which justice must expect as long as she shows herself needlessly inquisitive. Here again, and it is one of repeated instances, French justice, instead of saying, "We don't care who you are, we only know you as the murderer of the Rue du Regard," lends itself to the mysterious pose of an ingenious rascal, and exposes itself to cutting observations on the part of the criminal.

On the actual details of the murder of M. Ducros de Sixt, the trial did not shed any great light. It appeared probable that Campi's victims had been pointed out to him by an *indicateur*, a ruffian whose business it is to show ambitious criminals appropriate victims for their nefarious designs. More than one witness swore to seeing Campi in the Rue du Regard some time before the murder, accompanied by a mysterious individual.

The evidence of a *mouton*, a fellow-prisoner of Campi employed by the police as a spy on his actions, provoked the indignation of the prisoner. The spy described Campi as a somewhat remarkable person, a possible leader of men under a more fortunate star. He said that Campi's influence over his fellow-prisoners was most stimulating. One old man of sixty was so stirred by the urgings of the great Unknown, that he had quite made up his mind that, when he left prison, he would murder his wife, with whom he had certain differences. Campi had openly declared that if he was sent to New Caledonia instead of the guillotine, he would return to Paris on a raft and blow up the Palais de Justice. "Mere inventions," replied Campi on hearing this evidence; "you're an informer. I have seen right into your belly from the beginning. You had been promised 20,000 francs if you could find out my real name."

M. Quesnay de Beaurepaire of recent celebrity, who conducted the prosecution, succeeded in getting from the jury a verdict of "Guilty" without extenuating circumstances. Campi was sentenced to death.

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Campi had behaved like a wild beast in the Conciergerie, but the prison of La Roquette to which he was transferred to await execution, sobered his ferocity. "It is always the case," says the Abbé Crozes, for some time chaplain at that prison, "the fiercest are subdued as soon as they enter the Grande Roquette. They know only too well that the time for posing is past, and that the coffin is open before them."

Campi received the ministrations of the Abbé Moreau, the successor of the Abbé Crozes, with thankfulness. "It will always be a pleasure to me to see you," he said, "it will distract my thoughts." The Abbé was most struck, in observing him, by the curious expression of his eyes. His pupils were at times dilated in a fashion indicative of madness or extreme ferocity of disposition. Like Troppmann, he had the long thumb reaching almost to the top of the first finger, and separated by more than the ordinary distance from the rest of the hand. The grasp of his hand was like a vice.

Public opinion obliged President Grévy to forego his usual clemency in the case of Campi. The murder of a respectable gentleman in his own house in the middle of the afternoon was threatening to bourgeois security, and the President bowed to the apprehensions of his own class.

Campi received the announcement of his immediate execution at half-past four on the morning of the first of May. Though he recovered his self-possession after the first waking shock of surprise, and indulged during his toilet in some strong remarks on the journalists who had published various so-called true stories of his birth and past career, he reached the guillotine in an almost fainting condition. He had however bravado enough left to express his disappointment at the insignificance of the guillotine. He had expected a high and imposing scaffold; instead of which he saw before him a small red machine let in by four sockets to the paving-stones of the Place de la Roquette. "Ce n'est que ça," he exclaimed contemptuously.

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Campi had confided to the Abbé Moreau the secret of his birth and his career previous to his crime; and this is what the Abbé says—"The man executed on May 1st, 1884, in the Place de la Roquette, has never taken even a secondary part in the military or political life of the country. He has never belonged to a band of robbers or any other form of criminal association. He was a solitary, whose past had nothing terrible about it; and the solution of the mystery surrounding him could only interest the amour-propre of the police."

And so after all Campi was not a son of Napoleon III., nor a brother of General Boulanger, nor any of the interesting individuals that baffled journalism or fantastic gossip had tried to make him. He was practically resolved into a member of that upper class of criminals "born of respectable parents." But his letter to M. Macé showed an innate capacity for seeing things as they are, and giving direct and forcible expression to his resolutions which, had it not been associated with indolence and brutal ferocity, might have enabled him to end his life in a worthier fashion than by the brutal assassination of a kindly and charitable old gentleman.

PRANZINI

About eleven o'clock on the morning of March 17th, 1887, Madame Lacarrière, concierge at No. 17 Rue Montaigne, entered the office of the commissary of police, Créneau, in the Rue Berryer. She came to ask his assistance. She had vainly tried, since seven o'clock that morning, to get admission to the apartments of a Madame de Montille living on the third floor. She and another woman had broken the bell in their efforts to rouse some member of the household; but the only response to their

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repeated summons had been the dismal howling of Madame de Montille's two dogs. Afraid lest something terrible had happened, she had come to inform the police. M. Créneau, accompanied by his secretary, an inspector, a doctor, and a locksmith, immediately followed her to No. 17 Rue Montaigne. M. Goron, the ex-head of the Detective Department, describes in his Memoirs the result of the commissary's visit:—

"As soon as the door had been broken open, the carpet of the hall, which was fully lit by the large bay window in the drawing-room, was seen to be covered with large red stains. The locksmith, who went in first, made for the dining-room, but quickly stepped back in horror. 'A corpse,' he cried in a stifled voice. He had just seen in the passage the body of the maid, Annette Grémeret, which was lying on its stomach in a pool of blood right across the door. The unfortunate woman was in her night-dress and a petticoat; her cap and shawl had fallen on the ground. A gaping wound, nearly eight inches long, had opened the throat; there was another of the same length at the back of the neck; the weapon had penetrated to the vertebral column. There were other bleeding wounds on her right shoulder. The unfortunate woman had been struck unawares; her features wore no expression of terror; she had fallen all in a heap, like a bull at a sacrifice. M. Créneau crossed the passage to Annette Grémeret's bedroom. He saw blood-stains on the bed. Marie, the little daughter of the maidservant, had shared her mother's fate. The child's body, which seemed to be doubled up, was hidden under the bed-clothes. The little girl had been almost decapitated. The hair of her head was red with blood, the head itself only clinging to the body by a piece of flesh; her right arm, with which she had tried to shield herself, was pierced by many deep wounds. The commissary next proceeded to the bedroom of Madame de Montille. She lay on the floor at the foot of the bed, almost naked, her arms stretched out to the wall, her face bathed in a large

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pool of blood. Her features were contracted, her large eyes open and fixed in horror; she must have seen the blow that killed her, a shocking blow. Her throat had been cut like a sheep's, and with such force that the right shoulder had been nearly severed. Madame de Montille had been struck as she was getting out of bed. Over the bed there was a blood-stain that looked black on the red wall-paper. The victim had tugged at the bell-pull so violently that she had pulled it half off. She had evidently succeeded in rousing the maid, whom the murderer had dispatched as she came to the help of her mistress."

Robbery had been clearly the motive of these appalling crimes. Blood on the lock proved that vain efforts had been made by the murderer to open an iron safe; a purse stained with blood had been emptied of its contents; some jewellery, among which were a diamond ring, a pair of diamond earrings and a gold enamelled watch, had disappeared. The murderer must have washed his hands in a silver basin in the dressing-room which was filled with bloody water; but blood-stains on the chain and part of the front door showed that he had been wounded in the commission of the crime. The only clue to the identity of the criminal or criminals were a pair of dirty cuffs and a belt marked in ink with the name "Gaston Geissler," also a letter dated March 14th and signed "Gaston," presumably from the same individual. There were also found, among a number of papers, three visiting-cards bearing the name of one "Pranzini."

And Madame de Montille, the principal victim, what of her? She was not by right Madame de Montille at all. She was Marie Regnault, aged forty, who had assumed the more ambitious style to lend glamour to an otherwise sufficiently unfortunate history—a history common enough in all great cities. Born in an atmosphere of provincial respectability—her father had been a bailiff at Chalon-sur-Sâone—she did not continue in it long. The father took to drink, fell into disgrace, lost his appointment, and died of alcoholism. The daughter was left with nothing but

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her beauty, which was remarkable. She became the mistress of the son of one of the leading merchants in the town. When that episode had exhausted itself, she came to Paris, and from that moment Marie Regnault was transformed into Madame de Montille. At the end of 1886 she was living at No. 17 Rue de Montaigne, in a flat that had been previously inhabited by an admiral. The flat was luxuriously furnished; the bedroom with its red walls and its red carpet—a prophetic colour as it happened—was a particularly elegant apartment. Marie Regnault was a careful woman, leading a quiet and retired life, very fond of jewellery and having plenty of it. The best of it she kept in a safe in her bedroom. She had three lovers; two of them paid for the flat and the jewellery but were ignorant of each other's existence; the third, a young officer in the army, Marie Regnault entertained for his own sake. This was her situation at the end of 1886, a situation satisfactory enough to a woman of her way of life. For the first time in her hitherto trafficking career she had known what it was to love.

But with the dawning of 1887, if her diary is to be believed, a grievous disappointment brought misery and despair to the heart of Marie Regnault. The young officer, the favoured lover, was to be married; she writes in her journal—

"My sister died on February 28th, 1886.

"M. X. broke my heart on February 3rd, 1887.

"I wish I could die. I will try to forget; if not, I could kill myself. . . . I who have never wept except at my mother's death and my sister's, and three times in moments of anger, I cry now all day. X. left me at nine o'clock this morning; for an hour and a half after his departure I was prostrate with nervous anguish. I don't want him to see how I suffer; he doesn't love me enough to understand. If he can bring himself to love another, he can never have loved me. . . . I who used always to laugh at others when they talked of love, I am punished now! I didn't believe that I could ever love any one!"

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These were not the idle words of a woman exaggerating or simulating emotion to make copy for her diary. The consequences of her lover's departure were more fatal than even the wretched woman herself could have anticipated. The immediate effect upon her was to strip from her whatever of decency and restraint she had till then preserved in her poor life. She abandoned herself to strange and secret vices; she recklessly entertained acquaintances picked up in the street; she began to drink absinthe. The servant, Annette Grémeret, had a presentiment—"Madame," she said, "receives people she doesn't know; something will happen to her; we shall all be murdered." There was an unknown, dwarfish individual who used to go in and out of her apartments; there was the person named Pranzini who had left three calling-cards.

The maidservant's presentiment was not the only singular circumstance that, after the catastrophe, occurred to the recollection of those familiar with Marie Regnault. It was remembered that she had always entertained a great fear of robbers, and that her front door had been furnished with bolt and chain, which were carefully shot and fastened at night. Vain precautions! for it was from within, and not without, that robbery and murder were to come. Again, one evening shortly before the crime, one of Marie Regnault's admirers recollected that he had sat with her in her boudoir and had read to her a passage from a novel, in which a young and penniless gambler strangled his mistress and robbed her of 15,000 francs.

The evening of Wednesday, March 16th, the elder of her two accredited admirers dined with Marie Regnault. He left her at ten o'clock that night. At eleven o'clock the concierge saw a large, strongly-built man in an overcoat and high hat go up to the third floor. But she did not see this man go out again. About six in the morning some people, living in the flat below that of Marie Regnault, heard a child crying and the noise of a heavy body falling. About the same time Dr. Lepetit, living

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next door, heard some one going down-stairs from Marie Regnault's apartments. A person would have had no difficulty in getting out of the house unobserved at that hour, as at six o'clock the concierge opened the front door for the tradesmen.

The murder of the three women in the Rue Montaigne created, as may be imagined, a profound sensation in Paris, the more profound because, from its mysterious circumstances, this triple murder seemed likely to fall into the category of undiscovered crimes, which had about that time received some alarming additions. Since 1885 four women, of more or less the same class as Marie Regnault, had been assassinated, and the assassins were still at large. The murder in a railway-carriage of M. Barrème, the Prefect of the department of the Eure, which remains to this day an unsolved mystery, had still further agitated the public mind and provoked the usual reflections on the efficiency of the police. It was, therefore, with peculiar zeal that the police and the judicial authorities set about the discovery of the assassin of the Rue Montaigne. The case was confided to M. Guillot, one of the most accomplished and effective of Juges d'Instruction, and the foremost officers of the detective department were placed at his disposal.

What appeared to be the most likely clues were the cuffs, belt, and letter found in Madame de Montille's bed-room, all bearing the name of "Geissler." The search for the mysterious Geissler was eagerly prosecuted. By an extraordinary coincidence a man, whose real name was George Guttentag, but who had taken the name of Gaston Geissler to hide the disgrace he had brought on his family by a disreputable career, tried to commit suicide in Paris on March 22nd, and was arrested. For a moment the police thought that they had laid hands on the murderer of Marie Regnault, who, filled with remorse, or disappointed at the inadequacy of his booty, had determined to put an end to himself. Further inquiries, however, soon established Geissler's innocence, but not until M.

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Goron had been all the way to Breslau in Silesia in the hunt for the missing individual. Was the Geïssler whose name was inscribed on the articles found in Marie Regnault's bedroom an actual person, or had the name been used by the real murderer to throw the police off his track? Fortunately that question was soon to be conclusively set at rest.

It was on March 21st, the Monday following the murder, that a telegram from Marseilles reached the Parisian police, informing them that on the previous evening a man had been arrested in that city for having tried to dispose of jewellery identical with that stolen from the apartments of Marie Regnault. It appeared that on the afternoon of Sunday, the 20th, a man who had entered his name at the Hôtel de Noailles, where he was stopping, as "Dr. Henri Pranzini," lunched at the Pascal restaurant. After lunch he hired an open carriage and drove to his hotel. There he kept the carriage waiting whilst he fetched a parcel, and then drove to the Palais de Longchamps, a popular park and zoological gardens in Marseilles. He remained there some quarter of an hour, and then asked the driver to take him to the principal "maison de tolérance" in the city. This, according to the driver, was situated in the Rue Ventomagy, whither he conducted the Doctor Henri Pranzini. The doctor arrived at this establishment between half-past four and five, and did not depart till dinner-time. Whilst he was there he sold two of the women an enamelled gold watch, and, on their refusing to make any further purchases, presented them with a pair of earrings of turquoise set in diamonds. On leaving the Rue Ventomagy, Dr. Pranzini drove to another restaurant, had his dinner, and afterwards proceeded to the Grand Theatre, where he bought a stall and sat down in comfort to enjoy a performance of Beaumarchais' *Barber of Seville*. In the meantime the proprietress of the house in the Rue Ventomagy, whose suspicions had been aroused by the jewellery that Dr. Pranzini had disposed of to her women, had communicated with the police. M. Court,

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the commissary, at once suspected that he had to deal with a thief. The woman was able to give the number of the driver who had brought the mysterious visitor to her house, and he was found sitting on the box of his carriage outside the Grand Theatre, still waiting for his lucrative fare. It was at the end of the first act that a detective tapped the Dr. Pranzini on the shoulder, as he was attentively studying his programme, and informed him that somebody wanted a word with him. The Doctor followed without any demur, and was taken before the commissary. Asked to explain his possession of the jewellery and confronted with the women, he denied all knowledge of either the jewellery or the women. M. Court, however, thought it well to detain the Dr. Pranzini for the night. Next morning he found on his table a letter from the detective department in Paris giving an exact description of the missing articles of jewellery that had belonged to Marie Regnault. Two of these were identical with the watch and earrings given, on the previous evening, by Dr. Henri Pranzini to the two women of the house in the Rue Ventomagy. The capture was more important than it had at first appeared.

M. Court lost no time in acquainting his colleagues in Paris with the arrest effected at Marseilles, and MM. Goron and Jaume, two of the best known "agents de la sûreté," were dispatched from Paris to investigate this new aspect of the Regnault case. It was not long before other facts of importance were revealed that very directly associated the so-called Dr. Pranzini with the murders in the Rue Montaigne. He made an attempt to commit suicide on the night of his arrest. A gold and turquoise bracelet belonging to Marie Regnault was found in the refuse taken from the water-closets in the Palais de Longchamps, and the woman who looked after them positively affirmed that Pranzini had made use of one of the closets on the Sunday afternoon; she particularly recollected his visit, because he had given her an exceptionally large gratuity of half-a-franc. There were moreover suspicious wounds on

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his hand, and a scratch on his thigh which he could not satisfactorily explain. A letter, written by Pranzini to a friend in Paris, and asking him to tell any who might inquire his whereabouts that he had gone to London, had, in the meantime, been sent to M. Guillot in Paris, and was now communicated to the prisoner in Marseilles. But whilst, at length, admitting that he had known, respected, and loved Madame de Montille, Pranzini stoutly denied any knowledge of the murder beyond what he had read in the newspapers. He declared that he had spent the night of the murder with his mistress, a Madame Sabatier, with whom he lived when in Paris, at No. 20 Rue des Martyrs. To every question suggesting his complicity in the crime he constantly replied—"Je ne suis pour rien dans cette affaire." On March 25th M. Goron and Inspector Jaume brought Pranzini to Paris.

M. Guillot had not the same difficulty in reconstituting the past of Pranzini that he had experienced in the case of Campi. From all parts of Southern Europe arrived accounts of Henri Pranzini, and they were all uniformly unfavourable. It was soon clear to the judge that, if he had not in his hands the murderer of Marie Regnault, he had at any rate secured a dangerous and impudent adventurer.

Born in 1856, and therefore little over thirty in 1887, Pranzini was by nationality that most mixed and uncertain compound, a Levantine, one of the half French, half Oriental inhabitants of the east shores of the Mediterranean. His portrait, as he appeared at his trial, is inimitably sketched by M. Bataille in the pages of the *Figaro*.

"To recognize this peculiar Levantine type one must have travelled. With his small moustache turned up at the ends, his beard carefully curled and dressed, his easy, insinuating manners, his foppish air, his dandified get-up—the white waistcoat, the faultless linen, the end of his pocket-handkerchief peeping out from his side-pocket—Pranzini is a living embodiment of that type of hotel interpreter that one meets with in Austria or Italy, half cicerone,

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half scoundrel, acting in the daytime as a guide to the usual places of interest in the town, and at night conducting those travellers who can afford to pay, to the less respectable resorts that are not to be found in the guide-books. This Italian, brought up in Alexandria, is a thorough cosmopolitan. He speaks French with a hesitation that has a certain charm and picturesqueness about it. He has no mother-tongue, just as he has no mother-country. He is very calm, entirely master of himself, as he sits in the dock of the Cour d'Assises. He replies to the questions addressed to him with unctuous politeness, and with extraordinary ingenuity turns aside those that would seem to be the most compromising. When he is not astonishing the court by the recital of the most extravagant falsehoods, he is posturing in a self-satisfied fashion, displaying his shirt-cuffs and striking attitudes for the benefit of the fair ladies in the reserved seats. It is his eye alone that betrays the true nature of the man—a blue eye, cruel and shifting, occasionally lighting up with a wild, fierce glance, but generally hidden beneath long eyelids of the Chinese type. The dandy cannot altogether mask the wild beast that is in him."

The youthful career of Pranzini in Alexandria, which had commenced with an early indulgence in the promiscuous vices of that city, was cut short by a nine months' imprisonment for theft. This was in 1877, after which date Pranzini turned rover. An extraordinary facility for languages enabled him to find employment as courier or interpreter. He visited in this capacity Persia, Burmah, and Afghanistan. He spent some time in Italy. It was at the Hôtel Caprani at Naples that he became acquainted with a man named Geissler. Geissler kept the books of the hotel. Suddenly 12,000 francs in notes disappeared from the cash-box. Geissler was suspected of the theft, and it was only after a long and painful delay that Pranzini was obliged to confess that he was the real thief. But he did not forget Geissler. The murders in the Rue Montaigne seemed an admirable opportunity for

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once more thrusting criminal distinction on the unoffending cashier.

From Italy Pranzini returned to Egypt, and in his capacity of interpreter accompanied the English Army in the Soudanese War of 1885. He obtained from one of the English officers a certificate which declared him to be equally proficient in the English, French, Italian, Greek, Turkish, Arabic, Russian, and Hindoo languages. But in spite of these accomplishments, which should have made it easy for him to earn an honest and substantial living, Pranzini came to Paris in 1886 a discredited beggar, who, by his invincible dishonesty, had alienated any friends he may have had, and, rejected of men, was reduced to living as best he could on the cozening of women. It is in this respect that his career has, from the point of view of the psychologist, something extraordinary about it.

For the seduction of women he was well equipped by art and nature. Without emphasizing the indiscreet revelations of Dr. Brouardel as to his physical conformation, Pranzini was a man of singular muscular development, for which his feminine adorers could find no milder adjective than "magnificent." With this hopeful physique he combined an easy and insinuating address that seems to have been absolutely immediate in its effect. His favourite method of courtship was to invite a lady's attention by his seductive glance, after which he slipped his visiting-card into her hand, and a meeting was speedily arranged. In the fascination that Pranzini most undoubtedly exercised over the opposite sex lies the real interest of his case, an interest which the French instruction developed to its fullest extent. More than one woman who had stooped to folly with the wily Levantine was terrified by being summoned to the cabinet of M. Guillot, and confronted with the written proofs of her passion. One fashionable lady, fearing that her name would be made public, tried to commit suicide in the presence of the Judge.

But it was not only French women who flung them-

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selves with unbecoming ardour into the muscular arms of the assassin. Phlegmatic Anglo-Saxons, throwing caution to the winds, abandoned all to the sudden passion that seemed to spring up at the mere sight of him. An English widow is found writing—

"My magnificent Dear,—You cannot think how unhappy I have been since we parted. There is no disputing the fact that certain faces cast a spell over certain people. When I saw your face, I experienced this ; it was the work of a moment. No one can alter my determination to come and live with you, if you still love me."

And a little later—

"It is curious the way we were drawn to each other. The likes or dislikes we form when we first meet people are always instinctive, and in most cases correct. It is usually by instinct, and not for sound moral or intellectual reasons, that we love a man or loathe him. This is our way of reasoning, and will partly explain the precipitancy of our coming together. You can never know how priceless are your letters to me, and how passionately I love you. Sometimes I think of you as the being I have longed for, etc., etc."

If the English widow had been possessed of valuable jewellery, she might have had cause to regret the gratification of her longings. One fine lady, who had accepted the surreptitious calling-card from the "magnificent," was sorely puzzled by her new-found lover's urgent desire to meet her at her own house, in her own bedroom. She not unnaturally rejected such an indiscreet proposal, whereupon, to her astonishment and chagrin, she heard no more of the mysterious stranger.

About the end of 1886, Pranzini, in the course of his singular adventures, formed a liaison that had some bearing on the final catastrophe. A young American girl was visiting Paris with her parents. She was evidently a prey

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to that nauseous romanticism which lays hold of some ill-regulated minds that are destitute of a sense of humour, but are well endowed with a stock of silly sentiments about great passions and high ideals and various abstracts spelt with capital A's. Looking about with unhealthy curiosity to find a physical embodiment of their foolish dreams, these impatient creatures are likely victims for a loafer of the Pranzini type. The young American was soon enticed into the not inconsiderable ranks of Pranzini's admirers, and proved herself quite equal to any of her predecessors in the ardour of her attachment. She became his mistress. When she left Paris for New York she carried on an ardent correspondence with her lover, and evidently hoped that he would come out to America and marry her. "Come soon," she writes, "and you will fulfil my fondest hopes." Her reflections on the relative morality of Paris and New York are, under the circumstances, not to be passed over. "This city (New York) is very attractive in winter, and almost as clean as Paris; but it is not so wicked, that is, immoral. As you know, the French proclaim their vices, we hide them and try to reform them. The French are proud of their immorality and gloat over it. New York, like all large cities, is wicked, but the women are not so inconstant as the Parisians. Family life is happier over here." She begs Pranzini to leave so corrupt a city as Paris. "It is," she naively reflects, "the most wicked city in the world; the moral tone there is so low." For her own part, this critical lady prefers muscular men to those stout and flabby. "You possess the qualities I love; manly strength and good sense." Her love for Pranzini, she tells him, is in no way diminished. She has confided "our little romance"—at least, a portion of it—to her mother, who is surprised at the depth of her devotion. "I always carry a violet now, and I lower my eyes when there are men near me, for I want to keep my eyes altogether for you."

True to those characteristics of her race which she has so

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accurately described, she does not find religion incompatible with her situation. "I went to the Temple on Sunday, and came back much improved in mind. The minister and his wife are keenly interested in the salvation of my soul." Finally, the young lady's father had been acquainted with his daughter's passion, and had not absolutely prohibited its further consideration. Nothing now remained but that Henri should come to New York.

But Henri tarried; he came not, in spite of urgent prayers and entreaties, to which he vouchsafed no answer. The truth was that Henri had no money. If he was to secure this daughter of wealthy parents, he must present himself before them with money in his purse and fine clothes on his back. It was whilst he was in this awkward predicament, with the hope of a prosperous marriage held out before him, if only he could get enough money to cross the Atlantic and cut a decent figure until the young lady and her fortune were in his hands, it was at this crucial moment in his desperate career that he met Marie Regnault. Why should not her jewellery furnish him with the means of accomplishing the good fortune that was so nearly within his grasp? It is significant that at the end of February 1887 Henri suddenly breaks the silence that has so distressed his mistress in New York. Through the medium of an imaginary friend, bearing the rather transpontine name of Zamet, he writes to tell his beloved that he has been wounded in a duel and has been in bed a month already. But, he writes, his mother is beside him; in his delirium he has often murmured the young lady's name, but by the kind and unfailing solicitude of the good friend Zamet, he is on the way to complete recovery. A letter of passionate anxiety and feverish rejoicing at Henri's safety more than rewards Pranzini for his elaborate fabrication. The fable of the duel has been entirely successful. His delay satisfactorily accounted for, he can set about his preparations for his departure to America.

On March 4th he buys a large knife "that shall cut

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wood, if need be." On March 16th he orders a false beard, but, being recognized by the shopman, does not complete the purchase. On March 17th Marie Regnault, her maid and her little daughter were assassinated. On March 18th Pranzini telegraphed to New York, "Am quite out of danger now. Going to Nice with mother. Will write from there.—Henri." The results of the crime had not answered his expectations, but there can be little doubt that, had they done so, Pranzini would have been well on his way to America after the murder instead of loitering about Marseilles.

Circumstantially the chain of evidence against Pranzini was acquiring strength daily. But there still remained one vital question that justice had yet to determine. Another woman, passionately devoted to Pranzini, had come to his rescue in his perilous situation. This was a certain Madame Sabatier, a woman of over fifty, employed in one of the large shops in the Rue de la Paix. She had made the acquaintance of Pranzini in the street, and had immediately fallen a victim to his fascination, with all the superabundant enthusiasm of a woman whose youth is past, whose charms, such as they are, are sensibly diminished, and who may safely reckon this new passion as likely to be her last. Pranzini had made her acquaintance in October 1886, and since then had lived on her, she gladly devoting her earnings to supplying the needs of her penniless young lover.

As soon as the suspicions of the police fell on Pranzini, Madame Sabatier was arrested and interrogated as to Pranzini's whereabouts on the night of the murder. She persistently declared to M. Guillot that Pranzini had spent that night at her apartments. M. Guillot did not credit her. But the Judge, with, as it transpired, a fine appreciation of her character, instead of trying to frighten or bully her into telling what he believed to be the real truth, released her, saying that he was sure her conscience would soon prompt her to come to him and give the true account of Pranzini's movements on that eventful night.

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The Judge was not mistaken. On March 25th she wrote to him and admitted that she had deceived him, and that Pranzini had not spent the night of March 16th and 17th at her house.

Two days later Madame Sabatier was confronted with her lover in the presence of M. Guillot. As a dramatic example of the confrontation of prisoner and witness which plays such an important part in French criminal procedure, the meeting of Pranzini and his mistress is probably unsurpassed in modern crime. The official report says—

As Madame Sabatier entered the room she seemed deeply moved. She looked for a moment at Pranzini, and then said in a tone of entreaty—

"You know very well, Henri, that you did not sleep at my house on the night of Wednesday, March 17th. . . . I beseech you if you are innocent to say where you slept, for that would clear you."

Pranzini.—What can I say? I spent the night with you. Why do you want to make me tell a lie?

Madame Sabatier.—On the contrary, I want you to tell the truth. Come, Henri, look me in the face. Don't turn away. You know you slept out.

Pranzini.—I did not.

Madame Sabatier.—How can you say that?

Pranzini.—I did not.

Madame Sabatier.—It's no good your telling me that. Be frank, I ask you to be; remember my honour is at stake.

Pranzini.—I have told the truth.

Madame Sabatier.—Think well, and you cannot persist in this story. Again I ask you to look me in the face. (Tears run down the prisoner's cheeks.) Why won't you look at me? You know you slept out. Why deny it?

But Pranzini persists in his denial.

Madame Sabatier goes on—" I can't believe you guilty —I can't believe that you, who were so sweet and gentle,

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who would not have hurt a fly, who loved children—that you could have murdered that little girl! Come, now, it isn't true. But then you must prove your innocence—you must speak out; you must say where you were that night. Tell all you know—I beg, I beseech you. There is no other way."

Pranzini.—I know no more. I slept on the sofa.

Madame Sabatier.—Don't you remember what you confided to me the following evening, when we came back from the circus? It was a terrible story, but yet I couldn't believe you guilty.

Pranzini.—I never told you anything.

Madame Sabatier.—Why, I can see you now, sitting on the sofa. You began to cry. You spoke to me for the first time of Madame de Montille. You told me that you had met her one day as she was driving in the Champs Elysées, that she was a very nice girl, and very like some one you had once dearly loved. You told me that you had spent the night of the 16th and 17th at her house, that about three in the morning there came three knocks at the door, that the woman said, "I am frightened. Hide, so that you are not seen. It's a wretch who comes to me for money." Then you described to me how you had hidden in a cupboard, from which you had heard the steps of two men and a woman's cries, and how you had stayed in the cupboard till six o'clock. I asked you why you hadn't come to the woman's assistance, and you said because she had told you to stay where you were. This story seemed to me so confused that at first I didn't believe it, and thought nothing of it. I was surprised to see you crying, but when a little while after you went quietly off to sleep I was absolutely without suspicion.

Pranzini.—I never told you all that.

Madame Sabatier.—Then I have made it up?

Pranzini.—I don't know.

Madame Sabatier.—What, you don't know! One doesn't tell a story like that without knowing it. I have

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no motive for accusing you. I want to defend you. Do you want to make out that I am a liar?

Pranzini.—I don't say that.

Madame Sabatier.—Then confess that you told me this story.

Pranzini.—"Je ne suis pour rien dans cette affaire."

Madame Sabatier.—That's nothing to do with the question. Did you, or did you not tell me this story?

Pranzini.—Why all these questions? I have nothing to do with all this business.

Madame Sabatier.—The next morning—Friday—when they were crying the murder in the streets, you said to me, "That noise is very upsetting to me. Poor Marie! she was so good." Later in the day, when you came and told me that your friends had advised you to go away because some of your cards might be found in the murdered woman's apartments, I looked you full in the face and said, "Come, is it you who have committed this crime?" But you replied so confidently, I had such faith in you that I believed you, and thought you wanted to go away to avoid being dragged into the affair, and I pawned my locket to get you money for your journey.

Pranzini.—I am a complete stranger to this crime.

Madame Sabatier.—Why did you shave off your beard on Friday?

Pranzini.—A mere whim.

Madame Sabatier.—Some days before the crime I saw a knife in your portmanteau. Thinking more of your gallantries than with any idea of a crime, I said to you, "Is that to defend yourself with against injured husbands?" I wanted to take the knife away. What a misfortune that I did not!

Pranzini.—I never had one.

Madame Sabatier.—When you answer me like that, I can only think that you had it for a wicked purpose.

Pranzini.—I have done nothing wicked.

After some further statements by Madame Sabatier,

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which Pranzini continues to meet with blank denials, she makes a final entreaty to her obstinate lover—

"Let me believe you innocent instead of contradicting everything I say, and so giving me pain. Instead of making me appear a liar, who have been so kind, so devoted to you, tell the truth; for seven months I have loved you, with no thought of myself; I believed in you, I made great sacrifices for your sake, you used to speak to me of your mother, and how anxious you were to make her happy. Ah! you're weeping now!" She goes up to him, and herself in tears, says—"Henri, on my knees, I beg of you to tell the truth—I can't believe you guilty; if you know anything, speak; repeat what you told me; clear yourself, and if you are really innocent, say where you spent that night, say what you saw in that room, say how you came by that woman's jewels; for my sake, for your mother's sake, speak!"

Pranzini, having shed a few tears, looks at the woman Sabatier in an irritated fashion, and replies with a dry accent, "Je ne suis pour rien dans l'affaire."

And so with his wonted formula Pranzini brings to an end this extraordinary scene, dramatic in every sense of the word, and illustrative in the highest degree of a scheme of criminal procedure which, to the English mind, generally presents itself as either ridiculous by its emotionalism or abhorrent by the trickiness of its methods. To be fairly judged, however, the French system of instruction must be regarded from the standpoint of the people for whose use it is intended, and that it is, in capable hands, often efficacious, is undeniable. M. Guillot, in his interesting book, *Les Prisons de Paris*, in which he sums up the fruits of a long and successful experience as a Juge d'Instruction, bears striking testimony to the principles which, strange to us, permeate the whole course of French criminal procedure, viz. that it is by an appeal to the emotions rather than the logic of facts that a judge is likely to bring a prisoner to a confession, or extract the truth from the witnesses against him. He is commenting

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on a passage from a book by Maxime du Camp, in which the author says that he has known the most hardened and abandoned wretches to be moved to tears by the mention of their mother or their natal village. "Nothing is truer," adds M. Guillot; "the judge who thinks that he will extract a confession by pure reasoning, by the clever accumulation of proofs, by mere force of logic, deceives himself strangely; the only use of this kind of argument is to put a prisoner on his guard. The brain is far less vulnerable than the heart; it is by appealing to the latter that the citadel may be stormed. A tear is of more service to justice than the closest reasoning. The criminal who has denied his guilt in the face of all evidence, confesses at last because his mistress begs him to tell the truth for her sake, or because his feelings are stirred by the gentleness of his victim's mother."

There is to the English mind, and always will be, something a little comic about these sentimental considerations about mother and birthplace, occurring, as they constantly do, in the midst of the most hideous and appalling circumstances. But when we appreciate the practical utility of such considerations to an eminent magistrate like M. Guillot, and find him deliberately testifying to their importance in criminal investigation, we cannot fail to realize that we are dealing with a system of procedure which has its foundations in a difference in national character that must from the outset be fairly recognized. Then, and not till then, can we presume to criticize the course of proceeding.

But, making full allowance for differences of character, for the fact that a man's starts of emotion, pallor of countenance, his tears, and many other, to us, trivial or irrelevant circumstances, are matters of evidence in a French trial, making allowance for the substitution of confrontations for our cross-examination, there can be no doubt that of recent years the Instruction in France has become more inquisitorial and more full of sudden surprises and tricks of detection than, according to many authorities, it was originally intended to be; and that, whilst it may be kept

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within proper bounds by such magistrates as M. Guillot, it is very liable to abuse in the hands of the unskilful or the unscrupulous. Even M. Guillot calmly recounts a trick, for it is nothing else, to which he has frequently and successfully resorted. He is commenting on the effect produced upon murderers by their being suddenly confronted with the corpses of their victims, and he goes on to speak of a device which he has employed in the cases of particularly stubborn or hardened assassins. "I leave within their reach, as though by accident, a heap of papers containing amongst them a photograph of the corpse of their victim. And I soon observe that it seems to have a kind of fascination for them; their eyes keep wandering towards it; they are no longer listening to my questions; their voice grows hoarse, their expression is constantly changing, and they only recover their self-possession when, having got the effect I wanted, I put away the distressing picture." These are methods dangerous even in the hands of a trained lawyer. What will they become when parodied by a Du Paty de Clam?

The evidence of Madame Sabatier was practically the last and completing link in the chain of evidence against Pranzini. By a series of singularly stupid actions on his part that argue bewilderment, the murderer had delivered himself into the hands of justice. Having conceived and carried out the murder with some cunning and assurance, no sooner is the crime committed than he piles blunder upon blunder. Having adroitly put the police on to the false scent of the mythical Geissler, having contrived to enter and leave Marie Regnault's unperceived, his card among a number of others being the only piece of evidence to connect his name with that of the murdered woman, he seems to entirely lose his head from the moment that he is out of the house. He talks wildly of the murder to an acquaintance before it has even been announced to the police; he talks of it in a childishly suspicious fashion to his mistress; he makes a fatally clumsy attempt to prove an *alibi;* he escapes to Marseilles after posting Marie

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Regnault's jewels to himself in a registered packet; he throws some of the jewels into the public closets, and gives others to the girls in a house of ill fame; and, to crown all, attempts to commit suicide immediately after his arrest. In short, by one act after another, Pranzini forfeits all claim to be considered a great criminal. If one were asked to define what constitutes the great criminal, or at any rate the great assassin, one would be inclined to say that he was a great murderer who, having skilfully planned and executed his crime, had sufficient insensibility to be impervious to the pricks of conscience and the horrors of remorse. It is difficult to say by what acts of folly Macbeth might not have betrayed his guilt after Duncan's murder but for the sobering influence of his insensible lady. In the hands of a Juge d'Instruction like M. Guillot, the surreptitious photograph of Duncan's body would have soon overturned the composure of the Thane of Cawdor, whilst all the judge's subtlest wiles and surprises would have been wasted on the splendid imperturbability of the Thane's unfeeling spouse. There can be no doubt as to which of the two was the great criminal.

"As soon as a crime has been committed," says M. Guillot, with Pranzini in his thoughts, "the first desire felt by the murderer is to distract his mind. Conscience has not yet become what criminals in their slang call 'the mute'; he makes every effort to stifle its accusing voice, he goes after reckless amusements in order to banish the recollections that haunt his mind, he seeks out some confidant who can help him to bear the burden that is weighing him down. So powerful are these desires, that he compromises his own safety, and commits imprudences which betray him to justice. . . . Who can say what passes in the depths of a man's conscience? When the murderer of the Rue Montaigne arrived on the following day at Marseilles, whence he hoped to sail for Egypt, he was assailed by the recollections of his youthful days, he thought of his aged mother, who later wrote such a touching letter to beg a pardon for her son. It was Sunday.

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He went into the cathedral during Mass, but he only stayed there for an instant. Had a spark of repentance been kindled in his conscience? Perhaps he had thought for a moment of throwing himself at the feet of a priest and confessing his crime before submitting to his punishment. But the hideousness of his crime appalled him; I have often heard him say that he thought himself unworthy of forgiveness. He left the church for a house of ill fame. They are men of exceptional strength of will who can bear on their own shoulders alone the weight of a crime; those who don't confess to God, confess to the devil. That is why women are so often made the repositories of so many secrets, and why more than one criminal has bitterly regretted having confided in them. . . . Here is a man who has just cut the throats of three women; he knows that the news of his crime is spread abroad, that justice is seeking the guilty man; the most ordinary precaution makes it imperative that he should not show himself more than is absolutely necessary, that he should hide the jewels he has stolen. But the vision of the murder possesses his soul and cries with a louder voice than that of self-preservation. He delivers up a portion of his secret to those with whom he has sought distraction from his thoughts."

On July 11th, 1887, Pranzini appeared before the Paris Assize Court, presided over by M. Onfroy de Bréville. Seldom has a criminal trial in Paris caused greater sensation. The horror of the crime, the singular career of the prisoner, his peculiar reputation for gallantry, and his still more peculiar successes in that direction, provoked public, and particularly female, interest to an unwonted degree. It was more than ever necessary for the President to warn the gay and rustling audience that the court was not a theatre, and that the popping of champagne-corks was incompatible with the sobriety of a legal proceeding. But the President might with advantage have laid a little of this necessary warning to his own soul. His interrogatory of Pranzini was constantly marred

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by levity and bad taste, only explicable on the ground that he wished to amuse his audience. He also seems to have treated the prisoner with quite unnecessary harshness.

The interrogatory lasted the whole of the first day, Pranzini manfully struggling against an overwhelming case. The President could not resist a passing sneer at the English. Pranzini said that he had left our army in the Soudan with a certificate from an English officer describing him as energetic, obliging, and honest. "Honest!" exclaimed the Judge, "that only shows how well you took in the English" (Laughter). Italy likewise came in for facetious comment from the sprightly Judge. Something was said about Pranzini's fondness for jewellery. "You were always on the look-out for jewellery," remarked the President. "At Bologna you wore so many rings that they attracted public attention, even in Italy!" (Laughter).

They come to the night of the murder:—

President.—What did you do on the evening of the 16th of March?

Pranzini (slowly).—I cannot say! (Prolonged agitation).

President.—Is it a matter of professional secrecy?

Pranzini.—I shall not tell you anything, I don't wish to tell you anything.

President.—Come, now! after dining with Madame Sabatier, where did you go?

Pranzini.—Home to the Boulevard Malesherbes and wrote letters till half-past nine.

President.—And then?

Pranzini.—I paid a visit.

President.—Where?

Pranzini.—I cannot say.

President.—You're embarrassed, Pranzini, you change colour.[1]

Pranzini.—I! not at all! I am perfectly calm, my conscience is pure.

President.—Hadn't we better leave conscience out

[1] Later on in the trial the Judge accused Pranzini of turning *green*.

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of the question? You went and paid a visit which your conscience prevents you from divulging, because it concerns your head! . . . Where were you during the early hours of the night?

Pranzini.—I repeat, I cannot say.

President.—What gentlemanly delicacy of feeling! (Laughter). And in the morning?

Pranzini.—I got up without Madame Sabatier seeing me and went for a walk on the Boulevard Extérieur.

President.—But it was snowing hard! We have the weather report from the Observatory.

Pranzini.—It is very pleasant walking in the snow. And then I had to pay a visit in that neighbourhood.

President.—Come, Pranzini, we have had too many visits and mysterious adventures. Who is going to believe stories of this kind? The truth is that you returned to Madame Sabatier's about ten in the morning, carrying a small parcel.

Pranzini.—They were biscuits which I proceeded to eat.

President.—Then your visits during the night and morning had been very fatiguing! (Laughter).

The interrogatory by the Judge was not unfairly described as pitiless, and certainly succeeded in reducing Pranzini to a parlous condition. At the end of the first day, after accumulating proof upon proof of the prisoner's guilt, the President concluded—

"And so, Pranzini, you appear always the same—deceitful, cunning and hypocritical, and if you have ruined yourself, it is by the excess of your devices to save yourself.

Pranzini.—No, it is because I will not compromise a lady whom I love and respect.

President.—If this lady exists, let her come to the bar and save your life. For my part, I can only for the last time adjure you to think well, to recollect your situation. On Monday I will call upon you for the result of your reflections.

The result of Pranzini's reflections was not to make

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him more communicative. He was less confident the second day of his trial, but stolid in his ignorance of the whole affair. Occasionally he was impudent, as when a gentleman gave evidence of his dishonesty, and the President asked him what he had to say to it. "That this gentleman," he replied, "is very greedy of notoriety and very lucky to get himself into prominence by being called in my case."

The President continued to be at times pleasantly facetious. Two of Marie Regnault's lovers were called. One, a gentleman of fifty years of age, who had known her some sixteen years, was playfully hailed by the Judge as the "doyen."

The most interesting evidence, as might be expected, was that of Madame Sabatier.

"Did Pranzini come home on the night of the 16th and 17th March, that of the murder?" asked the President.

Madame Sabatier.—He did not. We were to have dined together that evening and gone to see *Francillon* at the Français. I did not get the seats, however, and Pranzini went out about half-past six, saying that he was going to spend the evening with his friend Marchettini. "Whatever you do," I said, "don't stop out too late."

President.—When did you see him again?

Madame Sabatier.—The following day at half-past two in the afternoon.

President.—Had you not been worried at his absence?

Madame Sabatier.—I slept well all night. I did not wake till half-past seven, and then I saw to my surprise that he wasn't there.

President.—Was not your jealousy aroused?

Madame Sabatier.—Oh, one must allow a little for young people.

President.—Did Pranzini explain to you how he had spent the night?

Madame Sabatier.—He told me that he had had a very good time with some friends.

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President.—The next day was the "Mi-Carême." Where did you spend the evening?

Madame Sabatier.—At the Cirque Fernando.

She then described how Pranzini had told her about his being present during the murder, but had sworn to his own innocence. "Lie down," I said, "you are tired." He lay down on the bed and slept like a child till morning.

President (to Pranzini).—You have a self-possession which astonishes, or rather appalls me.

Pranzini (very calm, smiling).—Madame Sabatier is in error, I never told her such a story.

Madame Sabatier.—Miserable man! you don't think I have made it up?

President.—Think, Pranzini. Here is a woman who has lied to save you. Do you think her capable of destroying you?

Madame Sabatier.—For so long I thought him innocent!

President.—The infatuation of love!

Madame Sabatier.—Not love, but faith!

The President reads the report of the confrontation, which has been already given. Pranzini lets his head fall in his hands and sobs.

President.—Pranzini, you are crying.

Pranzini (with a gulp).—Yes, sir, for my mother.

President.—She will weep tears of blood, poor woman, when she reads this trial.

Pranzini (with a violent gesture).—I am innocent, innocent.

President (to Madame Sabatier).—Now, madame, I want you to make one last attempt. Say one word to him. He may still have some heart left. Speak to him of his mother.

Madame Sabatier tries to speak, but in vain. She turns her head away from Pranzini, who looks coldly and fixedly at her.

President.—Don't try to fascinate her.

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Pranzini (with a sneer).—Who obliges her to lower her eyes?

July 13th was the last day of the trial. Maître Demange made a powerful appeal to the jury on behalf of the prisoner. A brown man, whom a cabman, much to the President's annoyance, swore to having been with Pranzini the day after the murder, was, according to M. Demange, the real murderer, Pranzini only a receiver of the stolen property. So fired was the prisoner by the ardour of his advocate's pleading, that he adopted a commanding tone when asked by the President if he had anything to add to his defence. He struck the bar in front of the dock a terrific blow, and exclaimed in a voice of thunder—"Death or liberty! I am innocent!" After two hours' deliberation, the jury declared themselves to be of a contrary opinion, and could find no extenuating circumstances. On the part of the prisoner, there was a moment of rage, followed by prostration; from the President sentence of death; and the Court rose at seven o'clock.

Execution was done on September 1st, 1887. Pranzini died protesting his innocence, "without swagger, with the fatalism of a man who has lived long in the East."

PRADO

One of the undiscovered murders that were already troubling the public security at the time of Pranzini's crime was the assassination on the night of January 14th and 15th, 1886, of a woman of the town, of the name of Marie Agaetan. She was found murdered in the small hours of the morning at her apartments in the Rue Caumartin, her head nearly severed from her body by a cut from a razor. The assassin had taken her unawares

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whilst she was preparing to go to bed. A number of people were arrested for the crime, but were soon discharged; and the death of Marie Agaetan was classed with the murder of the Prefect Barrème, which had occurred the previous day, in the category of police failures.

Nearly two years later, on November 28th, 1887, a man was caught in the act of trying to steal jewellery from the bedroom of a diamond merchant at the Hôtel du Palais in Paris. Pursued into the street by one of the hotel servants, who was quickly joined by some policemen, the fugitive turned and fired two shots from a revolver, seriously wounding one of the officers. He was, however, arrested and charged with attempted murder.

In the previous August, at Royan, a watering-place near Bordeaux, a jeweller's shop had been broken into, and a quantity of jewellery stolen. But it was not until December that two women, named Eugénie Forestier and Mauricette Couronneau, were arrested and imprisoned at Marennes on a charge of being concerned in the robbery.

These two apparently disconnected occurrences were in reality closely associated together. The man at the Hôtel du Palais and the two women at Marennes held between them the key to the mystery of the death of Marie Agaetan in 1886. The man was an individual of mysterious antecedents named Prado, and the two women were his mistresses. Eugénie Forestier had picked up Prado in Paris at the beginning of 1886. He was destitute, and she had fed and clothed him much as Madame Sabatier had fed and clothed Pranzini. Mauricette Couronneau was the daughter of a widow lady, a well-to-do lace manufacturer near Bordeaux. In April 1887 Prado had made the acquaintance of these ladies, under the high-sounding name of Linska de Castillon, and, under a promise of marriage, had seduced the young daughter. He was at this time still living with Eugénie Forestier. His two mistresses had received from Prado, who had committed the robbery, some of the jewellery stolen at Royan, and had in consequence been implicated

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in the crime. Shortly after her imprisonment Mauricette Couronneau had given birth to a child by Prado.

It will be seen from the foregoing circumstances that these two women might be reasonably excused if their feelings towards Prado, as they lay in the prison at Marennes, were less cordial than they had been. Their jealousy of each other was now forgotten in a mutual dissatisfaction at the conduct of their lover. The dullness of preventive detention inclined them to each other's society. They became confidential, and from their mutual confidences Prado soon found himself face to face with the guillotine. Eugénie Forestier held his head in her hands, if the following story, which she told to her fellow-prisoner, was to be believed.

Prado was living with Eugénie Forestier at the time of the murder of Marie Agaetan. The night of the murder he returned to her house in a state of marked agitation. He was continually getting out of bed to wash his hands, and continually smelling them as though some odour clung to them, which he could not wash away. The woman saw a scratch on his right hand, and asked how it came there. "It's done by a nail. I have just cut a woman's throat," he answered. "She was settled and done for all in a minute." Next day Prado destroyed his boots and clothes which were stained with blood, got rid of his razor, and on the afternoon of the 16th left for Spain. There he remained until the beginning of 1887, when he rejoined Eugénie Forestier at Bordeaux, and commenced his acquaintance with the Couronneaus.

This was in brief the substance of the confession which Eugénie Forestier made first to Mauricette Couronneau in the prison at Marennes, and then to M. Guillot in Paris. Evidence corroborative of the truth of her story was forthcoming from Spain, where Prado's wife, whose fortune he had squandered before deserting her, and a jeweller and various pawnbrokers, deposed that Prado had disposed of or given to them jewellery identical with that known to have been stolen from Marie Agaetan.

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The would-be robber of the Palais Royal had now become very interesting to justice. The question, Who was Prado? seemed likely to tax the ingenuity and pique the curiosity of M. Guillot as keenly as the problem of the identity of the mysterious Campi. But in Prado he had to deal with a far more redoubtable adversary, both intellectually and criminally, than either Campi or Pranzini. Whatever the mystery attaching to his previous career, it had been a desperate and an adventurous one. He had fought, and fought with courage and resolution, in Cuba and in the Carlist War in Spain. M. Goron, in his Memoirs, is inclined to accept the evidence of a South American doctor, published in the *Voltaire* newspaper, which represented Prado as the son of a President of the Peruvian Republic. That may or may not be, but Prado is the very antithesis of such a man as Pranzini. Pranzini is supple, insinuating, prone to accesses of emotion, poor of speech, his career that of the petty thief rather than the daring or enterprising bandit. Prado, on the other hand, has something of the soldier about him; his crimes are more reckless and daring; he knows no tears or yieldings to maternal reminiscence, and, brought to bay, he shows himself well-read, prodigal of words, and inexhaustible in protestations, overwhelming his judges with his torrents of argument and denunciation: he is more arrogant, more confident, more capable, in short, stronger than Pranzini.

One weakness they had in common, that inability to shut out from their recollection the horror of their crime, which M. Guillot has noted as one of the most remarkable failings on the part of otherwise hardened assassins. Both Prado and Pranzini return to their mistresses immediately after the commission of their crimes, and, by a variety of actions, betray the agitation which the recollection of recent bloodshed has produced in their minds; and in Prado's case, though the more daring and self-possessed of the two, after the lapse of months he reverts to his guilty act, and, at the bedside of his

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mistress, declares himself a murderer. Few murderers, however courageous or cruel, rejoice in that absolute insensibility to the taking of human life which made the reserved and imperturbable Lacenaire declare, not without reason, that he killed a man as easily as he drank a glass of wine. Though by no means a skilful operator, he would never have blundered or confessed to women, as did Prado and Pranzini, in their inability to carry on their own shoulders the weight of their bloody deeds.

One other characteristic Prado shared with Pranzini, and that was a power of fascinating women, "ce tact particulier de l'homme-à-femmes," which M. Paul Bourget has defined as "something of a special organ, like the antennæ of insects, something of an instinct, for education does not affect it in the least. Such a man sees at a glance what chance he will have with any woman to whom he is presented. He will say to himself, 'This woman is for me, that woman is not.'" In his *Physiologie de l'Amour Moderne* M. Bourget illustrates, with his own peculiar aptitude for such things, the difference between the real woman's man, if one may use the expression, and the poor fool who thinks himself one; and he chooses his instances from the annals of French crime. He compares Aubert, the lover of Madame Fenayrou, murdered in 1882 by his mistress and her husband, with Pranzini, the lately executed assassin of Marie Regnault. What he says of Pranzini is equally true from this point of view, and necessary to the right understanding of his fellow-assassin Prado. "Compare," says M. Bourget, "the false woman's man and the real, the pitiable Aubert and the murderer of Marie Regnault! the masterful touch of the latter, his absolute assurance of success, the palpitating curiosity that surrounds him, the faithful devotion he inspires. I would undertake that at the present moment this former conductor of Pullman cars is mourned in more than one lady's bed. They see him again in their dreams, his many widows bless the nights on which that form has returned to them, which

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the newspapers described so fully for the gratification of their readers, and which won for him from his unknown admirers the overwhelming appellation of 'chéri magnifique.' For he has had his unknown admirers, this cutter of children's throats, just as Merimée and Balzac and Lord Byron. How empty the glory that allows the same triumphs to real genius and abject debauchery!"

Empty glory, indeed! in which such atrocious rascals as Prado and Pranzini can equally participate with the beautiful and the distinguished. Mysterious, too, for the photographs of these two assassins reveal to us two singularly common and ordinary persons, Pranzini with the face of a waiter, Prado fittingly described at his trial as having the bearing of a "placid policeman." And yet Madame and Mdlle. Couronneau and their lady friends found this burglar and assassin distinguished, honest, and fascinating—"nous étions comme fascinées par cet homme."

The trial of Prado commenced before the Cour d'Assises at Paris on November 5th, 1888, almost a year after his arrest. As in Campi's case, this unnecessary delay had been caused by the vain attempts of M. Guillot to pierce the mystery of Prado's identity, attempts which, as in Campi's case, gave the prisoner an opportunity of presuming on the curiosity and the rather mistaken kindness of the magistrate. Prado, when asked to choose an advocate before the Assize Court, had boastfully written, "I am not a Cicero or a Demosthenes, but I could not find a better advocate than myself." If volubility, effrontery, readiness of retort and a rather telling impudence are effective with a jury, certainly Prado could place full reliance on his own powers as an advocate. However, as the President Horteloup warned him, he could not open the proceedings by reading an address.

President.—I shall ask you questions, and you will please to answer them. Let me make the position quite clear. You can only speak when I permit you to do so, but I shall treat you very liberally in that respect. What is your real name?

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Prado.—I take the name of Linska de Castillon. I alone can prove whether I have the right to it, but I don't see fit to furnish the necessary proofs.

President.—Very good. You shall be tried by that name. I will only add that we don't know who you are, and that all we know of your past is derived from what you yourself have stated to the examining magistrate.

Prado.—Let us not discuss these stories. I will tell you what they are worth. In certain pleasure resorts one pays for what one has had in money. In the cabinet of the Juge d'Instruction, which is not infrequently turned into a boudoir, and in which I was allowed certain indulgences, I paid for them with the only money I had—my imagination. In respect of imagination I wanted to show M. Guillot that I had quite as much as he; but I admit that he has more than I. They wanted to make me out a Fra Diavolo or a Rob Roy, and I was good enough to lend myself to this fabrication, but to-day I declare its falsity, and denounce the whole instruction as immoral and unjust.

The President reminds Prado that he was married at Madrid in 1879, and deserted his wife after spending her dowry of about £7000, and that in the same city he was in 1883 sentenced to four months' imprisonment by default for theft.

President.—You returned to Paris. What did you live by?

Prado.—By my pen. I was a journalist.

President.—You never told the examining magistrate that. . . . In January 1886, at any rate, you were in great straits for money.

Prado.—No.

President.—There are witnesses who will prove it. Now, tell me, how was it you got the money to make a hurried journey to Spain on January 16th, the day after the murder of Marie Agaetan?

Prado.—I had won 200 francs at the gambling-tables.

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One wins and loses. Any young man about town knows that.

President.—Very good. You returned to Madrid, and we shall hear later what you did there. You next appear at Bordeaux, where you are living with the woman Forestier under the name of M. and Mme. Mendoza. You hire a cottage in the neighbourhood of Bordeaux from Madame Couronneau.

Prado.—Yes. I had seen Mauricette, and she made such an impression on me that I determined to marry her as soon as I could.

President.—But you were already married?

Prado.—Oh, under an assumed name. That doesn't count.

President.—In any case, under a promise of marriage you seduced this young girl, Mdlle. Couronneau, and she soon became enceinte.

Prado.—The natural consequences of our relations. Besides, the thing had gone on of itself; I met Mauricette Couronneau just at the psychological moment when the first lover that comes along is welcome.

President.—At this period you were still on intimate terms with Eugénie Forestier, and at the same time living on Madame Couronneau.

Prado acknowledged that he had received some of the jewellery stolen at Royan on August 24th, 1887, and could not avoid admitting himself guilty of the attempted robbery at the Hôtel du Palais on November 28th, for which he had been arrested. But in regard to the murder of Marie Agaetan and the denunciations of him by his mistresses he was vehement in his defence.

"I cannot," he exclaimed, "be condemned on the unsupported declaration of a hussy. I want the jury to judge me by what they hear to-day. The prosecution say, 'It is necessary for us to make you out a murderer. We have no proofs of your guilt, but do you prove to us that you are innocent?' That is not the way to conduct matters of this kind. I have confessed to certain

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things, but I retract them. I only did so to back up the statements of Mauricette Couronneau. If she had said to me, 'Sign your death-warrant,' I would have done so immediately." (Turning to the public and pointing to the woman Couronneau, who, with Eugénie Forestier, is in the dock beside him.) "Strange, isn't it, to worship a woman? Look at her! look! with a face like that, who would not give the whole world for her?"

President.—But she is your accuser.

Prado.—And do you know why? Because she has been promised her liberty, because a German has offered to marry her, and she, yet warm from my embraces, will sell the head of the father of her child. She has yielded to the infernal arts of Eugénie Forestier. These two women, who were ready to pull out each other's hair in the streets of Bordeaux, begin to thee and thou each other, and, after a month in prison, become sisters in their plot against me. Ah, gentlemen, you have been promised an interesting trial. Well, it will be more interesting than you think.

President.—I see from this your system of defence.

Prado.—What do you mean, my system?

President.—Your explanations, if you like it better.

Prado.—Ah! that's better. I have no need of a system. I simply speak the truth, which is easy to an innocent man. Who knows but, when this trial is at an end, I may pick up this charge you have flung in my face, out of the mire from which it has sprung, and use it as a scourge for my accusers of to-day! All men will applaud the verdict of acquittal which I look for from this court.

The President, who conducted the interrogatory of Prado in a fashion very different from that adopted by Pranzini's judge, had allowed the prisoner to indulge his volubility to rather a tiresome extent on the first day of his trial. On the second day, before proceeding with the interrogatory, the President explained his indulgence of yesterday—"Prado, that the jury might appreciate you

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as you are, I have up to the present allowed you every possible licence; you have been insolent to me and insulting to the Juge d'Instruction. I passed it over yesterday, to-day I shall not permit such conduct."

They come to the murder of Marie Agaetan.

It was eleven o'clock on the night of January 14th that the woman Agaetan came home with a man. At four in the morning of the 15th she was found murdered. She had been seen the previous evening at the Eden Theatre with a man whose description by some witnesses answered to that of Prado.

President.—One particularly described the man as precisely like you, small round eyes, short hair, pale complexion, cynical manner. We saw the cynical manner yesterday.

Prado.—Yesterday? I! cynical! If a prisoner holds up his head, he is called impudent; if he is prostrate with grief, he is told he is overcome with remorse.

President.—This is a speech for the defence, not an answer to a question.

Prado.—Each of your questions being a speech for the prosecution, each of my answers is obliged to be a speech for the defence.

Prado was not less happy in retort when, animadverting on the methods which he accused M. Guillot of adopting to procure evidence against him, he remarked, "Carnot was the organizer of victory, M. Guillot is the organizer of evidence." After he had bitterly attacked the character of Eugénie Forestier, the President reminded him that he had once thought very differently of her character. "When a person is your friend," answered Prado, "you naturally think him honest, but if next day he knocks you on the head with a stick, you don't still say he's a good fellow."

President.—When on the night of the murder you came home to Eugénie Forestier, your manner was peculiar, and you spoke of the murder of Marie Agaetan before it was known to the public.

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Prado.—Oh, she got this from the Pranzini case. A lot of good my telling her then what I had done!

President.—Pranzini certainly behaved in this way, it is a common feature of such crimes.

Prado.—Pranzini was a murderer, I'm not. That's the only difference.

The President reminds him of his agitation during the night, his constant washing of his hands, of a 100 franc note cut with a razor which he gave to his mistress, of the destruction or disappearance of his blood-stained shirt, his boots, razor, overcoat and hat; in short, of all the circumstances given in the confession of the woman Forestier.

President.—On the morning of the 15th you even joked about the murder of Marie Agaetan. "One woman the less," you said; "I'd willingly kill every one of them."

Prado.—That would be hardly in accordance with the principles of a man who appears here to-day with two mistresses by his side and a wife about to appear in the witness-box. However, I admit that if they were all like Eugénie Forestier, it would be a pleasure to get rid of them.

The President recalls an incident that occurred at Bordeaux after Prado's return to France. "At the Hôtel des Pyrénées, in the course of a quarrel with Eugénie Forestier, you caught hold of her roughly and said, 'I must kill you!' She uttered a cry, the suspicion flashed across her mind, and she replied, 'Yes, as you did the other one!' 'Fool!' you exclaimed to yourself, and then, turning to her, you said, 'No, you know too much, it's better you should die!' Whereupon you fired at her with a revolver. The same evening you asked her to forgive you, saying you would commit suicide if she did not, and from that date you no longer allowed her to entertain other lovers, as you had previously. Another evening you again threatened her with a revolver, after which, in an access of remorse, you came to the side of

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her bed and said, 'Listen! wretch that I am, you are the mistress of an assassin!'"

Up to the termination of his interrogatory Prado fought step by step, with extreme readiness and cunning, the very damnatory evidence that the President urged against him. In conclusion, the Judge read an intercepted letter written by Prado to Eugénie Forestier, a month before the trial, in which by threats, by appeals to sentiment, by every kind of inducement, he sought to prevent her from swearing away his life before the Assize Court. His only wish, he writes, is to see his adored child once more; he begs Eugénie, in the name of her mother, to reconsider her position; he will give her some disinterested advice: "You will present yourself before the Assize Court in the most unfavourable light, an object of scorn to the public, who, as soon as I am acquitted—and I shall be acquitted, make no mistake about that—will cry out fiercely against you!" Let her get away as best she can, he writes, but above all she must not appear before the Court, for whom he, Prado, has in store some very startling surprises.

The President asked Prado why he wrote that letter. "From kindness of heart," was the bold answer; "it is Eugénie who will receive the blows which are intended for me, as you will see. I wished to spare her the pain." "We shall see to-morrow," retorted the Judge, "whether it was not rather because you feared to be confronted with her in court."

November 7th was the day of confrontation—in such a case as this the most thrilling and dramatic of all days. During the greater part of Prado's interrogatory, his two mistresses had been sent out of court. The first to be introduced on November 7th was Mauricette Couronneau, a low-voiced, timid, down-glancing woman, of the simple, virgin type, very touching and sympathetic, but hating Prado with a quiet persistency, born of gaol experience and other harsh deceptions.

President.—You have been Prado's mistress?

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M. C.—I have been cruelly deceived and very unfortunate.

President.—Why?

M. C.—Because he promised to marry me. But I had hardly known him before he began to distress me. He used to threaten me.

President.—How?

M. C.—Before I became his, he told me that I should belong to him, or he would kill me. He came constantly to our home, and I got to love him. When our child was born he again promised to marry me when it was baptized. He used often to be away. I thought he was working. I always looked forward to marrying him.

She describes how she was arrested for having in her possession some of the jewellery stolen at Royan, and goes on to describe her relations with Eugénie Forestier. "The first day I met her in prison we quarrelled from jealousy of each other. But two women, together in prison, cannot lead a cat and dog life. Each had our work. I read, she sewed; we didn't fight."

President.—How did Eugénie Forestier come to confide in you?

M. C.—I used often to cry. She spoke of my child, and I——

President.—What you may say now will be very serious. If hitherto you have not spoken the truth, now is the time to retract what you have said. Think carefully.

M. C.—I am thinking. Eugénie Forestier told me that if she were in my place, she would not like to have a child that bore the name of Linska. "Why?" I asked. "I'll tell you another time." I pressed her. She yielded. "Very good," she said, "but swear you won't repeat what I am going to say to any one else." I promised. Then she said, "Well, he has murdered a woman, Marie Agaetan." I was as one choking, I could not speak; for the moment I couldn't even weep; but all that night through I sobbed, and I was very ill.

President.—Did she not give any details?

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M. C.—She went on to tell me that M. Prado returned to her house on the night of the crime, that great drops of sweat were falling from him, that he seemed to her ill, but she could not make out what ailed him.

President.—She said nothing further?

M. C.—No; I was very miserable. The next day my pastor, M. Grener, came to see me. He asked me what was the matter. I told him everything, adding that I had promised to keep silence. The pastor told me that when I made this promise I did not know that it concerned a crime, and that, if Eugénie Forestier said nothing, I ought to reveal it myself, or I should be treated as an accomplice. I told this to Eugénie, who said that there was no need for me to open my mouth, that she should not have confided in me, had she not also intended to acquaint the authorities with her story.

President.—When Eugénie Forestier made these revelations to you, did she seem to you to be acting from motives of revenge?

M. C.—I don't know what her motives were, but she cried a great deal whilst she was telling me of the crime.

President.—On the other hand, you noticed that during the preliminary investigation she often tried to exonerate Prado?

M. C.—I did.

President.—The prisoner declares that you have given evidence against him, in order to get rid of him and marry a German to whom you are betrothed.

M. C.—Supposing it was so, how could I have invented all this story I have told?

Prado, invited by the Judge to reply to this evidence, rose quietly to his feet, and with an air of indifference, said—

"To reply to this young girl, whose presence here I am the first to deplore, would be to embark on an entire speech for the defence, for which I have not time now; but as her evidence is grave, I will reply to it in a few words. This woman is unworthy of credence, for the one

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reason that she wishes to bring under the knife the head of the father of her child. But the resentment of the lover is merged in the feelings of the father, and I desire her to be free, that she may return to my child and watch over her, until I take her in my arms again."

M. C. (energetically).—Never! I will never give her back to you.

Prado.—You lost your right to shield yourself behind your child on the day that you deserted her cradle to deliver her father to justice, you who said that you loved me.

M. C.—True, I have loved you.

Prado.—She has loved me! she who had neither the courage to support me, the constancy to remain faithful to me, nor the ordinary shame that would have obliged another woman to put a decent interval between one lover and another.

M. C.—I have had no other lover. The man I am going to marry is a good fellow. You have ruined me, he wishes to rehabilitate me. I forbid you to speak of him.

Prado.—You received visits from him at the prison at Marennes. You have lent yourself to all this, to these confidences of Eugénie Forestier, at the precise moment when it was expedient for you to get rid of me in order to give yourself to this German. Just in the very nick of time you have found everything to hand, even down to this Protestant pastor, who arrogates to himself the right to absolve oaths and loosen consciences. We shall return to him later on. (Turning to the Jury) Nothing of what Mauricette has said to-day occurred to her when before the Juge d'Instruction.

The President intervened at this point and called on the woman Couronneau to describe the interviews which M. Guillot had allowed her to have alone with Prado in a room adjoining his office, the door of which was open all the time. Prado represented these interviews as traps set for him by the magistrate with the object of discovering the

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secret of his birth. But Mauricette Couronneau declared that Prado had himself solicited these interviews, that he had appealed to M. Guillot as her lover and the father of her child, and that, having obtained his request by the kindness of the magistrate's heart, he had used their meetings to try to persuade her to help him to escape by getting out of the window. The President read the letter from Prado to his mistress, in which he fully described his scheme of evasion.

President.—You wrote this letter ?

Prado.—Yes.

President.—This, then, was the end you had in view when you besought the Juge d'Instruction with such earnestness to allow you interviews with Mauricette Couronneau ?

Prado.—That and others. Mdlle. Couronneau is not telling the truth. The door was always shut ; it was I who fastened it.

M. C.—What this wretch says is false. He would make me appear what I am not. He has deceived and dishonoured me. He lies, as ever !

Prado.—I will prove that I say what is true, and you what is untrue.

M. C.—Where is your proof ?

"Here," exclaims Prado, flourishing in his hand a letter.

"Give it to me," says the President, "I will read it."

It was a letter written to the prisoner by Mauricette Couronneau about a fortnight before the trial, but proved nothing except that at that date the woman, if her words are to be believed, would seem to have still retained some feeling of affection for the man who had so grossly betrayed her. The letter concluded—

"Since you never wish to hear of me again, I won't worry you any more. I am writing to you for the first, perhaps for the last time. Of one thing you may rest assured, that I am suffering martyrdom, and that you

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make me weep many tears. I don't want to live, the sooner I die the better. Good-bye, from your darling child, good-bye for ever, but I shall never forget you.
"MAURI."

And then as a postscript the hand of the child had been guided to write—

"Good-bye, papa, mamma loves you and so do I.
"MARIE-LOUISE."

Prado was unmoved by the reading of this letter. The woman herself explained—"I wrote this letter in answer to some very tender messages he had sent to me, in which he spoke only of my child. I was suffering; I had loved him once; there are some things one cannot forget, especially when one is a mother."

It is the turn of Eugénie Forestier. She is twenty-seven years of age, and a striking contrast to Mauricette Couronneau. There is nothing bashful, timid or shrinking about her. She is bold, determined and vindictive. It may be added that both these young women, who have fallen so desperately in love with this plain adventurer of thirty-four, are described as being pretty women.

According to the woman Forestier, she had, in 1885, sacrificed not only all her property, such as it was, but her body also, to keep Prado in food and clothing; and he had been content to live upon her shame. The President solemnly exhorted her to be careful and exact in speaking the truth, as upon her evidence principally depended the capital charge against her lover. She repeated the details of the story she had told to Mauricette Couronneau and the Juge d'Instruction, the story of Prado's return to her home the night of the murder and his hurried departure for Spain.

President.—You know that upon your evidence a man's head is at stake?

E. F.—I know it.

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President.—A man with whom you have lived, whom you once loved.

E. F.—Yes, sir, the only man in the world I ever really loved.

Prado.—Perhaps she'll tell you she loves me still!

President.—You nevertheless adhere to your statements?

E. F.—Absolutely, and under an oath, if I were able. (Turning to Prado) You know, Linska, that you told me all this. How could I have invented it? I never saw a soul. I lived shut up with you.

Prado.—We will reply to you at the proper time.

Prado's actual replies were trivial, and he could only meet the woman's evidence by taunts and jeers. She bore them patiently, until he hinted that she had once been kept by a Turk. At this she sprang to her feet and indignantly exclaimed—"I have never been kept by a Turk! It's an infamous, abominable lie! But it doesn't surprise me! You have so often said to me, 'I worship a good liar, I have never known a finer than myself.' Ah, the scoundrel! and that's not enough; even 'scoundrel' is too good for him!" (Laughter).

President (severely).—What is the meaning of that laughter? I insist upon those present being serious. A man's head is at stake.

Prado.—Oh, not at all! My head's all right!

The sitting of November 8th was principally devoted to the evidence of the mother of Mauricette Couronneau, a slight, gentle lady of five-and-forty, beloved by all her sons-in-law, who, according to Prado, used to carry her about in their arms like a doll. But the gaiety of the poor lady's life had been sadly eclipsed. With unmistakable sincerity she told the Court the story of her acquaintance with Prado—

"I am a lace manufacturer. M. Linska de Castillon, with Eugénie Forestier, rented from me a little house I had in the neighbourhood of Bordeaux. He saw Mauricette. He came many times to our house, until one day he said to me, 'I adore your daughter, I want to marry

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her.' 'But you are already married,' I said, 'to this young woman who is with you.' 'Nothing of the kind,' he answered, 'she is my mistress. It is the same with all gentlemen, and I shall do just as they do. I shall break with her.' I felt that M. Linska was very distinguished, and he seemed to me straightforward. All the ladies who used to visit me worshipped him, they were always saying, 'How nice, how charming he is!' However, I could not quite make up my mind to accept his proposal, so I called together a kind of family council. I have never come to any decision without consulting my sons-in-law, and we all came to the conclusion that this marriage was not a suitable one. I announced this to M. Linska, and he seemed distracted. Shortly after this I was very busy over the preparations for the marriage of my third daughter with a medical student. I was a great deal away from home, and M. de Castillon took advantage of my absence to seduce my daughter."

Then followed the poor woman's discovery of her daughter's condition, her entreaties to Prado to marry her, his inability to comply with her request. In desperation they all three went for some days to Royan, and, on their return, Madame Couronneau gave out that her daughter had been married to M. Linska. "From that moment," she continued, "as they were passing as man and wife, they were compelled to live together, he and she. This is what I did, and I know I ought not to have done it. I ought to have kept my daughter by my side. But we were, so to speak, fascinated by this man."

"Fascinated" seems a poor word to express the infatuation of the Couronneau family for this robber and assassin. They christened him "Fred" instead of his real name, Louis, because Eugénie Forestier used to call him by the latter, and they were anxious, good souls, to spare him painful reminiscences of his one concession to genteel indulgence. He had only to remind them of his birthday, and a splendid cake was hurriedly ordered by Madame Couronneau. The confectioner proposed to write on it

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in white sugar "Vive Saint Louis." But this was a little too much even for the infatuated mother. "No, no," she said, "he is not quite a saint. Just put 'Vive Louis.'" Was ever murderer so comforted and consoled for the perils of his business?

In accordance with that licence allowed to witnesses in France, Madame Couronneau turned to the jury at the conclusion of her evidence—"Gentlemen, I beseech you to be merciful; believe me, my daughter is innocent. She loved; there you have the whole story. She is pure and honest. I cannot tell you what she was to me. We are indeed unfortunate!"

This address produced an unmistakable effect on the jury. Prado, ever ready, sought to divert the sympathy to himself by reading a letter which he had written to his little daughter through the medium of Madame Couronneau, a few weeks before the trial. It was, however, a very unconvincing production, containing a good deal about God and the blue eyes of the infant; the "poor father" concluded by bestowing a kiss on his child, "so large that there will be no room for any more."

During the sittings of the 9th and 10th, Prado had to combat evidence that directly concerned the assassination of Marie Agaetan. It chiefly consisted of the testimony of various persons who, some of them, swore absolutely that the prisoner was the man whom they had seen frequently in her company at the time of the murder, and whom she called her "petit Américain." Prado, evidently wearied by the length of the struggle he was engaged in, professed to be bored by such evidence and declared it unimportant. The last witness called on the 10th was the prisoner's Spanish wife, and her evidence was, perhaps, the strangest in the whole of this strange trial. She had originally identified some jewellery, given her by her husband when he visited Spain after the murder, with that stolen from Marie Agaetan. Now, in court, in his presence, she says she knows nothing; she has lived with her husband four years, she has loved him, she loves him

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still, and neither her misery nor his infidelities, nor his desertion, have changed her feelings. Prado was not above trying to make capital out of the singular devotion of this faithful woman, but his attempt was not well received.

After a day's interval the Court sat again on the 12th, when a great deal of time was taken up with the evidence of M. Guillot, who seems to have appeared in the box solely for the purpose of refuting the charge, made against him by Prado, that he had used Mauricette Couronneau as a decoy to draw avowals from his prisoner. This charge the Judge indignantly and at some length repudiated. In allowing Prado four interviews with his mistress, he had yielded to the prayers of the prisoner and his own feelings of humanity. "It was as a father," said the magistrate, "that he begged and entreated me to permit these interviews, and I confess I believed him. If, as he has boasted, he has traded on my indulgence, if he has abused it, then he has profaned the holiest sentiments, and only committed one infamy the more. If I have perhaps been simple, if I have believed that this man still cherished some feeling as a father, I need not blush for my simplicity, which I shall continue to preserve, but, I hope, for worthier occasions." The interviews took place in an ante-room to the Judge's office, but the door was kept open all the time as a necessary precaution. "I was so near," said M. Guillot, "that I could have heard all their conversation, but I had given my word of honour not to listen, and if my ears overheard anything, my memory as quickly forgot it. . . . What I did was the most natural thing in the world, simplicity itself. A father and mother wished to see each other again, to discuss the future of their child. I gave them permission. It would have been inhuman to refuse; it was almost my duty, and I am glad to have fulfilled it."

The Court warmly commended M. Guillot for his whole conduct of the case, but Prado declined altogether to associate himself with these panegyrics. "Until," he

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said, "I found that M. Guillot was using Mauricette as a weapon against me, I respected him and was grateful to him. He said to me, 'You are two different men, Prado and the son of your mother; in the latter capacity you sometimes make me pity you.' I said, 'It is the same with you. There is M. Guillot whom I respect, and the Juge d'Instruction whom I can't endure.' But, as I have already said, I ended by seeing that they were playing a double game with Mauricette. They used her against me. She was Delilah and Phryne rolled into one, though at first she was on my side. One day she brought me a knife to help me to escape."

M. C.—An infamous lie! He knew he could do what he liked with me by frightening me. He terrified me out of my wits. He cried out, "Dare to marry and I'll throttle you!" so I promised I would not.

President (to Prado).—To sum up; it all comes to this, that you simply abused the trust reposed in you by the magistrate, one crime the more to your account!

Prado's retort, in which he alluded to the scandalous case of Daniel Wilson, President Grévy's son-in-law, that had occurred in the previous year, is pointed, if rather irrelevant—"On the contrary, it is he who abused my feelings as a father. When a Juge d'Instruction has to deal with one weaker than himself, all goes well; but when he is about to attack a more powerful adversary, he is dismissed like M. Vigneau, and the prisoner is acquitted, even though he has admitted his guilt by restoring his booty to the Treasury. And why? Because his name is Daniel Wilson!"

It need only be added that the comments of the Parisian press on the judicial aspect of the Wilson case were, in many instances, hardly less trenchant than those of Prado. The withdrawal of the case out of the hands of M. Vigneau, the Juge d'Instruction to whom the investigation was originally intrusted, when he was about to order the arrest of Wilson, was only less dubious than the ultimate quashing by the Court of Appeal of the sentence of two years'

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imprisonment passed on Wilson by the Correctional Tribunal of the Seine department.[1]

That a judge in M. Guillot's position should be called on to combat in open court the allegations of such a man as Prado, is altogether foreign to English ideas of the dignity of justice. But it is the natural consequence of the system. It is only in the Assize Court that there is any opportunity of penetrating the secrecy of the French Instruction, and that the prisoner has the chance of publicly ventilating any grievances he may entertain with regard to his treatment by the magistrate. Such glimpses as one gets into the methods and conduct of this secret investigation provoke a suspicion that its advantages as a means of securing the conviction of offenders hardly compensate for the arbitrary, sweeping, clandestine and inquisitorial way in which it is actually put into practice.[2]

The evidence of M. Guillot was the last of any importance called by the prosecution. On the 13th Prado's counsel addressed the Court. As in the case of Campi, the advocate had something significant to say about the secret of Prado's origin. "A notary and I," said M. Comby, "are the only people who know who he really is. If to-morrow all Europe was to learn the

[1] These are the comments of M. Bataille, himself an advocate, on the acquittal of Wilson by the Court of Appeal:—

"Yesterday's judgment concerns not so much the honour of M. Wilson as the honour of the French judiciary who are to-day sunk in complaisance and servility. Such judgments as that of yesterday explain only too clearly the contemptuous unpopularity with which the public have come to regard an institution once respected by all right-thinking men. The bulk of the people have always found the magistracy haughty, harsh and arrogant towards humble individuals. To-day these judges, by their insufficiency, by their obliviousness to their duty towards society, are detected as the accomplices of offenders who sit in high places and are still powerful even after their disgrace; they are caught in the very act of allowing great criminals to escape through a breach in the penal law." *Causes Criminelles et Mondaines*, 1887.

[2] Recent legislation in France has tended to modify the secrecy of the Instruction. Prisoners are now allowed to be represented by counsel, during their interviews with the examining magistrate.

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identity of the man who stands here in the dock to-day, it would immediately provoke a widespread feeling of sympathy and astonishment."

When it was Prado's turn to address the jury, he fully sustained the reputation for eloquence and adroitness which he had won for himself during the twelve days of his trial. Quietly and modestly, entirely dropping the rudeness and impudence that he had displayed earlier in the proceedings, he recommended himself to the jury. "I have been painted here," he said to them, "in all colours, some the most brilliant. You have heard for yourselves. I have been called a sorcerer, a charmer! Would that I had been a charmer of snakes, they would not have stung me! Would that I could so charm you, gentlemen, that you should say to me 'Go home, and take your child to your arms.' I have been credited with an excessive degree of ability and intelligence, that you might think me the more responsible for such offences as I have committed, however venial their character. Alas! my intelligence, my ability with difficulty instruct me how I should begin my speech and what I should say to you. In the first place, who am I? What does it matter? I am unfortunate. An adventurer, they say! Good God! launched on this vast sea of human affairs, I have yielded too readily, perhaps, to the beating of my heart and the surging of my brain."

This strain of a graceful and pleading admission of certain pardonable weaknesses, side by side with a stern and argumentative repudiation of grosser crimes, was well sustained up to the peroration—

"I have been represented as a Lovelace, a Don Juan! I am the first to hear of it. I am only sorry that I did not know myself to be possessed of these qualities while I was free, for then I could have put them to some advantage, and should probably have got something better out of them than the two mistresses who stand beside me in the dock. Remember, gentlemen, remember that in striking

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at me, you strike at my child, the child whom I give you my word I long to take to my arms. My punishment has been already greater than any you can inflict. I have endured enough to shatter a thousand men, I who am only one, standing alone. I admit that, as my mother-in-law has told you, I am no saint. But to-day there stands between me and wrong-doing an impassable barrier, the cradle of my infant, and if you hold out to me that helping hand which I have so long sought in vain, then by your aid I shall start on a new and happier life. This is my hope. Hear this, the last utterance of my soul, and do not withhold from me your forgiveness for such faults as may be laid to my charge."

It was at eight o'clock on the evening of November 14th that the Parisian jury found Prado guilty of the murder of Marie Agaetan, and at ten o'clock he was sentenced to death. His two mistresses were fully acquitted of all the charges made against them. Prado heard his condemnation with unaffected equanimity, sucking a pastille the while.

He was executed on December 28th. He had written to President Carnot, asking that an end should be put to the delay in carrying out his sentence—

"MONSIEUR LE PRÉSIDENT,—An iniquitous sentence has condemned me to death for a crime I have not committed. For forty days I have been impatiently awaiting my execution; to delay it further would be a needless aggravation of my punishment which I ask you to curtail. I disavow any prayer that has been made to you to commute my sentence. A commutation that would separate me for ever from the child I love and leave me under the disgrace of one of the greatest and most monstrous miscarriages of justice, would be a hundred times more grievous than death, even a death so dishonourable as that for which I now pray with all my heart.

"I beg you, Monsieur le Président, to put an end to the inexpressible suffering I am undergoing. May

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your presidency add many fair and glorious pages to the history of France.

"PRADO."

M. Carnot was not slow to comply with this earnest request, and Prado met death as fearlessly as he had promised.

The innate cruelty of the man broke rudely forth as he was being prepared for the guillotine. "Tell my wife," he said, the wife who had endured and yet loved him, "that she is even more infamous than Forestier. As to Mauricette Couronneau, tell her that if she marry, I give her my head as a wedding-present, that she may put it in the cradle of our child."

Prado wrote to a friend from the Mazas prison shortly before his trial, a few lines that might have been graven on his tomb, had he been a Cæsar or a Napoleon—"You know that this prison lies in the Diderot Boulevard. In running over in my mind the philosophers I have read, I find in Diderot himself the following maxim—'For the wise man there are no such things as laws. Since all laws are subject to error or exceptions, it is for the wise man to judge for himself whether he shall obey them or break them.'"

He liked books. He described himself as a man of wide reading. His mistresses said they were always more likely to find him in libraries than cafés. If Prado had flourished in France just a hundred years earlier, he might have gone to the guillotine as a doctrinaire politician instead of a murderer. Or, perhaps, the surmise of M. Paul Bourget is the more correct—"He was in all probability an adventurer of the type one meets with among the worst followers of Cortes, reappearing in complete form in the very midst of the nineteenth century, and applying to our contemporary life the methods of the gold-seekers."

The illumination which the character of Prado might

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have acquired in the fierce and unscrupulous exploits of the sixteenth century, or the lurid charlatanism of the French Revolution, it could only have derived in the nineteenth century from the pen of a Robert Louis Stevenson.

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VI

TWO ALGERIAN TRAGEDIES

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VI

TWO ALGERIAN TRAGEDIES

THE AFFAIR AT SIDI-MABROUK

On January 25th, 1888, at three o'clock in the afternoon, a man and a woman in a hired carriage drove up to the door of the villa of Sidi-Mabrouk, which is distant some half-an-hour's drive from the important Algerian city of Constantine. Alighting from the carriage, the man and woman entered the house, the former telling the coachman to wait and locking the door behind him. After an interval of two hours and a half, during which no sound had proceeded from the interior of the house, that is, at half-past five, the coachman and two other men who had joined him were startled by hearing four pistol-shots follow each other in rapid succession ; these seemed to come from a room on the first floor of the villa, the shutters of which were half closed. The three men broke into the house and then into the room on the first floor, where they found the woman lying on a bed in a state of semi-nudity, dead, her right temple bearing the marks of two bullet-wounds; and the man leaning against a sofa, revolver in hand, vomiting blood, having been shot through the cheek in two places. In other respects the room was not in disorder ; there were no traces of a struggle. There was, at the same time, no doubt as to the nature of the relations that had taken place between the man and woman

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previous to the firing of the shots. When the man, who was not seriously wounded, had recovered his senses, he exclaimed in a condition of obvious excitement—"Leave me near her, it is I who killed her; we loved each other; we had not the means to fly together. She made me promise to kill her first, she held the weapon herself. We wished to die in an embrace!" On the other hand, a rural policeman affirmed positively that, listening at the door, he heard the man say to his brother-in-law, who had been one of the three men who first entered the house after the crime—"I loved her, but she did not love me. I killed her." In these two contradictory accounts of what had occurred in the villa lies the great mystery of the case, a mystery that in all likelihood will never be completely elucidated.

The man who had fired the shots was Henri Charles,[1] aged twenty-two, a law student in Paris, addicted to literature. The villa of Sidi-Mabrouk belonged to his mother, who, on his father's death, had re-married an ex-officer, M. Ducamper. The woman was a Madame Gey, wife of the chief engineer of the East Algerian railway. She was thirty years of age, had been married for ten years, and had two little girls living, aged nine and seven. She was of English extraction, her maiden name was Dickson. She was a Protestant, and as a wife and mother, until the occurrence of January 25th, had borne an irreproachable character.

Three hypotheses may be raised to explain the death of Madame Gey, which took place in circumstances that were, to all appearances, entirely at variance with the whole tenor of her previous existence. They are—

1. That she was decoyed to the villa by Charles on some plausible pretext; that, there, rendered unconscious by means of some drug, or some hypnotic or magnetic suggestion, or having swooned from terror at the proposi-

[1] For obvious reasons, I have altered the names of the two principal actors in this drama.

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tions or threats of the young man, she was made the victim of gross outrage, and then murdered by her ravisher to conceal his crime.

2. That she yielded to the tears and entreaties of Charles, and gave way to his passion in a moment of weakness, but that she did not wish to die, and was killed by the man in an access of rage or depravity.

3. That she voluntarily sought death at his hands, after she and the young man had gratified their mutual passion, the version of the affair given by Charles in his defence.

It may at once be said that the family history and character of Madame Gey, anterior to the crime, presented no morbid conditions; that, on the contrary, the family history and character of Charles were replete with them. His father, a notary, had committed suicide out of disgust with the world; two of his sisters had died suddenly at a very early age; he himself, according to his own written account of his early youth, prepared as a portion of his defence, was a degenerate and sentimental egoist, given over to an unwholesome and dangerous introspection, seeking new and unwonted sensations, analyzing his feelings to a confusing and unnecessary extent, and admired and flattered by certain of his fellow-students, callow youths, who had neither the good sense nor the experience to see the mischief of his condition. Two brief extracts from his memorial will serve to illustrate his mental state. He is writing of his arrival at manhood and the "interior revolution" that at that time occurred in his mind. "I was then at the College of Oloron-Saint-Marie, and sixteen years of age. All young men pass through a crisis at that age. It is the melancholy crisis of puberty which is always accompanied by a moral crisis. In my case this crisis was out of all proportion and almost entirely intellectual. I was predisposed in every way to feel it much more acutely than any other young man, by the absolute virginity of my mind, my religious education, the books I had read as a child, by my excitable and visionary temperament. When I first came in contact with the actual world, which seemed,

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in derision, to spit in my face its dissimilarity to my chimerical ideals, it was as though my mind had tumbled into ruin. For me this awful awakening was to burn up and destroy everything ; religious belief, moral belief, my faith in myself, my faith in Christ, all were shattered to pieces, snatched from my grasp. Thenceforth, in spite of such trifling changes as time might effect, I was to carry within me, as in a living tomb, the ineffaceable memory of my infant soul." Time certainly did not succeed in effecting any change for the better in this most undesirable condition of the mind of Charles. His description of his mental state immediately before his meeting with Madame Gey reveals grave cause for uneasiness as to the possible conduct of a youth affected with such morbid and despairing egotism. "I had arrived at a time when I cursed the search after truth which had brought me so little happiness. I vowed that, if ever I had children, I would preserve them from the analytical spirit. I had begun to love the supernatural. I had visions of trees and peasants' cottages. I loved children at the first sight of them—a sign, as Céard says, that the mind is filled with disillusion. The sound of a mandoline, a starlight night, were sufficient to call up my dreams. Lying was dearer to me than women. God made the world, and, seeing it was so ugly, he bestowed on man the power of illusion. The roses of our mind spring from the dung-heap of life. What we blaspheme by the name of a lie, we worship by the name of the ideal. 'Not to know is to be happy,' said Sophocles."

If Charles sincerely held these convictions, and had not the power which a healthy condition of mind and body gives to most men to defy or overlook the unpleasant truths of human existence, suicide, or seclusion in some form or other, should have been the outcome of his speculations, for a man, suffering as he was, could only be a source of danger and anxiety to himself and others.

The atmosphere of the Quartier Latin only tended to inflame in Charles his love of pose, and aggravate his

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tendency to make all his passing moods and expressions, real or imaginary, vehicles for literary expression. The most unfavourable feature about Charles, regarded as a man of truth to be relied on in an emergency, is his inveterate habit of romanticizing, the mischievous readiness with which he turns his experiences into psychological-novel form. Without pressing too hardly against him his reputed saying, "I would like to experience the sensations of an assassin, in order to analyze them," one need only read his own memorial to see that a morbid devotion to the subject of himself had made him a great deal more prone to contemplate and sympathize with his own feelings than those of other people. Literature in the hands of such men becomes a weapon to be twisted and contorted to their misuse; Sophocles, Herbert Spencer, Taine, De Vigny and Sénancour are one after the other invoked to lend illustration to the successive moods and passions of an unstable mind. Charles had neglected his law studies for literary efforts, but without the success that might have steadied and disciplined his imagination. Such success it was not, in all probability, within the power of his deranged intellect to attain. If the novel of which a devoted friend made him the hero, may be taken as a test, neither fame nor popularity were to be looked for from the lucubrations of Charles or his friends. But the greed of fame was present, the longing to cut a figure in the world, to exhibit the wounded soul and dreamy passion, the miseries and disappointment of an all too sensitive nature. It is the desire for gold, without the power or energy to secure it by honest means, that makes the robber. The desire to give public expression to one's inmost moods and feelings, without the power or energy to gratify it successfully through the ordinary channels of literature or art, may induce the over-wrought and disappointed egoist to exhibit to the world through the medium of the real, his essentially unimportant conception of the ideal. Was Madame Gey the chosen instrument for such an achievement on the part of Charles? or had she yielded to the vague charm

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which the young man was said by his friends to possess, and fallen a heedless victim to the interesting melancholy of his mental condition?

Charles first came to Algiers, and there for the first time met Madame Gey, in August 1887. He remained there till October 13th, when he returned to Paris. He re-visited Algiers on December 13th in the same year, and stayed there until the commission of the crime at Sidi-Mabrouk on January 25th, 1888. It will therefore be seen that his acquaintance with the woman whom he represented as having abandoned herself to him so completely at Sidi-Mabrouk, had lasted two and a half months, broken in the middle by an interval lasting exactly two months. Throughout all this time up to the very hour of her death, no independent witness among the friends, acquaintances, or servants of Madame Gey seems to have entertained any suspicion whatsoever of there being any relations between Charles and herself other than those of ordinary friendship. But according to the subsequent declarations of Charles, the first period of his stay in Algiers, after he had met Madame Gey at his sister's house—she had been a friend of the Charles family for some time—soon resolved itself, as far as he and Madame Gey were concerned, into a "perpetual declaration of implied love"; and he left Algiers in October, his heart purified and his soul inexpressibly soothed by a pure and beautiful passion. This declaration, however, is not quite consistent with a letter written on September 27th to a friend in Paris. In this letter Charles, who, according to his own account, is supposed to be now under the influence of an ennobling passion, expresses to the friend his fear that he has contracted a disgraceful malady as a result of a night of dissipation. The letter concludes, "If you but knew how the fear of this has worried me! not because I am afraid of illness—you know that does not frighten me at all—but because it has come about at a time when a passion, camellia-white, strong and sweet, was perhaps beginning to dawn in my heart. And all of a sudden it is flung to

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earth." The language of comparative uncertainty with which in this letter he speaks of his possibly dawning love for some woman is certainly not in accordance with the "perpetual declaration of implied love," which in his narrative, written after the crime, he describes as existing between himself and Madame Gey during the latter half of his first stay in Algiers.

When Charles returned to Paris in October, his friends observed that he was melancholy and depressed. He explained his condition by admitting that he was in love with a married woman. Was that love reciprocated? If the documents Charles intrusted to his friend, Martin, when he returned to Algiers in December, were genuine, they would be evidence that Madame Gey was at that time enamoured of the young man. These documents consisted of a telegram and three notes written on small pieces of paper, and almost illegible. The notes are—

1. "Am in despair. Impossible to write to you. Send news. I have not told anything. Don't be unhappy. You burn letters."

2. "It is a part of those which you gave me, you remember, on the plateau. I have often embraced them."

3. "No, no, don't go away. Think of me. What will become of me? Never to see you again! I am mad, and I love you more than all the world. Take me then, I am yours; do not doubt my love for you; you are paining me."

The telegram—"Constantine to Paris.

"Don't be angry. Will write later. Too sad, send news. (Signed) HÉLÈNE.

(Address of sender) "Dickson, road to Mansourah."

The authenticity of the telegram, at all events, was beyond question. The circumstances of its dispatch were explained by M. Gey in his evidence given at the trial. "I had written," he said, "to Charles on the subject of

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Yvon d'Or, the book written by a friend, the hero of which was supposed to be modelled on Charles; I had laughed at its style and its ideas. Then, leaving the subject, I had gone on to speak of the health of Madame Vital, a sister of Charles, who was at this time suffering from domestic trouble. My wife was afraid that I might have hurt the feelings of M. Charles, and was anxious to send a word to soften the effect of my quizzical remarks. Accordingly she drew up this telegram. When she took it to the post her mother was with her, and it was at her prompting that she added the address. As you have seen, the telegram was sent on November 30th, and on that day there is the entry in my wife's account-book of two francs, ten centimes, the exact cost of the telegram. If my wife had thought she was doing wrong in sending the telegram, she would not have gone to a post-office where she was known, she would not have taken her mother with her, and she would not have entered the cost of the telegram in her account-book."[1]

The three notes were declared by certain experts in handwriting to be forgeries. If they were really forgeries, it is necessary to suggest some rational motive on the part of Charles for taking such a singular step as to forge love-letters from Madame Gey to himself. It is hardly admissible to suppose that as early as November 30th he had premeditated the assassination of Madame Gey, and was occupied in drawing up exculpatory documents, to be used in case of emergency. M. Trarieux, since Minister of Justice, and a staunch upholder of Dreyfus, in the remarkable speech which he delivered at the trial of Charles on behalf of the family of Madame Gey, who appeared there as *partie civile*, suggested a lighter motive for these forgeries which is worthy of consideration. "Charles," he said, "is full of vanity, always acting a part. He poses as the capturer of hearts. He lets nothing stand in his way. We have all known pretentious youths who,

[1] At the same time it is singular that Madame Gey should have signed this telegram in her maiden name.

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to keep up their reputation, stick at no trick or imposture. I knew one once, a fellow-student of mine in the Quartier Latin. He liked to pass for a great seducer of women, and he used often to tell us that he had a rendezvous at such and such an hour, and relied on our discretion. When the hour came, we used to hear the sound of whispered conversations and loving sighs proceeding from his room, all of which served to support his reputation as a Don Juan. But one day an 'enfant terrible,' forgetting his injunctions, burst into the room at what he believed to be a critical moment, and what did he find? Our friend was all by himself, talking to himself, playing the dual rôle of the two lovers. It was a hard lesson for him, and he was heartily laughed at, but the race of these vain creatures is not extinct. Charles belongs to this family. Not a doubt of it; we need not look further afield for an explanation of these strange documents which he entrusted to his friend."

If, however, Madame Gey was really the author of these notes—and one expert affirmed that she was—then she expresses herself in the third note of the series in language that is, to say the least of it, astonishing, as coming from a woman of hitherto unblemished reputation. In this note she abandons herself to her lover in terms that are the conventional utterances of the ardent heroine of the *roman passionnel*, but which are less convincing in the mouth of a discreet lady who keeps her accounts and faithfully discharges up to the last her duties as wife and mother. If Madame Gey shared the passion of Charles to the extent represented by him, she was a remarkable mixture of indiscretion and dissimulation. On the one hand she is found sending written messages which the adjective compromising but poorly describes; on the other she successfully masks from all those about her a passion that we are to believe possesses her with extraordinary violence. If the characters of men and women were not so frequently compounded of the most inconsistent qualities, the Madame Gey of Charles would be an immediately manifest absurdity.

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Previous to the occurrence of January 25th, Madame Gey, who had been during nine years of married life a woman of perfectly normal health and disposition, had been deeply affected by the death of her little son, which occurred in the February of 1887. Towards the end of that year, according to the evidence of her husband, she had developed symptoms of catalepsy, or at any rate, an extreme liability to hypnotic suggestion. One day, he said, on returning from a walk, he found her hypnotized before a teaspoon. "I touched her on the shoulder. She remained motionless, as though in a state of catalepsy. I removed the spoon, when she woke up with a start and said, 'Oh, I don't know! I seemed as though I had gone right off to sleep. Wasn't there some bright object in front of me? I felt like a cock in front of a stripe!' Another evening we met some Arabs under a street-lamp. She was so terrified, that I had to carry her back to the house. She could not open her mouth, or walk, or cry out. I had to undress her myself, and she did not come to until an hour after. A similar incident occurred at a *séance* at Aïssaouas. My wife was so upset that she could not stop for more than a quarter of an hour. She was afraid that she would be seized with the same contortions as the jugglers. She had recently read a number of books on hypnotism."

These facts which bear upon the general condition of Madame Gey at the time of her assassination, are important as giving weight to certain hypotheses with regard to her share in the final catastrophe.

According to those familiar with Madame Gey, her feelings towards Charles were simply those of friendship and sympathy. The Geys were very intimate with Madame Ducamper, the mother of Charles, and with his sister, whose death was the occasion that first brought him to Algiers. Under the influence of a common sorrow, Madame Gey had met Charles, and out of the infinite kindness of her heart, to which more than one of her friends bore eloquent testimony after her death, she did

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her best to cheer and encourage the despondent youth. In the words of the Procureur-Général Maillet, "A mutual sorrow led to a mutual friendship. Madame Gey did her best to raise up this stricken youth. She felt that here was one who needed help; she held out her hand to him in his desolation. With the friendship of this woman of thirty for a young man of twenty-two, there was mingled an almost maternal pity for this child whom she regarded as an orphan." At times, according to her husband, the melancholy youth bored and worried her, but she felt it to be her duty to extend her sympathy to him, and to promote in him a healthier state of mind. Unfortunately, her kindness produced the very opposite effect to that intended. The disordered youth, ever in search of new sensations, was morbidly affected by the sensation of meeting a pure and virtuous woman, leading a quiet and peaceful life, devoted to her husband and her children; and, all unknowingly, her sympathy, her readiness to listen to the recital of his mental woes, her words of consolation and affection only served to kindle in his morbid nature a wicked and unwholesome passion.

This was the view of the case ardently supported by all who had known and respected Madame Gey. The friends of Charles as ardently supported the theory of a reciprocal attachment, developing into a fatal and consuming passion.

After quitting Algiers in October, Charles remained in Paris until December, when, owing to his mother's serious illness, he returned to Constantine. According to his account, he found the feelings of Madame Gey unchanged, and, as the time for his return to Paris, which should have taken place at the end of January 1888, drew near, their passion for each other had become so intense that parting was impossible.

Charles should have left Algiers on January 23rd; but he had not gone either on that day or the following. On the morning of the 25th he went to the railway-station, and there met M. Gey, who was leaving Constantine on

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a tour of inspection. He saw M. Gey depart, and then turned back and called at his house. There he saw Madame Gey, and remained with her for an hour and a half—from eight till half-past nine. On his departure Madame Gey appeared in good spirits, and spent the morning in Constantine, where she met many friends, made an appointment for the following Friday, and proposed a walk with a friend that would have taken up a considerable part of the afternoon. She had déjeuner with her children, and was laughing and singing according to her custom. After déjeuner she sent the children to play in the pine-woods, bidding them au revoir.

Charles had, in the meantime, gone to a friend and tried to borrow 10,000 francs, but without success. He then went and said good-bye to his sister, Madame Roze, after which he purchased a revolver and some cartridges. This purchase completed, he hired a carriage and drove to the house of Madame Gey. It was between half-past two and three. Madame Gey was writing a letter to her aunt, a letter which betrays no trace of agitation or excitement, in which she writes quite calmly of purely domestic matters, and names friends with whom she proposes, in her husband's absence, to have déjeuner on the following day. This letter is left unfinished, broken off suddenly in the middle of a sentence. On the arrival of Charles, Madame Gey puts on a hat and cloak and drives away with him in the carriage. They do not speak much during the drive. In a quarter of an hour they reach the villa of Sidi-Mabrouk. They alight from the carriage. Charles tells the coachman that he may have to wait some time, and then the man and woman go into the house, he locking the front-door behind them. Shortly after, two friends of Charles, anxious as to his excited condition during the morning, arrive outside the villa in search of him. The coachman tells them that he has a lady with him, and they wait in discreet concealment till the lady shall have departed. They wait some two hours, until half-past five, when the revolver shots are heard, and they break into

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the house to find Madame Gey dead and Charles lying wounded by the sofa.

Such are the events of this day, January 25th, as far as they can be elicited from independent testimony. There is also a version of the day's proceedings given by Charles previous to his trial. He said that he went to Madame Gey's house at eight o'clock in the morning to say good-bye to her. She would not hear of his going; she said that she could not bear to leave him, and that they must fly together. He accordingly went away to get the money necessary for their flight, but was unsuccessful. In face of this disappointment they agreed to die in each other's arms after, for the first and last time, gratifying their mutual passion.

Those who believe in the innocence of Madame Gey reject altogether the story written by Charles. They oppose to it the unlikelihood of a hitherto irreproachable woman abandoning herself with such suddenness, such recklessness, such disregard of decency, to the embraces of a lover. They hold that Charles, using her intimate friendship with his family as a convenient pretext, decoyed her to Sidi-Mabrouk for some alleged domestic reason; that, once there, he either drugged or hyptonized her, or took advantage of her falling into a cataleptic state, alarmed by his threats and propositions, and that then, having made her the victim of gross outrage, he subsequently killed her to suppress the evidence of his guilty conduct, his attempt at suicide being nothing more than a cowardly simulation. In support of such a view they urge the tranquil demeanour of Madame Gey during the morning and afternoon of the 25th, the absence of any trace of disturbance or agitation of mind such as one would expect to find in a hitherto blameless woman who is contemplating the desertion of her children, adultery, or death. With regard to the money which, according to Charles, they required for their flight, Madame Gey had ready to hand on January 25th 2000 francs in silver and securities amounting to a considerable sum; whilst during the

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morning, when, according to Charles, flight had been already decided upon, Madame Gey makes not the least preparation for such a course, but goes unconcernedly about her usual daily duties. Even supposing her to have yielded in a moment of weakness to Charles, and to have wished to forget her sin in death, as a woman of decent life she would never have consented to have been found naked on a bed in circumstances of a peculiarly immodest and shocking description. The medical witnesses deposed to the absolute calm and peaceful expression of the dead woman's eyes, which would be more consistent with some kind of catalepsy than suicide.

Controversy, bitter and heated, between the friends of Madame Gey and those of Charles raged round the insoluble mystery of what occurred during those two and a half hours passed by the man and woman in the villa of Sidi-Mabrouk. So violent did it become that an application was made to remove the trial of Charles from Algiers to France. But the application was, not very wisely, refused. Accordingly, on November 8th, 1888, Henri Charles was arraigned before the Cour d'Assises at Constantine, charged with the wilful murder of Madame Gey.

"A young man with a pale complexion and restless, piercing eyes. He wears a reddish-brown beard, thin and cut close. He is very correctly dressed in black, and his demeanour is one of resignation. His thin and drawn countenance bears traces of prolonged suffering." This is M. Bataille's description of Charles as he appeared in the dock at Constantine.

The President, after briefly summarizing to the jury the questions at issue with regard to the death of Madame Gey, proceeded with the interrogatory of the prisoner.

President.—You neglected your legal studies for the study of psychology, which seems to have had a disastrous effect on your mind. You resided in Paris, but last year you paid two visits to Constantine—one at the

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time of your sister's marriage, the other owing to your mother's serious illness. Your family were on terms of great intimacy with the family of Gey, who were very universally respected in this country.

Charles.—No one has ever disputed that.

President.—With regard to Madame Gey, the clergyman, Bersier, who has known her in childhood and after her marriage, describes her as a woman of charming character, a wife absolutely wedded to her duty; and he says that he has at all times been impressed by the mutual happiness and confidence of the husband and wife. Madame Raoul Duval, friend of Madame Gey from her earliest years, rejects with horror the suggestion that she could have been guilty of the misconduct you attribute to her. We will come to the facts of the crime.

The President asks Charles to give his version of what occurred on January 25th, 1888. He replies—

"Early in the morning, feeling sure that I should never see it again, I went to our villa of Sidi-Mabrouk to bid a last farewell to the spot where I had passed my childhood. I gathered some violets and a rose. Passing by the house of Madame Gey, I went in to offer her the flowers. She was with her two little girls, but, when she saw me, she sent them away that we might be alone. I told her I was about to leave for France. She said, 'Yes; go at once,' and burst into tears. We fell into each other's arms. 'This life cannot go on,' she said, and, after a little hesitation, she told me of her fixed resolve to go away with me. We agreed that I should fetch her in a carriage in the afternoon and take her to a neighbouring railway-station to avoid suspicion. I then went away to get money. I had 500 francs for my own journey, but 10,000 were necessary if she accompanied me. Whilst I was vainly trying to get money from different bankers, Madame Gey, who was afraid to be alone—afraid of herself, as she put it—went out to help to nurse a friend's child who was ill. Then she sent her own children to play in the pine-woods.

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President.—How was it that the very thought of these two little girls did not make you pause?

Charles.—Monsieur le Président, there are moments of exaltation when one thinks of nothing.

President.—You know well enough that this unfortunate woman has left unfinished a letter to her mother which is wholly playful in its tone and filled with trifling details as to her little girls' occupations. Does a woman who is about to elope or kill herself write thus? How do you explain this—you, a psychologist?

Charles.—Madame Gey had written this letter before she had heard of my intended departure and seen me in the morning. We had not then formed any extreme decision.

President.—Whilst you were traversing Constantine in search of money Madame Gey came home to déjeuner with her two daughters, and was heard laughing and singing with them.

Charles.—Such gaiety is a frequent accompaniment of great nervous excitement.

President. — Madame Gey was very careful of her person. How do you explain the fact that she made not the least preparation for her flight in the way of clothes or under-linen?

Charles.—If she had made the smallest preparation, she would have aroused the suspicions of her servants. Ordinary prudence obliged her to take nothing away with her.

President.—And how do you explain your need of 10,000 francs to fly with her? Madame Gey had in the house 2000 francs in cash, and securities for a considerable amount.

Charles.—No man of honour will fail to appreciate my conduct in this respect. I did not wish to elope with a woman at her expense, perhaps at her husband's.

President.—These sentiments did not, however, prevent you from killing this woman.

Charles.—That's quite another matter.

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President.—You came back to Madame Gey's at three o'clock. Till then there had been no question of dying together, but only of flight. Why, then, had you purchased a revolver?

Charles.—To kill myself. Furthermore, once we had succeeded in escaping, suicide was the inevitable termination to our few days of happiness.

President.—We know nothing about that. There are so many ties that attach people to life. You returned to Madame Gey about three o'clock, after having vainly tried to raise money all over Constantine. What passed at your second interview?

Charles.—The butt end of my revolver was sticking out of my pocket. Madame Gey was quick to guess my plan. She said that, as we could not go away together, she had made up her mind to die with me. I told her to get into the carriage, and we started for our villa of Sidi-Mabrouk.

President.—One of her servants saw her get into the carriage with you, and said that her face was quite calm, that it bore no trace of emotion.

Charles.—Servant's evidence!

President.—The only evidence possible in such a case, as frequently happens in real life.

Charles.—That does not make it the more trustworthy. We were, as a matter of fact, absolutely calm. We felt on the eve of a great deliverance, of freedom from the cares of life.

President.—On the contrary, a situation such as yours would betray itself in the expression of the face. A mother does not desert her children in this fashion without an embrace, without one word of farewell. One does not require to be a psychologist to understand that.

Charles.—Excessive nervous excitement is in many cases accompanied by a peculiar outward composure.

President.—You say that during the drive you sang the romance from *Faust*, "Salut à mon dernier matin!" But the coachman denies having heard you.

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Charles.—The front part of the landau was up, so he couldn't have heard.

President. — What occurred in the villa of Sidi-Mabrouk?

Charles.—As I went up the staircase, I told the coachman that he might have to wait a long time. I shut and locked the door of the house, as I had told my friend, Paul Rieu, that I meant to blow out my brains if I could not get 10,000 francs, and I knew he would he looking for me. When I came into the bedroom, Madame Gey said that I was the man and ought to have the most courage. She made me swear on the head of my mother and of her little girl, Louise, that I would kill her. I did not then see anything monstrous in taking such an oath. On the contrary, it seemed to me to lend a certain sanctity to our voluntary death. I passed some sweet moments with her; there are things one cannot repeat. I opened my pocket-book, I took out the last letter she had written me, and, as we neither of us had any matches to burn it with, I tore it into small pieces and threw them out of the window. Then she said to me the one word "Partons." And after a long pause she added, "What a pity that I did not bring the little girls with me!" I trembled as I am trembling now. I did not think a man could tremble so. She looked at me and said, "Let it be done now, at once. Only promise to place in my right hand the rose you plucked this morning, and afterwards embrace me. I give myself to you, but promise by all that you hold sacred that you will kill me immediately after." She made me swear on the head of her daughter Louise that I loved her dearly. I wanted to go down into the garden and gather some more roses, but she would not let me. "You are a coward," she said; "kill me at once. You promised to kill me when I had been dishonoured." She placed the revolver close to her right temple, but after a moment she said, "No, that is not a good place," and settled it again. Then I fired.

The President commented unfavourably on the

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prisoner's failure to kill himself. "I an assassin!" exclaimed Charles. "It's awful, horrible! Come, come, there is at least one thing that nobody denies, that I who killed her, loved her!"

"Certain facts," said the President, "are consistent with your defence. It is an undoubted fact that Madame Gey went away with you quite quietly, without any kind of scene; that she must have heard you tell the coachman when you got to the villa that he might have to wait a long time, and that she must have heard you lock the door. It is equally certain that you were shut up together for two and a half hours. Of all this there can be no doubt. It has been also impossible to find on the woman any scratch, or any evidence of poison or anæsthetic having been administered. You certainly the evening before asked a chemist what was the dose of laudanum necessary to kill a person, but he did not sell you any. Some adhesive and viscous stains were found on a piece of furniture near the bedroom, but an expert chemist has declared that there is no reason to think that they had been caused by any toxic substance. It has been alleged that you were very much taken up with the subject of hypnotism and suggestion. But there is no certain evidence on this point. A magazine containing an article on hypnotism was found in your house, but the leaves were uncut.

"But in any case, whether you cruelly murdered Madame Gey, or killed her at her own request, because she would not survive her voluntary dishonour, you have turned aside from her duty a hitherto irreproachable woman, and seduced her from her devotion to her husband and her two unfortunate children."

Charles.—It is indeed an awful situation; a death held to be dishonourable, in reality heroic!

President.—The two poor little daughters of Madame Gey will have a melancholy appreciation of this heroism when their turn comes to marry.

At the request of the Procureur-Général, the prisoner told the story of the passion that he represented to have

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grown up between Madame Gey and himself. They had been, he said, drawn together in the beginning by mutual affliction. He had lost a loved sister, she a little son. Gradually, without their knowing it, they conceived a passion for each other.

"What day," asked the Procureur, "did you first tell her that you loved her?"

"On October 13th, 1887," replied the prisoner. "I remember the date because it was the anniversary of my father's death. My mother and I were dining at Madame Gey's. Before dinner I leant over to her, and said in a low voice, 'Madame, I love you!' She took me into the drawing-room and said, 'Yes, let us love each other as brother and sister,' and then by one of those curious contradictions so common in lovers, she kissed me for the first time. . . . After that our feelings, as well as events, hurried us along. One day, in passing her door, I was seized with such a fit of weeping that I had to be carried into her house. Madame Gey and her husband ran to my help, but she with the greater feeling and tenderness. Whilst M. Gey went in search of some neighbours, she spoke to me at length. She knew only too well that she was the cause of my suffering, of my excited condition. 'I wish,' she said, 'that my husband could see us through the blinds, that he might kill us both.'"

Procureur-Général.—On which day did you become absolutely certain of the nature of your feelings towards each other?

Charles.—Any one who has ever loved knows that it is impossible to fix with certainty the actual date of such a thing.

Procureur-Général.—You have on a previous occasion made statements with regard to the behaviour of M. Gey?

Charles.—For a long time I have kept silence on the subject of M. Gey. I was unwilling to violate the laws of hospitality. But so many disgraceful things have been said about me, that I consider myself at liberty to

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speak. I repeat emphatically that one day, as Madame Gey was passing a note to me, her two little girls called out, "Look, papa, at what mamma is giving M. Charles." "Let them alone," was the only reply of M. Gey, and he turned the conversation. On another occasion, during a lawn-tennis party, Madame Gey sent me a note, which, according to her habit, she took back from me almost immediately after, in which she said that she could not endure to live without self-respect, and was going to confess to her husband that she had ceased to love him. A few days later, she told me that her husband's reply to her admission had been, "Madame, if I were alone, I should know how to act, but I have children. This Charles family has upset you. Take some cod-liver oil, and give me a definite answer in a month."

Procureur-Général.—You have further said that M. Gey used to amuse himself by teasing you, taking his wife on his knees and undoing her dress.

Charles.—It happened once, but the incident has been exaggerated. My display of feeling on the occasion was absurd.

This was the story told by Charles with every symptom of nervous agitation. It is well to put side by side with his version that given by M. Gey in the witness-box. The real issue of the case lies in the question as to which of these two is to be accepted, and the remaining evidence is of importance in so far as it lends probability to one or other of these stories.

M. Gey said—"I first heard of my misfortune, during a tour of inspection, by a telegram, which said, 'Madame Gey wounded by a firearm.' It was only on arriving at Constantine that I learnt that my poor wife had been murdered at the villa of Sidi-Mabrouk by Henri Charles. My first step was to assure the magistrates of my absolute faith in the innocence of the dead woman. I had no misgiving on this point. Ten years of married life, following on a four years' engagement, are my grounds for speaking

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of her in the way that I do to-day. She was the sister of my favourite colleague, the late Réné Dickson. I first made the acquaintance of his family when I entered the 'École des Mines.' A deep attachment grew up between his sister Ellen and myself. She was then sixteen. We were married in 1878, and for ten years our happiness has been unclouded. She was all goodness, purity, simplicity itself. She did not know what evil meant, and she had the least romantic disposition I have ever known. She has done me a great honour in consenting to bear my name. Our only mistake was in being too kind and hospitable. We were particularly grateful to Madame Ducamper, the mother of Charles, for the sympathy she had shown us when we lost our little boy. She offered to let us bury him in her family vault. When in her turn she lost her daughter, Madame Couverchel, a sweet woman, my wife and I took her two surviving daughters under our charge. My wife, who could never bear to see a child suffer, brought them to our house, and it was thus she got to know Henri Charles. When he used to come to see his two sisters, he seemed to me to be gloomy, unhappy, romantic. Personally I showed him every sympathy. The day of the crime he met me at the station, and shook me warmly by the hand, telling me that he was about to leave for France, and asking if he might be allowed to execute any commissions for my wife—the wife I had just embraced for the last time, and whom I was never to see again alive. Our life has been a very simple one, with nothing extraordinary about it, a life of hard work, the usual life of honest people who love their children and try to bring them up properly."

President.—I am unwilling, sir, to protract the pain which your appearance here must cause you, but I am in duty bound to ask you certain questions.

M. Gey.—Please, Monsieur le Président, please! I am here to defend my wife's honour.

President.—Very good. After the death of your little boy, had not your wife some thoughts of suicide?

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M. Gey.—Never. Her sorrow was very great, but she still had her two daughters with her, her mother and myself. She had no thought of dying. We had made our plans for travelling as soon as we should be out of mourning. She looked forward with pleasure to taking me through Switzerland.

President.—Charles has said that she had confessed to you her passion for him.

M. Gey.—Disgraceful nonsense! If I had received such a confession, should I have been such a cur as not to turn Henri Charles out of my house?

President.—Now, Charles, what have you to say?

Charles.—The moderate tone of M. Gey makes my duty imperative. I have nothing to say.

President.—But you have made an accusation against M. Gey this morning. Now he is here face to face with you, speak.

Charles.—I have nothing to say.

President.—You said that the children saw Madame Gey give you a note, and told their father, and that he said nothing to it.

Charles.—I have nothing to say.

M. Gey.—I only say this. I regard M. Charles as an assassin, and I appeal to all honest men to vindicate my wife's honour. But I do not cherish any peculiar hatred for Henri Charles, for that would be to believe that my wife had sinned, and that is out of the question. Never! never!

President.—Was not Madame Gey possessed of certain securities which she kept in her house?

M. Gey.—Yes, 1900 francs in silver, and 50,000 francs in securities, part of her wedding portion. I found all her cupboards in order, her linen also.

President.—You know that the prisoner alleges that he has had intimate relations with your wife?

M. Gey.—Then she must have been dead or unconscious. . . . I repeat that I consider Madame Gey to have been the most honest woman that ever lived, and I was honoured in being her husband.

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The evidence of Charles and that of M. Gey represent the two sides of the painful question which the trial was unable to determine definitely. Had Madame Gey, or had she not, fully reciprocated the prisoner's passion? The honour of the dead woman was the agitating issue of the trial, an issue fought out with a zeal, a passion and a multiplicity of inconclusive evidence that obscured rather than assisted the truth. It was not so much the guilt of Charles as the accusation he made against the dead woman that stirred witnesses to eloquence and indignation; but unfortunately the only result of the battle fiercely waged between the Charles and anti-Charles parties, was to leave things very much as they were when the trial began. From the very outset of the affair the respective families and adherents of the man or the woman had stood in the way of justice, and had prevented that strict and passionless investigation which could alone by any possibility have solved the mystery of Madame Gey's murder. Immediately after the discovery of the crime, M. Scherb, the Protestant pastor of Madame Gey, goes to the villa and most improperly moves all the furniture, and rummages about in his zeal for the honour of his co-religionist. At the same time, members of the Charles family carry off Madame Gey's pocket-book and other articles which she had taken with her to the villa. Most important clues as to the behaviour of these two people during the two hours and a half spent in the upper room of the villa, may thus have disappeared through the wanton interference of excited partisans.

The evidence given at the trial was for the most part evidence as to character, which can be of little real service, except in regard to the probability or improbability of a certain occurrence, or of certain alleged conduct on the part of the persons concerned. Many friends of Madame Gey spoke in moving terms of the excellence of her character as wife and mother. One of these witnesses deposed that, on the morning of the crime, when

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flight or death were supposed to be in her mind, she had kissed his children and made arrangements to visit them on the following Friday. "And yet," exclaimed the President, "she did not embrace her own children when she went away from them with Charles!" Many spoke of her calmness up to the very moment when she entered the villa of Sidi-Mabrouk.

On the other side, the mother and step-father of Charles, and some literary and student friends, all spoke warmly of his loyal and lovable disposition. Both M. and Madame Ducamper swore that Madame Gey had, since her boy's death, entertained ideas of suicide, and some despondent passages from some of her letters were cited in proof of these statements.

But the letter written by Madame Gey to her aunt on the day of her death, and left unfinished when she departed with Charles, must in fairness be set against any suggestion that she was on January 25th under the influence of depressing or agitating thoughts. After speaking of her children's general condition of health and spirits, she continues—

"Yesterday, in pretty dull weather, we (she and her two daughters) went for a long walk on the plateau, then to the workshops, and then home on foot. The naughty little Gem (one of the little girls), though she said she was tired, capered about all the time, trying to make us go faster. Yvonne (the other little girl) has quite a passion for Sidi-Mabrouk, and says 'It's the prettiest place in Constantine.' The children love going there, nothing can give them greater pleasure. Whilst we were there, Marie Vital (a sister of Charles) came to say good-bye; she is going to Algiers with her mother for twenty days or so. The change of air and surroundings will do her good; she is much better, but still very nervous. Henri (Charles) is going too one day soon; he will give you our latest news.

"Antoine (her husband) went away at five this morning,

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to meet M. Hirsch. He will be back at midnight to-morrow. So as not to have déjeuner by myself, I shall invite myself to the Pelletreaus. Our déjeuner on Sunday was delightful, everybody merry and in good spirits. Madame Jacob was overflowing, and her son very amusing; he is witty to his finger-tips. The Danjous were very charming; he is a thorough gentleman, and has an air of enjoying life which gives one pleasure. Their little girl was very pretty, and Yvonne and Gem so glad to have her. Madame Vital was in the best of spirits, and so was her brother.

"In the afternoon the tennis-players arrived, but I could not play, as I had so many visitors (then follow their names).

"I am miserable about the postman's case, and I blame very much our own negligence. I have been obliged to sign a paper saying it was I who signed in his memorandum-book, for otherwise he would have been sentenced to some years' imprisonment, and one really couldn't allow that, don't you think so? That——"

These were the last words written by Madame Gey before her death. They certainly go some way to corroborate the evidence given by her friends and servants as to the calmness, happiness, and unconcern of her outward demeanour during the last hours of her life. These are hours, be it remembered, during which a woman is represented as passing from a scheme involving elopement and desertion to another involving immediate death.

Controversy raged round the question of the handwriting of the notes which Charles had confided to his friend as letters from a woman he loved, and also round the colour of some hairs which were with the letters and were said to have belonged to Madame Gey. Controversy did not, however, determine finally either of these questions.

The medical evidence negatived the suggestion that Charles had used any drug to render Madame Gey insensible, unless it were a drug all traces of which would have

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disappeared in eleven days, the interval between the death of Madame Gey and her autopsy. Such drugs were admitted to be in existence.

The zeal of at least one of the friends and admirers of Charles outran the proverbial discretion. M. Martin Laya, the author of *Yvon d'Or*, the book in which Charles was supposed to have figured as the hero, was asked by M. Trarieux, representing the Gey family, whether he acknowledged having written to Charles after his arrest, a letter on behalf of himself and his comrades, couched in the following terms—"You speak of pride. Yes, you may well be proud. We honour you, as we reconstitute in our minds the whole scene of the drama. Courage! nothing is lost; a great sorrow, a great rift, and then life will go on as before. You say the mainspring is broken. Nothing of the kind, don't think that; you will be a great man for having been a great sufferer. Thanks for your book on the *Untransmissible Soul*, which I have at last been able to appreciate. I take you to my heart." The young man, who was only twenty-four, very properly apologized for having written such inappropriate stuff, and excused himself on the ground of his indignation at the charges which were being made against his friend. On leaving the witness-box, he embraced the mother of Charles in open court.

The result of the trial was to leave the precise degree of the prisoner's guilt as undetermined as at the beginning of the proceedings. Court and jury were unable to arrive at a similar decision. Whilst admitting, at the request of the prosecution, extenuating circumstances, and so saving the prisoner from the guillotine, the jury found Charles guilty of premeditated murder. The Court, disregarding the severe conclusions of the jury, sentenced him to seven years' penal servitude. This sentence was further commuted by the President of the Republic, M. Carnot, to one of seven years' imprisonment. The jury then took the extraordinary step of writing to M. Carnot to "respectfully express their regret at the act of clemency which has

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followed on the already too indulgent sentence of the Assize Court." M. Gey also addressed himself to the President in an indignant letter. Ignoring the peculiar considerations which had led M. Carnot to inflict this supreme insult on his wife's memory, he writes, "I ask you, Monsieur le Président, to grant a full and complete pardon to the murderer Charles, that I may myself execute justice upon him, since the highest power in the state refuses to do it for me. What you have granted to a murderer, you cannot refuse to me, who am nothing but an honest man." The request of M. Gey was not, however, complied with, and Charles underwent his punishment in an Algerian prison.

It may be fairly surmised that the jury by their verdict intended to express their belief that Charles had robbed of life and honour a woman who had never voluntarily surrendered either into his hands. The judges, either believing the opposite to be the case, that Madame Gey was a consenting party to what occurred at the villa, or at any rate considering that the evidence was too doubtful to admit of a definite pronouncement one way or the other, refused to give by their sentence full expression to the views of the jury, and considered justice best satisfied by a comparatively short period of imprisonment. Theirs was in all probability the wisest course. The case will ever remain wrapped in a certain mystery, a fruitful theme for legal and psychological controversy. Though there are grave circumstances that tell very heavily against the good faith of Charles, though he appear eminently unwholesome and untrustworthy, he must have been a liar, a forger, and romancer of peculiar intensity to have entirely invented the story of the mutual passion that grew up between Madame Gey and himself; whilst, on the other hand, Madame Gey must have been possessed of powers of dissimulation far exceeding those which are by common consent allowed to women, if we are to believe that she had in complete secrecy reached a climax of passion and infatuation which elopement or death were alone powerful

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enough to satisfy. The words of M. Durier, the advocate of Charles, sum up, perhaps, as well as any the difficulty and mystery of this tragic story. "In these dramas of passion," he says, "everything is strange and abnormal, and in such a case as this above all others, what seems the most probable is not necessarily the most true." If, then, improbability is a safer test to apply to the circumstances of the murder of Madame Gey, it must be admitted that either side in the controversy can summon more than one highly improbable circumstance to their aid.

Between the extreme views of the adherents or opponents of Charles many explanations of the motives or relations of the two principal actors may be evolved which shall equalize to a certain extent their responsibility for what occurred in Sidi-Mabrouk. But such explanations will find little enough in actual fact to give them any conclusive support.

Whatever the exact degree of the guilt of Charles, he deserved a severe reminder from the justice of his country that his was a state of mind, a view of life and moral responsibility which must, if possible, be suppressed rather than encouraged. "Let youth be taught," said the Procureur-Général, "that such crimes are not heroic but infamous. Let justice enter a vehement protest against the indulgence of unwholesome emotions which corrupt the moral sense and lead young men astray. Let all men be taught that no one has the right to commit crime 'pour être le romancier de son propre roman,'" an admirable phrase that expresses perfectly the true malady of Charles, a malady which either infected Madame Gey with its poison, or converted a morbid youth into a heartless criminal.

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MADAME WEISS

Two years after the conviction of Charles, that is to say in the October of 1890, Algiers was once more the scene of a domestic tragedy, less mysterious but no less shocking than that of the death of Madame Gey. Passion, guilty and reckless, as in the case of Charles, was the motive leading to crime, but in the case of Madame Weiss, that passion was fully shared by man and woman alike, and it was to remove the inconvenient husband, not their erring selves, that the two combined in a singularly cold-blooded plan of assassination.

M. Weiss was an ex-captain in the army, occupying at the time of which we are speaking, an administrative post in Algiers. He lived at Ain-Fezza, near Oran. He had been married since 1886 to a young Russian, an orphan, named Jeanne Daniloff, who was in 1890 about twenty-two years of age. He had had two children by her, a son born in 1887, and a daughter born in 1889. When the then Lieutenant Weiss first met Mdlle. Daniloff, she was living with her grandmother, who kept a boarding-house at Nice. Her parents were both dead; her father had never acknowledged her as his daughter, her mother had died at twenty-five, a political exile from Russia. The life of Jeanne Daniloff at Nice, in spite of a strict Lutheran bringing up, had been of the shabby-genteel order, gay with the gaiety of a boarding-house given over to gambling and always trembling on the verge of an execution. In 1884 Jeanne Daniloff had gone to Paris for six months with a single gentleman, but her grandmother, who seems to have had a very deep, if not a very scrupulous, affection for her, took her back at the termination of the episode and launched her in the not inconsiderable gaieties of Nice. It was at a ball given in the neighbourhood of that town, that in 1884 she met the Lieutenant Weiss.

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He fell in love with her and wished to marry her, but his mother absolutely refused her consent. When in 1884 Weiss was promoted to a captaincy and sent to Oran, he took Jeanne Daniloff with him as his mistress. In 1886 he gave up his rank in the army and accepted an appointment in the Algerian civil service, and in the same year, having obtained his mother's consent, made Jeanne Daniloff his wife. It was in 1889, at the time of the birth of their second child, that M. and Madame Weiss went to live at Ain-Fezza. Till that period, during the first three years of her married life, the conduct of Madame Weiss, as a wife and mother, had been irreproachable. In the environment of a regular domestic life, the principles of her strictly Lutheran bringing up had been revived in her, and had overcome to all appearances the pernicious influences of the mixed boarding-house. Madame Weiss was remarkable at Ain-Fezza for her piety and her assiduous study of the Holy Bible. Without being pretty, in the strict sense of the word, the large, steadfast eyes of Jeanne Weiss, with their finely-shaped eyebrows, were described by one who saw them as possessing what a Frenchman happily terms "l'air fatal."

It was in 1889 that there came to Ain-Fezza, as an engineer working on the West Algerian railways, a certain M. Felix Roques—young, good-looking, fond of music and a clever talker. Felix Roques was the evil spirit chosen to try the pious Lutheran. He came, he saw, he conquered. To this man, within a short space of time, Madame Weiss abandoned her whole being. She surrendered herself to him with an intensity of passion and a slavishness of devotion which are the abiding characteristics of certain ill-balanced, incomplete natures which are only themselves when they are acting under the impulsion of one stronger than they are. Such women efface themselves in the presence of the man they love; they are content to act and think as he directs, they want, above all, to be dominated; and, though at one time they may seem to have possessed it, on a sudden they abdicate every vestige of

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moral sense in their passive obedience to the will of another. The records of dual crime are fruitful in the examples of such dangerous pliability, sometimes in men, more often in women. Of the latter Madame Fenayrou, Gabrielle Bompard and Jeanne Weiss are conspicuous instances. Such men and women are the chosen instruments of crime.

Madame Weiss has supplied her own account of her feelings towards the engineer Roques, and in her case, unlike Charles, there is an unfailing accent of sincerity in her autobiographical productions, a sincerity which, in the sequel, did not falter before the agony of a cruel death. She writes—"I loved M. Roques as the master of my thoughts, of my intelligence, of my body, of every fibre of my being; as a master whom I worshipped and in whose presence I myself ceased to exist. . . . When he asked me for the first time to appoint him an assignation, we were walking with some other people. Instead of saying 'yes' or 'no,' I took out a coin and said to him, 'I don't wish to take on myself the responsibility of a decision; you know that, if we once begin to love, it will be no light thing to me. I shall lead you far, perhaps farther than you think; if it comes down heads, it shall be yes, if tails, no.' He looked very astonished; he blushed very deeply and said, 'So be it.' I spun the coin, it came down heads, and I was his." November 13th, 1889, was the date Madame Weiss had engraved on a ring—the date, it was suggested, on which she became this man's mistress. Shortly after this date she is found writing to him—"You do not know how I hold to life now. Does it not promise me in the future days of radiant happiness, intimacy, affection growing daily stronger, with you, my well-beloved, you to whom I am proud to belong, you for whom I am capable of any sacrifice, any act of devotion. How I love you, Felix! Take all the kisses I can give you and many more. I embrace you with all the strength of my being. Your wife, Jeanne."

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It was not long before the husband began to pall on this ardent couple. His suspicions had been aroused; he had made a pathetic attempt to win back his wife's affection through the medium of jealousy, by pretending to pay attentions to a young cousin of Madame Weiss. There were quarrels and reconciliations; but M. Weiss seems throughout to have behaved to his wife with great affection and indulgence. To please her, as she complained of the dullness of Algiers, M. Weiss sent her to Nice in the March of 1890. She was expecting a third child; but it was the child of Roques and not of her husband. It was born in August at Nice, a little girl. Roques had gone back to France about the same time as Madame Weiss. She remained alone in Nice till July, when her husband rejoined her. He went to Vichy to take the waters during August, and on September 20th sailed with his wife and children for Algiers. Roques had, in the meantime, gone to Madrid. He had taken with him certain papers establishing the identity of Madame Weiss, and, shortly after his arrival in Spain, sent her a ticket that would take her from the Algerian port of Carthagena to Madrid.

In making these preparations on behalf of Madame Weiss, Roques had in mind a design more sinister than elopement. As early as the May of 1890 the lovers had begun to seriously entertain the question of the permanent removal of Weiss. A plan by which he was to be drugged with chloral and then shot in the mouth, so as to give an appearance of suicide in a fit of depression, was abandoned, because his life insurance policies were not payable in the event of his taking his own life. Poison appeared, from every point of view, to be the most suitable means by which Roques and Madame Weiss could escape the many inconveniences of adultery. Certainly elopement was a possible alternative to the more desperate course. But then, as Madame Weiss herself put it, she was too good a mother to forsake her children; it seemed better to suppress the father. It was on May 18th, 1890

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—Madame Weiss was always particular about dates—just before she left Ain-Fezza for Marseilles, that Roques made her swear to poison her husband. He obliged her, so she said, to write in her own hand in a yellow morocco pocket-book the words, "I swear that I will murder my husband, that I may belong to you alone. (Signed) Jeanne."

Madame Weiss was not, however, without scruples in the early stage of her criminal enterprise, as the following letter written by her to Roques testifies—

"I am beset by sad and depressing thoughts. What I am about to do is very ugly; and yet, if one commits suicide, what is to become of the poor little ones? My heart bleeds at the thought of never seeing them again, at the thought that to them I shall be as one infamous, whose memory even is a forbidden thing. Felix, I ask you, do you tell me whether it would not be better that we should relinquish our dreams of happiness. As far as you are concerned, our separation, however painful at the moment (for I know that you really love me), will be a sorrow that time and perhaps a new love will contrive to blot out. For my part, I will hide myself, I will take refuge in my motherhood. I will give all my love to my children, *to yours first of all.*"

But, in spite of this urgent appeal, Roques preferred to hold his mistress to her bond; and she with strange submissiveness set about the preparations for her husband's death. Throughout July she was busily occupied in carrying out the directions of Roques as to the use to be made of various poisons. Some extracts from her letters written to Roques at this time will serve to give a picture of this trying period.

"I prefer Fowler's solution to begin with. It is agreed, Felix, you shall be obeyed. Have I ever hesitated before anything except the desertion of my children?

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Crimes against the law don't trouble me at all. It is only crimes against Nature that revolt me. I am a worshipper of Nature."

In the midst of acknowledging the receipt of poisons, she goes off on to the subject of music, literature, and the decoration of their future home—

"I have been playing the *Danse Macabre* as a duet. My nerves must be affected, for it produced a gloomy effect upon me; I thought of death and of *those who are about to die*. Can it be that this feeling will return to me later on?

"I have read *Cruelle Enigme*, the story of a sensual and an intellectual love inspired at the same time in the same woman by two different men. I don't see any very great enigma in that! . . . I think that five-sixths of the infidelities of people are to be explained in this way, and it is quite simple and natural. . . . I have found something very original for our bedroom"—then follow two pages on furnishing.—"It is so sweet to think that I am working for our nest."

At times she feels a return of horror at the crime on which she is about to embark—

"Oh, Felix, love me, for the hideousness of my task glares at me. I want to close my heart and my soul and my eyes; I want to banish the recollection of what *he* has done for me, for I worship you. I feel such a current of complete intimacy between you and me, that words seem unnecessary; we read each other's thoughts as in an open book. To arrest this current would be to arrest my life. I may shudder at what I am doing, after it is done, but go back I cannot. Comfort and sustain me, help me to get over the inevitable moments of depression, bind me under your yoke. Make me drunk with your caresses, for therein lies your only power. I will be yours,

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whatever happens; so long as you give me your orders, I will carry them out. But it seems to me that I am doing wrong. I love you terribly."

And then as the time for execution draws near—

"What I dread above all is the awful time after the catastrophe; the priests, the mourning, the tears and condolences, and, worst of all, the doctors!"

The serious poisoning of M. Weiss did not begin until his return to Ain-Fezza with his wife and family at the end of September 1890, Roques in the meanwhile waiting full of expectation at Madrid, and sending constant directions and encouragements to his obedient mistress. At the beginning of October M. Weiss began to develop the usual symptoms of arsenical poisoning, constant vomiting, convulsions, burning pains in the head, sudden attacks of high fever. He was being given Fowler's solution in his milk and soup by his peculiarly attentive and devoted wife; she cooked the soup herself, she cleaned out the cups and dishes used by the invalid herself, she removed any trace of his attacks of sickness with her own hand, she was unfailing in her attentions.

If she grew at all remiss in the nursing of her sick husband, a few lines from Madrid soon recalled her to her duty, as for instance—

Sept. 29th.—"I can't believe that you are slackening. You promised to obey me. I implore you to obey me. I am very sad this morning. . . . I want you, I summon you to come to me, to me your lover, who stretches out his arms for you. May you be free to come by the time you get this letter. That is my one prayer."

Sept. 30th.—"Will this letter which you are to read in ten days be, perhaps, the last I shall write to Algiers? I hope so with all my heart. It always conveys to you the same orders."

Oct. 1st.—"Would I could see my daughter (the third

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child of Madame Weiss); take great care of her, she is a toy which, if it break, we can never replace."

Oct. 2nd.—"No letter. My God! why do you make me doubt? I don't know what I am doing. I hardly live. Can it be that you are trying to forget me? I could never survive that. A hundred times rather death than life without you."

Oct. 5th.—"You obey me, that is well. For my part, I will never fail you in respect either of love or cheering letters. On your side, I hope there will be no falling off."

There was none in the assiduity of Madame Weiss. During the first week in October M. Weiss continued to get steadily worse. His condition created in the mind of his secretary, M. de Guerry, a suspicion of foul play. He confided his suspicions to a doctor, who confirmed them. M. de Guerry was acquainted with the post-mistress at Ain-Fezza, a dubious functionary who favoured the correspondence of Madame Weiss with Roques, but gossiped about it to the wife of M. de Guerry. On October 9th the latter told her husband that she had learnt from the post-mistress that on that day Madame Weiss had posted an important letter to Roques. M. de Guerry, happening to go into the post-office, saw the letter lying on the counter. He quietly slipped it into his pocket, took it home and read as follows—

Oct. 9th.—"You may as well know what a fearful time I am going through at this moment, in what a nightmare I live.

"Monsieur has been in bed four days, and the best half of my stock is used up. He fights it, fights it by his sheer vitality and instinct of self-preservation, so that he seems to absorb emetics and never drains a cup or a glass to its dregs. The doctor, who came yesterday, could find no disease. 'He's a madman, a hypochondriac,' he said. 'Since he seems to want to be sick, give him some ipecacuanha, and don't worry, there's nothing serious the matter with him.'

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"The constant sickness obliges me to administer the remedy in very small doses. I can't go beyond 20 drops without bringing on vomiting. Yesterday, from five in the morning to four in the afternoon, I have done nothing but empty basins, clean sheets, wash his face, and hold him down in the bed during his paroxysms of sickness. At night, when I have got away for a moment, I have put my head on Mdlle. Castaing's shoulder" (she was the post-mistress) "and sobbed like a child. And I am afraid, afraid that I haven't got enough of the remedy left and that I shan't be able to bring it off. Couldn't you send me some by parcel post to the railway-station of Ain-Fezza? Can't you send four or five pairs of children's socks with the bill? I'll take care to get rid of the wrapper. Hide the bottle carefully.

"I am getting thinner every day. I don't look well, and I am afraid that when I see you, I shan't please you. Did you get the photograph?

"Forgive my handwriting, but I am horribly nervous. I adore you."

This letter M. de Guerry immediately placed in the hands of the Procureur de la République. On October 10th that functionary arrived at Ain-Fezza. He handed the opened letter to Madame Weiss. "Do you recognize that letter, madame?" he asked. "Yes," replied the lady, "M. Roques has been my lover. He wanted to marry me or elope with me. I tried to pacify him by pretending that I was poisoning my husband." The house was searched and a considerable quantity of Fowler's solution, prussic acid, and corrosive sublimate was found in the possession of Madame Weiss. She made a determined attempt at suicide by taking surreptitiously a large dose of the corrosive sublimate, which resulted in a severe illness of six months' duration. Information sent to Madrid led to the arrest of Roques by the Spanish police. But on October 20th he contrived to blow out his brains.

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Seven months elapsed between the arrest and trial of Jeanne Weiss. For six of these months the prisoner lay seriously ill from the effects of the corrosive sublimate which she had taken in the hope of ending her life. The misery of her situation was further increased by the death of her infant daughter, the child of her lover. She had been allowed to keep the child with her in prison, and it died in her cell.

A considerable part of her time was spent in writing her *Heures de Prison*, a long autobiographical sketch and an examination of the state of her mind, her motives for the crime, and her future prospects. She dwells strongly on the dominion which Roques exercised over her, and holds him chiefly responsible for what had occurred; and though the lover was dead, and consequently unable to give his version of the affair, the correspondence, previous to the crime, to a great extent bears out her declarations. Cowardice, at any rate, was no part of the character of Madame Weiss; she did not shrink from the consequences of her guilt, which immediately after her arrest she fully acknowledged. She was not the kind of woman who would have deliberately and unjustly shifted responsibility on to her dead lover in order to minimize her own share in their crime. The sinister influence of Roques is apparent from the very beginning; and the character of Madame Weiss predisposed her to yield with appalling readiness to the promptings of a man whom she worshipped with a morbid passion. At the same time, her views as to her own responsibility and the extent of her wrong-doing are not as thoroughly contrite as might be expected under the circumstances.

She explains the condition of her mind previous to the crime in the ensuing passage—

"I did not act of my own free will, I obeyed the orders given me by the man I loved: these orders were imperatively repeated in the last letters I received before my arrest. For a whole year I had fought against the power that was mastering me. Had I not to hand that

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terrible cyanide? How many times, after having sworn that I would bring the thing to an end, have I put down the phial, which I had taken up with a hand resolute to obey! It was no use to struggle, I had ceased to be my own master. M. Roques had created in me a woman whom I did not know, a woman fiercely passionate and blindly submissive. He has wrecked not only my life, but my whole inner being; in very truth it is his evil influence that has shattered my life and torn me from those I loved. Am I alone to suffer for what we did together?

"How often I wanted to fly with him my letters are there to prove. But that meant leaving my children, losing them for ever. When it came to parting from them, I had not the strength to go. Then came reproaches from my lover, doubts as to the reality of my affection for him. He was tortured by jealousy, and kept recurring to the belief that it was my husband whom I could not bring myself to leave. If M. Weiss were gone, my children would remain to me, and my lover professed to see in such a crime committed by my hand an overwhelming proof of my devotion to him.

"How many times has Roques wished to do it with his own hand! But, if I was not afraid for myself, I was afraid for him. I did not wish him to expose himself to danger. I had a thousand times rather that I should face the perils of the enterprise and the consequences of the crime. And since it *had to be*, since for the last time my master had fixed the final limit of time, in October I suddenly made up my mind, and, as I wrote in one of my letters, I shut my heart and my mind, I stopped my eyes and ears, and I obeyed.

"But what an awakening!

"Oh! if I have tried to kill myself, it has not been to escape public vengeance, but to finish with the life that is before me. Alas! death did not come; but for weeks I have endured sufferings of which no one can imagine the intensity.

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"My husband, by his behaviour towards me, has made me appreciate a thousand times more poignantly the wrong I have done him; instead of leaving me to my punishment, he has surrounded me with proofs of his pity. Yes, he has pitied me, for he knows that the woman I have become in this last year, was not the woman who for five years made him a happy home."

The death of her baby has completed her misery; life must end for her, whatever the result of her trial—

"Good-bye to life!

"Whether I open a vein,

"Or hang myself,

"Or drown myself,

"Or throw myself under a train, I will get there sure enough, even though all the Saints of Paradise were there to bar the way. And they will not be there, rest assured!"

She concludes—

"I have not been led into crime by mere insensibility of character, but I have been blinded by cunning sophistry, and deliberate persuasion, and supported by a mad passion, an intoxication of my intelligence, a stifling of my heart. No one can ever understand me, and I shall be punished in the name of society and by way of an example. This last is their only justification for what they are about to do, and I shall die resignedly, the only being who can appreciate the fact that my crime sprang from error and not deliberate wickedness. I am so certain that no one can understand me, that I shall not try to explain myself to any one whomsoever.

"I repeat that only as an example can my punishment be just, for if the punishment be inflicted to make me appreciate or repent my crime, it is futile, for I do *appreciate* it. If it is to punish me, it is more futile still, for I have already suffered so deeply and such great misery, that imprisonment could not make my sufferings greater. And if I kill myself in the event of my conviction, it is not to escape a few years of confinement,

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but because my conviction closes for me the gates of the future, and renders unavailing my determination to live an intelligent life. My children would suffer by my disgrace; my death will save them from that."

The words of Dr. Lacronique, who was thoroughly acquainted with Madame Weiss, are the best commentary on this curious revelation of a most dangerously perverted mind that has no sense of humour, and is evidently prevented from seeing things as they are. "Jeanne Daniloff," said the doctor at her trial, "is from the intellectual point of view, a woman of unbalanced mind, 'une déséquilibrée.' In addition to this, her nervous system is highly impressionable and excitable. She yields easily to hypnotic suggestion. But her mental condition is sound, she acts with full consciousness of what she is doing; she is responsible."

When Madame Weiss warned Roques that, if she loved him, she might take him farther than he thought, hers was an accurate forecast; for though Roques was the instigator or chief promoter of the crime, it was the passion which this strange creature fed in him, the absolute abandonment to him of her body and soul, the entire merging of her independent existence in his, the abdication of her own free will, that made her his overwhelming motive and most appropriate instrument for a cruel murder. The Scandinavian drama should find in this "latent degenerate" a worthy model for one of those dangerous and inexplicable women who suddenly descend upon some small Norwegian watering-place, and revolutionize the being of a number of hitherto composed persons by the vagaries of the morbid spirit. In the hitherto quiet and happy home at Ain-Fezza, converted on a sudden into a house of adultery and miserable estrangement, culminating in secret murder; in this transformation, the outcome of a violent and unscrupulous passion excited in the minds of two people, one of whom is a "latent degenerate"; in these distressing circumstances should lie material for one of those gloomy

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dramas of attenuated responsibility that neither exhilarate nor depress the student of human character.

The trial of Madame Weiss for the attempted murder of her husband commenced before the Cour d'Assises at Oran on May 28th, 1891. M. Zill des Iles who had conducted with such admirable impartiality the trial of Charles, presided.

The interrogatory of Madame Weiss shed no new light upon the crime. Her answers to the Judge's questions were brief; she abstained from any argument, and quietly acknowledged her guilt.

The most interesting evidence was that given by the husband—

"I was introduced to Jeanne Daniloff at Villefranche at an evening party. I saw her afterwards at the 'Pension Russe.' I wanted to marry her, but my mother would not hear of it. Some months after I was made a captain and sent to Algiers. Unwilling to leave Jeanne in her then surroundings, I took her with me. I still wanted to marry her. I entered the civil service in October 1886, and we were married. During the year I lived with her at El Milia, she was an irreproachable wife to me. We had a child. At Sebdu she was still a good, pious, and devoted wife; she used to read the Bible every morning. At the time our second child was born, I was sent to Ain-Fezza. M. Roques had been there a month already.

"One day he came to see me, and asked me to get up a garden-party at the celebrated grottoes near Ain-Fezza. A few days after this party Roques took leave of me; he said he was leaving Ain-Fezza for good. A month later he returned. My wife's aunt and niece were staying with me at the time. They spent the winter with us, and I invited Roques to my house to help me to amuse them. He was a good musician and a man of the world. He used to come every evening, and so got to be very intimate with us. One morning my clerk told me that he had seen Roques hanging about the house the previous evening. I said to Jeanne Daniloff, 'We must have no

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scandal,' and I told her grandmother to let M. Roques know that I forbade him the house. Before leaving for Spain, Roques asked permission to come and bid me good-bye. I granted it, and he spent the evening with us. I did not know his real character until the night of October 13th, 1890, when the Juge d'Instruction came to me and said, 'Your wife has tried to poison you. Here is a letter in which she admits it. Your last-born child is not yours.'

"This, Monsieur le Président, is all that I know."

M. Weiss then turned to the jury and said—"I desire, gentlemen, to make to you the following declaration. I speak that I may reply to certain calumnies that have appeared in the press. I have never forgiven Jeanne Daniloff. I do not, and I never will forgive her. Henceforth she is nothing to me. Whatever her fate, I stay near my children. I only wish never to hear her name again" (Applause).

The President.—No one is allowed to applaud here. Consider the accused.

This evidence, so disappointing to the confident belief of the prisoner in her husband's pity and forgiveness, produced a marked effect on Madame Weiss. She put her handkerchief to her mouth and appeared to bite it with a kind of rage.

On the evening of May 29th, Madame Weiss was found guilty of attempted murder, but with extenuating circumstances. Presumably the influence of Roques was the extenuating circumstance in the minds of the jury; otherwise it is difficult to imagine one. The prisoner was sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude.

Madame Weiss during the trial had said to her counsel —"I shall kill myself, I must save my children. They must not have a mother alive who is in gaol as a poisoner. And then all will be over." There was concealed in the hem of Madame Weiss's pocket-handkerchief a cigarette paper enclosing a mortal dose of strychnine. It was this dose that she had tried to get at when, after the shock of

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her husband's evidence, she was seen to bite so eagerly at her handkerchief. About four in the morning of the day following her conviction, she put her handkerchief to her mouth, and then asked one of the female warders for some water. This she drank hurriedly, but the bitter taste of the drug which the water was to wash down made her think that she had been deceived. "Oh!" she cried, "it's cruel; they have deceived me, they have given me quinine." She was soon, however, reassured by the tetanic convulsions which the strychnine was not long in producing, and exclaimed—"No, they have not deceived me. I am happy. Adieu!"

In spite of the administration of an emetic, Madame Weiss expired in terrible agony. She left behind her a letter to be given to her son when he should be fifteen. She also expressed a wish that her body might be dissected, "in order that after her death her body might at least be of service to science."

With the death of Madame Weiss perished the survivor of one of the most tragical stories of intrigue that have ever been chronicled in the records of so-called "crimes passionnels." The lover and the mistress killed by their own hands, the child, the fruit of their passion, dying in its mother's arms as she lies in prison charged with the attempted murder of her husband, the tragedy closes in true Elizabethan fashion with the wholesale extinction of the principal characters. Well worthy of a Webster is the sinister figure, lurking in the background, of the engineer Roques. This unfaltering assassin, who demands the favours of his mistress, revolver in hand, who experiments on his dog with corrosive sublimate, who is at the same time a charming and accomplished man of the world, capable of exercising an extraordinary power over the mind of a woman, and capable of feeling for that woman a most sincere and desperate passion, this Roques should have flourished in the courts of the later Valois, before the law had laid a heavy and unfriendly hand on poison and intrigue.

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The crimes committed by Charles and Madame Weiss have been partially attributed by some writers to the heating climate of Algiers, and the boredom engendered by the tedium of social life in these far-away stations. But it would be manifestly unfair to hold Algiers responsible, except in the most remote degree, for the evil deeds of two unmanageable persons, whose peculiar weaknesses it is the tendency of modern life to exalt and encourage. It is significant that both these criminals give literary expression to their situations in the language of that form of the modern psychological novel, which surrounds inherently depraved conduct with the false glamour of fine writing, subtle analysis and all those influences of heredity and environment which help to confound and obscure individual responsibility. The constant aggrandizement of the dangerous weakling by master minds cannot fail, but fortunately in rare instances, to make such persons in real life consider what is nauseous and wicked to be beautiful, interesting, and consequently more or less venial. Both in the case of Charles[1] and Madame Weiss, these two people are quite unconscious of the real depravity of their conduct, and regard their actions rather as subjects for literary dissertation and exposition than as monstrous transactions for which there is practically no excuse.

[1] The case of Charles is said to have partially inspired M. Paul Bourget's novel, *Le Disciple*.

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VII

THE STRANGE CASES OF ALBERT PEL AND EUPHRASIE MERCIER

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VII

ALBERT PEL

A GERMAN writer has said, "that genius is formed in secret, character in the stream of life." In the person of Albert Pel genius—or a more modest equivalent—and character alike were formed in a secrecy so invincible that all the resources of human investigation, pushed to the inquisitorial lengths of a French Instruction, have failed to reveal the mystery of this inscrutable and sinister person. Was he a devil or an imbecile? A monstrous serio-comic, or a grotesque lunatic, with the gravity and earnestness of purpose peculiar to ghouls? Murderer certainly, thief no less clearly, a man vain and passionate, fond of music and chemistry, with pronounced goitre and tendency to consumption; his face that of a Mephistopheles with the light of hell gone out of it, or of a Don Quixote of the laboratory seeking the philosopher's stone in gold spectacles.

Albert Pel was born in 1849 at Moutiers, in Savoy. His parents, humble working people, had been separated shortly after his birth, and Pel left to his father's care. But the latter proving unworthy of his charge, the boy was ultimately handed over to his mother.

With her, in 1869, he came to Paris, and set up as a watchmaker in the Rue Rochechouart. At this time the youth was chiefly remarkable as a considerable liar and something of a student. He evidenced his mendacious

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propensities by wearing decorations and life-saving medals to which he had no right, and calling himself Doctor of the Sorbonne, organist, and professor of rhetoric; his studious bent led him to cultivate music and chemistry. As a musician he played the organ much and indifferently, but it was as a chemist that he attracted most attention. He would pass weeks in his laboratory, denying himself to all visitors, his letters handed in through the window. The only indication, which he gave, of the object of these hermit-like investigations was his boast that he had discovered certain poisons that left no trace in the bodies of those to whom they were administered.

The Mother of Pel

In 1871 Madame Pel fell ill; she had always been very delicate, now she became a prey to a violent colic and pains in the bowels. Her friend, Mdlle. Reichenbach, came to see her in her distress, and begged Albert to send for a doctor. Albert said he had already sent for one; but, as a matter of fact, he had never sent for one at all. One day he said to the anxious visitor—"The doctor has just gone. He won't come again because things will be better to-morrow." On the morrow his mother was dead. "Ça y est"—"that's all over"—was the terse announcement that greeted Mdlle. Reichenbach when she called for the last time to inquire after her friend. The lady was a little shocked at the brevity, with which the sad intelligence was conveyed to her by the bereaved offspring. But in that she was wrong. Pel said of himself that he was not of an impressionable temperament; "Ça y est" was his customary formula for announcing a demise, and as he remarked with some justice, he was not aware that, in conveying intelligence of this kind, one was bound to any

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particular form of expression. Nor must it be surmised from the preceding incident that Pel had not a very nice appreciation of the respect proper to the presence of death. When Mdlle. Reichenbach offered to lay out her friend's remains, Pel forbade her. "You must not touch the dead," he said, an injunction only excessive in its reverence.

Pel came in for 8000 francs by his mother's death, but, knowing the evil of men's minds and the uncharitableness of their dispositions, he said that all his mother's valuables had been sewn up in her petticoats and most unfortunately buried with her. Any improbability in this singular story may be set down to the difficulties of the young man's situation. That he was right in adopting some such subterfuge to protect himself against the ill-natured suspicions of his fellow-creatures, was more than proved by the conduct of his friend Hubert. When he told that person that his mother had died of a shock she had received in tampering with some of his electrical apparatus, the distrustful friend received his simple explanation with ill-concealed scepticism and dropped his acquaintance. No wonder Pel regarded him in the future as "a friend more dangerous than an enemy."

In 1872 the father of Pel died, leaving him 25,000 francs, whereupon the son gave up watchmaking and hired elegant apartments. In order to be in keeping with his improved surroundings, he bestowed on himself quantities of decorations and fresh titles; his house, he said, was full of guns lent him from the Artillery Museum; he had invented a new kind of gun, and had been wounded at Cherbourg in the course of his experiments; the Government was about to confer on him a pension in recognition of his services. In the meantime he was squandering his inheritance and incurring considerable debts. But what of that? Tradesmen could well afford to wait for the money of the successful inventor of cannon. However, an evil-minded upholsterer sent bailiffs to the apartment, a proceeding which so convulsed Pel with indignation that he had to be

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shut up in an asylum for five weeks. At the end of this time he came out perfectly cured, and gave the best possible proof of his recovered sanity by putting all his available money into a theatrical syndicate. The company was known as the "Délassements Comiques," and Pel was appointed manager. But Pel, whatever his other advantages, was hardly fitted by temperament or physique to be a purveyor of light entertainment. The enterprise ended in failure, and Pel passed into the ever-swelling ranks of those who have fallen victims to the manifold seductions of theatrical speculation.

The Isolated Pavilion at Ternes

THE adventure of the "Délassements Comiques" was the termination of Pel's public career. He now returned to that life of seclusion which had terminated in his mother's death, his inheritance dissipated, he himself reduced to borrowing from benevolent old ladies in the character of an unappreciated inventor.

In 1877 he hired, on a two years' lease, an isolated pavilion at the bottom of a garden in the Parisian suburb of Ternes, and there set up as a medico-electrician. His household consisted of himself and a servant, Marie Mahoin —at least, so it seemed to the concierge, Madame Boujardy. She had, it was true, on certain occasions seen a closely-veiled lady go in and out of the pavilion, but did not regard her as an inmate of the house. As a matter of fact, this veiled lady was indeed a member of Pel's household, and no unimportant one. She was Eugénie Meyer, Pel's affianced wife, and in the meantime his mistress. She had advertised in the newspaper for a husband, and Pel had answered her advertisement, but he had not yet fulfilled its principal condition. Pending her marriage

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with Pel, Eugénie Meyer enjoyed the privilege of paying all the expenses of the pavilion out of her modest savings. Pel made only one stipulation with regard to his mistress's conduct, and that was that she should never go out except late in the evening and then closely veiled. Hence arose the mystification of concierge Boujardy.

One month after entering the pavilion Eugénie Meyer and the servant, Marie Mahoin, fell ill. Diarrhœa, terrible vomiting, colic, and intense thirst were the symptoms of their malady. Pel waited on the sufferers himself, and administered medicine to them out of a bowl; but unfortunately his ministrations seemed to aggravate rather than allay their distress. The servant began to feel apprehensive. A negro doctor, summoned by Pel, failing to reassure her, she sent for a doctor of her own choosing, who removed her to a hospital. There she was not long in recovering. As soon as she was well again, she returned to the pavilion to fetch her things, which had been left behind in a small chest. The chest was delivered up to her, but during her absence it had, strangely enough, been broken open. Marie Mahoin asked to see Eugénie Meyer, but Pel denied her request.

About this time Pel shut himself up in the most complete seclusion, not a soul was admitted to the pavilion; his letters and newspapers were passed to him through the shutters, which were closed night and day. When, at the end of a few days, Pel emerged from this seclusion, he emerged alone. Eugénie Meyer was never seen again. The two years' lease Pel suddenly abridged to six months. When the concierge went to the pavilion to put up the bill in the window, she noticed blood on the walls and carpets of the ground-floor and the first floor. Pel explained the presence of these stains by saying that he had had a severe attack of hemorrhage, and that the blood had been scattered about in his going from one room to another in search of a basin. The concierge also found a blood-stained cloth on a dung-heap in the garden. If Eugénie Meyer had gone away, as Pel averred, she had

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left a good deal of her wardrobe in his possession, for he soon sold some of her clothing, and said that he had "*inherited*" the rest; but the meaning attached by Pel to the term "inherited" is not quite clear. No one seems to have been much concerned at the disappearance of Eugénie Meyer. She was apparently friendless, certainly unattractive, and living in an isolated pavilion, her identity unknown even to the portress.

The First Wife of Pel

In 1880 Pel resumed watchmaking in Paris, at a shop in the Avenue Kléber. On August 26th he married a shop-girl, Eugénie Buffereau by name. She brought him a dowry of 1800 francs, was in perfect health at the time of her marriage, and was dead in two months from that time. The manner of her death was already familiar to Pel; the same symptoms were present as in previous cases within his personal experience—ceaseless vomiting, diarrhœa, and intense thirst. The doctor thought they were the symptoms of an attack of gastro-enteritis. Hubert, the former friend of Pel, now apparently reconciled with him, called one day, and was surprised to see Madame Pel writhing on a chair in fearful agony. He suggested that a doctor should be sent for. "Bah!" replied Pel, "she has seen one already. She can take nothing, brings up everything." Indeed, so convinced was her husband of the inevitably fatal termination of his wife's illness, that when she asked him for an orange to allay her raging thirst, he did not trouble himself to fetch one, being presumably unwilling to waste the fruit in what appeared to him to be a hopeless case.

When his wife died, Pel fetched Hubert to act as a witness to her death. He announced the sad event by

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his wonted formula, "Ça y est." Madame Hubert inquired who was watching by the corpse. "No one," replied Pel, and he added facetiously, "it won't run away." True to his principle as to the sanctity of corpses, which, it may be remembered, he considered should not be disturbed by living touch, he would not allow the body of the late Madame Pel to be laid out. The dead woman was left lying on the bed, with an arm, which Pel's feelings had prevented him from replacing under the bedclothes, hanging over the side of the mattress. The only rite performed on the dead body was the severance of a lock of hair. Pel was in course of forming a melancholy collection that was to consist, in true Bluebeard fashion, of locks of hair belonging to his deceased wives and mistresses; and so precious and sacred did he consider these touching souvenirs, that one lady whom, immediately after his wife's death, he had proposed to honour by leading to the altar, completely forfeited his regard by rummaging among the sad tokens. Pel entertained his friend Hubert with this anecdote on their way back from the first Madame Pel's funeral, and at its conclusion burst out laughing in a sardonic manner, which, according to Hubert, was peculiarly his own.

This matter of his first wife's death seems to have struck Pel as singularly mirth-provoking. He roared with laughter when he went to register her death, and in general did his best to lighten the dark hours by humorous sallies. But the watchmaker's temper underwent an unpleasant change when his wife's relatives demanded an account of her dowry, and expressed some not unnatural suspicions as to the manner of Madame Pel's death. Pel replied to these insinuations in a letter to one of his wife's brothers—

"I refuse to give you any account after the monstrous charge you have had the cowardice to make against me. I think the best thing you can do is to stop this cackle. One has rarely met with such depths of baseness, accompanied by such treachery. In the meantime, whilst waiting

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to learn of what your sister really died, be good enough to lay this to heart—you won't get a farthing.—Albert Pel."

To avoid scandal the family of Madame Pel did not follow up the charges which they had insinuated against the watchmaker. He was left free to marry again if he wished.

The Second Wife of Pel

The first Madame Pel had died in the October of 1880. Nine months later Pel re-married. He fixed his choice on a certain Mdlle. Murat-Bellisle, who had been his apprentice in the watchmaking business. She brought him a marriage portion of 5000 francs. Her mother, Madame Murat-Bellisle, had property of her own. By her will she bequeathed this property to her daughter, and, on her death, it was to go to her son-in-law, Pel. He had very kindly offered his mother-in-law a home. He was now living at Nanterre, and had obtained from the Prefecture of Police a licence to sell chemicals.

Shortly after taking up her residence with her hospitable son-in-law, Madame Murat-Bellisle fell violently ill, and her daughter was soon similarly prostrated. Their symptoms were those that seemed inseparable from residence under the roof of Albert Pel, constant sickness, colic, burning thirst, inability to keep down any food. Pel was himself so accustomed to this form of indisposition, that he declined to send for a doctor; and when in their agony the unfortunate ladies remonstrated with him for his refusal to do so, he replied chaffingly—"Perhaps you think I am poisoning you." In spite of his humorous way of putting it, some such idea seems to have seriously entered the head of the mother-in-law, for at the earliest oppor-

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tunity she fled from her son's house and never returned. After her departure she quickly recovered from her illness, as did her daughter. Madame Pel could only inherit her mother's property if that lady predeceased her daughter. It was not therefore in Pel's interest that his wife should die first.

Pel and his second wife continued to live together until 1884, when, in consequence of her husband's ill-treatment, Madame Pel left him, and rejoined her mother.

Unwilling to be solitary, Pel invited a neighbour's maid-servant to share his home. He was aware of the fact that the maid-servant, Eugénie Rabulle by name, had saved 1200 francs, and he offered to enable her to multiply her small fortune many times over by allowing her to invest it in the promotion of a great remedy against the phylloxera, which he had just discovered. In pursuance of this object he wrote to Mdlle. Rabulle the following letter—

"MADEMOISELLE,

"Forgive me, I beg, for addressing to you this last entreaty, to which I am urged by a perfectly justifiable appreciation of your own worth, the reputation you enjoy, and the good qualities that are universally attributed to you. I may be wrong, but perhaps you hardly value sufficiently a position in life, unquestionably modest, but in which you would find a shelter from the necessary vicissitudes of your present condition, and in which you would enjoy that freedom and tranquillity which are only to be found in one's own home; in a word, that happiness which may be fairly expected from the success in business which I shall undoubtedly attain, if I can have the help of a serious person.

"Whatever your decision, come and see me on Friday evening for the last time. We could then discuss the principal points relating to this subject, and dissipate any apprehensions which, quite mistakenly, you may be entertaining."

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Mdlle. Rabulle had been warned against accepting the addresses of Pel, but it was his forbidding appearance rather than the danger or impropriety of becoming his mistress, that chiefly decided her to have nothing to do with the watchmaker's proposal. She definitely declined the offer, and Pel was obliged to look elsewhere for a helpmate in his chemical enterprises.

Elise Boehmer

He was not long in finding one. Whilst he was still living at Nanterre, a shop-assistant named Elise Boehmer, had been in the habit of coming to Pel's shop to get her watch mended. Elise Boehmer was forty years old, weary of single life, and possessed of small savings. Pel made the same proposal to Elise Boehmer that he had already made to the woman Rabulle. The former, undeterred by the forbidding countenance of the inventor, accepted his offer to become his mistress. On this understanding the two removed to the Parisian suburb of Montreuil. This was in the June of 1884. Their life was tranquil enough as long as Elise Boehmer showed herself willing to make frequent pecuniary advances to her lover. At different times she lent him 500 francs, and allowed him to realize a security which she held in the Crédit Foncier. When, however, she developed a decided disinclination to make any further disbursements, an unpleasant change came over the attitude of the would-be destroyer of the phylloxera.

On July 3rd she wrote to a friend—"Alas! I have much to tell you. *My position is neither happy nor secure.* I will tell you everything, for I have only you to console me. I looked to *him* for friendship. I receive nothing but harsh words. I will come to déjeuner with you on

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July 9th." But on July 9th Elise Boehmer was not well enough to fulfil her engagement, and after July the 12th she was never seen again. From the 12th to the 15th Pel remained in the strictest seclusion. M. Bataille, the judicial correspondent of the *Figaro*, has graphically described what followed.

"On the 15th, the neighbours of Pel were sickened by the disgusting smells that proceeded from his lodging. They were putrescent odours, as from a dead body, and came principally from Pel's kitchen. The same night great flames lit up the windows of his lodging, as though there were some furnace burning within. Pel, apprehensive of his neighbours' curiosity, had covered the window-panes with black curtains, but all his efforts were powerless to prevent the light glaring through the interstices. The neighbours flocked round the house and gathered in the courtyard on which the kitchen looked, gazing up with inexpressible terror at the shrouded apartment in which there seemed to be passing some hellish drama. One morning two women hoisted themselves up to a level with the upper panes of the window and saw, through a rent in the hangings, Pel stooping over a glowing furnace, stoking the fire; his countenance wore a harassed expression, and, all unconscious of the appalling heat, he appeared to be impatiently watching for the fire to accomplish some mysterious function. The next day the woman, Deven, climbed up into a position from which she could see into, not only the kitchen, but also the room occupied by Elise Boehmer. In the kitchen the fire had gone out; there was only a quantity of white and damp cinders lying in the ash-box. In Boehmer's room the bed had been pulled out into the middle of the room; it was unmade, and the mattresses were lying about the floor. A strong smell of chlorine pervaded the whole lodging."

The occupation to which Pel was devoting himself with such assiduity and disregard of personal convenience, was, according to the unfriendly view of the legal authorities, no less than the dismemberment and cremation of the

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remains of Elise Boehmer, who had, so they suggested, died, wilfully poisoned by Pel, on the evening of July 12th. Proceeding in this hostile spirit, the police, after a delay of three months, arrested the watchmaker, and his case was subjected to judicial investigation. A saw, covered with stains of fat and blood, was found in his house. His cooking-stove was made the subject of experiment by the doctors. Having dismembered a corpse, they burnt it bit by bit in an identical stove; and in less than forty-eight hours they had succeeded in entirely consuming it. About thirteen pounds of white ashes, exactly similar in appearance to those found in Pel's furnace, were the result of the experiment.

In answer to the hostile conclusions of the examining magistrates, Pel averred that Elise Boehmer had gone away from his house on July 13th, without leaving an address; and declared that he had on that day fetched a cab for her from the stand in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. But conclusive evidence was given to the effect that on the 13th only one cab had gone from the Saint-Antoine stand to Montreuil, and that not to Pel's house. At the same time Pel had sold the clothes and jewellery of Elise Boehmer, and spent whatever of her savings he could lay hands on.

The body of Pel's first wife was exhumed and submitted to medical examination.

In consequence of a preliminary investigation, extending over more than ten months, Pel was arraigned before the Cour d'Assises at Paris, on June 11th, 1885, charged with the murders of his first wife, Eugénie Buffereau, in 1880, and of Elise Boehmer in 1884. By way of prejudice he was further reproached with his mother's death in 1872, the death of Eugénie Meyer, the simultaneous illness of Marie Mahoin in 1879, and the illnesses of his second wife and her mother in 1881. But Albert Pel was both undismayed and unaffected by this wealth of unsympathetic allegation.

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The Trial of Pel

Cour d'Assises for the Seine Department, sitting in Paris, *June 11th*, 1885.

"WHAT an extraordinary face!" writes M. Bataille,[1] in giving his first impression of Pel as he appeared in the dock of the Assize Court. "If this man had figured in some stage play in the character of a sorcerer or alchemist, the mere sight of him would have made the audience shudder. His countenance is pale, his complexion waxen, his figure that of a skeleton. A large white silk handkerchief, wound round his neck, only half conceals a huge goitre. His hair is straight, his parchment cheeks dragged by a kind of sinister rictus; and behind the gold spectacles of the pseudo-scientist one can detect two small cavities edged with red. One cannot help feeling that those eyes of his have never looked a man in the face, that this mummy's visage has never smiled, that this impenetrable creature has never known what it was to be young, that he has walled up his passions in the depths of his heart. A thin moustache and long pointed beard complete the Mephistophelian character of his face. I cannot find a juster comparison, though Pel has more cunning and less irony than the Mephistopheles of the legend. His insensibility is appalling; he shows neither surprise nor emotion; he has an answer for everything, and makes his replies in a clear and icy tone of voice that gives the impression of an automaton speaking."

The President, M. Dubard, after passing lightly over the boyhood of the prisoner, questioned him in relation to his mother's death in 1871.

[1] *Causes Criminelles et Mondaines*, 1885.

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President.—You were living then in the Rue Rochechouart, in poor circumstances. Your mother was very delicate, and in 1871 she fell terribly ill. Mdlle. Reichenbach, her friend——

Pel.—Her friend? Nothing of the kind. My mother could not stand the young lady, she was a Protestant.

President.—In any case, she nursed your mother. Madame Pel was suffering from violent pains in the bowels, and Mdlle. Reichenbach begged you to send for a doctor. You always replied that he was coming or had been. As a matter of fact, your mother never saw a doctor at all. The last time Mdlle. Reichenbach called you said, "The doctor has just gone. He won't come again, because things will be better to-morrow." On the morrow your mother was dead. You announced her death to Mdlle. Reichenbach with the words, "That's over!" (Ça y est.) On a subsequent occasion you employed a similar formula in announcing the death of your first wife. This is evidently your mode of expressing grief.

Pel.—Mine is not an impressionable nature.

President.—Mdlle. Reichenbach offered to lay out your mother, but you would not permit it.

Pel.—For a very good reason. The "rigor mortis" had set in.

President.—The reason you gave at the time was that people were not allowed to touch a dead body. A few days later, you made some extraordinary statements. You said that your mother had left you nothing, and that she had been buried in her petticoats in which she had sewn up all her property. You told your friend, Eugene Hubert——

Pel.—A friend more to be dreaded than an enemy.

President.—You told him that your mother had given herself a terrible shock in trying to use one of your electric machines, while you were away. Why all these lies? It also appears that you came in for some 8000 francs on your mother's death. In your eagerness to get

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at all her property, you even went so far as to pull up the flooring.

Pel.—That is untrue.

President.—In any case, your friend was so unfavourably impressed with your behaviour that he has ever since suspected that your mother died a violent death, and by your hand.

A year later Pel lost his father, from whom he inherited 25,000 francs.

President.—You then gave up watchmaking and went to live at Passy. There you bought expensive furniture, decked yourself out with foreign decorations, and represented yourself variously as a professor at Saint-Louis College, a mathematical tutor at the Sorbonne, and organist at the Trinity Church. You wore a Humane Society medal, which you said you had received for rescuing two lives in the Seine. Why, again, all these lies? In the meantime your furniture was not paid for. An execution was put into your house, and you threatened the bailiff with violence. You were thought to be suffering from an attack of insanity, and were sent to the Saint-Anne Asylum. But in five weeks you came out perfectly recovered. You are not mad?

Pel.—Certainly not.

The President, after alluding to Pel's brief career as a theatrical manager, passed on to the death of Eugénie Meyer at Ternes in 1877.

President.—You decoyed two women into your house. The one, Marie Mahoin, you took as your servant, the other, Eugénie Meyer, you took as your mistress. This girl, Meyer, who was forty years old and very ugly, had advertised in the newspapers for a husband, and you had answered her advertisement.

Pel.—I think you are wrong. I made her acquaintance in a creamery frequented by actresses.

President.—But she was not an actress.

Pel.—Pardon me. She had been in the theatrical profession.

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President.—She had a little property.

Pel.—Practically nothing at all.

President.—You first met her at the Odéon, where she was a sempstress. You passed yourself off as a doctor. You wanted to marry her and took her to your house in the meantime.

Pel.—Not at all. She was homeless. I took her in out of charity.

Avocat-Général.—Out of charity, or because of the money you supposed she had? (Movement.)

President.—But she had a home; you went and sold her furniture.

Pel.—Bah! I only made twelve francs out of it.

President.—Why did you forbid Eugénie Meyer to go out except late in the evening and veiled? No one knew at Ternes that she was living in your house, not even the concierge: people thought her a visitor.

Pel.—She went out freely in the daytime. The house has two doors.

President.—A month after their arrival Marie Mahoin and Eugénie Meyer fell ill simultaneously and of the same complaint; diarrhœa, colic, intense thirst. You sent for Dr. Thouzé, who saw Marie Mahoin and at her request ordered her removal to the Beaujon Hospital. She was very ill.

Pel.—She only had an attack of indigestion.

President.—Indigestion lasting fifteen days! At the hospital she recovered with extraordinary rapidity; she was no longer under your care (Sensation). On leaving the hospital the girl, Mahoin, came back to fetch away her things. She found a little chest of hers broken open.

Pel.—Ah! you would make me appear in a very ignoble light!

President.—She asked to see Eugénie Meyer; but you barred her way. Now at this time you had shut yourself up for some days; you took in your letters and newspapers through the window. Listen! What has become

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of Eugénie Meyer? Was she cured while she was with you?

Pel.—She was not cured. She was consumptive and incurable.

President.—Then she left your home ill?

Pel.—Yes.

President.—When? Before the return of Marie Mahoin?

Pel.—About that time.

President.—Where was she going to?

Pel.—I don't know.

President.—But you do know that nobody has ever seen her since, and that nobody knows if she be living or dead—except you perhaps! (Prolonged sensation. Pel alone unmoved.)

President.—Considering the sensation caused by your trial, if E. Meyer were alive, she would be here to-day—then she must be dead.

Pel.—Probably. She was in the last stages of consumption.

President.—Where did she die?

Pel.—How do I know?

President.—But she can't have died all by herself. She had friends in Paris. Considering the excitement created by your trial, any one who had been present at her death would have informed the examining magistrate. One of her female friends to whom she had confided her intention of marrying you, said, "If Eugénie has entered Pel's house, she has never left it!" And why did you tell your second wife that you had inherited some theatrical costumes from an actress at the Odéon?

Pel.—They were only odd scraps.

President.—But you said you had *inherited* them. Then you were sure that she was dead!

Pel.—Excuse me, I wish to make a correction. This woman was not my mistress, nor did I intend her to be.

Avocat-Général.—You wished to marry her?

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Pel.—I was introduced to her in the evening. But when I saw her in the daylight, I was immediately disillusionized (Laughter).

President.—You took no trouble to find out about her, you did not even ask her address.

Pel.—She was nothing to me. E. Meyer wasn't even her real name. It was a stage name.

President.—Do you know her real name?

Pel.—I did, but I have forgotten it.

President.—At Ternes you had a two years' lease. You stay six months and leave suddenly after the disappearance of E. Meyer. This departure is very suspicious. In explanation of it, you say what is untrue, that you are going to stop at the Midi Hospital. As a matter of fact, you took a house in the Avenue Kléber, and resumed your trade as a watchmaker.

After alluding to the quantity of blood-stains found in the pavilion at Ternes immediately after the disappearance of Eugénie Meyer, the President came to the death of Pel's first wife in 1881. Her body had been exhumed and submitted to chemical analysis. This was a subject which aroused Pel's interest in an unwonted degree.

President.—Your wife was ill twelve days; pains in the heart, fearful colic, burning in the mouth. Dr. Raoult saw her a few days before her death. He could not understand her complaint. The unfortunate woman could not keep down anything—not even a drop of water; the tongue was very red, the voice affected, the patient complained of having a fire burning inside her.

Pel.—Can the doctor possibly remember after four and a half years? The tongue was quite white.

President.—The doctor first attributed it to poisoning by mushrooms, and finally put it down to gastro-enteritis.

Pel (phlegmatically).—The symptoms of that are not the same as those of arsenical poisoning.

President.—On the contrary, they are identical; you will hear the experts. You are aware that when subsequently the body of your wife was exhumed and arsenic

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found in the organs, Dr. Raoult exclaimed, "Ah! that explains all!" (Prolonged sensation).

Pel.—Because he had read about it in the newspapers. The symptoms of arsenical poisoning are perfectly well known. How is it that he didn't detect them?

President.—What can you expect? Perhaps you knew more about it than he did.

The President alluded to the chemical analysis and discovery of arsenic in Madame Pel's body.

Pel.—I don't dispute it. She used Fowler's solution.

President.—Who ever saw her take it?

Pel.—I.

President.—You and nobody else! Her parents, her friends, the girl who shared her bedroom in the shop, have all been questioned on this point, and none of them have ever seen her take the slightest remedies.

Pel.—One doesn't take a remedy like that before others. It is like using an enema.

President.—It's not at all the same thing. Will you tell us where you bought the arsenical acid in pharmaceutical doses? Where are the prescriptions?

Pel. — Oh, she had small bottles of it before our marriage.

President.—Admitting for a moment your explanation, arsenical acid in pharmaceutical doses assimilates quickly and leaves no trace in the organs.

Pel (after the manner of a doctor).—I demur to that statement. *Slow* poisoning by arsenic causes in every instance sickness and diarrhœa. If I had wished to kill my wife I should have employed a vegetable poison which leaves no trace (Sensation).

Beyond eliciting from Pel a general remark in disparagement of mothers-in-law, the circumstances of his second marriage and the illness of his wife and her mother were traversed without comment from the prisoner. But the interrogatory revived when it came to the question of the disappearance of Elise Boehmer in 1884. Pel represented that Elise Boehmer had originally come

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to him and asked him to take pity on her lonely situation.

President.—Then it was she who seduced you? (Laughter).

Pel.—Monsieur, she was never my mistress. She had an infirmity which would have prevented such a thing.

President.—Then what did you want with her?

Pel.—It was a partnership. We put our money in the same till, and she came to rest a little at my house.

President.—She lent you 500 francs, and you sold one of her securities. This you denied for some time until you were shown the broker's memorandum, when you had to admit it. You loved this woman?

Pel.—I loved her good qualities.

Avocat-Général.—And her money.

President.—You lived with her in a little ground-floor lodging at Montreuil and there resumed that same secluded existence you had led in the time of E. Meyer (Movement). You forbade E. Boehmer to visit the neighbours. She disliked this sort of life and wanted to leave you. You knew it.

Pel.—But she had only come to me "en passant."

President.—In all respects as E. Meyer. On July 3rd, 1884, she wrote to an intimate friend—"Alas! I have much to tell you. My situation is neither happy nor secure. I will tell you everything. You alone can comfort me. I have sought for friendship at his hands, I have found nothing but words of bitterness. I will come and breakfast with you on July 9th." She did not breakfast with her friend on July 9th, poor woman, she had fallen ill (Sensation). One day a neighbour saw her. She was pale and worn, she dragged herself along with difficulty; she was seized with vomiting; her sufferings were frightful. You never sent for a doctor.

Pel.—I sent for one, but he never came.

President.—Yes, and E. Boehmer said to her neighbour, Madame Chenel, who slipped in to see her and take care of her while you were out, "He doesn't wish me to see a

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doctor, he doesn't wish it." On July 11th another neighbour, Madame Deven, saw E. Boehmer. She complained then of a fire burning in her stomach and of bringing up everything. "She won't last long," said Madame Deven, "she has only to close her eyes" (Prolonged stir).

Pel.—I dispute this woman's capacity to pronounce a diagnosis (Murmur).

President.—The next day, the 12th, E. Boehmer was in agony. At seven in the morning a woman of the name of Letout heard her groans distinctly.

Pel.—She was in the habit of talking to herself.

President.—At eight o'clock Madame Chenel saw her again. She had a burning thirst, and complained that her mouth was so sensitive that she could not bear to take even a drop of water. In the evening, at dusk, Madame Chenel saw her once more. As she came near the bed the sick woman pushed her violently away, crying, "Who are you?" "I am your little neighbour," answered Madame Chenel. The dying woman replied with incoherent words. She was getting delirious. Madame Chenel fled in terror.

Pel.—Delirium is not always premonitory of death.

President.—From that hour E. Boehmer was never seen again. Never. What have you done with her?

Pel.—Women disappear every day.

President.—When did this dying woman leave you?

Pel.—On the evening of the 13th, at eight o'clock, I went and fetched a cab.

Avocat-Général.—Yes, three miles away in the Rue du Faubourg St. Antoine, though there were three cab-stands nearer to your house (Movement).

Pel.—I didn't see them.

Avocat-Général.—So be it, but no cab was called that day from the stand at the Faubourg St. Antoine to Montreuil. There is no such entry on the register.

President.—This cab arrives at Montreuil. Who hears it? sees it? Not a soul!

Pel.—Numbers of cabs pass my street.

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President.—Supposing a cabman to have driven a sick woman from Montreuil to Paris on the evening of July 13th, don't you think he would have been found again, considering the notoriety of your case? How then did E. Boehmer go away? Did she say good-bye to any of the neighbours who had looked after her? Not a word! She leaves all her things behind with you, even her travelling-bag, which was found in your house. Who told the cabman where he was to drive to?

Pel.—She did.

President.—Did you hear where?

Pel.—No.

President.—You don't accompany this sick woman, or even ask where she's going?

Pel.—That was from motives of delicacy. She owed me thirty-seven francs.

President.—Has she written to you since?

Pel.—No, but she ought to have written.

President.—You were not at all anxious about her? You knew an intimate friend of hers, Madame Barrière, Rue Polonceau. Did you go to her and ask what had become of this woman who had been given up as dying? Not a single inquiry on your part, not one! But two days after you said to the neighbours, "Boehmer is dead." How did you know that?

Pel (without extraordinary composure).—There are two hypotheses—either she is dead or she is not. If she does not appear, it is because she has a reason for not appearing.

President.—Why did you dispose of her effects, and sell her watch to a young girl?

Pel.—She had given me that watch.

President.—The prosecution have sought for E. Boehmer in every direction, in the hospitals, asylums, in Paris, in the country, as far as Belgium, in Bavaria and Frankfort-on-the-Maine, her native town. Not a trace of her! They have examined the registers of deaths for all the twenty districts of Paris, questioned the undertakers, but

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still no trace! What has become of the body? Some of your neighbours will tell you.

Pel.—I shall be curious to hear.

President.—E. Boehmer disappears on July 12th. On the 15th the whole house is suffused with a smell of rotting flesh, soon after with a smell of roasting flesh, and lastly, with a smell of chlorine. All these smells come from your floor. What were you doing?

Pel.—Nothing. I was cooking my dinner.

President.—The smell became so powerful that the neighbours sent a M. Klein to you with a threat of sending for the police. Some of the neighbours could not eat their dinners.

Pel.—I suppose they had no appetite.

President.—And the smell of the chlorine?

Pel.—I had upset some by accident.

President.—But you had filled whole plates with it?

Pel.—To get rid of the smell which E. Boehmer had left behind. She had infected the room.

President.—And what of the extraordinary fires which burnt all night in your kitchen, and were seen by all the neighbours? You had covered over your windows with black cloth, but the reflection of the flames lit up the ceiling. At midnight, early in the morning, still they saw them. Your stove never went out (Sensation).

Pel.—It was the light of my candle.

Avocat-Général.—If E. Boehmer had infected your room, why, in the great heat of last summer, did you keep your doors and windows so closely shut? Recollect too that one day a neighbour mounted a ladder, looked into your room, and saw, in front of your stove which had then gone out, a large quantity of ashes.

Pel.—It was some filth I had covered over with them.

President.—A strange way of getting rid of filth! Were not these ashes the result of the cremation of the body of E. Boehmer? You are aware that the experts have conclusively proved that it is quite possible to burn a dead body piece by piece in your stove.

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This closed the interrogatory. The evidence was for the most part concerned with establishing the facts that have been already given in the narrative of Pel's career, and the President's examination of the prisoner.

One of the first witnesses to appear for the prosecution was Pel's friend, Hubert, " the friend more to be dreaded than an enemy." He described Pel as having been from his earliest years cunning, ambitious, and hypocritical, a person who took a wife as he would have bought a dog.

Madame Buffereau, the mother of Pel's first wife, described his indifference during her daughter's terrible illness—

Madame B.—My daughter asked for an orange. Her husband took not the least notice of her request.

President.—And this is the man who says he went about four miles to get a cab for Elise Boehmer.

Madame Chenel, a neighbour of Pel at Montreuil, furnished some striking details of the night of July 15th, 1884. Elise Boehmer had disappeared on the 13th. " On the morning of the 15th," said Madame Chenel, " a sickening odour began to pervade the whole house ; it was like the smell of high meat. It lasted all through Wednesday ; and on Thursday the character of the smell became chemical.

President.—Didn't you see a great fire burning ?

Madame C.—Oh yes ! It burnt one night till one o'clock in the morning. I could see the reflection of the flames on the ceiling. M. Pel was moving about till half-past one, when I went to bed. The neighbours were so disturbed that some of them went up to the top of the house to look at the chimney. The whole house was agog. But M. Pel had covered up the windows with black curtains. I asked everybody what had become of Elise Boehmer. I ended by thinking that M. Pel, who was considered rather an original person, did not want to declare her death officially, and was keeping the body at home. I thought that he might be burning it to avoid the bother of a funeral.

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President (to Pel).—What was the meaning of these extraordinary fires you were burning?

Pel.—I kept the fire in till eleven for domestic purposes.

Avocat-Général.—What! till eleven o'clock at night in the height of summer?

Pel.—I was boiling my cup of tea.

Madame C.—The smell reminded me of a corpse I had once watched over.

The evidence of the medical experts, M. Lhôte and M. Brouardel, may be reproduced at some length.

M. Lhôte visited Pel's lodging on October 13th, 1884, three months after the death of Elise Boehmer. "I was," he said, "so to speak, knocked over by a strong smell of chlorine. I found no suspicious stains either on the walls or floors, which I examined microscopically. I took from Pel's house some large boxes and phials containing many pounds of cyanide of potassium, arsenic, and corrosive sublimate. The ashes I gathered on October 13th contained no remains of bone. I also took away a saw. Though the blade had been oxidized by the damp, I found a fatty deposit adhering to it, and on the wooden handle some suspicious stains which chemical analysis declared to be blood-stains."

M. Lhôte then described the post-mortem held on the body of Pel's first wife. "We went to the Clichy cemetery, where Madame Pel had been buried just four years. We took away the body as well as some portion of the earth surrounding the coffin. This earth contained no trace of arsenic; nor did the mixture with which the body had been covered. Dr. Brouardel removed those portions of the flesh which were still adhering to the bone, for the corpse was in a remarkable state of preservation. Distillation and an analysis by means of Marsh's preparation resulted in the discovery of one thirty-sixth of a grain of arsenic to seven ounces of flesh. Whence came this arsenic? As I have pointed out, it did not come from the earth or the coffin. It must have been taken

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internally by Pel's wife. But it had not been taken in pharmaceutical doses. When arsenic is taken in the ordinarily prescribed doses, it spreads throughout the whole organism. Whereas arsenic taken all at once in great quantity, that is as a poison, is found localized in the liver and kidneys. The arsenic contained in the body of Madame Pel was found accumulated in these very organs. And I ought to add that arsenic in its native form is never found in the human body."

M. Lhôte then described the experiments made by burning a corpse in a stove similar to that used by Pel. "We took a stove identical with that belonging to Pel. In that we burnt a corpse weighing one hundred and twenty pounds. The construction of this kind of stove enables it to reach such a degree of temperature that the flesh whilst itself burning, also acts as fuel, and the ashes contain no trace of bone. We had entirely burnt the corpse in forty hours.

President.—Did the process of burning create any unpleasant smell?

M. Lhôte.—No, only a smell of grilling, as though one were cooking a cutlet.

Avocat-Général.—Then the insupportable smell which troubled Pel's neighbours was caused by the putrefaction of the body, and not by the cooking?

M. Lhôte.—It was in July. The heat at the time was stifling, and the smell of a corpse overcomes any other.

President.—Were your experiments conducted at night-time?

M. Lhôte.—Yes, and the bright circles of flame from the stove were reflected on the ceiling.

M. Joly (Pel's advocate).—Would this saw produced here be of any use in dismembering a body?

M. Lhôte.—Certainly it would.

Pel.—This saw hasn't been used for three years. If I had used it to cut up Elise Boehmer, the blade would have been greased by the contact with the flesh, and so would not have rusted.

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M. Lhôte.—There are certainly no traces of grease on it.

Pel.—Oh, I don't do things by halves. I'll tell you how the blood-stains came there. I used this saw to cut off pieces of horse or ass or mule with which, from motives of economy, I used to feed my apprentices. Do you think that after committing the awful butchery of which you accuse me, and the mere thought of which is enough to make one shudder, that I should have been so stupid as to leave this saw as an evidence against me?

Avocat-Général.—Well, we will admit that you did not dismember the body with this saw. In the three months that preceded your arrest, you had plenty of time to get rid of whatever instruments you had used.

Dr. Brouardel followed M. Lhôte. With regard to the death of Pel's first wife, he said—"The corpse was remarkably well preserved. I detected an appreciable quantity of arsenic in the liver and kidneys. Its localization in this fashion shows clearly that it had been taken in toxic and not in pharmaceutical doses. Dr. Raoult, who attended Madame Pel in her last illness, swears that he never prescribed any medicine containing arsenic, and his prescriptions are here in court. The symptoms he has described—diarrhœa, a red and dry tongue, coldness of the extremities, burning sensation in the pit of the stomach, collapse, and extreme weakness—all these symptoms are found in cases of poisoning, and most noticeably in those of poisoning by arsenic. There are many illnesses in which certain of these symptoms may be present, but not all together at the same time, nor in ordinary illnesses of this kind is the progress of the disease so rapid. I attend five or six exhumations a week, but I have never seen a body so well preserved as this after four years.

Pel.—And you attribute this state of preservation to the presence of arsenic?

Dr. B.—Not necessarily. But arsenic and corrosive sublimate are used to preserve dead bodies.

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Pel.—Then how do you explain the state of preservation in which you found the brain and which you declared did not contain arsenic?

Dr. B.—Because decomposition does not reach the brain until after it has attacked the intestines, which in the case of your wife were almost absolutely unaffected.

After addressing a few other questions to the doctor, which did not materially assist his case, Pel concluded by abruptly asking him—"In short, do you affirm that I poisoned my wife?" "I cannot affirm that," replied the doctor; "your wife died four years ago, and I have consequently been unable to analyze the lesions in her organs. What I do affirm is that her symptoms are those present in all cases of poisoning by arsenic, and that arsenic was found in her body."

It was a quarter before midnight on the third day of the trial that the jury retired to consider their verdict; and at half-past twelve they returned into court. They acquitted Pel of the murder of his first wife, but convicted him without extenuating circumstances of the murder of Elise Boehmer. "I accept my fate with resignation," remarked Pel in a firm voice, "but remember, gentlemen, you are condemning an innocent man." He was sentenced to death, upon which he raised his hands to heaven and left the court.

Pel evades the supreme penalty

But Pel was not to be food for the guillotine. On July 10th his conviction was quashed by the Court of Cassation, on the ground that, by inexcusable carelessness in the preparation of the lists, an undischarged bankrupt had been admitted on the jury that had tried him in Paris. The Court referred the case for re-trial to the Cour

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d'Assises of the Seine et Marne Department, sitting at Melun. The second trial commenced there on August 12th, and lasted three days. It presented no novel features. It is a curious illustration of French procedure, that, though declared by the Parisian jury not guilty of the murder of his first wife, that charge was still maintained against him on his second trial, "à titre de renseignement," that is by the way of insinuation. Pel was the only person who reaped any profit from the repetition of the proceedings. The Melun jury discovered extenuating circumstances in the murder of Elise Boehmer, and Pel was sentenced to penal servitude for life.

Thus there escaped the guillotine one of the most pitiless, most sinister, and most mysterious assassins that have ever troubled the peace of their country.

EUPHRASIE MERCIER

If the case of Albert Pel presents many features that are fantastic and uncanny, these are, if anything, intensified in the strange relation of the murder of Elodie Ménétret. The circumstances of the two cases are in many respects similar. The sudden disappearance of Elodie Ménétret, and the disposal of her remains have many points of resemblance to those of Eugénie Meyer and Elise Boehmer. The uncanny eccentricity of Pel finds its complement in the sinister extravagances of the murderess, Euphrasie Mercier; both she and Pel in the course of their gruesome transactions may justifiably claim some measure of originality. But the story of Euphrasie Mercier is heightened in its weird character by the grotesque chorus of her

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crazy relations, the mad sisters who envelop her nefarious proceedings in a morbid atmosphere of religious mania. These luckless creatures, dragged from place to place in the wake of their resolute sister, whom she tends and watches over with extravagant devotion, constitute the motive of her crime. Like some possessed tigress, Euphrasie Mercier guards her brood of idiots, and conceives and executes an atrocious murder to serve their pressing needs, herself a dangerous spirit that haunts but never passes beyond, the confines of insanity.

In the year 1882 Mademoiselle Elodie Ménétret, a lady forty-two years old, living in Paris, had the misfortune to lose her pet dog, Rigolo. Whilst still in the first agony of her affliction Mdlle. Ménétret happened to go into a boot-shop in the Boulevard Haussmann, to buy a pair of boots. As she was in the act of making her purchase, she saw a lady pass by leading a dog, in which she thought she recognized the lost Rigolo. Before, however, she had time to confirm her belief, the lady had disappeared. In her anxiety to recover her pet, Mdlle. Ménétret asked the woman who kept the shop whether she might return there for a few days to watch, in the hope that the lady with the dog that so closely resembled her Rigolo might pass by again. The woman of the shop, her name was Euphrasie Mercier, gave a ready consent. Needless to add, Mdlle. Ménétret fully availed herself of the permission accorded her, and, as a result of her visits to the shop in the Boulevard Haussmann, Mdlle. Ménétret soon became friendly with its mistress. The two women were not long in finding out that they both came from the same part of France, the department of the Nord, which lies in the extreme north-east of the country, touching the Belgian frontier. Euphrasie Mercier had a long and distressing story to tell of repeated misfortune, of afflicted and dependent relatives, of the approaching collapse of the boot business; in the latter event, she said, she should try to find a place as a lady companion. Mdlle. Ménétret, who was lonely and something of a "malade imaginaire,"

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had recently bought a little house at Villemomble, in the neighbourhood of Paris. Euphrasie Mercier seemed kindly, religious, and unfortunate. When Mdlle. Ménétret finally took up her residence at Villemomble in the March of 1883, she engaged Euphrasie Mercier as her companion and housekeeper. Thus it was that out of the small beginning of the lost Rigolo, there sprang up an intimacy which cost Elodie Ménétret her life.

This life had been hitherto peaceable enough, if not strictly speaking respectable, one of those lives which, overshadowed at the beginning by some inglorious accident, seem unable to throw off the evil spell attaching to their unhappy birthright. The father of Elodie Ménétret had been killed in Africa in the course of some exploit of illicit love; his dishonourable death had slowly killed his wife, and left their children orphans. Elodie had been well educated, but her history, as one writer happily phrases it, had been the common history "of those young ladies who drift from music-lessons into dalliance." Before she reached the age of forty-two, she had entertained a certain number of lovers, and they had been comparatively generous lovers. Besides a permanent allowance made her by one of them, she had amassed a small fortune of some £3500. Such was the present state of the lady who had accepted the kind offices of Euphrasie Mercier.

Euphrasie Mercier was sixty when she met Mdlle. Ménétret. She also was one of an ill-fated house. Her father, who had given up teaching for spinning, had left a fortune of more than £16,000, but it was a fortune doomed to be of little profit to his descendants. Of his five children, three were mad. Religious mania was the form of insanity that had possessed the Mercier family. The high-sounding names he gave to his children show something of the kind latent in the father; he called them Euphrasie, Zacharie, Camille, Honorine, and Sidonie. Of these the last three were unquestionably the victims of pronounced religious mania, believing themselves guilty of imaginary sins, writing extravagant letters to the Pope

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and their Bishop, in which they claimed to be in direct personal communication with God; the son Camille was firmly convinced that in the course of one night a steam-engine had absorbed his brain. Euphrasie and her brother, Zacharie, had alone escaped the family curse. Though the former was certainly eccentric, it was an eccentricity that stopped well short of insanity; what was religious mania in her brother and sisters, became in her something like sinister hypocrisy; there was method in her occasional exaltation and her furious appeals to divine co-operation; if she called God as a witness or summoned him as her avenger, it was either to back a lie or gratify some settled hate. Euphrasie was cunning, resolute, and courageous, and devoted to her crazy relations whom, she declared, Heaven had committed to her charge. But she was never successful in business. By the year 1848 her management of the paternal inheritance had resulted in its complete dissipation.

Then began her wanderings, which extended as far as Vienna, in search of a livelihood for herself and the three daft ones, Camille, Honorine, and Sidonie. For thirty years this singular quartette led a precarious and nomadic existence, pursuing their erratic course over Central Europe and the South of France. In 1878 they found a temporary settlement in the home of a Polish countess, inclined to charitable offices. But even her good-will was not proof against the arrogance and excitability of Euphrasie, and the idle vagaries of her half-witted brood. She was obliged to dismiss them from her house. It was then that Euphrasie started the boot-shop in Paris, whilst her brother and sisters were eking out a miserable existence in a neighbouring department.

In 1882, when she first made the acquaintance of Elodie Ménétret, Euphrasie Mercier was sixty years of age. For nearly forty years she and her odd companions had tramped life; after four years of unsuccessful business the boot-shop was on the verge of bankruptcy—repeated failure seemed to promise no term to their fruitless

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wanderings. How if the adventure of the lost dog should prove the threshold of a haven of rest? Villemomble the last stage in their frantic progress?

Within a month from her arrival at Villemomble, Mdlle. Ménétret began to find her elderly companion rather alarming. She had been for some time a sufferer from nerves. In the boot-shop Euphrasie Mercier had been sympathetic enough with her condition, but in the new home the old lady, with her pale, wrinkled face and hooked nose, seemed to take a strange delight in exciting rather than allaying her mistress' affliction. She began to trouble and distress her with horrid relations of ghosts; she told how solitary women had been strangled in their beds by cruel murderers, to rob them of their gold. The poor woman became so apprehensive of some sinister design on the part of her weird companion that she summoned a neighbour, Mdlle. Grière. "The boot-maker frightens me," she said to her, "I have dismissed her, but she obstinately refuses to go, saying she only wants food and lodging."

The two women, in their agitation, drew up a list of Mdlle. Ménétret's jewellery and other valuables, of which Mdlle. Grière made a duplicate copy. This was on April 18th, 1883. On the 25th another friend calling at the house found it shut up, and could get no admittance. Elodie Ménétret was never seen again.

"Mdlle. Ménétret is dead to the world," said Euphrasie Mercier to all inquirers; "she has entered a convent, and I have sworn not to divulge the place of her retreat." The house at Villemomble was rigidly closed to every comer. In vain did the sister of Mdlle. Ménétret communicate her not unreasonable suspicion of some foul play to the Commissary of Police at Montreuil. Though that functionary went so far as to summon Euphrasie Mercier to appear before him, he was quite satisfied when the old lady produced a letter, which she said she had just received from Elodie, bearing the somewhat inconclusive date of "Wednesday evening." Euphrasie

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Mercier at the same time produced a document which she was pleased to style a "deed of gift." It said—"I quit France—I leave all to Mdlle. Mercier—let her transact my affairs." True, this document was somewhat formless, written in a hand that betrayed agony of body or agitation of mind, in fact a document full of unpleasant suggestion, but it was unquestionably in the handwriting of Mdlle. Ménétret, and that was sufficient for all practical purposes. Closer investigation seemed unnecessary, nay superfluous, to the Commissary of Police at Montreuil.

In the meantime the conduct of Euphrasie Mercier was marked by an assurance, which could only have arisen from very definite information on her part as to the whereabouts, and present circumstances and intentions, of her vanished friend. Less than a week after Mdlle. Ménétret was said to have quitted Villemomble for ever, the idiot brood was installed there, and decked out with the clothes of the departed lady; other portions of her clothing were sold to a Jewish dealer. At first Euphrasie Mercier was reluctant to conclude the bargain with the Hebrew woman, owing to her strong anti-Semitic prejudices; and it was only when the latter promised to convert her daughter and marry her to an uncircumcised husband, that the zealous old lady finally agreed to the sale. In August of the same year Euphrasie Mercier made a journey to Luxembourg. There she visited a notary to whom she described herself as one Elodie Ménétret, a lady who had come to reside at Luxembourg. Having property at Villemomble, in France, she wished to draw up a power of attorney in favour of a friend, Mdlle. Euphrasie Mercier, who was to administer her French property. The notary making some little difficulty as to her identity, Euphrasie Mercier stepped out into the street and soon returned with two witnesses—a musician and a hairdresser—who, at a modest cost of five francs a head, were only too pleased to declare that this lady was indeed well known to them as Mademoiselle Elodie Ménétret. Fortified with her fraudulent power of attorney, Euphrasie

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Mercier returned to Villemomble, and did not hesitate to remind two gentlemen who made small allowances to Mdlle. Ménétret that their quarterly payments were overdue.

There was a particular bed of dahlias in the garden at Villemomble which Euphrasie Mercier strictly forbade the gardener to touch. Dogs were rigidly excluded from the garden, Mdlle. Mercier having a not unnatural prejudice against their too frequent habit of scratching up the flower-beds.

For two years Euphrasie and her three demented relatives were the sole occupants of the house at Villemomble, but in 1885 their number was increased to six by the arrival of two visitors. One was Adèle Mercier, daughter of Euphrasie's brother Zacharie, the other a certain Chateauneuf, an illegitimate son of the mad sister, Honorine, by a Comte de Chateauneuf. The latter was a red-headed and altogether unpromising youth, physically and morally unprepossessing; he had been living at Brussels, a deserter from the French army, and it was disguised as a woman that his aunt Euphrasie smuggled him to Villemomble. She regarded Chateauneuf with that intense and uncompromising affection which she lavished on all her immediate relatives. But, in this instance, that affection was to compass her utter ruin. In her blind devotion she failed to see that the youth was treacherous and hypocritical to the last degree. Though shortly after his arrival he ran away with his cousin Adèle, and married her at Brussels without his aunt's permission, Euphrasie readily forgave him, and welcomed the young couple back to Villemomble.

Chateauneuf was curious as well as treacherous, and he was not long in detecting that there was some mystery that oppressed and troubled the weak-headed denizens of his aunt's strictly secluded home. His gibbering aunts, Honorine and Sidonie, kept letting fall odd sayings about the dead coming to life, and misfortune coming out of the garden; the power of attorney obtained by Euphrasie at

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Luxembourg seemed to him suspicious; the close watch set over one particular bed of dahlias, an extravagant precaution. He began to indulge in that dangerous intellectual operation known as putting two and two together, in spite of the obvious inconvenience that he saw it caused his loving aunt, Euphrasie. The more the estimable young man pondered, the more clearly it appeared to him that, if Elodie Ménétret had disappeared, she had disappeared within the four walls of his aunt's abode, and that the old lady knew something in regard to the vanished woman which she was particularly anxious to conceal. Euphrasie Mercier's own indiscretion finally resolved her nephew's doubts. Honorine, during the war of 1870, had embroidered a banner in honour of the Virgin Mary. This was now set up in the house at Villemomble, and candles were kept constantly burning before it. Euphrasie would on occasions prostrate herself in front of this banner. She would then kiss the ground sixteen times, crawling backwards all the while, after which, rising to her feet, she would throw open the window and cry out—"In the name of God, get hence, Beelzebub, Lucifer, and thou, Satan! hence with your legions of devils! Back, judges, commissaries, Assize Court! Back, ye terrors that beset me! Back, phantoms of my garden! Family of Ménétret, rest in peace—in the peace of God, and the glory of the elect! Amen!" This singular ceremonial was not lost upon the assiduous Chateauneuf; it confirmed his blackest suspicions, at the same time constituting a base of operations from which to levy tribute on his affectionate aunt. But in her case avarice triumphed over affection. When Chateauneuf pressed Euphrasie for money, and threatened denunciation if his suit were rejected, he was met with an unflinching refusal. Thereupon the indignant virtue of the young man, hitherto not ineffectually stifled or concealed, broke into feverish activity. He withdrew to Brussels, whence he addressed two letters, one to the judicial authorities at Paris, the other to an uncle of Elodie Ménétret. The first was a dutiful, though

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reluctant information against his good aunt; in the second he declared with a fitting show of horror, that Elodie Ménétret had been poisoned with chemical matches, her body burnt and buried in the garden, and that he had thoughtfully inscribed on the wall of the room in which she had been murdered, "Mademoiselle Ménétret killed here!"

In consequence of these communications Euphrasie Mercier was arrested and a judicial investigation opened. In a spot in the garden pointed out by Chateauneuf, the bed of dahlias so carefully preserved by Euphrasie Mercier from the attentions of man or beast, was found a quantity of charred bones, and some teeth, one of which had been stopped with gold. The medical experts declared the bones to be those of a woman of forty-five, the approximate age of Elodie Ménétret; and that lady's dentist, by referring to his books, proved that on one occasion he had stopped one of her teeth with gold. An examination of the bulbs of the lilies and dahlias which were buried with the bones, enabled an expert to fix the date of their disturbance as the spring of 1883, the time of the disappearance of Mdlle. Ménétret. In her bedroom some greasy stains were found in front of the fireplace; and the soot in the chimney was declared, after analysis, to contain matter similar to that found in the chimneys of restaurants where they are in the habit of cooking a quantity of meat. A knife and a chopper were discovered in the house; but there was nothing in their appearance to suggest that they had been used for an improper purpose.

But there was one discovery made, which was significant under the circumstances, if not very cogent as a piece of evidence. This was a cutting from the *Figaro* newspaper of October 18th, 1881, giving the details of the murder of a priest at Imola in Italy. It had been stuffed behind a looking-glass. The following was the paragraph to which the attention of the magistrates was directed—

"What has become of the victim? The search for him has at last been successful. Yesterday the body of

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the priest was discovered in a pit of moderate depth that had been dug under the country house of Faella (the suspected murderer). It was buried at a depth of about eighteen feet and covered over with a quantity of rice."

This story may have suggested to Euphrasie Mercier the method by which she was alleged to have concealed the remains of Elodie Ménétret.

If the direct evidence of the murder of Mdlle. Ménétret by her companion and housekeeper was of a rather slight description, circumstantially, a very strong presumption was raised in favour of her guilt. It was the same presumption as was raised in regard to the deaths of the two mistresses of Pel, whom he, in a fashion similar to that of Euphrasie Mercier, had declared to have departed from his house in a mysterious manner without leaving any address. As in that case, inquiries were made in all directions to find out the convent in which, according to the prisoner, Mercier, Elodie Ménétret was immured. But they were fruitless. On the other hand the proceedings of the prisoner, subsequent to the alleged departure of her mistress, were one and all those of a guilty person, desirous of hiding and profiting by some crime, and the discovery of the charred bones of a woman of Mdlle. Ménétret's age, coupled with the evidence of the nephew Chateauneuf, seemed to point very clearly to the nature of the crime which the old woman was so anxious to forget by prayer and invocation.

How, in what fashion, Mdlle. Ménétret, if murdered, had met her death was a secret known only to the prisoner; these two were alone in the house at the time. Whether she was poisoned as Chateauneuf declared, or put to death in a more summary fashion, there was no conclusive evidence to show. If the bones in the garden were hers, her body must have been disposed of as Pel had disposed of that of Elise Boehmer, that is by dismemberment and burning in a stove. The family were evidently acquainted with the story of Pel, whose trial had taken place the year before the arrest of Euphrasie

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Mercier; for, when the bones were discovered by the police in the dahlia-bed, Honorine Mercier suggested that they must be the remains of the missing woman, Boehmer. There can be little doubt from the various hints and suggestions which the mad sisters were in the habit of dropping to different people, that they were aware that the house at Villemomble was haunted by the presence of some crime with which their resolute sister was directly connected. Not only did they first arouse the inquisitive suspicions of Chateauneuf by their vague allusions to the mystery of the garden, but to an architect, who had come to the house at the request of Euphrasie Mercier to design some improvements, Honorine Mercier made a very damning statement. The architect, worried by the importunities of the mad sisters, who followed him about singing chants and invocations, in a moment of irritation asked Euphrasie why she did not get the Commissary of Police to take these women away. "Oh," said Honorine, "the Commissary indeed! If once he came here, Euphrasie would never see the light of heaven again!"

But, in spite of their evident knowledge of something sinister with regard to their elder sister, Honorine, Sidonie, and Camille were found to be too insane to be of any service to justice, and shortly after their arrest, they were all three shut up in the lunatic asylum of Sainte-Anne. Euphrasie alone was summoned to the bar to answer for the murder of Elodie Ménétret. She, according to three eminent authorities on brain disease, was fully responsible for her acts; she was, they declared, certainly affected by the religious mysticism prevailing in the family, but in a very much less degree than her sisters, and not in a degree which interfered in any way with her capacity for rational crime.

On April 6th, 1886, the trial of Euphrasie Mercier commenced before the Cour d'Assises for the Seine department, sitting in Paris. M. Dubard, the Judge, who had presided over the first trial of Pel, presided also on this rather similar occasion. On the table reserved for

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the "pièces à conviction" was a large jar containing the charred remains dug up from the dahlia-bed, and declared by the prosecution to be those of Elodie Ménétret.

The searching questions of the President, Euphrasie Mercier met with fanatical resolution. True to the family tradition, God was her ever-present stay and comfort, dictating all her actions, and ready to put her enemies to shame and confusion. By his orders she had purchased property; she declared that it was she, and not Elodie Ménétret, who had bought the house at Villemomble, and that she had purchased it with her own money and at God's direction, in order that it might serve her as a retreat before making a pilgrimage to Mount Nebo. "But," urged the President, "it was Mdlle. Ménétret who paid for it." "With 15,000 francs that I had lent her," retorted the prisoner.

Pres.—Have you the receipt?

E. M.—No, I don't understand business.

Pres.—As a matter of fact, you were her servant?

E. M.—We had agreed to let it appear so. I wanted to keep my pecuniary circumstances a secret from my family, whom I had been keeping all my life. I was getting old, and I wanted to reserve a part of my savings for God.

Pres.—You took up your residence at Villemomble on March 30th, 1883?

E. M.—Yes, on a Saturday. Mdlle. Ménétret wished to go in on a Sunday, but I told her that that was unlucky.

The President pointed out to her that she had certainly produced a receipt, signed by Mdlle. Ménétret, for 15,000 francs, and dated 1878; but that unfortunately the water-mark of the paper on which the receipt had been drawn up was dated four years later, 1882. The prisoner had presumably made use of a blank signature left behind by the dead woman. The Judge went on to recall to her mind the fearful stories by which she had so worked on the fears of her mistress, and named an old

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gentleman to whom Elodie Ménétret had confided her state of terror. "An old thing of seventy-five!" exclaimed the prisoner, "who wanted to gobble her up and who said he was livelier than a young man of twenty-five!" In reply to the President she gave her version of Mdlle. Ménétret's disappearance—"She had made up her mind to flee the world. She was in love with a young man whom she could not marry. She worshipped him as the angels worship. Besides she was afraid to live in the house; sinister individuals had been seen skulking about the premises. One evening she threw herself at the feet of a priest, and the next day, after spending the night in burning all her letters, she departed."

Pres.—That is your version. You are aware, however, of what the prosecution allege? They say that Elodie Ménétret never quitted the house at Villemomble, that she was buried there, and that you murdered her.

E. M.—Impossible! I, who wouldn't hurt a cat or a rabbit! I, to kill a poor lady I loved so dearly!

Pres.—Where is she?

E. M.—I don't know.

Pres.—You have given many and various accounts of her whereabouts. You have said she was in Paris, another time in Belgium, then in Luxembourg, and Mecklenburg.

E. M.—She often changed her convent. I have seen her in the dresses of different sisterhoods. She used to write to me.

Pres.—Where are her letters?

E. M.—I sent them all back to her by her own orders. She was dead to the world, and was afraid lest any indiscretion should divulge her place of retreat.

Pres.—The police have made active inquiries in all the convents in France and the neighbouring countries, but in vain.

E. M.—So I am told.

Pres.—Have you seen her?

E. M.—Often!

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Pres.—Where?

E. M.—At night, once for instance under the clock of the Gare du Nord.

Pres.—Do you know of any convent where they would tolerate such escapades?

After questioning the prisoner as to a letter, purporting to come from Elodie Ménétret, but in reality a forgery by the prisoner, and taking her through the journey to Luxembourg to obtain the fraudulent power of attorney, the President arrived at the point in the story when the ill-omened Chateauneuf appeared on the scene. In 1885, after two years' residence at Villemomble, Euphrasie Mercier had lapsed into her usual state of pecuniary embarrassment, and had sent for her niece Adèle Mercier from the North of France, that she might make the house over to her by a fictitious transfer, and so avoid her liabilities. But the prisoner now explained that the real object of this transfer was to facilitate the marriage of her niece with her cousin, Chateauneuf.

Pres.—You were very fond of your nephew, Chateauneuf?

E. M.—Yes, unluckily for me. All the same, the spirits had warned me that this child would be my ruin.

Pres.—He was a deserter. You brought him from Brussels to Villemomble disguised as a woman?

E. M.—Not I, but his cousin, Adèle. On her return I noticed that she seemed very tired. But I very soon understood her fatigue, when I saw that she and Chateauneuf occupied the same room at Villemomble.

Pres.—What happened then? Was it that you talked too much? Did you betray yourself to, or confide in Chateauneuf? In any case he discovered your secret.

E. M.—What secret?

Pres.—The death of Mdlle. Ménétret.

E. M.—Mdlle. Ménétret is not dead.

Pres.—Chateauneuf acquired the firm belief that you had murdered her.

E. M.—He is conspiring with my enemies.

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Pres.—No, not that. He asked you for money, and, when you refused him, he denounced you to the judicial authorities.

E. M. (in scared fashion).—Oh yes—yes, he wanted to go to America, and asked me to help him to get there. I said to him, "My child, I have no ready money, but when I have——" He would not wait. Satan had possessed him with a devil of greed.

Pres.—It is significant that accompanying his letter to the Procureur was a plan of the garden at Villemomble, and particularly of the flower-bed beneath which he said the remains of Mdlle. Ménétret would be found. And, as a matter of fact, they were found there.

E. M.—What were found? Enough bones to fill a pocket-handkerchief! . . . The garden is an old cemetery.

Pres.—It is nothing of the kind. No other skeleton has been found there except that one, which is lying on the table there among the "pièces à conviction."

After the President had enumerated the various circumstances already given, which made in favour of the prisoner's guilt, the interrogatory concluded.

Pres.—When, the day after the disappearance of Mdlle. Ménétret, your sister Honorine arrived at Villemomble you seemed to be worried. "I have just carried through a great work," you said, "the angels have helped me."

E. M.—I had tidied the garden and cleaned the walls. God has always given me strength when I have stood in need of it. For the last three days I have been in a dying state, unable to eat anything, yet to-day I have been able to speak to you for four hours on end, with nothing but a couple of eggs in my stomach. I am innocent. Act as your conscience shall direct you.

Pres.—Your case has enjoyed an extraordinary publicity. If Mdlle. Ménétret is still living, she, whose virtue and piety you laud to the skies, she, whom you saw daily and with whom you have corresponded incessantly, she, your friend and confidante, would come to your deliver-

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ance, or at least would communicate with your judges, if she were so anxious to remain in absolute seclusion. Look at that skeleton (pointing to the bones on the table) and swear that those are not the poor remains of Elodie Ménétret.

E. M.—Before God, I swear it! I have never killed a soul, and when my time comes to appear before my Sovereign Judge, I shall go straight to heaven!

The culminating interest of the trial was in the evidence of the prisoner's two relatives, her nephew Chateauneuf and his wife and cousin, Adèle.

"I am the daughter of Zacharie Mercier," said the latter. "My father lives in the department of the Nord. My Aunt Euphrasie persuaded me to come to Villemomble. She showed me the papers of Mdlle. Ménétret, said that she was her heiress, and that there was no fear of the lady ever returning to claim her sous. At Villemomble I was told that Euphrasie had found a treasure. My aunt showed me her will, which, she said, was made in my favour, on condition that I protected all the mad members of the family. 'When I die,' she added, 'you are to bury me in the garden—one may just as well sleep in the earth as in a coffin.'"

Pres.—Did not your Aunt Euphrasie tell you that a very long time ago the garden at Villemomble had been a cemetery?

Adèle.—No. It was my Aunt Honorine who said to me one day, "There are corpses in the garden. We must go and find the priest to bless them." Chateauneuf also knew a great deal. One day in my presence, he looked hard at my Aunt Euphrasie, and said, "Terrible things will come to pass here. The dead will speak."

E. M. (beside herself).—You are mad, Adèle! How can you say such things before these gentlemen?

Avocat-Général.—Did your aunt ever show you some hair that had belonged to Mdlle. Ménétret?

Adèle.—Yes, sir, a long plait of blonde hair.

E. M.—It was a false plait! Wretched child, how

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can you say such things? I, who have been so good to you! You have deceived me! The Holy Virgin will punish you!

The witness was removed amidst the continued threats and curses of her frantic aunt.

Chateauneuf appeared on the third day of the trial. This truculent compound of vanity, cant, and malice created anything but a favourable impression, though his evil character made his extraordinary evidence the more probable. "I ought to warn you, gentlemen," said the President, addressing the jury, "that this man is an informer." "Yes," echoed his aunt, "and he is my nephew, the man who used to write to me as his beloved aunt."

Chateauneuf (without looking at the prisoner).—I am twenty-seven—I was brought up by my father. As a child I was quite able to reckon up my Aunt Euphrasie. She used to make me go on my knees, and then tell me I should see the Virgin Mary; but, as I was very naughty, I didn't see the Virgin, and got smacked instead. My mother, Honorine, was as mystical as my aunt. In 1878 I joined the army, where I greatly distinguished myself (he was a deserter). I then went to the United States. There I received letters from my Aunt Euphrasie. She told me that she had become rich, and made me promise to come back to her.

E. M.—That is true. By God's permission, I had recovered the money I had lost.

Chat.—My aunt smuggled me into France. "You must come back," she said, "or I shall die!"

E. M.—You lie! You are a deep scoundrel. God will punish you.

Pres.—Come to the facts. Soon after you entered the house at Villemomble, you guessed that Mdlle. Ménétret had been murdered?

Chat.—I did. I wrote on the wall of her dressing-room, "Mademoiselle Ménétret killed here."

Pres.—How was it that you found out this secret?

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Chat.—The power of attorney my aunt showed me struck me as suspicious. I asked her what had become of Mdlle. Ménétret, and she could not tell me. Besides, I saw her constantly looking in the direction of the dahlia-bed. My religious scruples (cries of "Oh! Oh!" from his listeners) obliged me to try to discover how she had come into possession of her fortune.

Pres.—Then you discovered this crime by a process of deduction?

Chat.—Oh! I could play the spiritualistic game as well as they; I said that I had seen visions as well as they, and that the day would come when the dead would speak. I wanted to give them to understand that I had guessed at the murder.

E. M. (enraged).—Go on, talk on! Tell all your lies! You're wasting your time and these gentlemen's too. You have taken me in completely, I thought a man who had once been a Capuchin was sure to be honest.

Chat.—At length I was able to point out the exact spot where the bones would be found.

E. M.—Bones buried by my enemies in the garden at Villemomble. God had forewarned me of it.

Pres.—Why did you inform against your aunt?

Chat.—For the salvation of her soul. I did not want her to burn for ever in hell-fire. I did not want the gates of Paradise to be closed to her because of an ill-gotten fortune (Loud burst of laughter). Besides, I was acting in the interests of society. My aunt was intending to murder somebody else in similar circumstances, at least so I believed. . . . In conclusion I left Villemomble and wrote to M. Kuehn, the head of the Detective Department.

E. M.—Wretch, you are my murderer! M. Kuehn died all of a sudden, because he sought to do me ill.

This disinterested protector of society and his aunt's ultimate salvation hurried from the witness-box that he might not tarry in France until his free conduct had expired, when he would have been immediately arrested as a deserter. But before he left, the prisoner's counsel

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reminded the unselfish youth that he had been trying to sell in the purlieus of the court a penny leaflet entitled *The Mystery of Villemomble*, by Alphonse Chateauneuf. His wife was unable to escape without a final malediction from her energetic aunt. She had been recalled on some point in her evidence. As she was about to leave the box, Euphrasie thus addressed her—"You should not tell lies. I do not wish it, and I forbid it. You little hussy! The Devil possesses you! God commanded me to fast three days and three nights in order to drive the devil out of your body, you little Judas!" The only person to whom the prisoner addressed any words of kindness or approval was the Commissary of Police at Montreuil, who had so readily accepted her dubious explanation of the sudden disappearance of Mdlle. Ménétret. He was hailed as a "good Commissary," and rewarded by a kindly glance from the old lady's eyes.

In the course of the four days' trial, those facts with which the reader is already familiar were fully substantiated by evidence which the prisoner, for all her appeals to Heaven and hell, was powerless to shake.

On April 10th, after an hour and a half of deliberation, the jury found Euphrasie Mercier guilty of murder, theft, and forgery, but granted her extenuating circumstances. She was sentenced to the utmost punishment to which this verdict and her age could by law expose her, that of twenty years' imprisonment. Penal servitude is not inflicted according to French law on those over sixty years of age. The prisoner received her sentence in silence; the hopelessness of the situation made prayers and curses superfluous.

If Pel had chosen as his third wife Euphrasie Mercier, no one could have declared the couple ill-assorted; and it would have been interesting to see which of the two first succeeded in getting rid of the other. It is curious that about the same time two people of very similar character should have resolved on almost identical plans of

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assassination ; there could be no question of imitation, as the crimes of Pel were not made public until 1884, and Mdlle. Ménétret had been murdered in 1883. Euphrasie Mercier was on the whole the most successful of the two. In consuming the body of her benefactor, she avoided that extraordinary display of firelight which ruined Pel, and it was only treachery from within her own domestic circle that ultimately brought her within the clutches of the law. By a strange irony, one of the very relatives to whose welfare she was so passionately devoted, for whose sake she had murdered and robbed, acted as her betrayer ; with all her cunning, she had unwittingly nourished in her bosom a serpent, even baser and more treacherous than herself. The only virtue she seemed to recognize, the ties of relationship, were as nothing to the perverted inclinations of her excellent nephew, Chateauneuf.

It was only however by fortunate accidents that Pel and Euphrasie Mercier contrived to escape a speedy retribution. The relatives of Pel's first wife shirked an inquiry into the cause of her death from a dislike to publicity ; whilst, had the Commissary at Montreuil shown himself more energetic and less credulous, Euphrasie Mercier would not in all probability have enjoyed a two years' immunity from detection.

Pel and Euphrasie Mercier, though beyond doubt sane, were as surely eccentric. It is this atmosphere of eccentricity surrounding their horrid deeds that recalls irresistibly to the mind the weird creations of Poe or Lefanu ; whilst the boding chorus of Euphrasie's demented relatives is strongly suggestive of those strange and fateful beings that inhabit the palaces and parlours of the Maeterlinckian drama.

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VIII

THE ANARCHISTS—

RAVACHOL, VAILLANT, AND EMILE HENRY

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VIII

THE ANARCHISTS

To declare the causes that have made anarchism a political creed is the task of the student of social or political science. The ultimate causes of the comparatively greater success of the anarchist propaganda in France than in England are to be found in the histories of the two countries. But the immediate causes of the anarchist outrages which, from the appearance of Ravachol at the beginning of 1892 down to the murder of President Carnot in June 1894, shocked all Europe by their atrocity, may be fairly deduced from a study of the various trials to which those outrages gave rise. That the causes of these crimes were to a great extent momentary and accidental in their character is, I think, proved by the suddenness with which they commenced and the abruptness with which they ceased. Such general considerations as the inefficacy of the anarchist remedies to cure the undoubted ills of modern society, and the natural repugnance of every reasonable man to indiscriminate slaughter as a means of advancing political principles, are bound to make the anarchist propaganda by bomb at most a transient and futile reign of intimidation. But there were immediate circumstances which, at the beginning of 1892, made outrage easy and inexpensive, and there were, at the same time, circumstances connected with the punishment of these crimes which encouraged rather than suppressed the criminals. These were—

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1. The theft by certain anarchists of 792 lbs. of dynamite, 512 yards of fuse, and 1400 percussion-caps, from the unprotected depôt of the owner of a quarry at Soisy-sous-Etiolles, near Paris.

2. The appearance of a great and inspiring criminal in the person of one Koenigstein, *alias* Ravachol. Not that Ravachol was the first criminal to adopt anarchical principles and carry out after his fashion the "propaganda by action." In 1888, a burglar named Duval, a member of an anarchist fraternity, known by the melodramatic title of the "Panther of the Batignolles," had in open court pleaded anarchism as a justification of robbery, arson and attempted murder, and had pleaded so noisily that the judge was obliged to send him out of court. He was condemned to death but reprieved by President Grévy, and sent to New Caledonia. In the report of his trial one finds him using all the stock phrases made current later on by Ravachol and others; the oppression of the working-man, the tyranny of the bourgeois, and the necessity of destructive remedies. But the psychological moment for the propaganda by action had not arrived in 1888. Four years were to pass before circumstances afforded the anarchists the opportunity of realizing the hopes of Duval, and, like many a pioneer in history, when that hour arrived, he was eclipsed by the greater exploits of the martyred Ravachol.

3. The want of public spirit, or judicial capacity in the juries called upon to try the authors of these outrages; and the inadequacy of the French system of criminal procedure to fortify their resolutions or assist them to a reasonable decision.

4. The tacit support given to these outrages in their earlier stages by the more intelligent and theoretical propagandists of anarchism, such as Paul Reclus, Jean Grave, and Sebastien Faure.

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RAVACHOL

THE Carey of the anarchist plot, the instigator and traitor, was a man of the name of Chaumartin, a professor at the technical school at St. Denis. Specious in address, he preached anarchical theories to working-men, and his house was looked upon as a meeting-place for the most abandoned and desperate recruits to the anarchist cause. In July of 1891, a man travelling under the name of Léon Léger was sent from St. Etienne in the department of the Loire to Chaumartin at Paris, powerfully recommended as being in grave trouble with the legal authorities, and requiring immediate shelter from police inquiries. This Léon Léger was no other than Koenigstein, better known as Ravachol, who was "wanted" for the murder of an eccentric hermit at St. Chambles, in the preceding June, and was suspected of four other murders besides. He was at the same time a thief, smuggler, coiner, incendiary and resurrectionist. As may be gathered from the foregoing description, Ravachol was essentially the man of action. He was no maker of phrases as Chaumartin, but a silent, determined and solitary worker, of great physical strength, pitiless in disposition and grimly single of purpose. His vulgar and brutal intelligence had realized how his criminal career might be elevated and enhanced by the current phrases and arguments of the extreme anarchists, who counted on crime for the advancement of their theories. Having nothing better left him to do, he offered his services and his experience to a cause which promised him free indulgence in his favourite occupations and the possibility of ending his days as a martyr, instead of an ordinary and commonplace victim of the Cour d'Assises.

The month after Ravachol's arrival, the Cour d'Assises of the Seine department condemned two anarchists named

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Decamps and Dardare for unlawfully wounding some policemen. The anarchists had waved a red flag in the streets of Levallois. The indiscretion of the police in dispersing them had provoked a fierce encounter with swords and revolvers, and some of the wounded anarchists had been treated in rather inconsiderate fashion. This treatment, followed by the conviction of the two leaders, caused great indignation among their "companions"—the favourite term of the Parisian anarchists to describe each other—and the desire for vengeance only waited its opportunity. Chaumartin, a friend of Decamps, saw in the desperadoes gathered round him convenient catspaws, by whose means he might avenge his friend's conviction. In 1891, he sent a worker in bronze, named Béala, coming like Ravachol from the South, to steal some grisoutine cartridges from St. Etienne. But it was not till February 1892, when the great theft of dynamite from Soisy-sous-Etiolles was accomplished by Ravachol and three other anarchists, that Chaumartin and his companions were furnished with sufficient means of practical agitation. Four crimes resulted from this theft of dynamite—

1. Explosion at No. 136 Boulevard St. Germain, the residence of M. Benoit, a judge of the Court of Appeal at Paris, who presided in the Cour d'Assises at the trial of Decamps, on March 11th, 1892. One person wounded.

2. Explosion in the Rue de Clichy, at the residence of M. Bulot, assistant to the Procureur de la République, who conducted the prosecution of Decamps, March 27th, 1892. Many wounded.

3. Explosion at the Lobau barracks on the night of March 14th, 1892. No one hurt.

4. Explosion at the Café Véry, where Ravachol had been arrested, on April 24th, 1892, the evening before Ravachol's trial. Two lives lost.

The first two of these crimes were the handiwork of Ravachol, the second two of Meunier, an anarchist to whom had been given the second portion of the stolen dynamite. Four days after the explosion in the Rue de

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Clichy, Ravachol was arrested in the Café Véry, through the courage and intelligence of a waiter named Lhérot. He was brought to trial on charges of attempted murder before the Cour d'Assises in Paris, April 27th, 1892. Chaumartin, Béala, and the mistress of the latter, stood with him in the dock. Four explosions, occurring within little more than a month, had caused considerable alarm. The explosion at the Café Véry the evening before the trial was a direct intimidation on the part of the friends of Ravachol to those whose duty it would be to judge the criminal on the morrow. That intimidation was successful.

The first circumstance in the trial of Ravachol to provoke a suspicion of unwonted leniency is the interrogatory of the leading prisoner by the President Guès. We have seen in the interrogatory of the Abbé Bruneau what, to a French critic, is an example of a fair and just interrogation; and, if that may be taken as a sample—and there is no reason why it should not be—the interrogatory, as understood by modern French judges, should be a severe and caustic, closely reasoned and dramatic presentation of the case for the prosecution, to which the prisoner may make the best reply that he can. And the interrogatory would be more severe, more pointed and indignant in its character according to the clearness of the prisoner's guilt or the heinousness of his offence. If ever there was a case in which an interrogatory might fittingly have been vigorous and poignant in its character, the case of Ravachol was such an one. The public security was shocked and endangered, magistrates in the fulfilment of their duty had met with appalling outrage, the Court itself had been threatened by an act of cruel slaughter the very night before the trial; the jury, not unnaturally anxious about their own safety, required to be strengthened and upheld by a display of firmness and intrepidity from the Bench. Under such imperative circumstances, an interrogatory conducted in a tone of courteous remonstrance, passing at times to what seems an almost gentle humour, was, to say the least of

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it, deplorably ill-chosen and open to the most unfortunate misconstruction by a nervous jury. To an Englishman the interrogatory, as conducted by President Guès, may seem in its note of forbearance and self-restraint to fulfil our idea of a judicial examination; but to a Frenchman it would only present itself as a most dubious and regrettable departure from the almost invariably hostile attitude of Presidents of the Cour d'Assises.

President Guès commenced his interrogatory by taking Ravachol through his past career, but when he began to speak of the murders laid to his charge in his native department of the Loire, and particularly that of the hermit of Chambles, Ravachol stopped him. "Since I am not being tried to-day for the offences in the Loire department, I shall decline to speak of them. I am not here for that, so I shall say positively nothing." The President grew quite apologetic, almost pleading—"But it is my duty to speak to the gentlemen of the jury of the occurrences at St. Etienne. You are exercising your right, but I, for my part, am performing my duty. I only allude to what is in the 'dossier.'" Having reminded Ravachol of the disinterment and robbery of the corpse of the Baronne de la Roche-Taillée, the President concluded the review of the prisoner's numerous crimes with the rather flat criticism—"I cannot refrain from remarking, in my capacity of magistrate, that your past is horrible." He then took Ravachol to the dynamite outrages—"In the month of August last the Cour d'Assises of the Seine condemned the anarchists, Decamps and Dardare, for organizing a riot in the streets of Levallois, on May 1st, 1891?"

Ravachol.—I learned the particulars of the trials from friends of mine present in court. I learned that the President Benoit had shown great partiality. And as for M. Bulot, he had treated fathers of families, whose children were in dreadful misery, like brigands. He had even asked that they should be condemned to death.

President.—The fact of a man being the father of a

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family does not prevent him from incurring the most severe punishments.

Ravachol.—That is your personal opinion; but it was not the jury's, for Decamps and Dardare were only sentenced to imprisonment.

Ravachol scored one palpable hit in his duel with his judge. The former had complained of the violence with which Decamps and Dardare had been treated by the police at the time of their arrest. "How do you know that?" asked the President; "you were not at Levallois on May 1st last?" "You have just told me precisely what the hermit of Chambles said to me," retorted Ravachol, "and yet you were not there."

Ravachol's description of the outrages at the houses of M. Benoit and M. Bulot was perfectly frank. He made no concealment of his desire to kill the two magistrates, so that the crime of attempted murder in an aggravated form, which is in France punishable by death, was fully made out against him. His account of the explosion in the Rue de Clichy was lively. He had found out M. Bulot's address by the directory, and had selected the early morning as the best time to place the infernal machine, owing to the watch that was kept during the day-time over the houses of certain magistrates since the explosion at M. Benoit's.

President.—What did you do on March 27th?

Ravachol.—I took my breakfast at Saint-Mandé, where I was hiding, and started about half-past six, carrying my portmanteau, and in the portmanteau an asparagus-case, filled with dynamite and gunpowder.

President.—It was a formidable machine?

Ravachol.—Of course it was. I took the train from Saint-Mandé to the Louvre, and by changing there reached the Trinity Church. As soon as I came to the house of M. Bulot, I unlocked my portmanteau, and went up to the second floor. There I opened my portmanteau and lit the fuse. It was very dangerous, as the portmanteau was full of blasting-powder, which a spark would have set

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alight. The fuse was two and two-thirds feet long, which gave me time to get into the street again. When I had gone about seventy-five yards I stopped, astonished that the explosion had not taken place.

President.—It would savour of simplicity to ask you why you fitted on so long a fuse?

Ravachol.—To give me time to get away.

President.—Did you know the result of the explosion?

Ravachol.—Not then. I only learned it on the following day from the newspapers.

President.—The explosion was terrific. Five people were injured, among them was a woman who was in labour. The staircase was broken in. It was a miracle that the whole building was not destroyed. Where did you go after the explosion?

Ravachol.—I had got on the top of an omnibus in the hope of seeing the explosion; but I had taken the wrong one, which did not go down the Rue de Clichy.

President.—And then?

Ravachol.—I went and had déjeuner at the restaurant on the Boulevard Magenta.

President.—Yes; at the Véry restaurant which yesterday attained such a melancholy notoriety.

Ravachol.—There I unfortunately got into conversation with a waiter named Lhérot, who was complaining of the hardships of conscription. I tried to make a convert of him.

President.—But you did not succeed.

Ravachol.—Apparently not. I wanted to talk to him of anarchism, but I am no orator.

President.—No; you are a man of action.

Ravachol.—None the less, I mean to defend my ideas here.

President.—It is not my place to argue with a man like you. Think of your past, of that wretched old man of ninety-four who pleaded to you for mercy. And yet Chaumartin tells us that you are a man of heart and sensibility.

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The interrogatory terminated, Ravachol defended his principles in a short paper which he read to the jury. He had, he said, attacked M. Benoit because of his partiality, and M. Bulot because he had asked for sentence of death against the father of a family. "I sincerely regret having struck at innocent victims, and I regret it all the more, as my own life has been full of bitterness. I feel a lively regret at having brought to the bar people whose only crime has been their acquaintance with me. Anarchism desires to convert society into a large family in which the weakest shall be protected by all men; in which all property shall be common and every man shall be able to satisfy his hunger. It has been my object to frighten existing society into lending an attentive ear to those who are suffering. It is wrong to treat us as criminals; we are only the champions of the oppressed. I have spoken." Chaumartin gave an account of Ravachol in reply to a question from his counsel, which would show him to have been kindly and abstemious among friends. According to Chaumartin his was a very sympathetic and humane character. He gave as much as he could in charity, helped the wife of Decamps, and bought boots for her little boy. He never looked at a woman, and drank lemon-juice and water.

But whatever sympathy may have been aroused in the hearts of a sentimental jury by this "good-to-his-mother" kind of testimony, should have been dispelled by the powerful speech of the Procureur-Général, Quesnay de Beaurepaire, the magistrate who prosecuted Boulanger before the High Court of the Senate, and has since laid himself open to unfavourable comment by his vagaries in connection with the Dreyfus case. If his words had been the last in the ears of the jury before they turned to consider their verdict, they might have successfully atoned for the weakness of President Guès. But in a French trial the counsel for the defence has the last word; and there is no charge from the judge to restore the balance of mind of the jury. M. Lagasse,

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who defended Ravachol, was able to make an ingenious appeal to the nervous anxiety of the Parisian jurymen. "If," he said, "Ravachol is to die, let him be condemned down in the south for the murders he has committed there; and don't you provoke reprisals here, in Paris, by giving a pitiless verdict." The bourgeois jury caught at the opportunity of indulging their redoubtable enemy. By their verdict they found extenuating circumstances in his confessed schemes for their destruction.

As long as government in France is in the hands of a select circle of officials and place-seeking deputies; as long as politics are regarded with apathy or contempt by the large mass of Frenchmen; as long as political freedom is nothing but a stock phrase of would-be tyrants, so long will that public conscience and that respect for the laws which should constitute the strength and efficacy of trial by jury, be uncertain in its operation and liable, at a time of public danger, to be over-ridden by unworthy considerations of domestic selfishness. It is unfortunate that a nation, at present unable to conduct trial by jury to a successful issue, should give to a jury twice as much power as it enjoys in England, where it is a feature of the national history, and long tried in the exercise of its functions.

But in France, whilst on the one hand the jury has too much power, the judge has too little, and that little he has, is hardly of a judicial character as we understand the word. As we have already pointed out, the absence of a summing-up removes what should be, if rightly conducted, a help and encouragement to a jury. But experience has shown that the procedure in a French trial, the necessarily hostile attitude which the President is obliged to assume towards the prisoner, prevent his returning to an impartial state of mind at the end of the trial. There are other circumstances which unfortunately tend to lower the prestige and individual importance of French judges. The useless multiplication of judges which the present system necessitates in the French Courts, where there are eight hundred

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and ten judges to do what in England is performed by twenty-nine, must lower the standard of the men holding such offices, as it diminishes their individual responsibility. Judges in France are neither so well paid nor so independent as they are in England. It would be impossible to pay the huge army of magistrates, which includes not only the judges of the various courts, but also the various procureurs and their assistants in whose hands alone is vested the prosecution of criminals, at the rate at which we pay our judges. In one sense in particular the French judiciary may fitly be termed an army; for from the lowest grade, that of a Juge de Paix, to the highest, a judgeship in the Court of Cassation, there is a continual stream of promotion always flowing on. The Bench and the Bar are, in France, entirely separate bodies. The judicial career and that of the "avocat," or barrister, are distinct. In England, as soon as a man is appointed to a judgeship in the Supreme Court or the County Courts, he is established in a comfortable and independent position, where he will remain for the rest of his life. He has nothing further to expect or seek from the Government, and, whatever the means by which he has attained to his office, he has every encouragement to justify his appointment by an independent and impartial bearing. But in France a judge is, from the nature of things, always looking for promotion to a higher grade in the judicial hierarchy; higher office means higher pay, and he has a great number of steps to climb before he can enjoy a substantial income. To climb these steps he is dependent, to a great extent, on the favour of the Minister of Justice for the time being. But ministerial favour, for reasons that need not here be specified, is hardly calculated to keep up the prestige and independence of the judicial bench. When the unscrupulousness of politicians and the arbitrary character of French administration are borne in mind, the dependence of a constantly changing judiciary on external and improper considerations is, to say the least of it, a possible danger.

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Another source of weakness in the composition of the Cour d'Assises is, not only the fact that the Procureur and Avocat-Général who conduct the prosecution occupy the position of judges, sitting by the side of and in similar robes to the President, but that the President himself, chosen, in all but rare cases, from among the Conseillers of the Cour d'Appel, is often inferior in the judicial hierarchy to the prosecuting magistrates. The independence, dignity, and impartiality of the judge cannot fail to be, in some degree, impaired or compromised by such a close and derogatory alliance with the public prosecutor.[1]

The discovery of extenuating circumstances in the outrages committed by Ravachol cannot fail to provoke critical reflections. It may be expedient or inexpedient to punish attempted murder of an aggravated kind by death; but there can be no doubt that, if ever murder was attempted with every possible form of aggravation, it was so attempted, and admittedly attempted, by Ravachol. And therefore it was the solemn and unquestionable duty of a jury to convict a prisoner of the full offence, and leave him to the full penalty, whatever that penalty might be in law. The jury failed in that duty, because they were lacking in courage. The plea advanced by some, that they were reluctant to condemn to death in a case in which no life had been taken, might, under ordinary circumstances, have some force in it. But the menacing outrage at the Café Véry the night before Ravachol's trial placed any indulgence on the part of the jury out of the question. If pardon was to be extended on any ground, they should, as in Duval's case, have left that privilege to a higher power, at whose hands mercy would hardly have been attributed to bourgeois timidity. It is very much to be regretted that the existing law as to the effect of an extenuating verdict by a jury on the degree of punishment to be inflicted by the Court should afford

[1] See J. Cruppi, *La Cour d'Assises*, Chaps. I.—IV.

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a possibly bare majority the opportunity for shirking a plain responsibility.

The Cour d'Assises at Paris, in accordance with the lenient verdict of the jury, condemned Ravachol to penal servitude. But the authorities were determined that this redoubtable criminal should not evade the supreme penalty. Previous to his appearance as an anarchist, he had incurred a heavy reckoning, of which the ordinary laws of his country now demanded a final settlement.

It was June 20th when Ravachol was indicted before the Cour d'Assises for the department of the Loire, held at Montbrison, to answer for other crimes, entirely unconnected with the anarchist propaganda. There were in all five charges against "Koenigstein, *dit* Ravachol," three of murder, one of body-snatching, and one of arson and robbery combined. Enumerated in order of time, they were as follows—

1. On March 29th, 1886, an old man of eighty-six, named Rivolier, living at La Varizelle on the road from St. Chamond to St. Étienne, was found murdered at the foot of his bed, his head broken in by all appearance with a hatchet. About twenty-eight yards from the house his aged servant, Louise, was found lying on the road, her head likewise broken in, and her shoulder dreadfully slashed by a hatchet. Rivolier was a furniture-broker; the lower part of his house, which had once been a large inn, was now converted into an old curiosity shop, filled with the usual assortment of chairs, clocks, etc. The cries of the servant as she fled from the house, pursued into the road by the murderer, and the howling of Rivolier's dog, prevented the assassin from completing his work by rifling the house. The evidence connecting Ravachol with the crime consisted of statements made by him to the informer, Chaumartin, and a former mistress.

2. On the night of May 15th, 1891, the vault in which the Baronne de Roche-Taillée had been interred, near Saint-Etienne, was broken open. The coffin, thrown on to the flag-stones, had been also wrenched open, and the contents

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scattered on the ground. A little cross and a medallion had been torn from the body, and a fruitless attempt made to pull off the rings from the dead fingers. In this case Ravachol admitted his guilt.

3. About mid-day of June 18th, 1891, Jacques Brunel, a miserly hermit, living alone in the Forez Mountains, at the top of an eminence known as Notre Dame de Grâce, was throttled in his hermitage; some sixty-six pounds of gold and silver, hidden in old pots, saucepans and shoes, besides 1000 francs in penny pieces, were carried off by the assassin. Ravachol was arrested on suspicion, but contrived to escape on his way to prison. He subsequently acknowledged his guilt and a profit of 35,000 francs drawn from the crime. A woman, bringing bread and milk to the hermit, knocked repeatedly at the door whilst Ravachol was accomplishing his work. She was, fortunately for her, not so persistent as to oblige Ravachol to open the door.

4. On the night of July 27th, 1891, two women named Marcon, mother and daughter, keeping an ironmongery shop in the Rue de Roanne at Saint-Etienne, were both killed by wounds inflicted with a hammer. The bodies were lying in the shop-window, their heads touching each other. The daughter had some screws in her hand. After the manner of Williams, the murderer of the Marr family in Ratcliffe Highway, the assassin had evidently pretended to be making a purchase, and had struck the women whilst they were in the act of attending to his wants. According to the informer, Chaumartin, Ravachol committed this crime with the assistance of Béala and his mistress, Soubet. These two had been tried with him in Paris as his accomplices in the outrage on M. Benoit, but had been acquitted by the jury. They were now by his side in the dock at Montbrison, as accessories to the murder of the Marcons. Ravachol denied his guilt in this instance. According to Chaumartin, the assassination of the Marcons had only realized forty-eight francs, owing to an interruption from the street outside.

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5. The robbery and arson are of no interest.

As might be expected from this catalogue of crimes, all of them committed in or about Saint-Etienne, the birth-place of Ravachol, the welcome extended to the brigand on his return home was anything but sympathetic. Circumstances were in general far less favourable to an escape from the guillotine than they had been in Paris. Montbrison is a quiet old provincial town, the grass growing in its streets, the inhabitants quite oblivious to the stirs and agitations of the great capital. The jury in the Cour d'Assises would know nothing of and care less for big talk of anarchism and bourgeois tyranny; they would only see before them an intrepid and dangerous malefactor who had been for some years the terror of their neighbours at Saint-Etienne. M. Darrigand too, the judge from the Court of Appeal at Lyons, who had come to preside over the Assizes, took a much sterner view of his duty than M. Guès of Paris, and was coldly firm in his determination not to be dominated by the formidable anarchist. The opening of his interrogatory is far from deferential—"Your father, Auguste Koenigstein, a Dutchman by birth, worked in the iron forges at Izeaux; but you have always preferred to be known as Ravachol, your mother's name. You were a dyer at Saint-Etienne. You have been sentenced to penal servitude for life by the Cour d'Assises of the Seine department, for dynamite outrages. You admit yourself to have been a smuggler and coiner by profession; in short, you have the reputation of being cunning and vindictive."

Ravachol (smiling).—Cunning? I think I have shown myself to be anything but that, or I should not be here.

President.—You habitually carried a revolver. You are strong and energetic; but, in reply to inquiries, your employers describe you as a very ordinary workman. In October 1891 you left the workshop to take up with smugglers and gaol-birds.

Ravachol.—It was not I who left my work; it was the

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work that left me. As to smuggling, you know perfectly well that everybody does a bit of that.

President.—The weak have suffered from your violence. You beat your own mother and threatened to kill her.

Ravachol.—We quarrelled on the subject of a mistress.

President.—Yes; and we know what that involves! You liked to have nice clothes and enjoy yourself; but as smuggling did not bring in much, you determined to make "a bold stroke to win yourself a comfortable little fortune."

This "bold stroke" was the murder of the old hermit of Chambles. As Ravachol had confessed the crime, the President asked him to narrate it.

President.—At what time did you murder the hermit?

Ravachol.—About mid-day. I climbed the garden-wall, broke open the cellar door, and entered the house.

President.—And then?

Ravachol.—And then? But it's really not a very pleasant sort of thing to tell (Laughter). However, the hermit was in bed. I offered him a fifty-franc note and begged him to take twenty francs out of it to say some masses. I wanted to see where he kept his money. "I have no change," he answered, and made a movement to get out of bed. At that moment I put my hand over his mouth and tried to stifle him. But I saw he wasn't dying quick enough, so I stuffed my handkerchief into his mouth, jumped on to the bed, and pressed my knee into his chest; a minute later, he was dead.

President.—But you could have easily robbed an old man of ninety without killing him.

Ravachol.—I had made up my mind to crush every obstacle that stood in the way of my getting money; the hermit was an obstacle—I crushed him.

The day following the murder, Ravachol, singing gaily, and accompanied by the woman Rullière, his mistress, revisited the scene of his crime in a hired fly. He wanted to be sure that he had not left anything behind. But this was not his last visit.

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President.—You went back again once more, didn't you?

Ravachol.—I did; I was afraid that the little fellow who had driven us the first time might inform the police. I had a dagger with me and was prepared to put him out of the way. Then it occurred to me that his murder was not an absolute necessity, and I gave up the idea, for I am by nature scrupulous.

President.—But you would have pitilessly murdered this young fellow if you had decided that it was necessary?

Ravachol (fiercely).—Of course I should. And society does just the same nowadays.

President.—Happily there are still honest workmen who do not share your views.

Ravachol tried to get in a discourse on behalf of the oppressed working-man, but the President stopped him —"Don't speak for workers, speak for murderers." "Your justice is a bourgeois justice," retorted Ravachol. "Bourgeois justice maybe," exclaimed the President, "but so far you have only experienced its forbearance."

After the murder at Chambles, Ravachol had tried to put the police off the scent by a feigned suicide. The President explained his purpose in doing this—"You said to the examining magistrate, 'I had made up my mind to get money in any way except by work.' And you wrote to your mistress—'There are people who kill thousands of men in order to be rich. I have killed one. If I'm not caught, we'll go and live at Dijon. How happy and peaceful we shall be.' You had not then committed this crime for the sake of the cause, as you falsely pretended, but to enrich yourself."

Ravachol.—Only because society would not allow me to earn my living by honest work.

President.—Society can look for nothing from a man like you.

Ravachol.—But I had the right to expect everything from her. And she gave me nothing.

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The questions relating to the murders of the old furniture-dealer and his servant, and to those of the two Marcons at Saint-Etienne, Ravachol met by blank denials, but he consented to discuss the robbery from the corpse of the Baronne de la Roche-Taillée. "You admit that?" asks the President.

Ravachol.—I was driven to it by want.

President.—An odious and repulsive act.

Ravachol.—I admit it required some courage to do it; but I was dying of hunger.

President.—Yes; your appetite is so tremendous. And when you can't gratify it, you call it dying of hunger. And this horrible night in the cemetery: didn't it impress you? didn't you feel any remorse?

Ravachol.—I remember that I didn't like it, that's all.

The prisoner then read a concluding menace to the jury—"I made of myself a sacrifice. If I still struggle, it is for the cause of anarchism; and I know I shall be avenged."

In smug informer-fashion Chaumartin told how he had learnt from Ravachol and Béala the extent of the former's crimes. Ravachol, he swore, had on one occasion said to him—"Five people have died by my hand, and I have every hope of making up my dozen." "How was it, then," asked Ravachol's advocate of the witness, "that you continued to think well of Ravachol, after he had confessed to you such a number of murders?" "Because," replied Chaumartin, "apart from his crimes, I could not help recognizing the largeness of his heart."

Ravachol strenuously denied the truth of the informer's evidence. "I believe," he said, "that Chaumartin tells all these stories in order to redeem his own character." Pressed by the President to give a more convincing motive for the witness' treachery, the prisoner said—"Well, it's rather a delicate matter to touch upon. The newspapers have stated that Madame Chaumartin had been my mistress. I protest most strongly against the charge, but

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Chaumartin may have believed it. Hence his spite against me."

Chaumartin.—I have never spoken ill of Ravachol. I hold him to be a large-hearted man, and I esteem him still.

President.—Your esteem is singularly persevering.

Nothing could disturb Chaumartin's cordial appreciation of the man whose life he was doing his best to swear away. But then Ravachol was so kind-hearted, and had taught his children to read!

The Procureur de la République, who conducted the prosecution, elicited an interesting fact from the witness. "Ravachol," he asked, "stopped at your house from August 1891 till March 1892. Did he ever do any work?" "Never!" was the prompt reply.

The woman Rullière, Ravachol's former mistress, was among the witnesses for the prosecution. She had been sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for receiving some of the plunder derived from the murder of the hermit, and in the prison at Montbrison had admitted to some of her fellow-prisoners that Ravachol was also the murderer of the old furniture-dealer and his servant, at La Varizelle. But when brought into court she denied that she had ever made any such admission. "These women lie shockingly," she said, "if you only knew what they are!" "It's not your place to reflect on any witness," sternly replied the President, and pointing to Ravachol, he continued—"I appeal to your sense of decency, did you not say that you were ashamed of ever having known such a monster?" "I said it to amuse the police," replied the woman. "I love him still. I was giving the lie to the feelings of my heart." Ravachol smiled upon her, and she was rewarded. He had previously burst into tears at the sight of her two sons, who came to testify that the prisoner was always kind to them, but that he and their mother had some very queer acquaintances and used sometimes to come in very late with mysterious parcels.

M. Lagasse, Ravachol's counsel, explained to the jury

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the utilitarian considerations which moved the prisoner to suppress the hermit of Chambles. Of what service to the community were the 35,000 francs hoarded up by the old miser? Let him die, and let his money be circulated through the medium of the large-hearted Ravachol.

The last-named, at the conclusion of the speeches of the various counsel, read to the jury a few parting words. "I sincerely hope that the gentlemen of the jury, who, by condemning me to death, will hurl anguish among those who still preserve me in their affections, will carry in their consciences the recollection of their verdict with the same courage and lightness of heart, with which I shall lay my head under the knife of the executioner." The jury, who at the opening of the proceedings had been observed to take their oaths with peculiar fervour and determination, had apparently the requisite courage and lightness of heart. In spite of his social inutility, they could not find, in the murder of the hermit, any extenuating circumstances, and for that crime Ravachol was condemned to death. This happened in the small hours of the morning. "I hail my condemnation with the cry of 'Vive l'Anarchie!'" exclaimed Ravachol. "The only cries you have the right to utter," retorted the President, "are 'Vive le Vol! Vive l'Assassinat!'" And the proceedings terminated.

The jury had acquitted Ravachol of the four other murders charged against him. They could hardly do otherwise, as the evidence of his guilt consisted of nothing but admissions made to others, unsupported by any direct testimony. At the same time, there seems little reason to doubt that Chaumartin was speaking the truth; there was no appreciable motive for him to do otherwise; nor were the admissions of the woman Rullière to her fellow-prisoners likely to be imaginary on their part. Ravachol in all probability chose to deny these crimes, because he could hardly justify them to a jury on the utilitarian ground which he had invoked to his aid in the case of the miserly hermit.

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Ravachol's conduct at his execution, which took place on July 10th, eighteen days after his trial, was courageous enough, but extremely vulgar and turbulent. He went to the guillotine singing a profane and beastly song, and his neck was severed half-way through a revolutionary exclamation. If Ravachol in repose was kind and a teacher of children, careless of money and amiable to those about him, he was detestable in action. The criminal with a kindly side to his nature is perhaps the most dangerous of all, for finding himself gently disposed to the little ones or to dumb animals, he is apt to consider himself as virtuous at bottom, and to regard an occasional murder or two as justifiable efforts to earn an honest living. Delightful periods of gracious idleness, varied every now and then by a robbery or murder just to keep things going, would seem to have been Ravachol's ideal existence. But the theft of some dynamite mixed him up in pseudo-social agitation, and precipitated him into a display of vigour which attracted the general regard. He profited for the moment by the weakness of some Parisians, and appeared more redoubtable than he really was. It was reserved for the judge and jury at Montbrison to vindicate the justice of France from a grievous reproach. Ravachol fought a spirited fight before the Cours d'Assises; his contests with the Presidents are by no means one-sided, and he was sufficiently adroit in bringing out those points in his character and his crimes best calculated to impress or conciliate a jury. But at the supreme moment, when there was nothing to be gained by reserve or restraint, the wild beast asserted itself and could only howl and struggle into the arms of death.

Ravachol was the professional criminal who gave to the anarchist agitation a truly professional send-off. His work accomplished, he made room for the enterprising amateur.

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VAILLANT

From the end of 1892 to the end of 1893 there was a lull in the anarchist outrages. The great haul of dynamite was exhausted, and another Ravachol was hardly to be expected. But his striking career was not forgotten. His temporary notoriety, the fear he had succeeded in inspiring in the breasts of some Parisians, the opportunities for mischievous and useless display which the Cour d'Assises affords to any criminal sharp or vain enough to make use of them, were all present to tempt the weak, the vain, the mischievous and the unsuccessful to redeem their insignificance by blowing a few of their countrymen to pieces. The failure of the juries to do stern justice to those who fell into their hands continued to make the extreme penalty an even chance, and it was only when the murder of President Carnot drove the Government to the adoption of stringent measures, which dispensed with the uncertain co-operation of the jury, that the outrages finally ceased, a coincidence which would seem to suggest that the whole series would have been considerably curtailed if unfaltering severity had been shown from the beginning. A list of the crimes and their punishments will furnish some idea of the strange vagaries of the jury and the necessity that exists of limiting the extent of their power and responsibility—

1. Vaillant explodes a bomb in the Chamber of Deputies, December 9th, 1893, but no lives are lost. He is guillotined.

2. Léauthier wantonly stabs the Servian Minister in a café, as a representative of the bourgeoisie, November 13th, 1893. The Minister, though badly wounded, survives. Léauthier is accorded extenuating circumstances.

3. Marpeaux, a burglar, is convicted of murdering a detective who is trying to arrest him, and in court declares

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himself an anarchist. He is accorded extenuating circumstances.

4. Emile Henry is convicted, April 28th, 1894, of two dynamite outrages in which five lives were lost. He is guillotined.

5. Meunier, an anarchist, is convicted, July 27th, 1894, of two outrages in which two lives were lost. He is accorded extenuating circumstances.

6. Caserio is convicted at Lyons, August 2nd, 1894, of the murder of President Carnot. He is guillotined.

The first five of these cases were all tried before Parisian juries. Taken in detail, it can, I think, be shown that, if words have any meaning, only one of the five cases presents any circumstance which can be fairly said to extenuate the guilt of the criminal. But a closer examination of these cases will throw a strong light on the curious conception of their functions that prevails among French jurymen.

Vaillant and Emile Henry are the most prominent figures in the second period of militant anarchism. The former was a yellow man of thirty-two, who, after making the study of social inequality a justification for petty theft, withdrew to the Argentine Republic to breathe the air of freedom and expand his philosophical ideas. He failed to turn to any account a concession of land in the Republic, and returned to France with the intention of revenging his want of success on society. He set to work secretly, studied chemistry and explosives, borrowed one hundred and twenty francs from friends, and ended by constructing an infernal machine. This consisted of an iron box filled with sulphuric acid and chloridated gunpowder, separated from one another by a pad of cotton. When the bomb was thrown these two substances would mix together and produce an explosion. The bomb was placed inside a larger box, and between the two about sixty nails were inserted which at the moment of explosion would be blown right and left into any people who happened to be present. This spiteful engine was intended for the Chamber of Deputies, to be exploded in their midst, as a reminder of their

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indifference to the social problem, and a precedent which should be in the future a perpetual "bomb of Damocles," suspended over the heads of the legislators. After two unsuccessful attempts, Vaillant, by assuming the common name of Dumont, which might safely be reckoned on as familiar in any constituency, obtained a ticket of admission to the Chamber for December 9th. A few days before, Vaillant felt it incumbent on him to be photographed, and to send one of his portraits to Paul Réclus, a leading French anarchist. "I shall then," he wrote, "die in peace, content with having shed the last drop of my blood in the cause of liberty. What I am about to do is the logical outcome of my studies in Darwin, Buchner, and Herbert Spencer."

On December 9th, he arrived at the Chamber, bomb in hand, and was shown into one of the public galleries. His intention was to hurl his engine at the ministerial bench; but, not being a person of any presence of mind, he was unduly excited by the importance of the occasion, and failed to reckon, in his haste, with the crowded condition of the gallery in which he found himself. He threw the bomb; but in throwing it, his arm struck against the shoulder of a lady sitting near him, the bomb missed its direction, and exploded in mid-air. Vaillant made an undignified rush for the door, but was stopped by a soldier, who threatened to bayonet him if he tried to pass. He was obliged to yield to the inevitable, and was soon recognized by those in the gallery as the man who had thrown the explosive. Some fifty people in the galleries and one or two deputies had been wounded by the missiles that scattered in every direction, but no one very seriously; fortunately the ceiling had received the greater number. The trial of Vaillant took place before the Cour d'Assises at Paris, on January 11th, 1894.

Vaillant showed himself to be an egregiously vain man who, doomed by his want of ability and application to remain in obscurity, determined to deliver himself from his proper fate by giving battle to society. But he was

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not, as Ravachol, prepared to face the consequences of his act. He fancifully endeavoured to convince the jury that in throwing his bomb, he had only intended to wound and frighten, not to kill the deputies. But the President would not hear of such a defence. "I repeat," said Vaillant, at the end of his interrogatory, "I did not wish to kill. You assert the contrary, but you know nothing about it." "You are not the first assassin who has taken up such a position," retorted the President, "you quibble in a wretched fashion."

Vaillant (annoyed).—I do not quibble. I say what is the fact.

Vaillant was obliged to remind the President that he had not asked him what were the motives of his action. The President curtly replied—"Very good; explain yourself." This was the opportunity for which the prisoner had waited; the moment had come when he was to read to the jury a statement of his views on the social problem. He told them how he saw nothing but oppression and injustice in the world around him. He had fled to South America to avoid the horrid spectacle, and hoped in the depths of the Argentine Republic to be able to lie in the shadows of the palm-trees and study nature. But, alas! even there he found the vampire, Capital, sucking the blood of the outcast. He returned to France, where he found things unchanged, and straightway resolved to contribute in his own small way to the realization of that happy future, when men should have no desires but to study science, and love their fellow-creatures.

But the conclusion of his address was anything but hopeful, and seemed rather to imply a futility of human effort from which even bombs would find it hard to escape—"And now, gentlemen, whatever the punishment you inflict upon me, it matters little to me, for, looking upon this assemblage in the light of reason, I can hardly avoid a smile when I see you, who are but atoms in the great world of matter, you who possess the reasoning

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faculty only because you have an elongation of the spinal marrow, anxious to vindicate your right to judge a fellow-creature. Ah, gentlemen, how small a thing is this Court, this verdict in the history of humanity! And this history of humanity in its turn counts for equally little in the whirlwind which sweeps it through the immensity of space, and which must ultimately disappear or transform itself, that the same history and the same facts may begin over again, in the everlasting play of cosmic formation, re-shaping and transforming itself in infinite degree."

If such arguments were expected to convince the jury of the futility of cutting off Vaillant's head, they would also remind the jury of the futility of his agitation. The evidence of M. Girard, the Government analyst of explosives, did not incline them to indulgence. He entirely brushed aside the prisoner's excuse that he had not intended his bomb to kill, but only to wound. "It was a terrible machine," he said; "happily, it exploded in the air; the missiles hit against the ceiling and only rebounded on to the heads of the spectators. If, however, the wounded had been struck directly by the explosive, every one hit in the intestines or any vital organ would have been killed at once. The mixture contained in Vaillant's bomb was equal to four cartridges of dynamite, one of which would have been sufficient to blow up many cubic yards of stone." "All this," answered Vaillant, "is only the expert's way of saying, 'You must cut off Vaillant's head.'" "We quite appreciate now," sarcastically remarked the President, "all the precautions you had taken to render your machine harmless."

The speech of the Procureur-Général Bertrand, in demanding the execution of the prisoner, gives a spirited account of Vaillant from the standpoint of the prosecution. "Vaillant," he said, "has no accomplice in the legal sense of the word. He is a 'solitaire.' But he has moral accomplices, and at their head, M. Paul Réclus, with whom we have seen him associated in such doubtful fashion. His crime, moreover, has nothing political about

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it. He is an ordinary assassin. With his bomb in his pocket, the anarchist kills and wounds in the lump. He works destruction as some cataclysm of nature, regardless of its victims. The laurels of Ravachol kept this man awake at nights. He had seen in the 'almanach' of the *Père Peinard*, the picture of his predecessor's head framed in the upright posts of the guillotine, with the sinister glow of the 'grand soir' on the horizon. He wished to surpass him, to throw his bomb into the very middle of the Chamber of Deputies, that he might strike with still greater force the imaginations of his companions.

"And this philosophy of which he brags, you ask him to formulate it? It is summed up in the anarchist propaganda by action which he defines as the execution of the bourgeoisie, the destruction of buildings, theft on behalf of the propaganda, and even theft on behalf of the individual. This would-be apostle has dreamed of a little house in Algiers by the blue waves of the Mediterranean. He has been a colonist in the Argentine Republic; he has had land, horses, and a herd of cattle. There are many who have found life a good deal harder than that. But he has lost all by his incalculable vanity, his immeasurable worship of his Ego. 'One day out on the pampas,' he wrote to a friend, 'I found myself face to face with a tiger; I looked him firmly in the face and he recoiled from me' (Laughter). Disillusion came to this man who had never had the courage to work. Vaillant returns to France, where he begins by running away with his friend's wife.

"And what about work? He finds it at Choisy-le-Roi. Ample justice is done to him; there is even a talk of increasing his salary. If to-day he is the victim of his envy and his disordered vanity, he deserves no mercy, for, burning to acquire notoriety by a crime, he has passionately nursed and wantonly indulged these two vices."

M. Labori, later the defender of M. Zola, presented to the jury the other side of the picture. "Vaillant has

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not attempted the life of an individual, of his employer, or of M. de Rothschild. He has struck at the fountain head. He wished to lay the blame at the doors of those who govern this society of ours, and who have done nothing for him. Is he the only guilty one? Will you condemn him without pity? Was it his desire to kill? He has told you, no! He loves men, he loves humanity too well to do that. Nay, more; he could have charged his bomb with bullets; he charged it instead with nails. He who has not wished to kill does not deserve to die. As to his crime, everybody has had some little share in it.

"If you sentence Vaillant to death, then how would you punish his father, that Corsican gendarme who deserted him in childhood? The real culprits are those who exploit collectivist ideas, and who create fanatics that they may reap commissions and profits for themselves. Gentlemen, you are about to perform an historical action. Do not be afraid to carry it out. The eyes of all men are upon you. Let your verdict be an example of temperance, of public morality, and of mercy!"

In spite of the conduct of the Corsican gendarme, the jury followed the wishes of the Procureur-Général, and Vaillant left the court under sentence of death, with a hoarse shout of "Vive l'anarchie!" Unlike Ravachol, who had scorned to exercise his right of appeal to the Court of Cassation, and following that, to the President of the Republic, Vaillant made both attempts to avoid his execution. He went to the Court of Cassation on the ground that, his offence being a political one, and the death penalty having been abolished in the case of political offences, he could not legally be put to death; but the Court rejected such a view of the case. He died on February 4th, cursing President Carnot for having refused his petition for a remission of his sentence.

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EMILE HENRY

By the side of Ravachol, Vaillant cuts a poor figure. His character is not robust enough to do and endure to the end; his clinging to life is worthy of the bourgeois whom he would destroy. But in Emile Henry, Ravachol found a worthy successor, one who in some respects surpasses the master as a militant anarchist, and deserves to be ranked with the historic Lacenaire as one of the most cynical and unfeeling assassins that have engaged in the destruction of comparatively inoffensive people. In many respects, Henry may be fitly compared with Lacenaire. The same superficial sensibility in childhood, which finds expression in sentimental versification; the same intense hatred of their fellow-men, which comes with their first experience of the world; the same hard materialism; the same cynical assertion of a purely personal and individual standard of conduct; the same unflinching readiness to face the utmost consequences of their acts; in all these respects the similarity between the two men is striking. But the superior common-sense of Lacenaire shows his to be the stronger and more logical disposition. He hates his fellow-men with an extreme hatred; he recognizes his own insensibility to the sight of human suffering; he can kill a man as he would drink a glass of wine, and is thoroughly prepared to enjoy himself in his own peculiar fashion. But he does not attempt to elevate his taste for crime by associating it with extreme political theories, involving the annihilation of all social order; he admits from the first that social order is a necessity to mankind, and that the logical consequence of his own acts, if universally adopted, would be to abolish a needful organization. Therefore he takes up the very simple and unassailable position that, having conceived an intense loathing for his fellow-creatures, he is going to gratify that hatred by

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indulging his pleasure in man-killing, until man, necessarily and quite justifiably, curtails his pleasure by the familiar operation of the guillotine. Lacenaire would have hated and despised anarchists, militant or otherwise, just as he hated and despised everybody else; and would have been quick to recognize and sneer at their principles and their pretensions. Crime with him was a purely individual matter, depending on the individual's taste and capacity for taking men's lives and appropriating their property to gratify the immediate wants of one, who regarded all men as most men regard foxes.

But, since an overwhelming majority of mankind is as yet opposed to any scheme of destruction which should comprehend all existing creatures under the general head of vermin, Lacenaire bows willingly before the will of that powerful majority, and submits to the only argument he will recognize in such affairs, that of superior force. In this respect is Lacenaire different from Henry. Whilst the latter shares Lacenaire's capacity for hating, his cynicism, his fortitude, and his insensibility, he is beguiled from the straight path of personal indulgence by impossible theories and hopeless dreams of human regeneration. These only serve to weaken his position and irritate rather than impress those whose duty it is to get rid of him. Instead of slowly arriving at murder as the only possible and logical result of personal tastes and feelings, and regarding it from a purely subjective standpoint, Emile Henry is seduced by the spectacle of external inequalities and injustices in the world around him, inevitable from the general worthlessness of mankind, and is moved to feelings of pity and sympathy for creatures who are deserving of neither. In some such terms would Lacenaire have remonstrated with Henry for his erroneous idea of bettering the conditions of the irredeemably contemptible. In other respects the two men would have been in complete accord.

"You know the charges against me," said Henry to his jury—"the explosion in the Rue des Bons Enfants

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(Nov. 8th, 1892), in which five were killed, and which has resulted in the death of a sixth; the explosion in the Café Terminus (Feb. 12th, 1894), in which one person was killed, which has resulted in the death of another, and wounded a certain number; and the additional charge of having fired six shots from a revolver at those who pursued me after the latter outrage." The author of these crimes, to all of which he confessed, was the son of a quarry proprietor, who had been mixed up in the Commune and exiled from France till 1872, when he returned to his country and died, leaving his son Emile a boy of ten years old. Emile was intelligent enough to secure an exhibition from the École Jean-Baptiste Say, and to take his degree as Bachelor of Science at sixteen. He passed the entrance examination for the École Polytechnique, but did not avail himself of his success, owing to his dislike of a military career. At the age of seventeen he held an excellent place as an engineer, which for some trifling reason he threw up. At eighteen he was earning six pounds a month in a factory at Roubaix. But in 1892 he had begun to attend anarchist meetings, at which a brother of his, Fortuné Henry, was a frequent and militant orator. His employer soon after found in his desk a manual on the fabrication of dynamite, and a translation from an Italian anarchist newspaper, in which occurred the lines, significant from after events—"If a bomb is found by a policeman, it will be perfectly certain to explode in his hands." These dangerous studies, coupled with a short arrest on suspicion of inciting to outrage, obliged Henry's employer to dismiss him. He then worked with a watch-maker, and after that with a decorator, M. Dupuy. It was during his stay with M. Dupuy that occurred the appalling disaster in the Rue des Bons Enfants, on November 8th, 1892.

Of all the dynamite outrages perpetrated at this time, this was the most bloody in its consequences. With or without assistance, Emile Henry had constructed a formidable machine. It consisted of a melting-pot con-

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taining twenty dynamite cartridges, and a detonator of fulminate of mercury. It was a bomb "à renversement," that is to say, it exploded by being turned upside down or receiving any concussion; either of these causes would produce the combustion of chloride of sodium by bringing it into contact with water, and so discharge the engine of death.

For whom was this engine destined? There had been quite recently a strike at the Carmaux mines, and a number of strikers had been sent to prison. Henry determined to avenge these victims of the law by placing his machine in the Paris offices of the mining company, No. 11 Avenue de l'Opera. He discovered the address in the directory, and was the more reconciled to causing an explosion at No. 11 Avenue de l'Opera, as the other floors of the building were occupied by such prosperous bourgeois as a well-known dressmaker, a milliner, and a banker. It was between 11 and 11.5 in the morning of November 8th, that Henry deposited his bomb at the door of the company's offices. What ensued is best told in the words of President Potier at Henry's trial. "The pot turned upside down was wrapped up in a number of the *Temps* newspaper, and the whole fastened together with a strip of sheet-iron. A servant of the company noticed the machine and called to the porter to carry it into the street. The latter, with the help of the unfortunate office-boy, Garcin, placed it on the pavement. Garcin immediately called the policeman Cartier, who was on duty in the Rue d'Argenteuil; but Cartier being engaged in piloting across the street some children going home from school, did not think it right to leave his place. He contented himself with calling two of his colleagues who happened to be passing by, the sergeant Formorin, and the detective Reaux. Garcin tied a napkin round the pot and the three men carried it to the police-station in the Rue des Bons Enfants. They had hardly entered the hall of the police-station when a tremendous explosion took place. A few hours later the Juge d'Instruction Atthalin arrived at the

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scene of the disaster, and drew up in moving terms the procès-verbal of the awful spectacle that met his eyes. Some pieces of bleeding flesh were the only remains of the sergeant Formorin, the detective Reaux, the unfortunate Garcin, and the secretary to the Commissary of Police, M. Pousset. A lump of entrails was hanging on a gas-jet, which was twisted by the force of the explosion. Those present were slipping at every turn on the remains of livers, lungs, brains and other organs torn from the body. The only possible identification was that of the boy Garcin by means of an uniform button found on a heap of shapeless pieces of human flesh. A fifth victim, the Inspector Grouteau, lay dying near the door of the police-station."

The only clue to the author of the outrage was the number of the *Temps* newspaper in which the bomb had been wrapped. This number contained an account of an anarchist meeting, in which the brothers Henry were reported as having taken part. Suspicion fell on Emile, his house was searched, and his letters intercepted. But he contrived to give a satisfactory account of his movements on the morning of the crime, and the charge was abandoned. He then left Paris, and passed two years partly in Belgium, partly in London, and partly, perhaps, in acts of brigandage committed in Normandy under the superintendence of a dangerous anarchist named Ortiz.

Whatever the nature of his occupations, Henry was again lodging in Paris at the beginning of 1894, and was in possession of sufficient money to make fifteen bombs, and a quantity of picric acid. These preparations were, of course, destined for a further rude awakening of the tranquil bourgeoisie; this time Henry selected a popular café as likely to bring down a full bag of guzzling citizens.

"The 12th of February last," said President Potier at Henry's trial, which took place in Paris, April 28th, 1894, "at eight in the evening, you entered the Café Terminus with a bomb hidden in your trouser belt."

Hen.—Excuse me, in my overcoat pocket.

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Pres.—Why did you select the Café Terminus?

Hen.—Because it is a large café, and much frequented by the bourgeoisie. I had previously wandered about the Avenue de l'Opera and the Boulevards, and looked in at Bignon's, the Café de la Paix, and the Café Américain.

Pres.—Why didn't you go into any of these?

Hen.—There were not enough people there.

Pres.—Quite so. You said before the Juge d'Instruction that you wanted to kill a great number of the bourgeoisie.

Hen.—As many as possible.

Pres.—There was a great crowd at the Café Terminus, as a Tzigane orchestra was playing there that night. You ordered a bock, and three-quarters of an hour after you ordered a second bock and a cigar. What were you waiting for?

Hen.—For the room to get fuller. About nine o'clock I placed the bomb on my knees, lit the fuse with my cigar, got up, walked to the door, and threw the machine into the middle of the room, towards the orchestra.

Pres.—You are careless of other people's lives?

Hen.—Of other people's? No; of bourgeois lives.

Pres.—But you are very careful of your own! You had arranged everything so as to give yourself time to get out of the way.

Hen.—I had to keep myself for other explosions. Once out in the street, I reckoned on getting away quietly, without any hurry, and going up to the waiting-room of the Saint-Lazare railway-station, where I should have been lost in the crowd, and could have taken a ticket for some place in the suburbs.

Pres.—Unfortunately for you, you ran against a waiter in the doorway. He tried to stop you, but you kept your head and cried out "The villain!" as though you were pointing out an imaginary assassin.

Hen.—That is false. I made no such remark.

Pres.—However, the waiter wasn't to be deceived. He pointed you out to the policeman Poisson, who ran after you. You had gone in the direction of the Rue d'Isly.

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An employé at the Saint-Lazare station, M. Etienne, tried to bar your way. "I've got you," he cried, taking you by the collar. "Not yet," you answered, and M. Etienne was rolling on the pavement with a bullet from your revolver full in his chest.

Hen.—That's his look-out. He shouldn't have mixed himself up in other people's affairs.

Pres.—You have, I believe, regretted that you did not kill this unfortunate man?

Hen.—Certainly. If I had had a better weapon, he would have been a dead man.

Pres.—There was another brave citizen, a hairdresser's assistant, who had run up at the noise of the explosion. He joined in the pursuit, and had nearly caught you up, when a second shot from your revolver stretched him bleeding at your feet. The policeman Poisson came up with you at the corner of the Rue d'Isly and the Rue de Rome. He drew his sword. With a third shot you sent him to the ground just as he was raising his hand to arrest you. At last two other policemen managed to get hold of you, and to protect you with some difficulty from the fury of the crowd.

Hen.—Yes, the crowd which didn't even know what I'd done.

Pres.—You had six more cartridges in your pocket, the bullets of which you had champed. Why?

Hen.—To make them more deadly.

Pres.—You also carried on you a spiked knuckle-duster, and a poisoned dagger.

Hen.—I had poisoned it a year ago for the purpose of killing an anarchist informer. I had determined to wound him mortally, and if circumstances had been favourable, the traitor would not have escaped.

Pres.—And no doubt you would have struck Poisson in the same way if you had had time.

Hen.—Certainly. I am very sorry that I only wounded one policeman.

Pres.—You had thrown your bomb towards the

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orchestra, in front of which a great number of diners were sitting. But comparatively few people were hurt.

Hen.—I am quite ready to admit that I threw the bomb too high.

Pres.—It fell near a lady, and exploded with a dull noise. The material damage was considerable, windows smashed in pieces, the ceiling caved in, the tables literally riddled. More than twenty people were wounded.

Hen.—Excuse me, only seventeen.

Pres.—One of them has died since, in consequence of having been obliged to have his leg amputated. The rest you see here, some of them yet hardly recovered. You see M. Vandenhagen, who has received twenty grape-shot wounds, and will be lame for many a day to come. One lady is still being treated for severe hemorrhage. Behold your handiwork! And what is your attitude when first arrested? You begin by giving a false name. It is only two nights later that you make up your mind to tell all, and give to one of the detectives a full and artistic recital of your crime.

Hen.—You flatter me, M. le Président.

Pres.—I have no desire to flatter you, but I ought to add that your machine was very cleverly constructed. It was a melting-pot, wasn't it?

Hen.—Exactly; a pot in which I had placed a certain number of dynamite cartridges. In the middle of these was a detonator filled with fulminate of mercury, and a fuse which I calculated I ought to light fifteen seconds before the explosion.

Pres.—You have complained of your moderate success. What more did you want?

Hen.—I wished to kill, to kill as many as possible. There were a hundred and twenty lead bullets in the pot, all of which I had made myself in order to avenge Vaillant. . . .

Pres.—You admit that you intended to kill the policeman Poisson?

Hen.—Of course. He tried to stop me running away.

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Pres.—And to kill the diners at the Café Terminus?

Hen.—As many as possible.

Pres.—And lastly you are charged with intending to destroy the café itself.

Hen.—Oh, I didn't bother myself much about the building!

Pres.—You would have well deserved to have been tried in a brutal and summary fashion. But it is to the credit of our society that it does not abrogate the strict forms of justice, even in the presence of so great a criminal as yourself.

The conclusion of the interrogatory was mutually defiant. The President tried to make Henry confess to the burglaries in Normandy with which he was said to have filled up his time between his exploits with the bomb. "We have the right," said the Judge, "to ask whether you have not, as Ravachol before you, appeared as a thief. Have a care!"

Hen.—Of what? I know perfectly well already that I shall be condemned to death!

Pres.—Have not those white hands of yours, the white hands of the pseudo-working-man, snatched at the proceeds of successful theft, as they have made themselves all bloody to accomplish murder?

Hen.—All bloody as your robe, M. le Président. I repeat, I have nothing to tell you. I don't pry into your life.

Pres.—No; but it is the business of your judges to look into yours.

Hen.—My judges! I don't worry about their judgment! My conscience is my judge. I laugh at your justice!

Pres.—Unfortunately for you, you have fallen into her hands, and you are here to render her an account. Sit down.

It would be difficult to imagine two men more dissimilar within their own peculiar circle than Henry and Ravachol. Physically, they are the antitheses of each

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other; Ravachol large, broad, heavy of countenance, with a powerful animal jaw; Henry small, thin, pale and bilious. Mentally the difference is no less pronounced. Ravachol rough, uneducated, yet not without intelligence; in some aspects genial and kindly, though shockingly brutal in others. Henry, with superior advantages of ability and education, a cold, cynical, ungracious malignant. Except for a sad lack of humour, in his envy and hatred of his fellow-men, his contempt for their lives, and his scorn of their punishments, Henry might not unfittingly be likened to Iago.

In spite of the exhortations of the President, Henry was not to be moved even at the sight of his wounded victims who one by one went into the witness-box. "And you, Henry," asked the Judge, "you are still unmoved? You can contemplate with indifference the passage of your victims, hard-working men and women? What is their offence? You did not know any of them!" "Their offence," replied Henry, with an evil look, "lies in their being bourgeois."

He took a professional interest in the evidence of M. Girard, the Government analyst of explosives. "But for a slight fault in its construction," said M. Girard, "the bomb at the Café Terminus would have done much greater execution." "I know that," added Henry; "M. Girard and I have discussed the matter together, and we are quite agreed as to the nature of the imperfection." He had often wondered, he said, as to the cause of the explosion at the police-station in the Rue des Bons Enfants, whether the policemen had overturned the bomb in carrying it, or had put it down too hard on the desk in the office? He inclined to the latter supposition.

At the request of his advocate, but contrary to the wishes of the prisoner, a number of witnesses to character were called for the defence. They were mostly people who had known Henry as a boy, and spoke of him as well-behaved at school, of exceptional ability, dreamy and poetic, charitable and kind to children. This last trait

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he developed at the end of 1892, when he was working with M. Dupuy, a decorator, and had already embraced anarchism. The example of Ravachol was strong at this time, and a great criminal finds as many imitators as a great writer or a great actor. It was the correct thing, after Ravachol, to lead a little child in one hand and hurl a bomb at adults out of the other.

In one incident of his trial Henry showed a feeling of propriety, rather rare in French criminal courts on such occasions. Henry had begged the President by letter not to allow his unfortunate mother to be called as a witness; but his advocate, determined to spare no effort to melt the hearts of the jury, had put her name on the list of the witnesses to be called for the defence. The President expressed his surprise at such a course being taken; "but," he added, "she is called to-day, and I am bound to hear her unless, Emile Henry, you formally waive your right to her being heard." "I waive my right," answered the prisoner; "it never occurred to me to inflict such pain on my mother." "I was sure of it," added the Judge.

The prosecution was conducted by M. Bulot. It was his house in the Rue Clichy which Ravachol had tried to blow up in 1892, by way of punishment for his severe prosecution of two anarchists in the previous year. He had since been promoted to be an Avocat-Général, and was apparently undaunted by the destruction of his furniture and window-panes. In concluding his speech against Henry, he ingeniously turned the appearance of Henry's mother on the scene to the discredit of the prisoner. "His poor mother, whose name will be used to inspire in your breasts a feeling of sympathy towards the prisoner, fills my heart with profound feelings of sorrow and pity. But her period of hopeless mourning will not date from your verdict. It entered into her heart the day that her son made so many women and children widows and orphans." After enumerating the women and children left thus desolate by the deaths of Henry's five victims

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of the explosion in the Rue des Bons Enfants, in all five widows and ten orphans, he went on—"Here you may see the solution of the social question. The fatuous bomb of the Rue des Bons Enfants has wrecked the happiness of five families! What will you do with Emile Henry? The crowd would have lynched him! The law, in a calmer moment, calls upon you to strike with firmness. The death penalty alone can be a fitting expiation for this man. In admitting any extenuation of his guilt you would be signing the death-warrant of fresh victims. To grant extenuating circumstances to Emile Henry would be not only an exhibition of unpardonable weakness but a betrayal of your duty."

Henry replied to this decided address by a long exposition of anarchical doctrine. Socialism he rejected because it retained the principle of authority. He was an atheist and materialist, recognizing the individual conscience as the only judge of a man's actions. His explanation of the motives that led him to place a bomb in the offices of the Carmaux Mining Company was frank enough. The strike had, to all appearances, just been settled favourably to the company, who, more powerful than ever, had resumed their operations, and the shareholders were congratulating themselves on the happy issue of the strike. "It was at that moment that I determined to add another voice to this choir of happy melodies, a voice the bourgeois had heard before but thought dead with Ravachol—the voice of dynamite." The bomb at the café was a reply to the execution of Vaillant, and the wholesale arrests that accompanied it. "Since you hold a party responsible for the acts of an individual, and punish them wholesale, we do the same. We punish wholesale, not only the 'bons bourgeois' who live in idleness on the product of the labourer's toil, but every one of those who are content with the existing state of things, who approve the acts of the Government, and so become its accomplices—all those clerks at three hundred or five hundred francs a month, who hate the

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people even more intensely than the big bourgeois, a stupid and pretentious lot, who are always on the side of the strongest, and form the ordinary clientèle of the Terminus and other large cafés."

After the prisoner had given this compendious catalogue of doomed men, Henry's counsel was hardly tactful in describing him to a jury of small bourgeois as "a child with bright eyes and musical voice, hardly yet of an age to don the *toga pretexta*, a poet uttering gentle flights of song"; or in blandly adding that his client was "to-day committing his first breach of society's regulations." Henry's address had certainly shown little trace of a poetic style, being a singularly matter-of-fact presentment of his views, entirely free from any of the vagueness that troubled the speculations of Vaillant; whilst a man who has made his début in crime by blowing up six people can be a first offender in little more than name.

"Guilty," without extenuation, was the verdict of the jury. Henry jumped gaily over the benches of the dock to hear it pronounced, and saluted it with a disdainful acquiescence. He refused to make any of the usual appeals for mercy, and met his death with complete assurance.

In the cases of Vaillant and Henry the Parisian jury carried things to their logical conclusion, and returned the only verdict possible under the circumstances. In the three other anarchist prosecutions undertaken in Paris about the same time, their behaviour is more difficult to explain. One day, in November 1893, a youth called Léauthier, a victim of anarchist literature and want of exercise, and having a marked inclination towards pine-apples, entered a restaurant without a penny in his pocket and ordered a dinner consisting of roast quails and pine-apple tart, washed down with burgundy and champagne. When he declared his inability to pay the reckoning, the proprietor kicked him out. Next day, Léauthier repeated

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the same experiment; but, instead of waiting for his bill, he rose after sitting at table for two hours, plunged a shoemaker's knife into the breast of the Servian Minister who was in the habit of dining at the restaurant, and in the confusion that followed made his escape, well satisfied at having struck with the implement of his trade an infamous bourgeois. The jury accorded him extenuating circumstances. They accorded the same to Meunier, convicted of being the author of the explosion at the Café Véry, in which two lives were lost, and to Marpeaux, a burglar and anarchist, who had killed a detective engaged in arresting him. Their reasons for indulgence in these cases may be to a certain extent surmised. In that of Léauthier, the prisoner was proved to have been an honest youth until seduced by anarchist literature, and the Servian Minister had not died of his wounds; in that of Meunier the evidence against him was so imperfect that he would in England, in all probability, have been acquitted, whilst at the same time the President, conscious perhaps of the weakness of the case against him, offended the jury by trying to carry it through, as M. Bataille has it, "tambour battant"; in that of Marpeaux the jury were shaken in their conviction of the prisoner's guilt by a clever defence which a charge from a judge would, I think, in England, have shown the jury to be ingenious but not sufficiently strong to defeat the case for the prosecution.

It will be seen from these instances that, except in the case of Léauthier, the term "extenuating circumstances" has entirely lost its apparent signification. Not only is it used to express the feeling of the jury that the prisoner has some claim to their indulgence, but it is used also as a means of remonstrance with the judge or a compromise between a conviction and an acquittal. As M. Bérard de Glajeux, an ex-President of the Assize Courts, phrases it, the French jury "ne peut pas résister à une tendance de donner les leçons." "If," he says, "the President seems by his attitude to take the line of censuring the prosecutor,

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the jury will take the line of punishing the prisoner; if, on the other hand, a prosecutor appears too full of zeal and is allowed to pass unchallenged, without criticism or censure, the jury will not scruple to sound a discordant note by returning a verdict of acquittal. 'He,' they say, 'who leaves our hands pardoned but bruised, will not do it again, and the other will learn what it costs to appear before a jury with weak points in his character.' It is true that morality and example will suffer from such conduct, but these judges of a day, slaves to a momentary impression, care little for abstractions of this kind." And when the same authority goes on to say that the class of jurymen has steadily deteriorated, so that men of property, barristers, solicitors, and professors are rarely found on the jury-lists, one cannot expect that such juries should wield with dignity or intelligence the great powers placed in their hands. The dangerous stultification of law and justice by the verdicts given in these three cases, in which a common jury are either teaching lessons to the judge or expressing their supreme doubts as to a man's guilt by finding extenuation in the brutal murder of a detective, may not work much substantial injustice, but it cannot fail to subject the certainty of punishment to the fads or mental troubles of twelve amateur judges, and to impair the reliance that can be placed on the firmness and resolution of the criminal courts to deal with any exceptional outbreak of crime such as the anarchist outrages of 1892 and 1894.

Emile Henry may be reckoned as the last of the reasoned assassins raised up by the invocation of outrage to assist in the spread of anarchism. The disgust universally aroused by these senseless crimes culminated when President Carnot was murdered on June 24th, 1894, by an Italian degenerate, Caserio, whose mental weakness had yielded to the temptation of a fanatical anarchism. The leading theoretical anarchists who had up till then done something more than coquet with the shade of the martyred Ravachol, realized the futility of such crimes

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and threw up all connection with outrage. As in a sudden and meaningless fashion the propaganda by action had sprung into activity, so in a sudden and meaningless fashion it died away. The real senselessness of the whole agitation, if it can be dignified by such a name, is best shown in the characters of the chief actors. There is not among them one who had really suffered unjustly in the struggle for life, as many amongst us must suffer every day, no honest working-man who had vainly endeavoured to secure employment and, driven to desperation, had tried to fight starvation by a resort to crime. Ravachol, Marpeaux, and Vaillant are criminals first and anarchists afterwards. Henry, Léauthier, Meunier, are all three men of something more than the average intelligence of their respective classes, all men who have never wanted for employment and have had little to complain of in their experience of society. In their cases, indolence, vanity, and a certain malign hatred of their species have been the real incentives to action, as they are the incentives to most crimes. In France, the merciless character of party warfare, the, at times, extraordinary hatred of class for class or party for party, in which the common name of Frenchman seems forgotten, find themselves magnified in the characters of these merciless assassins. Crime has its national character as much as any other feature in the life of a great people, and crime in France, whilst it reflects the originality, the liveliness, the emotionalism of the nation, reflects also that exasperation in the national character which breaks out in times of political excitement and is always present in the cruelty of a section of their press. In England, crime is as solemn and businesslike as a court of law or the House of Commons. In France it is as excitable, as bitter, and as vehement as a political trial or the Chamber of Deputies.

It is these phrasing anarchists, with their bomb in one hand and in the other the declaration of their principles to be read to their jury, it is criminals of this kind that the French procedure encourages in their thirst for display

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and the assertion of their personalities. It was only after Henry's trial that the Government forbade the reproduction by the press of their manifestoes from the dock. But why not forbid the reading of such manifestoes altogether? Did you or did you not commit this outrage or this murder contrary to the law? That is the question for a jury; and it is in the face of crimes such as these that the value of a strict limit to the issues of a trial is most conclusively shown. Courts of law should not be manufactories of martyrs; prisoners should offer evidence, not lectures and facetiæ; irrelevance should be discouraged rather than welcomed; and then the Cour d'Assises would not crown the lives of criminals with the priceless glory of a cheap notoriety.

Yet it would be ungracious to gird at a scheme of justice which in many instances combines the interest of the novel with the pleasing consciousness of truth, and makes of crime something more than the commonplace expression of imperfect education. Historically, Ravachol and his fellows are passing nightmares, unworthy to be more than barely chronicled in the lifetime of a great people; but there are points in the characters of these criminals and the circumstances of their punishments which are not without significance to the better understanding of the French character and administration of justice.

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