The History and Romance of Crime

FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES
TO THE PRESENT DAY

THE GROLIER SOCIETY
LONDON

Title: The History and Romance of Crime. Modern French Prisons

Author: Arthur Griffiths

Release Date: January 27, 2016 [EBook #51049]

Language: English

Produced by Chris Curnow, Wayne Hammond, and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at http://www.pgdp.net (This file was produced from images generously made available by The Internet Archive)

The cover image was created by the transcriber and is placed in the public domain.

The History and Romance of Crime

FROM THE EARLIEST TIMES
TO THE PRESENT DAY

THE GROLIER SOCIETY
LONDON

Madame Roland Incarcerated in Sainte Pélagie

From the painting by E. Carpentier

One of the innocent and most distinguished victims of the French Revolution, whose memoirs were written in prison, and who will be longest remembered by the exclamation, “Oh, Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name!” uttered with her dying breath when facing the guillotine.

Modern French Prisons

BICÊTRE—ST. PÉLAGIE—ST. LAZARE

LA FORCE—THE CONCIERGERIE
LA GRANDE AND LA PETITE ROQUETTES
MAZAS—LA SANTÉ

by

MAJOR ARTHUR GRIFFITHS

Late Inspector of Prisons in Great Britain

Author of
"The Mysteries of Police and Crime,"
"Fifty Years of Public Service," etc.

THE GROLIER SOCIETY

EDITION NATIONALE

Limited to one thousand registered and numbered sets.

NUMBER 307

INTRODUCTION

The period in French prison practice treated in this volume is one of transition between the end of the Old Régime and the beginning of the New. It presents first a view of the prisons of the period immediately following the Revolution, and concludes with the consideration of a great model penitentiary, which may be said to be the “last word” in the purely physical aspects of the whole question, while its very perfection of structure and equipment gives rise to important moral questions, which must dominate the future of prison conduct.

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century the combat with the great army of depredators was unceasingly waged by the champions of law and order in France, to whom in the long run victory chiefly inclined. As yet none of the new views held by prison reformers in other countries had made any progress in France. No ideas of combining coercion with persuasion, of going beyond deterrence by attempting reformation by exhortation; of curing the wrong-doer and weaning him from his evil practices, when once more sent out into the world, obtained in French penology. At that earlier date all the old methods, worked by the same machinery, still prevailed and were, as ever, ineffective in checking crime. An active, and for the most part intelligent police was indefatigable in the pursuit of offenders, who, when caught and sentenced travelled the old beaten track, passing from prison to prison, making long halts at the *bagnes* and concluding their persistent trespasses upon the guillotine, but that was all.

French prisons long lagged behind advanced practices abroad, not only in respect of their structural fitness and physical condition, but also in the measure in which the method of conducting them effected the morals of those who passed through them. When the question was at last presented, it was considered with the logical thoroughness and carried out with the administrative efficiency characteristic of the French government, when impressed with the necessity for action in any given line.

The question for the French prison authorities—as indeed it is the question of questions for the prison government of all nations—is now: “What can be and shall be done for the reform of the convict rather than for his mere repression and punishment?” The material aspects of the French prison system have attained almost to perfection. These, as well as the moral aspects of the subject, which that very physical perfection inevitably presents, it is the purpose of this volume to consider.

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations

MODERN FRENCH PRISONS

CHAPTER I
AFTER THE REVOLUTION

The Old and the New Régime divided by the Revolution—Changes in prison system introduced by the Legislative Assembly—Napoleon's State prisons which replaced the Bastile—Common gaols which still survived—Bicêtre—St. Pélagie—Saint Lazare—The Conciergerie and La Force—Account of La Force from contemporary records—Béranger in La Force—Chenu—His experiences—St. Pélagie described—Wallerand, the infamous governor—Origin of Bicêtre—As John Howard saw it—Inconceivably bad under the Empire—Vidocq's account of Bicêtre—The Conciergerie—Marie Antoinette—Political prisoners in the Conciergerie—Marshal Ney and Le Comte de La Valette—His wonderful escape.

The Revolution may be considered the dividing line between the ancient and modern régime in France. Many of the horrors of the first period, however, survived far into the second, and although with a more settled government the worst features of the Terror disappeared, prisons remained in character much the same. The Convention no doubt desired to avoid the evils of arbitrary imprisonment, so long the custom with the long line of despotic rulers of France, and would have established, had it survived, a regular punitive system by which prisons should serve for more than mere detention and deprivation of liberty, intending them for the infliction of penalties graduated to the nature and extent of offences. It was decreed in 1791 that the needs of justice should be supported by classifying all prisons in four categories, namely: Houses of detention for accused but untried prisoners; penal prisons for convicted prisoners; correctional prisons for less heinous offenders; houses of correction for juveniles of fewer than sixteen years, and for the detention of ill-conducted minors at the request of their relatives and friends.

The scheme thus sketched out was excellent in theory, but it was not adopted in practice until many years later. France again came into the grip of a despotism more grinding than any in previous days. It was choked and strangled by an

autocrat of unlimited ambitions backed by splendid genius and an unshakable will. Napoleon, even more than his predecessors, needed prisons to support his authority, and he filled them, in the good old-fashioned way, with all who dared to question his judgment or attack his power. He threw hundreds of State prisoners into the criminal gaols, where they languished side by side with the thieves and depredators whose malpractices never slackened; and he created or re-opened no less than eight civil prisons on the line of the Bastile of infamous memory. These were the old castles of Saumur, Ham, D'If, Landskrown, Pierrechâtel, Forestelle, Campiano and Vincennes. Here conspirators, avowed or suspected, too outspoken journalists and writers with independent opinions were lodged for indefinite periods and often without process of law. It had been taken as an accepted principle that the Emperor of his own motion with no show of right, undeterred and unchallenged, could at any moment throw any one he pleased into prison and detain them in custody as long as he pleased.

Such common gaols as still survived the shock of the Revolution were pressed into service: Bicêtre, St. Pélagie, Saint Lazare, the Conciergerie and La Force. The last named was of more recent date, and really owed its existence to the mild-mannered and unfortunate Louis XVI, who in 1780 desired to construct a prison to separate the purely criminal prisoners from those detained simply for debt. A site was found where the rue St. Antoine ends in the Marais. The ground had been bought thirty years before for the erection of a military school, but nothing had come of the project. New buildings were erected upon the ground formerly occupied by the gardens of the Ducs de la Force, as had been done in the case of the Hotel St. Pol which had belonged to Charles of Naples, brother of the king known as St. Louis in French history. The new prison of La Force was to be established under good auspices. It was to include rooms for habitation, hospital, and yards for the separate exercise of various classes of prisoners, the whole to cover a space ten times as large as the For-l'Évêque and Petit Châtelet combined. It was to be interiorly divided into five sections (afterwards increased to eight), with names describing each section.

There was the "Milk Walk," for those who had failed to pay for the children they put out to nurse; the "Debtors' Side," in the centre of the prison, where non-criminals were lodged; the "Lions' Pit," described by a contemporary as the most horrible place conceivable, where the worst classes of criminals were herded together. Next came the "Sainte Madeleine," then the "Quarter of the Niômes," after that the "Court of Fowls," again the "Court of Sainte Anne," for old men and worn-out vagabonds, and lastly, the "Court of Sainte Marie of the

Egyptians," a hateful place, being a deep well between high, damp walls which the sun's rays never reached, and in which were thrown prisoners whom it was desired to isolate entirely. This prison of La Force, from the first a very ruinous place, was in use down to the middle of the nineteenth century and received in its turn a large proportion of French criminality, criminal convicts being confined with political offenders and persons at variance with the government of the hour. On the same register might be read the names of Papavoine, the child slayer, and the poet, Béranger; Lacenaire, notorious for his bloodthirsty murders, and Paul-Louis Courier, the socialist.

An interesting contemporary account of La Force and other prisons of Paris in Napoleonic days has been preserved. M. Paul Corneille, Mayor of Gournay-en-Bray, has published in the *Revue Penitentiaire* the journal of his grandfather, who was an involuntary guest of La Force. The régime in the prison was abominable. Discipline was all a matter of money. Such comfort as the prison afforded was reserved for those only who could pay for it. There were thirty-seven rooms in all. Thirty-four were occupied by those who could pay the rent. The remaining three were for the impecunious. In one case forty-two individuals were crowded into nineteen beds, and in another nineteen persons used eleven beds. The ordinary bedding issued consisted of a mattress, a woollen blanket and a counterpane. A second mattress and sheets might be had for nine francs a month. Prisoners on the "simple pistole" were lodged in the back premises and excluded from the first court. Prisoners on the "double pistole" were somewhat better lodged and served. The "pistole" was the name given to the mode of prison life the prisoner was able to ensure himself by his means, and was so called from the coin of that name. Special small rooms were provided at exorbitant rates; and the gaolers' fees were considerable from all sources, and, when the prison was full, enormous—each prisoner being good for at least a dozen francs the month.

The prison rations were of the most meagre character. A daily loaf of a pound and half of ammunition bread and a spoonful of unpalatable soup would barely have saved the prisoners from starvation, had they not been permitted to buy extra articles at the canteen. The insufficient nourishment and the unsanitary conditions produced many deaths from disease. An abbé, Binet by name, who had been imprisoned for four years as a refractory priest, succumbed, and another was driven by misery to poison himself, which he did by soaking copper covered with verdigris in a liquid, to which he added some mercurial ointment, and then swallowed this disgusting mixture. Prisoners were entirely at the mercy

of the gaolers, who had the monopoly of supplies and charged exorbitant prices. Nothing could be sold except at their shops, where a small fowl cost five francs, three eggs, twelve sous, five small potatoes, fifteen sous. It was the same with drink, the prices of which were excessive and the fluid bad. Many small devices were in force to increase the gains of the gaolers, prisoners being allowed to pay twenty sous for the privilege of sitting up two or three hours later than the regular hour of closing. With all this, the police were constantly in the prisons, seeking information against suspected persons or working up proofs to support a new trial. The most rigorous rules existed as to letter writing; prisoners were allowed to write complaints to the ministers and even to the Emperor himself, but their correspondence passed through the gaoler's hands to the Prefecture of Police, where it was generally lost.

The worst feature of La Force was that children of tender years, often no more than seven years of age, were committed to it for the most trifling misdeeds. They were cruelly ill-used by the gaolers, whip in hand, and they passed their time in idleness, associating with the worst criminals with the result that they grew up thoroughly corrupt.

We have a glimpse of La Force from the record of the imprisonment of the poet, Béranger. The French governments after the Restoration continued to be very sensitive, and frequently prosecuted their critics, even versifiers of such genius as Béranger. They desired to make people good, religious and submissive by law, and invoked it pitilessly against the poet who dared to encourage free-thinking in politics and religion. They were resolved to put down what they deemed the abuse of letters, and to punish not only the preaching of sedition but the open expression of impiety. So, as the persecuted said at the time, poetry was brought into court, and songs, gay and light-hearted, written to amuse and interest, were held to be mischievous, and their writers were sent to prison. Béranger was tried at the assizes in 1822 for having exercised a pernicious influence upon the people, and he was sentenced to three months' imprisonment which he endured at St. Pélagie. He was again arraigned in 1829 on charges akin to the first, and now found himself sentenced to La Force for nine months, and to pay a fine of 10,000 francs, greatly to the indignation of the general public. It was considered a shameful perversion of the law to send the joyous singer to herd with criminals, and he was visited by crowds of right-thinking people from outside, eager to show their sympathy. While in La Force, Béranger devoted himself to exposing some of the worst evils of the régime, especially the improper treatment of the juvenile offenders. On the day of his arrival, when the

gate was opened to admit him, he heard a childish voice exclaim, “Look at the street; how beautiful!” The view within must have been dreary enough to force the contrast with that without—the muddy, dirty side-street with its poor shop-fronts and ugly, commonplace passers-by. He was still more disgusted when they brought the daily rations for these poor little ones: a coarse vegetable soup in great tin cans, which was distributed in rations to each child to be eaten anyhow, without knife, fork or spoon, very much like dogs from a trough. The poet made a vigorous protest to the governor, adding that he wondered these human beings were not obliged to walk like beasts on all fours. The answer he got was that it would cost money to supply utensils; whereupon Béranger took all the expense on himself. He was in fact continually employed in charitable deeds. While in prison he visited all parts of it: the various courts, the “Milk Walk” the “Debtors’ Side” and the “Lions’ Pit,” distributing food and small luxuries, wine, tobacco and bread to the inmates. He listened patiently to all complaints, the injustice of their punishment being, as ever with prisoners, the chief burden of their song. “I see how it is,” he once replied, “the only guilty one here is myself.” But he was always overwhelmed with grateful thanks, and one inmate of the prison composed a poem in his honor. When Béranger received it, he was eager to ascertain the name of his brother songster. He learned that it was the work of Lacenaire, the murderer, then awaiting sentence for his many atrocious crimes.

Another literary prisoner was thrown into La Force about the same time. This was A. Chenu, who afterward published his experiences in a small book entitled “Malefactors.” The first sight that met his eyes on arrival, according to Coquers, was the words, written large upon the wall, “Death to tell-tales.” He was at once approached by the provost, the prisoner who wielded supreme power in the room and whose business it was to collect the sums demanded from new arrivals, who promised protection and help. The provost provided writing materials and arranged the secret conveyance of letters for prisoners, and when one of their frequent quarrels broke out he settled the preliminaries of the duel, which was the only possible end. They were strange fights, as often as not conducted with one knife, the only weapon to be obtained, which the combatants used in turn, after drawing lots for the first stab. Numerous wounds were frequently inflicted on each side with fatal result before honor was satisfied.

St. Pélagie was used as a prison pure and simple during the revolutionary epoch and afterwards, like La Force, received debtors, convicted prisoners and prisoners of State. It was notorious in the Napoleonic régime for having as governor one Wallerand, who deserved to have been dismissed fifty times over,

and was finally proceeded against at law. He had powerful protectors, having married into the family of the Prefect of Police, and was greatly feared for his vindictive temper, which never spared any one who dared to protest against or to complain of their treatment. This governor practised all the exactions already described as prevailing at La Force, and raised the charges of the “pistole” till the prisoners were completely fleeced and ruined.

Instances of Wallerand’s barbarous treatment may be quoted. A prisoner named Thomas was employed by him as a groom, and escaped through an unbarred window in the stable, but was recaptured. Wallerand, furiously angry, threw him into a cell, and ordered that he should be flogged three times a day. Death would probably have been his portion, had not two other prisoners informed an inspector of police, who was visiting the prison and who saved the victim from his keeper’s rage. Wallerand avenged himself by lodging the two informers in the cell just vacated. An ancient priest, after much cruel suffering, fell ill and begged hard that he might be attended by another doctor than the medical attendant of the prison. Wallerand obstinately refused to give his consent, and the old man died. He got into trouble once by entertaining a great party of some hundred and fifty friends in the prison on his fête day. The largest hall in the prison was splendidly decorated and lighted by five hundred candles. The entertainment consisted of the performance of an opera and a grand display of fireworks in the prison court, a great ball and a splendid supper. The police authorities, although well disposed to Wallerand, could not tolerate this impudence, and he was suspended for a time, but received no other punishment.

Among the many foul prisons of the Capital Bicêtre was quite the worst of all, and it was said of it that nowhere else could such horrors be witnessed. At once a prison, a madhouse and refuge for paupers, wretchedness and insanity existed along with vice and crime. John Howard, the English philanthropist, who visited it in 1775, draws a terrible picture of it, which will best be realised by transcribing his own words: “Bicêtre is upon a small eminence about two miles from Paris; if it were only a prison, I should call it an enormous one. But this for men, like the ‘Hopital General’ for women, is indeed a kind of general hospital. Of about four thousand men within its walls, not one-half are prisoners. The majority are the poor, who wear a coarse brown uniform, and seem as miserable as the poor in some of our own country workhouses; the insane; and men that have foul diseases. Each sort is in a court and apartments totally separate from the other and from criminals. These last are confined, some in little rooms about eight feet square, windows three and one-half feet by two, with a grate, but not

many glazed. By counting the windows on one side of the house I reckoned there must be five hundred of those rooms. There is but one prisoner in each. These pay two hundred livres a year for their board. There are others in two large rooms called La Force, on the other side of the courtyard, La Cour Royale, which are crowded with prisoners. Over these two rooms is a general infirmary; and over that an infirmary for the scurvy, a distemper very common and fatal among them.

“In the middle of La Cour Royale are eight dreadful dungeons down sixteen steps; each about thirteen feet by nine, with two strong doors; three chains fastened to the wall and a stone funnel, at one corner of each cell, for air. From the situation of these dreary caverns and the difficulty I found in procuring admittance, I conclude hardly any other stranger ever saw them. That is my reason, and I hope will be my apology, for mentioning the particulars.

“Prisoners make straw boxes, toothpicks, etc., and sell them to visitants. I viewed the men with some attention and observed in the looks of many a settled melancholy; many others looked very sickly. This prison seems not so well managed as those in the city; it is very dirty; no fireplace in any of the rooms, and in the severe cold last winter several hundred perished.”

The condition of Bicêtre during the Napoleonic epoch was almost inconceivably bad. It was very convenient for the officials of the Prefecture, who committed to it almost every one who came into their hands. Disastrous overcrowding was the natural result. When so many were herded together within its narrow limits, fevers and scurvy were epidemic; diseases were particularly engendered by the waters of the wells, which were charged with deleterious constituents. All classes were associated together pell-mell. Prisoners of State, of good character and cleanly life, lived constantly with the dregs of Paris society. The interior régime was regulated upon the same lines as those of the prisons already described. The same tyrannical treatment prevailed, the same extortion, the same lack of even the smallest physical comforts. It might well be styled the new sewer of Paris, and the word Bicêtre was rightly adopted into the current *argot* as a pseudonym for misery and misfortune.

In corroborative testimony of the horrors of Bicêtre I will quote here the description given of it by another witness, who had personal experience of the prison. We shall hear more of Vidocq on a later page, the well-known ex-convict who turned thief catcher and, in a measure, originated the French detective

police system.

“The prison of the Bicêtre,” says Vidocq in his “Memoirs,” “is a neat quadrangular building, enclosing many other structures and many courts, which have each a different name. There is the *grand cour* (great court) where the prisoners walk; the *cour de cuisine* (or kitchen court); the *cour des chiens* (or dogs’ court); the *cour de correction* (or the court of punishment) and the *cour des fers* (or court of irons). In this last court is a new building five stories high. Each story contains forty cells, each capable of holding four prisoners. On the platform, which takes the place of a roof, was night and day a dog named Dragon, who for a time passed in the prison for the most watchful and incorruptible of its kind. Some prisoners managed, at a subsequent period, to corrupt him through the medium of a roasted leg of mutton, which he had the culpable weakness to accept; so true is it that there are no seductions more potent than those of gluttony, since they operate indifferently on all organised beings.

“Near by is the old building, arranged in nearly the same way. Under this were dungeons of safety, in which were enclosed the troublesome and condemned prisoners. It was in one of these dungeons that for forty-three years lived the accomplice of Cartouche, who betrayed him to procure this commutation. To obtain a moment’s sunshine he frequently counterfeited death, and so well did he do this that when he had actually breathed his last sigh, two days passed before they took off his iron collar. A third part of the building, called La Force, comprised various rooms, in which were placed prisoners who arrived from the provinces and were destined like ourselves to the chain.

“At this period the prison of Bicêtre, which is only strong from the strict guard kept up there, could accommodate twelve hundred prisoners; but they were piled on each other, and the conduct of the jailers in no way assuaged the discomforts of the place. A sullen air, a rough tone and brutal manners were exhibited to the prisoners, and keepers were in no way to be softened but through the medium of a bottle of wine or a pecuniary bribe. Besides, they never attempted to repress any excess or any crime; and provided that no one sought to escape, one might do whatever one pleased in the prison, without being restrained or prevented; whilst men, condemned for those crimes which modesty shrinks from naming, openly practised their detestable libertinism, and robbers exercised their industry inside the prison without any person attempting to check the crime or prevent the bestiality.

“If any man arrived from the country well clad and condemned for a first offence, who was not as yet initiated into the customs and usage of prisons, in a twinkling he was stripped of his clothes, which were sold in his presence to the highest bidder. If he had jewels or money, they were alike confiscated to the profit of the society, and if he were too long in taking out his earrings, they were snatched out without the sufferer daring to complain. He was previously warned that if he spoke of it, they would hang him in the night to the bars of his cell and afterwards say that he had committed suicide. If a prisoner, out of precaution when going to sleep, placed his clothes under his head, they waited until he was in his first sleep, and then tied to his foot a stone, which they balanced at the side of his bed. At the least motion the stone fell and, aroused by the noise, the sleeper jumped up; and before he could discover what had occurred, his packet, hoisted by a cord, went through the iron bars to the floor above. I have seen in the depths of winter these poor devils, having been deprived of their property in this way, remain in the court in their shirts until some one threw them some rags to cover their nakedness. As long as they remained at Bicêtre, by burying themselves, as we may say, in their straw, they could defy the rigor of the weather, but at the departure of the chain, when they had no other covering than frock and trousers made of packing cloth, they often sank exhausted and frozen before they reached the first halting place.”

The origin and early history of the Conciergerie has been given in a previous volume, but its records are not yet closed, for it still stands on the Island of the City in close proximity to the Palace of Justice. It has many painful memories associated with its later history, and is more particularly notable as having been the last place of durance of the unfortunate Marie Antoinette. The cell she occupied is still preserved and is decorated nowadays with pictures and memorial inscriptions. Through all the changes that have come over the old prison, the cell in which the Queen of France awaited execution has always been kept religiously intact, although many right-thinking people are ashamed of this hideous relic of an atrocious national crime. The order for the Queen’s execution is still preserved in the archives and runs as follows:—“On the 25th day of the first month of the second year of the French Republic one and indivisible, the woman named Marie Antoinette, commonly called of Lorraine and Austria, wife of Louis Capet, has been removed from this house at the request of the public accuser of the Revolutionary Tribune and handed over to the executioner to be taken to the Place de la Revolution there to suffer death.” The fate that overtook her contrasts painfully with the good intentions of the mild and humane Louis XVI, who soon after his accession sought to improve the Conciergerie prison.

“We have given all our care,” he announced in a decree in 1780, “to mend the prison, to build new and airy infirmaries and provide for the sick prisoners.” A separate quarter was provided for males and females, no one henceforth was consigned to the underground dungeons, the great central court was provided with a shelter from rain, the interior was heated. But these reforms were short-lived. At the outbreak of the Revolution, the worst horrors were revived. An account of the sufferings in this prison are given by Baron Riouffe in his “Memoirs”: “I was thrown,” says he, “into the deepest and foulest dungeon, entirely deprived of light, the atmosphere poisonous, and inconceivable dirtiness around. Seven of us were crowded in this small space, some of them robbers, one a convict condemned to death. We were inspected daily by stalwart warders accompanied by fierce dogs.” This description was confirmed by the author of the “Almanac of Prisons” during the period. The cells were never opened to be brushed out, but occasionally they changed the straw; yet an exorbitant sum was demanded for rent, and it was often said that the Conciergerie was the most profitable hotel in Paris having regard to its charges.

The Conciergerie

The old prison of the Palais de Justice in Paris. When the palace was inhabited by the kings of France, the name “Conciergerie” was given to the part of the building containing the home of the concierge.

Throughout the Napoleonic epoch the Conciergerie was appropriated largely to political prisoners; and at the Restoration it was the last resting-place of Marshal Ney, who left it only to be shot. Comte de La Valette, who had been one of Napoleon’s aides-de-camp, and who was arrested after Waterloo on no other charge than that of loyalty to his old master, was sent also to the Conciergerie, and detained there under sentence of death. The story of his escape, through the devotion of his wife and the friendly assistance of three English gentlemen, two of them officers of the army, is told in his own “Memoirs.” When he was taken to the Conciergerie he was lodged in the cell which had been occupied by Marshal Ney, a long, narrow room, terminated by a window with a shutter that made reading impossible except for a short period on the brightest days. He lay here for some weeks, sustaining himself with the hope of escaping the scaffold, being told that his punishment would be limited to a few years of imprisonment. The cell he occupied was just over the woman’s ward, and this neighborhood irritated and annoyed him greatly; for all day long he could hear their voices chattering continually and using the most abominable language. The two

windows of the Queen's prison had also looked upon this courtyard, and she had been subjected to the same annoyance. It was a dark den at the end of a blind corridor, and during her occupancy had held only a common bedstead, a table and two chairs. The room was divided by a heavy portière, and on the far side a gendarme and gaoler were constantly on duty. When La Valette was most depressed he comforted himself by the thought that he did not suffer as much as this high-born daughter of a long line of emperors. Close alongside his quarters was the condemned cell, but no one was executed while he was there. One man, who had murdered his wife under horrible circumstances, seemed certain to lose his life; but the violent hysterics, into which he fell on returning from court, and which La Valette concluded were caused by his sentence to death, were really the result of joy at his acquittal.

La Valette was not entirely forbidden to see his friends, and many came, bringing him consolation and the more tangible benefits of louis d'or, which came in most fortunately in his subsequent escape. At last his trial came on, and although he was admirably defended he was sentenced to death. Passion still ran high, and it was impossible to extend mercy to an ex-aide-de-camp of the fallen emperor. Madame de La Valette pleaded hard for her husband's life, and she gained an audience with the King himself. He briefly told her that he must do his duty as he had already done it in executing Marshal Ney. Madame de La Valette was one of the Beauharnais family, the niece of the Empress Josephine, who had been given to La Valette as his bride by Napoleon himself. She was possessed of great beauty and great strength of mind. After sentence had been passed she was permitted to visit her husband and to communicate to him the failure of her intercession. When alone with him she apprised him of the plan formed to compass his escape. "I shall come to-morrow evening, bringing with me some of my own clothes. You shall wear them, and, mounting my sedan chair, shall leave the prison in my place. You will be taken to the rue des Saints Pères where M. Baudus will be in waiting, and you will be conducted to a safe hiding-place, where you will wait until the danger is over and you can leave France."

La Valette at first stoutly refused to accept this proposal, which seemed to him far-fetched, and threatened to expose Madame de La Valette to insult and ill-usage when the escape was discovered. A brief struggle between them ended in La Valette at last giving his consent, and the details were arranged. Next evening Madame de La Valette arrived dressed in a long merino mantle lined with fur, and in a small bag she carried a petticoat of black taffeta. She was accompanied by their daughter, a child of twelve or thirteen, and it was arranged that at seven

o’clock, La Valette, having disguised himself, should walk out, taking his young daughter by the hand and being careful to conceal his face as he passed out. It would have been safer to wear a veil, but Madame de La Valette had never done so in her previous visits, and it might cause suspicion. “Also,” she said, “be particularly careful as you go out; any awkwardness would betray you. The doors are very low, and you may catch the feathers of my bonnet. If everything goes well, you will find the gatekeeper will give you his hand politely and see you to the sedan chair.” The child was to follow closely at his heels, and to take her place on her father’s left, so as to prevent the gatekeeper from giving his arm to the fugitive, in which there was a possible danger. After they had dined together, a small family party, the disguise was put on. As La Valette was about to make his attempt he begged his wife to step behind a screen in the room, and remain there as long as possible so as to postpone discovery. “The gatekeeper always comes in as soon as I ring a bell, giving him notice that I am alone,” writes La Valette, “and if you will cough and make a movement behind, showing some one is there, he will wait patiently for a time. The longer this detention the more time I shall have had to get away.” La Valette then went out into the great lodge, where half a dozen officials lounged idly or were seated, watching the lady pass. The gatekeeper only made the remark: “You are leaving earlier than usual, Madame. It is a sad occasion.” He thought she had taken a last farewell of her husband, for the execution was fixed for the following day. The disguised La Valette counterfeited poignant grief extraordinarily well, with handkerchief to eyes and heart-rending expressions of sorrow.

They reached the outer gate at length, where the last guardian sat, keys in hand, one for the iron grating, the other for the wicket beyond, and La Valette was soon outside but not yet free. The sedan chair was there, but no chairmen, no servants. The fugitive got inside under the sentry’s eyes, and shrunk back behind the curtains to avoid observation, but still a prey to the keenest anxiety and ready for any desperate act. Two minutes passed, and seemed a whole year. Then a voice cried, “The fellow has disappeared, but I have got another chairman,” and the sedan was now lifted from the ground and carried across the street, to where a carriage was in waiting on the Quai des Orfevrés. The transfer was quickly effected, the horses whipped up and started at a rapid trot across the Saint Michel Bridge, and so by the rue de la Harpe to the rue Vaugirard behind the Odéon. La Valette began at last to have hope of liberty, which grew when he recognised in the coachman a devoted friend, the Comte de Chasseuon, who spoke to him encouragingly, saying there were pistols in the carriage and that they must be used if required. As the carriage drove on, La Valette exchanged his woman’s

clothes for a groom's suit, and when it stopped he jumped out at the bidding of his friend, M. Baudus, who was to act as his new master.

It was now eight in the evening, pitch dark and the rain falling in torrents; the neighborhood was deserted and silent save when the sound of galloping horses' hoofs were heard, and several gensdarmes passed at a hard gallop. No doubt the escape had been discovered, and pursuit had begun. La Valette, wearied and agitated, having lost one shoe, walked on as best he could, through the mud, following his master into the door of a house in the rue de Grenelle, which was actually the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the residence of the Duc de Richelieu. M. Baudus stopped to speak a few words to the Swiss after bidding La Valette to run up-stairs. "Who is that?" asked the Swiss. "My servant," replied M. Baudus, "going up to his own room." This was enough for La Valette, who hastened to the third floor, where some one met him, and without speaking led him into a room, the door of which was immediately closed on him. There was a stove alight, giving out heat and flame, and La Valette, stretching out his hands to warm them, touched a match box and a candle. He at once accepted this as permission to light up. He found himself in a good sized garret, furnished comfortably with bed, chest of drawers and a table, on which was a scrap of paper with a few words. "Make no noise, only open the window at night time, put on slippers and have patience." On this table was also a bottle of excellent Burgundy, several books and a basket containing toilet appliances. He had fallen among friends certainly, but why in this house, under the same roof as a department of State, presided over by a perfect stranger, the Duc de Richelieu? But M. Baudus was an employee in the office, and he remembered perhaps the Eastern proverb that "the thief in hiding is safest under the walls of the King's castle." It seemed, however, that a certain Madame Bresson, whose husband was cashier in the Foreign Office, had resolved to help the first fugitive seeking safety, in gratitude for the escape of M. Bresson on a previous occasion. The two were now moved to pity and indignation at the ignoble spite vented by the government, and their cruel treatment of political enemies.

La Valette's escape from the Conciergerie spread fear and dismay among the adherents of Louis XVIII. No one went to bed that night in the Tuileries. Reports were circulated that a vast conspiracy had been formed, and the escape was to be a signal for the storm to burst. Some time elapsed before the alarm was given from within the prison. The warder attendant had entered the prisoner's room as usual, but, deceived by the noise made behind the screen, had again withdrawn, to return five minutes later and make closer investigation. He saw Madame de

La Valette standing there alone, and the truth broke in upon him. He turned to run out, but the devoted wife clung to him crying, “Wait, wait, give my husband time, let him get further away.” “Leave go, leave go,” he replied, roughly shaking her off, “I am a lost man;” and he rushed away shouting, “He is gone; the prisoner has escaped!” Dismay and confusion prevailed on all sides. Gaolers, attendants and gensdarmes ran here and there. One or two hurried after the sedan chair, which was still in sight, jogging along the quay, and fell upon it savagely. It was empty, as we know, and his carriage had already removed the fugitive to a distance.

A certain calm now fell upon the bewildered keepers, and more systematic pursuit was organised. Visits were forthwith paid to all La Valette’s friends and acquaintances. Orders were issued to close and watch the barriers, hand-bills were hastily printed, giving particulars of the escape. For half an hour Madame de La Valette was consumed with the liveliest anxiety, but as her husband was not brought back she was satisfied he had not been recaptured. But her situation was painful in the extreme, for the gaolers bitterly reproached her, using threats and curses. Then a high official appeared upon the scene, and, interrogating her rudely, upbraided her angrily for the part she had played. She was plainly told not to look for release and was committed to a room, which she knew had been Marshal Ney’s last resting-place, and was full of the saddest memories. Directly under her windows was the courtyard of the female prison, and she was within earshot of the conversation of the lowest of her own sex. There they kept her in the strictest seclusion, her lady’s maid was not permitted to join her, and she was waited upon by one of the female gaolers. She was not allowed to write or receive letters, or see visitors. Not a syllable of news reached her, and she was left in such increasing anxiety and agitation of mind that she did not sleep for nearly three weeks. La Valette’s little daughter had been received into a convent, where she was not unkindly treated, although the mothers of other inmates objected to their association with the child of a condemned and prosecuted man.

Meanwhile the fugitive had found safety and comparative comfort in the hands of his loyal and devoted friend. He spent the first night at his window, breathing the free air; then towards the small hours slept the sleep of the just. When he woke he found a servant sweeping out his room, and was visited by his host, who assured him he had nothing whatever to fear. Neither the threats launched against those who gave him an asylum nor the rewards promised to those who would betray had the slightest weight with Madame Bresson, who was prepared to watch over him with the most scrupulous fidelity—so much so, that when he

asked for small beer to quench his incurable thirst, he was refused. “We are not in the habit of drinking beer here, and if it is ordered it may suggest that we have some new lodger in the place.” M. Bresson emphasised his caution by the story of a M. de Saint Morin, who was betrayed and perished on the scaffold during the Terror because he would eat a fowl, the bones of which he picked and threw out of the window. They were seen by a neighbor, who knew that the old woman who owned the house could not afford to eat fowls, and it was concluded that she was giving shelter to some one of better class. This led to the discovery and arrest of M. de Saint Morin. “No, no,” said M. Bresson, “you can have as much drink as you please,—syrups and *eau sucré*—but no beer.”

The days passed, the excitement in Paris did not diminish, the police were increasingly active, and it became more and more necessary to smuggle La Valette away. Various plans were suggested, one that he should escape in the carriage of a Russian general, who would pass the barrier, having La Valette concealed in the bottom of the coach. A condition was that the general’s debts to the amount of 8,000 francs should be paid, and the money would have been forthcoming, but he would not move without knowing the name of the fugitive, and this was deemed dangerous to divulge. Another plan was that La Valette should march out of Paris, incorporated with a Bavarian Battalion on its way home. The officer in command readily agreed, and the King of Bavaria, a warm friend of La Valette’s, heartily approved. But the notion became known to the police, and the Bavarian regiment was constantly surrounded by spies enough to arrest the whole battalion.

At last, after waiting eighteen days, Baudus came with the joyful news that certain Englishmen in Paris were willing to give their help in furthering the escape. A Mr. Michael Bruce was the first to move in the business. He was well received in the best French society, and he was approached by certain great ladies, chief among them the Princesse de Vaudémont. Bruce was delighted when invited to assist a distinguished but unfortunate person, unjustly condemned to death, and he at once took into his confidence a British general, Sir Robert Wilson, who had already chivalrously essayed to save the life of Marshal Ney. In common with many of his countrymen he had felt that the hard fate meted out to Napoleon’s chief adherents was a disgrace to the country which had played so large a part in the Emperor’s overthrow. Wilson readily agreed, and took upon himself to make the necessary arrangements. Bruce did not appear; his known sympathy for Ney would have laid him open to suspicion, and he might have drawn the attention of the police to his movements and exposed

La Valette to detection. Sir Robert Wilson sought assistants among the younger officers of the Army of Occupation, and finally chose Captain Allister of the Fifth Dragoon Guards and Captain Hely-Hutchinson of the Grenadier Guards, afterwards the third Earl of Donoughmae. After some discussion it was settled that La Valette should assume the disguise of a British officer, and as such should travel to the frontier by the Valenciennes road to Belgium, that generally taken by the English officers then in Paris. Some little difficulty was found in obtaining the necessary uniform, but it was at last made to La Valette's measure by the master tailors of his Majesty's guards.

On the evening of the ninth of January, 1816, La Valette bade farewell to the hosts, who had so nobly protected him and walked as far as the rue de Grenelle, where he found a cabriolet awaiting him, driven by the same faithful friend, the Comte de Chasseuon, by whose aid he had escaped from the Conciergerie. They passed the tall railings of the Tuileries gardens, and laughed at the long series of sentinels, any one of whom would have gladly checked their progress, and at length reached the rue du Hilder, where Captain Hely-Hutchinson had an apartment. His three English friends, Sir Robert Wilson, Hely-Hutchinson and Michael Bruce, were there to welcome him, and they all sat down to talk rapidly over the important adventure fixed for the following day. The general was very precise in his instructions. They must be moving early, awake and up at 6 o'clock. La Valette was as spruce and smart as became a captain in the guards. "I shall call for you at 8 A. M. in my own open cabriolet, as I mean to drive you myself as far as Compiègne," said he. "Hutchinson, here, will accompany us on horseback."

All happened as planned. Although some surprise was expressed at the sight of a general officer in full uniform, driving in a gig, no questions could be addressed to a person of his rank. The guards turned out and saluted, and the barrier of Clichy was reached without accident; then the first post-house at La Chapelle, where the horse was changed. Here a party of gensdarmes seemed disposed to be inquisitive, but Captain Hely-Hutchinson dismounted and gossiped with them on the coming arrival of troops. More gensdarmes were encountered along the road, but none accosted them, and La Valette hugged his pistol close and would have resisted recapture. There was a long halt at Compiègne awaiting the general's large carriage, which Captain Ellister was bringing after them from Paris. It was during this half that Sir Robert Wilson, having caught sight of some straggling gray hairs beneath La Valette's wig, produced a pair of scissors and deftly acted as barber in removing them. Taking the road in the new carriage they sped along

rapidly through the night, and reached Valenciennes, the last French town, at 7 o'clock in the morning. Here the captain of gendarmerie on duty summoned them to his presence to exhibit their passports, but Sir Robert Wilson refused haughtily. "Let him come to me. It is not the custom for a general officer to wait on captains. There are the passports; he can do as he pleases." It was bitterly cold, the officer was abed and did not care to turn out, but gave the passports his *visé* without more ado. A last obstacle offered in the person of an officious custom-house officer, but he was quickly satisfied, and the frontier was passed in safety. Some close chances had been surmounted on the way. They ran the risk of detection at the various post-houses, where the carriage was examined closely and the passengers interrogated. Once the identity of La Valette was questioned; he was travelling under the assumed name of Colonel Losack, and no such name could be found in the British army list, but Sir Robert Wilson carried it off with a high hand. A nearer danger was that La Valette had very marked features, and he was well known to many officials, having been Napoleon's Postmaster General, while the hand-bills notifying the escape and describing him in detail had been very widely distributed. At one town, Cambray, a dangerous delay occurred through the obstinacy of the English sentry at the gate, who refused to call up the guardian to pass them through during the night. He had received no orders to that effect and was deaf to all entreaties, although they came from a general officer.

From Valenciennes the carriage proceeded to Mons, and arrived there in time to dine. La Valette then continued his journey towards Munich, where he was most hospitably received by the Elector of Bavaria. Sir Robert Wilson made the best of his way back to Paris by another road, and arrived in the capital after an absence of no more than sixty hours. Now misfortune came upon him, and the three generous and disinterested friends fell into the hands of the police. One of the innumerable spies on the lookout for La Valette came upon Sir Robert Wilson's carriage, covered with mud in the stable, and learned that the general had just returned after a long journey to the North. The general's servant was found, and, being questioned, admitted that the general had just been to Mons with an officer of the guards who could not speak English. A watch was set on this servant, who was the general's messenger when communicating with the British Embassy. The servant was suborned, and for a price promised to bring any letters written by Sir Robert first to the Préfet of Police. One was addressed to Earl Grey in London, and it contained a full and particular account of the escape. On the strength of the evidence thus unfairly obtained, the three Englishmen, Wilson, Hely-Hutchinson and Bruce, were arrested.

The English ambassador, Sir Charles Stuart, declined to interfere on behalf of his compatriots. His answer was that these gentlemen had broken the law by interfering with the course of French justice, and they must abide by their acts. Accordingly, they were lodged in the prison of La Force, and in due time brought to trial at the Assize Court. Sir Robert Wilson appeared in the dock in the full uniform of a general officer, his breast covered with decorations and orders, for he had served with great distinction, and was especially favored by the continental sovereigns, whose troops he had often led on the field. Captain Hely-Hutchinson wore the uniform of an officer of the British guards. Mr. Michael Bruce appeared as a private gentleman. All admitted the truth of the charge, and it was not thought necessary to advance proof, but Madame de La Valette (who had been detained six weeks in prison) was brought into court and questioned. She evoked much respectful sympathy, and was overcome with deep emotion at the sight of her husband's chivalrous preservers. "I have never seen any of them before, but I shall never forget them and all that I owe to them so long as I live," was her cry.

When put upon their defence, the prisoners all boldly justified their conduct. "The appeal made to our humanity and national generosity," declared Sir Robert Wilson, "was irresistible. We would have done as much for the most obscure person in the same dread situation. Perhaps we were imprudent, but we would rather incur that reproach than that of having abandoned a man in sore straits, who threw himself into our arms." "Whatever respect I owe this tribunal," added Mr. Bruce, "I owe it also to myself to affirm that I do not feel the slightest compunction for what I have done." The judge summed up impartially, but declared that the law must be vindicated, and a verdict of guilty was returned, followed by the minimum sentence of three months' imprisonment. The large verdict of public opinion was and still is entirely in their favor. Even the outraged majesty of the French law was soon soothed, for the Government repented of its vindictive treatment of men, whose chief offence was loyalty to a fallen master, and, although unhappily they could not bring the gallant Marshal Ney to life, they pardoned La Valette and suffered him to return to France. The hardest measure meted out to the two officers came from their military superiors. The Duke of York, Commander-in-Chief of the British army, forfeited their commissions with a scathing reprimand. The infraction of discipline was soon condoned by the nobility of the action, and ere long the offenders were reinstated in their commands.

CHAPTER II
THE GREAT SEAPORT PRISONS

The *bagnes*, the survival of the old galleys at Brest, Rochefort and Toulon—Character and condition of the convicts—Day and night at the galleys—Forgery of official documents and bank notes—Robberies cleverly effected by expert thieves—Severe discipline enforced—The *bastonnade*—Cruelties of the warders—Escapes very frequent—Petit, a man impossible to hold—Hautdebont—The *payole* or letter-writer, a post of great profit—Usury at the *bagne*—Wanglan an ex-banker does a large business in money lending, and creates a paper currency—Some convicts always in funds—Collet lives in clover—Sharp measures taken with usurers.

Some attempt was made in 1810 to improve the French prison system, and the *maisons centrales*, or district prisons, were instituted; but no great progress was made with them. At that time the principal punishment inflicted was labor in chains at the seaports in the so-called *bagnes* of Brest, Rochefort and Toulon, or the *travaux forcés*, the survival of the old galleys, the population of which found a permanent home ashore, when the warships ceased to be propelled by human power. These *bagnes* will now be described. The earlier records have already been given in the volume immediately preceding.

The name *bagnes*, which was at one time in general use to express these hard labor prisons, is derived from *bagnio*, the bath attached to the Seraglio at Constantinople, which was the Turkish establishment for galley slaves. The *bagnes* were sometimes known as *prisons mouillés*, or floating prisons, because the prisoners were for a long time housed in hulks; but as their numbers increased, buildings were at length erected on the shore, containing vast dormitories, each capable of holding five or six hundred prisoners. The grand total at the Naval Arsenal often exceeded several thousand men. The régime was not exactly severe. The labor was easy, and consisted of little more than rough jobs about the wharves, moving guns to and fro, storing shot and shell, occasionally excavating for new buildings. As described by an eye-witness,

penal labor was a mere farce. “The bulk of the convicts,” wrote the Director of Naval Arsenals, in 1838, “do no more than doze. They may be seen, eight or ten of them, following a light cart, not half laden, which they pull in turn, two and two. The hospital is full of them as invalids or nurses. They are to be found in private houses and hotels, engaged as private servants.” In earlier days things had been much worse.

Under the Directory and under the First Empire many who possessed private means were allowed to purchase improper privileges. A certain old convict at Rochefort was allowed to go at large in the town, where he was admitted into society and welcomed for his affable manners. He went so far as to make overtures to the authorities to purchase his release, by building and equipping a ship-of-war at his own expense. It was said in those days that Napoleon I was willing to forgive crimes at a price; that big robberies were sometimes condoned by a gift to the State. One convict, Delage, sentenced for embezzlement, was a man of large private fortune, which he was allowed to spend freely in ameliorating his condition. He arrived at Rochefort in a carriage and pair, escorted by two gensdarmes. He was located in a separate room at the Hospital, which he furnished comfortably, and later his wife and children joined him at the *bagnes*. He was in the habit of leaving the prison every morning at gun-fire to spend the day with his family, and return in the evening, on the excuse that he had a situation in the port, and must sleep on board the ship. This man was known as *le joli forçat* on account of his good looks and pleasant demeanor. Others of the same class were to be seen parading the town in fashionable garb, bearing the badge of their real position only in the basil, or ankle-iron, which all were obliged to wear. Criminals with accomplishments or skill in trades could always find remunerative employment. Private families found tutors for their children and music or dancing masters in the *bagnes*, while all high officials might employ convict coachmen, grooms and cooks.

For the rest, life was irksome. The progress of the ordinary prisoner has been well described by Maurice Alhoy, who paid many visits of inspection to the various *bagnes*. The journey to the coast was made in the cellular carriage, which came into use in 1830, in substitution for the abominable chain gang, by which the wretched *forçats* marched through France. The way was long, the coach moved at a foot pace, there was no rest or ease on the road. On arrival the passengers, broken with fatigue, were carried to the reception ward, identified, examined, stripped of their clothes and dressed in the uniform of the *bagne*,—a crimson blouse, yellow pantaloons and a coarse canvas shirt. These clothes were

covered with marks, the first syllable of the word *galérien*, “GAL,” in black letters. A woollen cap of red or green, according to the term of sentence, covered the head. When dressed and passed fit for full labor (*grande fatigue*), the coupling took place. For long years French *forçats* were chained together in pairs, and the merest chance decided upon the chain companionship. The pair, thus indissolubly joined for a term of years, might begin as perfect strangers to each other, having nothing in common, neither ways nor tastes, not even language. The coupling was accomplished by first riveting an iron ring above the ankle, to which one end of the chain was attached, the other end being riveted to the ankle of his fellow. The whole chain measured nine feet, half of it belonging of right to each. But if each had different ideas and intentions, they naturally pulled in opposite directions, the limit of difference being reached at nine feet. Sometimes, as at the hour of mid-day rest, there was a difference of opinion between the partners. One might wish to walk, the other to be quiet; but the to and fro movement of the first dragging at the chain would disturb the second, and then the matter could only be settled by a fight or a compromise. To quarrel was to risk punishment, so the usual course was for one to take out a pack of cards and cry: “*Je te joue tes maillons*,” “I will play you for your half of the chain.” The game would proceed calmly while the stake, the disputed chain, lay coiled between the players; and in the end, according to the issue, both would walk, or both would lie down to sleep. Often enough one of a couple was quite indifferent as to the behavior of his chain-companion. A case was known where a fight was started between a *chaussette*, or convict, permitted to go about singly, and one of a chain couple. In the course of the struggle the second and passive member of the twins, who had watched it quite unconcernedly, was dragged nearer to the edge of a deep ditch by his companion, into which both were nearly precipitated. Had not the conflict ceased both would probably have been drowned.

The first three days after arrival were allowed for rest and recovery. On the fourth day at gun-fire (6 A. M. in winter and 5 A. M. in summer) the new arrival’s chain was released from the bar, which ran the length of the wooden guard bed, the night’s resting-place for all, and he was marched out with his fellow convict to labor. On passing through the great gates a blacksmith struck with a hammer upon the leg iron to test its solidity. A short pause followed for the issue of a ration of sour wine, and the parties were then distributed to the various works in hand. It was for the most part unskilled labor, mere brute force applied to moving heavy burdens. They were harnessed like beasts to carts, laden with stone, or set to work in gangs at raising the great weight of the pile driver, or

operating the steel drill, driven down into the solid rock. But work was continued incessantly and in all weathers, “rain or shine,” in the pelting storm and under the fierce rays of the summer sun, with a short rest at mid-day; bodies thrown down anywhere they stood, when the signal was given. Work went on for ten hours daily until the hour of return to the *bagne*, where the evening meal, the common feed at the trough, awaited them. Each squad, a dozen or more, gathered round the same *gamelle*, or great tub, filled with a mess of bean soup, into which they dipped their wooden spoons, fighting like dogs over a bone, each for his portion. The weakest fared worst, and the strongest and greediest carried off the lion’s share. The same vessel was passed from hand to hand, and they drank foul water with dirty mouths. After the sorry feast an hour or two of idleness followed, and the convicts lay on the great wooden bed (*rama*), conversing with one another. At last the whistle for all to “turn in” was heard, when every one, without undressing, rolled himself in his grass blanket, and sought oblivion, often vainly, in sleep. Nothing now broke the silence but the footsteps of the night watchman going his rounds under the dim light of the oil lamps, and the occasional falling of his hammer as he struck the bars and chains to be certain that they had not been tampered with. When this was done just before the rising hour it was called “morning prayer.”

Use becomes second nature, and many *forçats* could bring themselves to endure the miseries and discomforts of the life at the *bagne*. They had their hours of relaxation, which they spent in the manufacture of fancy articles, to be sold for the few francs that helped to increase and improve their daily rations according to their taste. Some kept and trained dogs to perform marvellous tricks or taught mice to draw a carriage. A convict well known in his time, nicknamed Grand Doyen, who had done forty out of sixty years in various prisons, is remembered for his extraordinary power of taming rats. By a strange contrast this Grand Doyen was a man of cruel character and abominable temper, who was ever at enmity with his fellows. He was constantly in gaol, now for fraud, now for robbery with violence, at last for murder, with extenuating circumstances. He spent all his life, from the age of nineteen, in detention of some sort. No one liked him, and in his loneliness he captured a young rat, and trained it to live with him. He began by drawing its teeth and shortening its tail. He taught it all kinds of tricks, harnessed it to a cart, and secured it with a collar and chain, which he fastened to a waistcoat button, leaving sufficient length to the chain to allow the vermin to shelter in his waistcoat pocket. Once, when at Bicêtre waiting for a chain, Grand Doyen let the rat loose to run about the yard, where it was pounced upon by the prison cat. Grand Doyen, in defence of his pet,

promptly killed the cat with his wooden sabot. Then the rat got into trouble by gnawing a hole in a convict's clothes, and an order for his execution was forthwith issued. Grand Doyen, in despair, saved his friend by substituting another rat, which he had caught on purpose, and decorated with the chain of his favorite before handing it up to justice. The warder asked why he had not killed the rat as ordered, and was put off by the excuse that he had not the heart, so he brought it now to the warder, who was not so sensitive, and hammered it on the head with his key. The pet rat was still alive, safely hidden by Grand Doyen, who was on the point of removal from Bicêtre. How was he to get it past the gates? Inventiveness was stimulated by the difficulty, and Grand Doyen, being in possession of one of those enormous loaves in which French ration bread is baked, tore out the crumb in the centre, and made a comfortable hole for his pet. Then, carrying his loaf under his arm, he took his place on the chain, and passed safely through the gates.

Hospice de la Bicêtre

A celebrated hospital founded by Louis XIII in 1632 for invalid officers and soldiers. It is now devoted to the aged, the incurable poor, and the insane.

The ingenuity of the prisoners was equalled by their industry. The most unpromising materials and the rudest tools served to produce the most artistic pieces. Cocoanut shells, beautifully carved, formed elegant goblets. Old bones were converted into chessmen or paper knives or penholders, the tools by which they were shaped being scraps of iron picked up in the yards. The products of their cleverness were not always avowable or harmless. The *bagne* was often the home of false money makers, and their audacity must have been something marvellous. That prisoners employed in the workshops should be able to escape observation and manufacture files, keys and other tools to be employed in compassing escape, was not so strange; but it was almost incredible, that, working in the open or under the shelter of a ship's side, they could cast metal coins, having first made the molds and melted the substances, then polish and perfect them so as to deceive any but the sharpest eye. There were still more marvellous frauds accomplished. Forgery and all kinds of imitation of signatures, the preparation of official documents, even the seals to attach to them, were within the powers of these clever convicts. One case is on record, in which release was all but secured by means of a forged authority, but at the last moment one document was missing, and when search was made for it among the papers in the office, the fraud was discovered. In this instance several signatures had been imitated, including that of the Chancellor and the King himself. On another occasion one of the trade-instructors received a letter, enclosing a note for five hundred francs, but unhappily found, when rejoicing at his good fortune, that the bank-note was false, although it had deceived many expert persons.

When a certain tradesman got into money difficulties, and his papers were seized by a sheriff's officer, one paper was found amongst them, which he had been foolish enough to retain. It was a letter from a convict in the *bagne* of Rochefort, claiming payment for the fabrication of a receipt at the instance of the bankrupt. "May I remind you," ran the letter, "that at your request I manufactured a receipt, for which you promised me two louis, if the document served its purpose. As it was exactly what you wanted I now claim the completion of your promise. You can pass the two louis in to me by enclosing them in half a pound of butter, which I can receive at the canteen. I trust that you will not oblige me to

apply to you again." This letter was handed over to the police, with the result that the fraudulent tradesman was arrested and sentenced to ten years for having made use of the false receipt.

The most adroit thieves were to be met with at the *bagne*. Extraordinary stories are preserved of the daring ingenuity and marvellous skill in which the thefts were carried out. The story is told of a bishop, who visited the *bagne*, and who was moved to great pity for one unhappy criminal, to whom, after exhortation, he gave his blessing and his hand to kiss. As usual he carried on his middle finger his Episcopal ring with a valuable precious stone. When he left the prison, the ring had disappeared. It is not recorded in what manner it was abstracted, nor whether Monseigneur recovered his jewel. On another occasion a convict actually stole a cashmere shawl from the back of a visiting lady. The victim was Mdlle. Georges, a famous actress, who, when visiting the *bagne* of Toulon, spoke kindly to several of the inmates, and was especially drawn to sympathise with one of good address, who had once been an actor. This man actually purloined her shawl, and in triumph started to carry it off, but had the good taste to bring it back and replace it on her shoulders, exclaiming, "This is the first time I have ever made voluntary restitution." At another time a watch was stolen from one of the visitors, who was examining the articles which the convicts offered for sale. The chief guardian, certain that the thief must be among a particular group of convicts, declared that he would flog them in turn until the watch abstracted had been given back. The punishment was actually in progress, when the official received a letter from the visitor who had been robbed, saying that on his return to his hotel he had been met by a poor creature, dressed in a ragged old blouse, who approached and handed him a small parcel containing his watch. It had been passed out, either by the culprit himself or one of his comrades, and was now surrendered under threat of the *bastonnade*.

An expert thief known in all the *bagnes* was Jean Gaspard, who, although crippled and compelled to walk on crutches, could use his hands, the only good limbs left him, with wonderful skill. His ostensible business was that of a wandering beggar, and he relied upon his infirmities to insinuate himself into crowds of people. He then worked with ready skill, and managed to pass his plunder to friendly accomplices, who removed it to a distance. He was a professional thief. He had inherited his skill from his forbears. His father and mother, his brothers and sisters, all his relatives, in short, were thieves; and some of them had suffered the extreme penalty of the law.

Thieving at the *bagne* was greatly encouraged by the facilities that offered for getting rid of the plunder. The business of “receiving” flourished when the gangs marched to and fro, free people hanging about, who managed to enter into relations with the thieves.

The administration of the *bagnes* left much to be desired. The discipline was severe, even cruel, and relied chiefly upon the lash, the *bastonnade* as it was called, which might be inflicted for all sorts of offences. Attempts to escape, extending to sawing through irons or the assumption of disguises, were punished by the whip; also a theft of value up to five francs, drunkenness, gambling, smoking and fighting with comrades. Any convict might be flogged, who made away with his clothing, wrote clandestine letters, or was found in possession of a sum of more than ten francs. There were graver penalties for escape and recapture. In the case of a convict sentenced for life, the punishment for escape, upon recapture, was three years of the double chain—that is he was kept in close confinement, and not allowed to go to work in the open air. An extension of the term of imprisonment by three years was the punishment for those sentenced to shorter terms. A theft of more than five francs was met with extension of term. Last of all the guillotine was the penalty for striking an officer or killing a comrade, or for entering into any combined plan of revolt.

Repression and safe custody were the guiding principles of the *bagnes*. Their supreme rulers, who were always naval officers, commissaries of the marine ranking with captains, might at times realise that they had a higher duty than that of keeping a herd of black sheep, but any idea of amelioration or improvement rarely entered their heads. They were rough old sailors, of coarse manners, with little of the milk of human kindness, imposing their authority harshly, exacting submission with a word and a blow. Some revolting stories are preserved of the cruelties of the *garde-chiourmes*, the slang name of the officers of the bagne.

Several couples of convicts were once at work unloading a cargo of wood. Some sorted out the wood, while others levelled a mound of earth and piled up the barrows, which were dragged away. One of a chained couple suddenly struck work, declaring that he could hardly stand, from fever and weakness. “You shall go to hospital to-morrow,” replied his officer. “Go on working now. I will give you a dose of medicine to help,” and with that he applied his stick to the poor creature’s back. His comrade thereupon charged himself with the whole labor, and drew the barrow alone, while the sick man staggered along, becoming worse and worse every moment, and unable even to carry the weight of the chain. Then

his companion lifted him in his arms on to the barrow, and proceeded to drag it along. The guardian, resenting this act as defiance of his will, applied his stick to the back of the good Samaritan, calling forth redoubled effort, which ended in the upset of the barrow, which dragged over the sick man, who died then and there. This story is vouched for by an eye-witness of the atrocity. He rewarded the kindly convict, and would have reported the guardian, but was afterwards unable to recognise him.

The régime, as we have seen, was tyrannical, but it must often have been lax, to judge by the frequency of the escapes at the *bagnes*. The regulations were stringent. Notice of an escape was immediately proclaimed by three guns, and flags were run up at all commanding points. At the same time the personal description of the fugitive was circulated through the neighborhood, and brigades of gensdarmes were sent in pursuit. Handsome rewards were offered for recapture; twenty-five francs (five dollars) if it was effected within the port, double that amount if within the town and one hundred francs (twenty dollars) for apprehension beyond the walls. In spite of all, the determination to break prison, a fixed idea with all animals in captivity, was always present with the inmates of the *bagne*. It has well been said that the prisoner, in his endeavors to escape, displays skill and energy enough to win him inevitable success in any reputable line of life. The stories of the results achieved at the *bagnes*, the conquest of many difficulties, the triumph over all surveillance, imperfect, perhaps, but systematic and generally alert, read like a fairy tale.

One undefeated convict, by name Petit, escaped continually. He was always getting the better of his gaolers. He took a pride in stating precisely the hour at which he would arrive at Toulon and the day upon which he would leave it a free man. The event always came off exactly. Petit, at one time, when recaptured, after escaping from Brest, was lodged in the prison at Abbeville. He at once warned the prison officials that he could not stay in such an unsatisfactory prison. On the next day he had disappeared. He had broken into a room where the linen was kept, climbed several high walls, fell at length into the garden and got out and away, although his two feet were chained together. He got rid of his irons outside the walls, and had the audacity to return and sell them openly in the market place of Abbeville.

Opportunity and good luck usually favored escape. Hautdebont was a convict tailor employed in the workshops where the guardians' uniforms were made up. He caught sight of a new suit hanging on a peg, which he calculated would fit

him, and at a moment when the master-tailor's eye was withdrawn, Hautdebont took down the uniform, put it on and walked out. Unhappily for the fugitive the suit was immediately missed. The foreman tailor raised an alarm, and Hautdebont was quickly caught and sentenced, among other penalties, to lose his place in the tailor's shop. Excessive bad luck was the portion of the convict who had exactly calculated that, by surmounting the boundary wall at a particular point, he would reach a certain retired and solitary street. All went well till, having surmounted the wall, he lowered himself on the far side to fall straight into a cart, where a guardian was taking his mid-day rest. He awoke and snapped greedily at the hundred francs' reward which had fallen straight into his hands.

Convicts have often to thank their own quick-wittedness and self-possession for succeeding in attempted escape. One convict at Brest, helped by a free workman, who had promised him shelter and a suit of plain clothes, reached the outskirts of the town, where he made up as a laborer, concealed his closely cropped hair under an old hat, borrowed a barrow and a pick and started off for Orleans as if he were in search of a job. His leisurely gait and frequent halts betrayed no feverish desire to get away. The people gave him *bon jour* as he passed, and the gensdarmes whom he met accepted a pinch of snuff; and he went on his way without interference. He marched thus for a couple of hundred miles, taking by-roads, still wheeling his barrow before him, resting by night in the woods, and at last reaching Orleans in the heart of France, where he found friends, who helped him out of the country.

Ingenuity and boldness of plan of escape were often equalled by the limitless patience with which it was pursued. More than once a long passage was tunnelled underground, leading to liberty beyond the Arsenal walls, and this in spite of surveillance and the galling inconvenience of carrying chains. In one case a space had been contrived at the end, large enough to contain the disguises, into which the fugitives were to change when the moment arrived, and to store the food saved up for the journey. The paving stones were taken up, and places of concealment contrived beneath to hide the intending fugitive until pursuit had passed on. Once a man got within a heap of stones, and presently more stones were brought outside to add to the heap. He narrowly escaped being built in alive. By desperate efforts he broke through and gained the boundary wall, which he escaladed, and fell into the arms of a couple of fishermen on the far side, who seized him and took him back to the *bagne*. The promised reward was generally too strong a temptation to working men to let a fugitive go free.

There were convicts with no sense of loyalty to their comrades, always ready to betray an intended escape, eager to gain the reward. Others, again, had invented a strange business, that of giving assistance to a comrade, resolved to attempt an escape, by helping him in the work of excavation, or of standing sentinel to prevent surprise by the guard. On the arrival of any convict, known to be well furnished with funds, he was approached by these friends with proposals. Sometimes the kindly convict made a double coup,—for when he had started to escape he betrayed the plot and was paid the authorised reward by the other side. The guards sometimes encouraged an attempt to escape, and then turned on the would-be fugitive after he had gone so far from the prison to be worth the full sum of a hundred francs.

Great cleverness in preparing, and promptitude in assuming, a disguise was frequently shown. One convict manufactured the whole of an officer's uniform out of paper, which he painted and completed so as to escape detection. Petit, who has been mentioned already, whose escapes were almost miraculous, got away once from the court at Amiens, after being recaptured, by entering the dressing-room of the advocates, where he stole a robe and wig, in which he walked out into the street. A convict named Fichon, at Toulon, disappeared so effectually that it was concluded he had left for good. But he was still on hand, although the most minute searches were fruitless. He had hidden under water in the great basin of the dockyard, and had arranged a leather duct to bring him air from the surface. At night he emerged from his moist asylum, landed, ate his food, placed for him by his friends, and at daybreak took to the water again.

Long brooding on the impossibilities of regaining freedom has been known to produce mania. An Italian, named Gravioly, at the *bagne* of Rochefort, was driven mad by his failures to escape. He was sentenced for life after three brutal attempts to murder. The hopelessness of his condition led him to secrete a knife, with which he suddenly wounded the adjutant of the day, broke his chain and ran amuck through the prison, brandishing his weapon and attacking all who tried to stop him. Another adjutant fell before him, and the guard at the gate he killed. Another murderer, of exemplary prison character, after years of good behavior in the maritime hospital, struck one of the nursing sisters a fatal blow, which severed her head. It was supposed that she had discovered his intention to escape, and he was unable to persuade her to hold her tongue. In these days we should call this man a homicidal maniac, but he was executed; and, on mounting the scaffold, smiled pleasantly at the guillotine.

The disciplinary methods at the *bagnes* were brutal enough, but the severity of the system was softened by privileges and concessions, that would not be tolerated in any modern prison. It was much the same as in Australia in the early days and at this moment in the Spanish penal colony at Ceuta. The freedom given to some convicts in service naturally favored escape, and in one case a high official was robbed of his full uniform by a convict employé, who, having changed his costume, mounted his master's horse and rode off through the principal gate, after having received the compliments of the sentries and guards at the grand entrance. When the reins were tightened and these improper privileges were forbidden, others of a minor and mitigating character still survived. There were situations in the service of the prison, as sweepers, barbers, cooks and lamplighters. Some became gardeners, others coopers, more were nurses and bedmakers in the hospital, and a few were permitted to act as hucksters in the sale of food and condiments within the prison buildings. A post of great profit was that of *payole* or prison scribe, which was given to an educated convict who was allowed to write the letters of his comrades. The *payole* became the confidant of every one, and knew all their most precious secrets. Often enough he abused his position, and, after eloquently stating the case to a prisoner's family, would misappropriate the funds forwarded by soft-hearted relations. The *payole* was constantly the author of the so-called "Jerusalem letters," the equivalent of the begging letter or veiled attempts at blackmail, which often issued in large numbers from the *bagnes*.

Reference has been made already to the ingenious manufacture of articles for sale, but a less honorable, although more profitable, trade was that of usury, which long flourished in the *bagnes*. The business was started by an ex-banker named Wanglen, who was condemned to *travaux forcés* in the time of the Empire. He brought with him to the *bagne* a certain amount of capital, carefully concealed, and with the skill acquired in his business he trafficked in usury, and made advances, like any pawnbroker, upon the goods and valuables secretly possessed by his fellows as well as upon the *pécule* or monthly pittance accorded as wages to the convicts. He had so large a trade that he created a paper currency to take the place of the specie so generally short in the prison. But his business suffered seriously from the competition that might have been expected in such a place; for after a time his notes were cleverly imitated by forgers, and he had no redress but to return to cash payments. This man Wanglen is said to have made a great deal of money by the time he retired from business, and to have had many successors. When a borrower could offer no tangible security the good word of a convict reputed to be a man of substance was accepted instead; and such men

were to be found in the *bagnes*.

A notable one was the celebrated Collet, whose criminal career will be detailed further on. Collet, strange to say, was always in funds. According to M. Sers, who wrote at some length on the *bagnes*, from facts under his own observation, Collet, during the twenty years of his imprisonment, was never known to hold a single centime more, in the hands of the official paymaster, than the regulation allowance, yet he lived luxuriously the whole of these twenty years. He always wore respectable clothing and the finest underlinen, very different from that supplied by the prison; he lived on the fat of the land, despising the mess of pottage, the horrible haricot of beans, that made up the daily ration. He was supplied always with abundant and succulent repasts from the best hotel in the town. The source of his wealth and the means used to bring it to his hand were secrets never divulged during his long term of imprisonment, although inquiries were constantly made, and every effort tried to unravel the mystery. The secret died with him; and even after death nine pieces of gold were found sewn into his waistcoat pocket.

The authorities in due course set their faces against these convict usurers, called *capitaines*, whose processes were very properly condemned as tending to demoralise convicts and aggravate their miserable condition. A very strict surveillance was instituted, and when detected the *capitaines* were severely punished. Sometimes they were flogged; but other methods were tried, one in particular, calculated to bring the culprit into ridicule, always a potent weapon in dealing with Frenchmen. The prison barber was ordered to shave the culprit’s head, leaving one lock only upon the crown. He was then dressed as an old woman, and made to sit upon a barrel at the entrance to the prison, where he was exposed to the jeers of his comrades on their return from labor. The same measure was meted out to the *capitaine’s* assistants, for the big men always employed a number of agents or canvassers in extending their business.

Thus, it is seen, that ours is a world of worlds, one within the other; and assuredly the prison world is not less interesting, though much less inviting than many others held in greater esteem.

CHAPTER III
CELEBRATED FRENCH CONVICTS

Life history of some noted convicts—Collet travels through Europe—In trouble at Montpelier, arrested and lodged in gaol—Brought to hotel to amuse the Préfet's guests—Escapes as a cook's boy—Fresh swindles—Arrested and sent to *bagnes*—Other remarkable convicts—Salvador or Jean Ferey, full of strange tricks and laughing at iron bars—The Marquis de Chambreuil—Cognard, the false Comte Pontis de Sainte Helene—Vidocq—His personal experiences at the *bagnes*—Escape from Brest—Recapture—Other remarkable escapes.

The quality of the criminals upon which the *bagne* laid its hands will be best realised by describing one or two of the most notable convicts who passed through them.

A very remarkable person was Anselme Collet, who has had few equals in his nefarious profession, that of swindler on the widest scale. He was essentially the product of his age, which undoubtedly encouraged his development and afforded him peculiar facilities for the display of his natural gifts. Chief among these were boundless audacity, readiness of resource, an attractive person, insinuating address, and skill to assume many different parts.

Collet was born at Belley, in the department of the Ain, and from his earliest days gave evidence of a desire to go wrong. He was a born thief and an unmitigated liar, and as he was constantly in trouble his family handed him over to a maternal uncle, a priest, on the point of expatriating himself because he could not take the oath exacted from all ecclesiastics. Three years later Collet returned from Italy and entered the military school at Fontainebleau, and was presently incorporated as a sub-lieutenant in an infantry regiment. He had seen too much of the priests to take kindly to soldiering, and when in garrison at Brescia, he spent more time in the Capuchin monastery than in the barracks. Soon after this his regiment went on service, and he was seriously wounded.

While in hospital at Naples he nursed a French major, who died in his arms and gratefully bequeathed him all he possessed, a sum of three thousand francs and some valuable jewelry. When Collet was discharged from the hospital, he joined the monks and was associated with a body of missioners destined for La Pouille. Collet's task was that of treasurer. Returning to his monastery on one occasion, he found himself short of three thousand francs, which he had embezzled, and he saw nothing for it but flight. He had been kindly received by the syndic of the town, from whose office he had stolen a number of passports signed in blank. He had no intention of staying at the monastery, and persuaded the superior that he had an inheritance to claim in France, to which, being a deserter, he dared not return. He got a letter of introduction to a banker at Naples, and was entrusted with a valuable diamond ring and commissioned to buy another like it in that city. Collet managed to swindle the banker out of 22,000 francs, kept the ring, bought a smart suit of clothes and, filling up a blank passport as the Marquis de Darda, proceeded to Capua. Here he picked up a portfolio containing the papers of Chevalier de Tolozan, which title he now adopted with the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor, and passed on to Rome. Here he found a French ecclesiastic, a native of Lyons and an intimate of the Tolozan family, who took Collet under his wing and introduced him to Cardinal Fesch, Napoleon's uncle and the then Archbishop of Lyons. Collet made the most of his time, and swindled people, right and left,—60,000 francs here and 20,000 there; 5,000 and 10,000 more borrowed under false pretences, with jewels stolen from tradesmen, and moneys craftily secured. Rome became too hot for him. He filled up a new passport, called himself a bishop, changed costume and character and went to live in the city of Mondovi, safe from the police, already in pursuit of him. Well furnished with funds Collet threw off his guise of priest, and led a life of pleasure with the young dandies of the place, among whom he created a desire to perform in amateur theatricals. Subscriptions were raised, Collet becoming *costumier*. He got together a large wardrobe made up of priest's robes, military uniforms and diplomatic dresses, with sham jewelry and crosses and ribbons of many orders. He soon made off with this valuable stock in trade, and the first disguise he assumed was that of a general officer. He next became a Neapolitan priest, and thus passed on to Sion, in Switzerland, where he was received with open arms by the bishop, who appointed him to the cüre of a lucrative parish. What followed may be told in his own words. "I stayed here five months," he says, "performing all the duties of a priest, confessing, marrying, baptising, visiting the sick and burying the dead. Our church was in a ruinous condition, and subscriptions had been raised for its repair and restoration. There were 30,000 francs in hand, but posing as a man of wealth I offered to make up the sum necessary for the new

works, and my generosity was soon seconded by fresh subscriptions. I meant to lay hands on all and, starting with the money, accompanied by my architect and others, proceeded to a neighboring town to purchase pictures, candelabra, a chalice and so forth. None of these purchases were paid for in cash. I sent the Mayor back to Sion, but stayed myself another night, then started for Strasburg." Thence Collet took the road to Germany, and, passing the mountains of the Tyrol, reëntered Italy, changing his costume en route continually. By passing himself off in various characters he laid everybody under contribution. A banker at Savona advanced him 100,000 francs, but he was nearly detected, and he became once more a bishop, by name Dominico Pasqualini, Bishop of Monardan, and was received most cordially by his confrère, the Bishop of Nice. Twenty-seven seminarists were to be ordained next day, and the Bishop of Nice besought his fellow prelate to examine them. Collet tried to get out of it by assuring his Eminence that he saw no necessity for doing so, as it was little likely the Bishop would desire to ordain "incompetent asses;" but the Bishop of Nice insisted, and the Monseigneur de Monardan put on his robes and assisted in the ordination of thirty-three abbés. Travelling westward Collet arrived at Fréjus, en route for Spain, now the plenipotentiary of his Majesty, King Joseph, representing the Inspector-General, and charged with the equipment of the army at Catalonia. From Fréjus he went on to Draguignan, preceded by official orders to await his coming, and there commenced to form his staff. He appointed a half-pay officer as his aide-de-camp, the son of the sub-préfet at Toulon his private secretary, named officers of ordnance, commissioners and pay-masters, and had a suite of twenty persons by the time he had reached Marseilles. At Marseilles he laid hands on 130,000 francs in the government treasury and at Nimes secured about 300,000 more.

His star paled at Montpelier. After spending an hour on an early parade he went to lunch with the Préfet, to whom he promised promotion and the decorations of the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor. Upon returning to his hotel he found it in the hands of the gensdarmes, and himself under arrest. Collet's staff shared his fate, and all whom he had misled were held in custody for several weeks, while the villain of the piece hourly expected to be shot. One day the Préfet had a party, and to amuse them sent orders that Collet should be brought from his prison under escort. He was left for a moment alone in the serving-room, from which there was no exit save through the dining-room. At this door two sentinels were stationed. Collet's wits were at work. While he waited to make a spectacle for the guests he caught sight of the white suit of an assistant cook, which had been left in the serving-room. Hastily putting it on and taking up a dish of sweets

he knocked at the passage door, and was suffered to go through without recognition or interruption. He took refuge in a house close to the Préfecture, and remained there in hiding while the alarm was given, and search and pursuit organised.

After escaping from the town he wandered about the country devising fresh swindles. One of the most successful of these was at the expense of a bank at Tulle, where he cashed a forged letter of credit for 5,000 francs, and got off as far as Lorient. A clerk of the bank followed him thither, caught him and handed him over to justice. He was more carefully held this time, and passed on to Grenoble, where he was sentenced to five years of *travaux forcés*, which by special favor he expiated at Grenoble. Here he was recognised and denounced by one of his former staff officers, with the result that he was sent to Toulon to finish his term. When set at liberty he fixed his residence at Poussin, in the department of Ain, where he was kept under surveillance, but managed to evade it, and proceeded to commit fresh crimes. At Toulouse he imposed upon the superior of a religious house, where he was given shelter. To show his gratitude he proposed to endow it with a gift of land. The property was chosen, the purchase agreed upon, but Collet could not immediately produce the funds, and his bankers, according to Collet, talked of delaying completion. Collet meanwhile set himself to borrow from friends he had beguiled, and managed to extract 74,000 francs in all from them. Next day he disappeared.

He played the same trick at Rochbeaucourt in the Dordogne. Now posing as the Comte de Gôlo he desired to purchase a chateau. Using the same methods as at Toulouse, he again made himself scarce with the moneys he borrowed. Then he appeared at Le Mans. He acquired property, and was on the point of exchanging land for diamonds at a jeweller’s, when the rumors of former fraud reached the place, and the police were set on his track. He was arrested, tried and convicted, and was sentenced to twenty years at the *bagne*, after exposure for an hour in the *carcan*, or iron collar, on the platform of the guillotine. He was sent first to Brest, but was transferred later to Rochefort, where he died in 1840, having endured his captivity with philosophy, and not, as has been said already, in extreme discomfort. “I have but one grief,” he said in the hospital of the *bagne*, “and that is that I am dying a *forçat*. My money is of no use to me;” for he undoubtedly possessed considerable funds, although the secret of their whereabouts was never disclosed. Collet had no small opinion of himself, and claimed to be an interesting criminal. His head was turned by the attention he attracted, and he actually replied in an open letter to the charges brought against

him in the numerous biographies of him published in his lifetime. He sought to correct the severity of the criticisms passed upon him, and protested that the standard of his morality was put too low. “My life has had two sides,” he represented; “and, I am free to confess, presents features I cannot defend; on the other side I can point to many good deeds. I have given largely to the poor when I was in funds, and my conduct in prison has always been irreproachable.”

A few very remarkable convicts contemporary with Collet may well find mention here. One was Salvador, whose real name was Jean Ferey. His prison history includes thirty-two escapes from gaol and nine from the *bagne*. He was originally a respectable man, a tradesman in the north of France, who, on returning from one of his business journeys, found his house deserted. His wife, after pillaging the place, had run away with a young clerk. He fell away at once into evil courses, vowed eternal hatred to society and instantly adopted a life of crime. He was taken in Paris and sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment for robbery by means of false keys. He escaped and was recaptured, finished his term and was again sentenced for a new burglary. He had had a violent struggle with the police, in which he was mortally wounded, as it was supposed, and was taken to the infirmary of La Force, where the surgeon bade him prepare for death. His wounds were deep, his strength was waning and hope abandoned. Next morning he had disappeared, and was driving post-haste along the highroad to Switzerland, in company with a woman, who had assisted in his escape. He had got out through a hole in the infirmary wall, and had lowered himself into the street by a rope made out of his blankets. Then followed a fresh offence and a new sentence, this time of death. The night before his execution he volunteered, with every sign of contrition, to make a full avowal of his crimes. A judge came to attest his confession, and, seeing that the prisoner was suffering acute pain from his chains, ordered his leg irons to be removed. The story was prolonged far into the night. The judge, meaning to return the next morning, left Salvador to sleep entirely unfettered. He was still well guarded and kept under eye; yet next day nothing was found of him but his clothes, which he had been compelled to slip off so as to effect his passage through the usual hole in the wall.

The woman who, in his first escape, had carried him off in a post-chaise, became his wife and clung to him with every mark of loyal affection. Once Salvador, when in custody, persuaded his guards to allow her to dine with him in prison. The dishes were brought in from outside and carefully examined as they passed the gate, but there was a file carefully concealed in a stick of celery, with which

the prisoner sawed through his bars and gained his liberty.

Salvador had a certain pride in his nefarious profession as well as for his fellow criminals. He could not bear the idea that any one sentenced to exposure in the *carcan*, or collar, upon the scaffold should appear in a shabby dress; and he was frequently known to provide them with a suitable costume out of his own private purse. He had the reputation of being a staunch and devoted comrade, whose loyalty to his fellows nothing could shake, and who was never known to betray a soul. On one occasion, in a great robbery of goods in a shop, he had gained the assistance of one of the salesmen. Salvador was presently taken, and it was clear that it had been a “put up” job, the slang phrase for collusion from inside; but when the whole staff of the shop were assembled, and Salvador was called upon to indicate his accomplice, he obstinately declined and declared that he had never seen a single one of them before. He ended his days on the guillotine in a *bagne*. It was said that he had grown weary of the life of constant escapes and repeated recapture, and to put an end to it all had attacked and wounded a warder so as to incur the extreme penalty of the law.

The *bagne* had its aristocracy, not of crime only, but in the actual persons of men of rank and title, real or fictitious. There was the Marquis de Chambreuil, who spent many years at Rochefort, and was always distinguished by his air of good breeding and exquisite manners. There was a mystery about him, which was never penetrated, and no one ever knew his real name. Another pretended nobleman was the so-called Comte d’Arnheim, who appeared at Rochefort with the badge of his rank on his convict cap and his coat of arms embroidered in silk.

The most notable of all such pretenders was the famous Cognard, commonly known at the *bagne* under the name of the Comte de Pontis de Sainte-Hélène, a man with a curious history, who passed through many strange adventures and vicissitudes. He was endowed with many personal gifts, was of handsome appearance with regular features, had a firm mouth, a keen eye and a suave voice, which easily assumed a note of command. He escaped from Toulon, when a convict sentenced to *travaux forcés*, and found his way into Spain, where he somehow made the acquaintance of the family of Pontis de Sainte-Hélène, the last representative of which died suddenly, and Cognard became possessed of his papers. He had military aspirations, and as one of the old noblesse he easily obtained a lieutenancy in the French army, in which by varied service he rapidly rose to the rank of major and leader of a squadron. As such he served with the staff of Marshal Soult in the Pyrenees. When the French army retreated he was

appointed to the command of the 100th regiment of the line. He was present at the battle of Toulouse, and afterwards behaved well at Waterloo, where he was seriously wounded. He went over at the Restoration and was decorated with the order of Saint Louis, and was appointed by the Duc de Berry, lieutenant-colonel of the legion of that nobleman and soldier.

He was playing a bold game and yet he dared to march at the head of his regiment day after day, through the streets of Paris, constantly crowded with old comrades, who might at any time recognise him. This actually happened at a parade in the Place de Vendôme, when an old friend claimed his acquaintance, demanding blackmail. This was but grudgingly given, and the false Count and convict Lieutenant was denounced to the police. He was soon faced with the record of his evil antecedents and re-committed to the *bagne* at Brest, where he died.

A strong light is thrown upon the life of the *bagne* by one who passed through it in the early part of the nineteenth century. Readers of French memoirs are no doubt familiar with the autobiography of Vidocq, who, from an active pursuit of crime in all its forms, went over to the other side and became a famous thief catcher. His black treachery to his class, his constant betrayal of his old confederates, may be said to have been condoned by the services he rendered society by bringing so many of the worst depredators to justice; but he was a contemptible character with no redeeming points but his pertinacious courage and his unflagging pursuit of the criminals, whom, renegade that he was, he hunted unceasingly. The “Memoirs” he gave to the world have been widely read, and not less widely discounted as extravagant beyond measure and probably unveracious. But it is the fact that they never were contradicted, although many of the people he exposed were still living when he wrote, and would certainly have refuted the charges he brought, had they been false. Withal, the “Memoirs” are amusing, even fascinating to lovers of personal adventure, full of hairbreadth escapes, thrilling exploits and great dangers incurred and surmounted. They no doubt present a faithful picture of criminal episodes and the prison treatment of criminals in his time.

He was confined in the *bagne* of Brest, from which he speedily made his escape, and his account of his life as a convict, his journey from Paris “by the chain” will be read with interest when contrasted with the experiences of Jean Marteilhe, the innocent Protestant galley-slave of just a century before. Vidocq started from Bicêtre, where the travellers, some one hundred and twenty in

number, were assembled in the forenoon in the *cour des fers*, “Court of Irons,” and medically examined as to their fitness for the march. The commander of the gang, Captain Thierry, and his lieutenant, M. Viez, were present, both of long experience and much respected by all. A ring in the centre of the chain that joined every two men seemed to take the gang chain, and the whole twenty-five couples were as one man. The act of fettering seems to have completed the degradation of these miserable creatures. So far from despairing, they gave themselves up to riotous and reckless gaiety. The most horrible and disgusting language was heard on every side, wild shouts and indecent gestures provoked stupid, senseless laughter. Vidocq himself comments bitterly upon the scene. It was painfully evident that the criminal loaded with fetters was goaded into trampling under foot all that is honored and respected by the society which has cast him off. He feels no restraints, no obligations, his charter is the length of his chain, his only law the stick of his *argousin* (guard). When night came on they began to sing. Imagine fifty scoundrels, the greater number of them drunk, all screeching different and timeless airs. Where the few gave way to the horrors of their situation and wept bitter tears, their abandoned companions fell upon them and beat them. That night three of the number charged with the heinous offence of having betrayed the secrets of the prison house were all but killed. One indeed, a noted informer, was only rescued by the *argousin*, and he was so misused that he died within four days.

That first night was passed on the bare stones of a disused church. At daybreak all were afoot, the lists were read over, the fetters examined. Then the larger number mounted long, low cars, back to back, legs hanging over outside. They were soon covered with frost and their bodies were motionless from extreme cold. The balance, made up of the most robust, were condemned to walk, which at least kept them warm; and besides they could attack defenceless people and rob, when they escaped supervision, which was not always exercised, for the guards shared in the plunder. On reaching the first stage out (St. Cyr), all were stripped of their clothes and a close search made of their person and of every article—stockings, shoes, and shirt—for hidden files or watch springs likely to be used in sawing through their irons. This examination lasted for nearly an hour, while the convicts undressed and shivered with unendurable cold.

The night resting-place was a cattle shed. The beds were made on the impure litter, in the midst of which were set the wooden troughs, filled with a steaming mess of bean soup, from which each man’s porringer was filled. At the end of this disgusting meal the sergeant blew his whistle for silence. “Listen, robbers,

and answer me ‘yes’ or ‘no.’ Have you had bread?” “Yes.” “Soup?” “Yes.” “Meat?” “Yes.” “Wine?” “Yes.” “Then go to sleep or pretend to do so.” In striking contrast to this mockery of a feast, the guards dined at a table laid out close by, and abundantly supplied. “It is not easy to imagine a more hideous spectacle than this stable,” says Vidocq. “On one side were a hundred and twenty men, herded together like foul beasts, rolling their haggard eyes, from which fatigue and misery had banished sleep. On the other were eight ugly ruffians, carousing and eating greedily, but never losing sight of their carbines or their clubs. A few miserable candles affixed to the blackened walls cast a murky glare upon the revolting scene, and the grim silence was constantly broken by the clank of fetters.”

The toilsome journey occupied twenty-four days and ended at a depot outside the *bagne*, where a sort of quarantine was performed. The prisoners were bathed two and two, put in the crimson uniform and rested for three days. No great vigilance was shown here, and it was easy to get out and over the outer wall. Vidocq had been meditating escape, and prepared for it by obtaining private clothes, a shirt, trousers, and neckerchief, which he concealed in the centre of an enormous loaf of ration bread. Having secured a steel chisel, negligently left within his reach, he cut a hole through the wall of his chamber, while a friendly comrade relieved him of his irons. He gained the yard and the boundary wall, which he surmounted with the aid of a pole, which was too heavy to be lifted on top and used for the descent. At last his only chance was to jump down, and in doing this he injured his ankles seriously, and could only drag himself to an adjoining bush, where he lay for hours, hoping the pain would abate and he might go on. But his feet swelled prodigiously, and he was obliged to surrender himself. Three weeks were now spent in hospital, and a charitable Sister of Mercy who nursed him gained him forgiveness from the commandant.

Vidocq was still bent on escape. An obstacle to his plan existed in his chain companion, of whose discretion he was afraid. The man was still young, but already half an idiot from misery and brutal treatment. It was the rule to blame the remaining half of a couple, when the other had got away, and Vidocq knew this man, to avoid punishment, would betray the projected escape. It was necessary to be coupled afresh, and Vidocq, feigning sickness, was laid by for a few days, and then given another partner, who had no fears and was full of good-will. He strongly advised the would-be fugitive to make his move at once, before the sergeants had come to know his face. He helped Vidocq, who was in funds, to buy a disguise, a suit of sailor’s clothing, which was put on the morning of the

third attempt, underneath his convict's frock, and was undetected as the gang passed out of the gate to labor at dawn. His fetters, which he had sawn through, only hung by threads, but these also escaped notice; and on reaching the basin where the works were in progress, Vidocq slipped aside behind a pile of planks, where he made a rapid change, and walked off towards the wicket gate, giving upon the town. Altogether ignorant of the proper way, after threading many intricate streets and turning continually right and left, he luckily reached the main gate of the city, where a veteran guard was posted, who had the credit of being able to tell a convict at a look, and penetrate any disguise. A telltale hang of one leg, that to which the chain has been fastened, is an unfailing sign, but Vidocq had not been coupled long enough to show this. He played his part very coolly. He was carrying a jug of buttermilk, bought on purpose, and placing this upon the ground he halted in front of the warder, and carelessly asked for a light for his pipe. This self-possession served him in good stead. He passed safely through, and three-quarters of an hour elapsed before the three guns giving the alarm were fired. He still held on bravely, and all would have gone well, had not two gensdarmes suddenly appeared at the turn of the road, and took him into custody, but not as an escaped convict. With ready wit Vidocq gave himself up as a deserter from the navy, the *Cocarde* frigate then in the roadstead of St. Malo, near at hand,—to which he thought to be returned and to escape from the escort on the way.

After prolonged detention Vidocq was started for the coast, when he escaped and passed through many exciting adventures. For a part of the time he wandered about the country disguised as a Sister of Mercy. Then he joined forces with a party of escaped convicts, who had recognised him. Then he became a cattle drover, a business in which he earned good wages, and which took him to Paris. Danger threatened in the capital, and he worked north to Arras, in his own country, and on to Brussels and Rotterdam, where he was pressed into the Dutch navy. He claimed release as a Frenchman born, and was speedily identified as the deserter from the *Cocarde*. He was carried back into France as a prisoner, and his fate seemed so uncertain that he thought it best to proclaim himself Vidocq, an escaped convict from Brest. He was removed to Bicêtre on a second visit, and to be transferred for a second time on the chain to one of the *bagnes*. His second journey, which took him south, for Toulon was now his destination, was a repetition of that already described,—the most interesting feature in it being his companionship with a very noted criminal of that period, Jossas, better known as the Marquis Sainte Armande de Faral, one of the most celebrated robbers of Paris. There was very little of the convict about this prosperous thief.

Although fettered, he wore a smart travelling costume, knitted pantaloons of silver gray and a waistcoat and cap trimmed with Astrakan fur, the whole covered with a large cloak lined with crimson velvet. He had ample funds, and fared sumptuously every evening, when he treated several of his comrades at dinner. He spent much time daily on his toilet, and was provided with a splendid dressing-case filled with all necessaries. His line of business was that of thefts by means of false keys, and he showed extraordinary cleverness in getting impressions to enable him to open the locks of doors and safes.

On reaching Chalons by road the gangs were transferred to large boats, on which they dropped down the Rhône to Lyons, then on as far as Avignon, where they landed and recommenced the march. Vidocq and others, who had been guilty of escape, were condemned to the “double chain” as it was called. This meant unbroken confinement in one part of the prison, where they were chained to the guard bed, which they never left except for a short period of exercise. The worst characters in custody were collected here. Vidocq found himself side by side with several celebrities, notably revolutionaries who had robbed the royal wardrobe, a gigantic theft of Crown jewels and priceless treasures valued in all at half a million pound sterling, among which was the famous Regent diamond, sometimes called the “Pitt,” which had been brought from India by Mr. Pitt, Governor of Madras. There was also a member of the Cornu family, the head of which had long terrorised the people of Lombardy. Disguised as a horse-dealer he frequented country fairs and attacked merchants who were carrying large sums of money. He was greatly assisted by his third wife, who ingratiated herself with travellers and led them to their death. This family consisted of three sons and two daughters, all of them habituated to crime from their earliest childhood. The youngest girl, Florentine, showed some repugnance to adopt the criminal profession. She was cured by being compelled to carry in her apron, for two leagues, the decapitated head of a murdered farmer. So rapid is the degeneration of those who once go astray that this same Florentine, when her relatives joined a band of *chauffeurs*, for her part was to apply the lighted candle to the feet of their victims, when they refused to confess the hiding-place of their valuables. The brother, who was confined at Toulon with Vidocq, carried on the assumed business of a journeyman, and was sentenced to the double chain when caught in the act of committing a burglary.

Vidocq gained the good-will of his guardians by inducing his companions to pursue prison industries, and the prison of the double chain became a busy workshop, where children’s toys and other articles were manufactured in large

quantities. The trade was profitable, and supplied the funds needed for undertaking a fresh escape. Vidocq collected materials for disguise—a wig and black whiskers and an old pair of boots. For the rest he trusted to the overcoat, hat, cane and gloves of the prison surgeon, who was in the habit of leaving these unguarded within Vidocq's reach. The first attempt made in this disguise was a failure, the second was more successful. It had been arranged with the convict, Jossas, already mentioned, who had provided him with the plain clothes which he put on beneath his crimson frock. The rivet in his irons had been removed, and had been replaced by a movable screw, and one morning, when issuing forth to labor, Vidocq slipped behind the pile of wood, quickly threw off his red shirt and, extracting the screw, freed himself from his fetters. He ran at top speed to the basin, where a frigate was in repair, and jumped into a boat on the point of starting from the town. Vidocq seized an oar and pulled manfully towards Toulon, where he landed and made for the Italian gate. Here he was refused admittance. The production of a pass, or green card issued by the Magistrate, was demanded, and while he was still parleying, the three reports of the guns announcing his escape were heard. He forthwith left the gate and, avoiding the crowd, betook himself to the ramparts, where he was accosted by a friendly girl, who had penetrated his disguise, but who sympathised with the convict fugitive. She promised him a green ticket, which she would borrow from her lover; but the lover was absent from home, and recapture seemed imminent, when a funeral procession came past. The girl advised him to mix amongst the mourners. This he did, and thus passed the gate. Presently he gained the high-road which led into the open country. It would be tedious to follow the fugitive in his wanderings, or to detail the narrow chances he constantly ran of being captured. His story as a refugee was that of a hundred others of his class, who had broken prison and infested all parts of France. As a convict turned thief catcher his story is vastly different and of vastly greater interest; as will be seen in the following pages.

CHAPTER IV
THE FIRST GREAT DETECTIVE

France overrun with fugitive galley-slaves—Life and property constantly in danger—Vidocq offers his services to the cause of law and order—M. Henri refuses to accept his cooperation—Vidocq taken again, and again offers M. Henri his services—A compact finally made with him—Becomes a “mouton” and renders very useful service—Brings about the capture of the notorious receiver—Routs out a robbers’ home kept by Mother Noel—Does good work in the discovery and arrest of Fossard and others who robbed the Royal Library of a great collection of old coins and medals—Vidocq, the father of the French Detective Police—His portrait—A man of unexampled courage, fertility of resource and great physical strength—The “police provocative,” an invention of the day—The so-called conspiracy of Colmar—Saumur and the betrayal of La Bédoyère.

The state of France during the period which has just been described was deplorable. There was little security for property, and life was constantly in danger. Whole bands of fugitive galley-slaves were at large, pursuing their evil courses with the utmost daring and effrontery. They were apprehended from time to time, but were acquitted, when arraigned, for want of evidence; witnesses as to identity were not forthcoming, and unless caught red-handed there were no proofs of guilt. To surprise them and take them into custody knowledge of their domicile was essential; and they were so cunning and evasive that it was not easy to ascertain this fact. It was under these circumstances that justice in France, in its eagerness to check these depredations and to protect the deserving, industrious population, secretly sought the aid of spies and informers willing to work against the criminal fraternity. Vidocq was one of the first to go over. He was weary of the life he led, the unceasing anxiety, the constant fear of recognition by old associates, the incessant blackmail to which he was subjected; and to escape re-arrest he was driven in self-defence to retaliate and offer his services to the cause of order. Matters were brought to a crisis when he was called upon to participate in a series of robberies to be perpetrated by old

convicts, whose hands were already bloodstained. Vidocq, realising that whether he refused this proposal or not he must be compromised sooner or later in other infamous deeds, resolved to go in person to the Chief of Police, at that time a M. Henri, an excellent officer, who rendered eminent service in his day. Vidocq confided in the Chief, and explained his situation, saying, if his presence in Paris was tolerated and he was assured immunity from arrest, he could promise much valuable information. He could lay his hands upon great numbers of convicts at large, knowing precisely their places of residence and many of their plans. M. Henri at once declined to enter into any compact of the kind. All he would say was: “I have no objection to receiving any information. We will test it and use it for what it is worth; perhaps we may accept your services in the long run, but we can make no promises and agree to no antecedent conditions. You must take your chance.” “Under these circumstances I may consider myself already a dead man,” replied Vidocq; “for it might come out that I had given information, and my life would be forfeited.” M. Henri would not alter his decision, and dismissed Vidocq without even asking his name.

His overtures thus rejected, and himself still closely pressed by his evil associates, Vidocq passed several anxious months. His fears were verified by the certainty that the suspicions of the police were aroused, and that his house was watched. His arrest seemed imminent, and he was resolved to leave Paris without delay. But he was too late. One morning, in the small hours, a light knock came at the street door. Vidocq felt sure that he was immediately to be arrested. He dressed, and ran quickly up-stairs, got out upon the roof and hid himself behind a stack of chimneys. His surmises were correct, for the house was speedily invested by police agents, who hunted for him high and low, and found him where escape was hopeless except at the risk of breaking his neck. He was carried at once to the Prefecture and into the presence of M. Henri, who remembered him perfectly. The chief, in the interval, had changed his mind. The increase in crime had led him to believe that Vidocq might be usefully employed in laying his hands upon the worst offenders at large. Nothing was said, however, and Vidocq was removed for a third time to Bicêtre, to take his departure with the next chain gang. At Bicêtre, Vidocq wrote privately to the Chief of Police, offering his services afresh. He made no condition but that he should not be sent back to a *bagne*, and expressed his willingness to complete his sentence in any prison in France. M. Henri still hesitated. One argument militated against accepting Vidocq’s proposal. This was the barrenness of the results achieved by others who had promised largely and performed little. Vidocq in his own defence appealed to his good conduct when at large, his

continuous efforts to earn an honest livelihood, the production of his books and correspondence and many letters, bearing witness to his probity and good character.

Vidocq was detained between Bicêtre and La Force for nearly two years, and no doubt rendered useful service as *mouton*, the French slang word for a spy who worms himself into the confidence of his fellow prisoners and denounces them. In this way he came upon the addresses of numbers of escaped convicts who were in prison under false names, and was able to give constant information of plots in progress for carrying out new crimes. His reports were closely examined and compared with others, so as to obtain corroboration or the reverse. They were so generally accurate that M. Henri realised the value of this unofficial assistant, and came to the conclusion that such a man would be more useful when free. He was at length released from his probationary detention. To keep up the deception and to screen him from possible suspicion and discovery by the comrades he had betrayed, he was removed from La Force in the ordinary way, handcuffed and under escort, but en route to Bicêtre was permitted to escape. He went at once into hiding, and posed amongst his friends as extraordinarily successful in avoiding recapture. Of course, he carried his life in his hands and would have been instantly sacrificed to the vengeance of those he betrayed, had he been found out. But no one doubted him. He enjoyed unlimited confidence, and was always in high favor with the thieves and bandits, among whom he constantly lived. He was at home in all the lowest dens of Paris, and was a trusted member of the criminal fraternity, all of whom he knew intimately, their favorite haunts and whereabouts and the schemes in which they were engaged. He was frequently invited to join in their depredations and seldom refused, but always carefully avoided taking part in them by failing at the appointed rendezvous or inventing some flimsy excuse for holding aloof. The strange fact is emphasised by Vidocq, that the dangerous classes are singularly simple and unsuspicious. They seemed to take arrest almost as a matter of course, and seldom paused to inquire, when once in custody, how or through whom they had been taken. No one blamed Vidocq, who was their friend, often their hero and model for imitation.

Meanwhile robberies of every description continued to be perpetrated, and Vidocq was more and more in demand. He made it his business to undertake a series of rounds through Paris and the immediate neighborhood, and regularly visited the worst quarters, ever on the alert to discover and check projected crimes. He was taken on by the Prefecture as a salaried agent at the rate of 100

francs per month, with a specially apportioned reward for every arrest, according to its importance. This salary was saddled with a condition that he should produce a certain number of criminals at regular intervals; and his enemies declared that he was capable of any base perfidy in order to make up his required quota of arrests, and that he heartlessly betrayed people, to whom he was under obligation—as in the case of the tanner with whom he lodged, and whom he secretly denounced as a fabricator of false money. A medical man who attended him was implicated in this charge, and both were arrested and sent to *travaux forcés*. He was accused also of instigating crimes of which he gave information, and saw to it that their perpetrators were taken in the act or with clear evidence. It may be claimed that in criminal matters all is fair that may conduce to arrest, although this savors of the argument that “the end justifies the means.” Vidocq, at least, had no scruples, and would lay traps and be guilty of any treachery in order to bring an offender to justice. He had no reason to be proud of the manner in which he routed out the house of Madame Noel—commonly known as the mother of the robbers—which was a certain refuge and receptacle, where they could always find shelter and assistance. Mother Noel provided for all their wants. She always knew where they could find work, each one on his particular “lay.” She had blank passports on hand, and could fabricate papers for any one in want of them. Vidocq visited the house and acted the part of a convict recently escaped, still bearing the marks of his chains, with closely cropped hair, worn out and wearied, his feet lacerated, his whole air that of one hunted and proscribed. He won the woman’s sympathy instantly, and was made warmly welcome. He was given a bath, his wounds were dressed and he was put to bed in a very private room. He soon wormed himself into her confidence, gained all the knowledge he required, and eventually broke up this refuge and receptacle so useful to the thieves of Paris.

The way by which he contrived to come upon the secret store of a notorious receiver of stolen goods was more excusable. This man’s operations were well known to the police, but they had failed to bring his crime home to him. Vidocq met him one day and claimed his acquaintance, calling him by a name different from his own. The receiver declared it was all a mistake, but Vidocq persisted, adding that he knew the man was wanted by the police. Whereupon the other said: “Let us go to the nearest police station, where I shall easily find someone who can speak positively upon my identity as a resident of this quarter.” It was an incautious move, for Vidocq, on reaching the station, still refused to believe that the man was not the person he had declared him to be, and called upon him with an air of authority to produce his papers. None were forthcoming, and

Vidocq begged that he might be searched, when twenty-five double napoleons and three gold watches were found upon his person, somewhat suspicious property. The man was now detained until he could be taken before a magistrate, and the articles found in his pockets were wrapped in his own handkerchief. Vidocq, armed with this, visited the receiver's house, saw his wife and showed the handkerchief, which she recognised at once. "I thought you ought to know," went on Vidocq, noticing that she was greatly perturbed, "that your husband has been arrested. Everything found on him has been seized, and he believes that he has been betrayed. I come from him to beg you to have all the property, you know what I mean, removed, as these premises are to be searched immediately, and something compromising may be found." The woman, thoroughly alarmed, begged Vidocq, whom she looked upon as a friend, to go out and bring back three hackney coaches. When they arrived they were loaded up with articles of every description, timepieces, candelabra, Etruscan vases, cloths, cashmeres, linens, muslins, etc. At the proper moment the police surrounded the coaches, and more than enough was at once found to convict the receiver.

One of the most remarkable robberies in Paris was that of the collection of old coins and medals from the Royal Library, now known as the National Library in the rue Richelieu. This collection is reputed one of the finest in the world, and, besides a couple of hundred thousand coins, contains a great number of cut gems and antiques, dating back into the earliest times. Cameos, crystals, agate goblets, bronzes, ivories, sacrificial cups of massive gold, choice medallions, tankards richly chased by artists whose names have not survived, and so on, are among its treasures. The news of the robbery was received with dismay at the Prefecture. An immediate inspection made by the police showed how cleverly the thieves had gained admission to the cabinet containing the collection of medals. They gained access to a neighboring house, and ascended to the roof and slid over the slates to a garret window in the library. They broke through this, reached the back stairs and slipped down into the principal salon. A solid oak door at the north end of the salon shut off the medal room, but the thieves sawed through it, and entered the inner room, which was lighted by a large window opening on to the rue Richelieu. It was easy enough to break into the cases, sweep up a large number of the precious coins and lower them to the confederates in the street below.

With close examination of the premises the detectives were satisfied that only one of three famous burglars could have accomplished the theft. The work had been executed most cleverly. The panel in the door had been cut out by a skilled

hand. The saw, left behind, was a very perfect tool. The candle in the dark lantern, also abandoned, was of the finest wax, and the rope used was of the best quality. Only the most expert thief would have expended so much care and capital upon the enterprise. The three men indicated were Fossard, a notorious convict, who should have been in the *bagne* of Brest, but had recently escaped and was at large; a friend of his, Drouillet by name, ex-convict at liberty, and Toupriant, believed to be then in England.

Light was suddenly thrown upon the mystery of the theft by the arrest of the first of these men. Vidocq met him in the street, and remembered his face, as of one who had passed through his hands on a previous occasion. This was hardly enough to justify arrest, but the astute police officer whom Vidocq informed took the responsibility. The man seemed so confused, and his replies were so unsatisfactory, that he was carried at once to the Prefecture, where he was at last definitely recognised by various officials. The fact that this man, Fossard, was in Paris strengthened the suspicion that he had been concerned in the robbery of the medals, and he was at once questioned, after the French manner, to extract some confession. It was all to no purpose. Fossard stoutly denied all knowledge of the theft. The police next tried to bribe him in hope of recovering at least a part of the stolen property, the intrinsic worth of which was nothing to its sentimental value, which was estimated at a million francs. Fossard persisted in his denials, and was at length committed to Bicêtre to take his place in the next chain departing for Brest. He waited there for several months, in such an abject condition and so destitute of means that his comrades subscribed a sum to provide him with sabots and a pair of trousers for his long march. But a clandestine letter of his was intercepted, in which he begged a friend to forward him 25,000 francs ($5,000) to Brest, for his use on arrival at the *bagne*. He was therefore clearly in funds.

The effrontery of a woman who posed as the Vicomtesse de Nays paved the way to further discovery. This pretended great lady, who was really the associate of thieves and the wife of one of Fossard’s friends, was on the best of terms with the Prefecture, and quite an intimate friend of the Prefect. She passed as a charitable person with many protégés, whom she was eager to befriend by obtaining places for them and supplying them with funds when temporarily in distress. At one of her visits to the Prefecture she pressed the prefect to honor her with his company at dinner, and it was quite by accident that he discovered that his fellow guests included some of the most notorious criminals in the capital. Happily for his reputation he discovered that she was well acquainted with

Fossard; and, yet more, that she had taken places for herself and maid in the diligence for Brest, where, no doubt, she was to carry him substantial aid. Other valuable news was forthcoming, namely; that a number of the stolen medals had been melted down into ingots, and that some of them were in the possession of the so-called Vicomtesse de Nays. Others were traced to the Drouillet above mentioned as a possible thief, and others to Fossard's brother, a clockmaker of Paris. Arrests followed, and the clockmaker confessed that his brother and Drouillet had committed the robbery and had melted down a portion of the booty and thrown the rest into the Seine—where, as a matter of fact, it was subsequently fished out. More stolen property was unearthed in the clockmaker's cellars.

When the case came up for trial both the Fossards were sentenced, the elder Etienne, to *travaux forcés* for life, the younger to ten years. Drouillet was sentenced to twenty years. Madame de Nays was brought to Paris and her domicile searched, but no fresh proofs of her complicity in the robbery were forthcoming, and she was released; but it was clear that her kindness to the young men she patronised was repaid, both in the shape of information and assistance in the planning of robberies. A pretty incident is related of the recovery of these valuable treasures. A well-known savant who was called in by the Prefecture to identify them was so overcome by emotion when he saw them again that he burst into tears and kissed them repeatedly, especially the seal of Michael Angelo, the cup of the Ptolemies and the "Apotheosis of Augustus," the largest cameo in the world.

Before leaving Fossard it may be interesting to note that he had been a long time at large in Paris, and was the author of innumerable thefts. His capture was a difficult matter, for he was a reckless character, who had frequently been sent to the *bagnes* and as frequently escaped therefrom. The police report said of him: "Unequalled for intrepidity and always armed to the teeth, he must be attacked with caution." He declared that he would blow out the brains of any police agent who attempted to apprehend him. Vidocq obtained great credit for making the arrest. Fossard lived in great retirement at the shop of a vintner, who was secretly warned by Vidocq that Fossard intended to rob him, and, if necessary, to cut his throat in doing so. The vintner, alarmed, was willing enough to admit the police, and Fossard was overpowered by the gensdarmes and taken in his bed. Fossard's history was curious. He had embarked early upon a career of crime. He came of decent people, and had received a good education, but his nature was vicious and he speedily lapsed into evil courses. One peculiar characteristic was useful to

him in his nefarious business. He had a natural taste for the fabrication of keys, and was known as one of the most skilful locksmiths of his time. He died at Brest, two or three years after his conviction of the robbery of the medals.

Vidocq, with all his shrewdness and insight into criminal human nature, was himself capable of being deceived. Later on, when he had secured a firm foothold in the police and was actually director of the newly created detective department, a man unknown to him came to offer his services as an *indicateur*. When asked what he could do he answered, “Anything.” “Well,” said Vidocq, “take these two five-franc pieces, and bring me the best two fowls you can find in the market.” The man returned with the fowls and the money also. “How did you do it?” asked Vidocq. “I went to the market,” said the messenger, “carrying the basket on my shoulders, which I had filled with stones with straw on the top. I also bought some vegetables, which were placed on top of the straw. When I bought the fowls, I begged the woman, as I stood before her, to place them on the basket; in doing this her hands were occupied and mine free, the pockets of her apron were close in front of me and I soon recovered my two five-franc pieces and thirty francs besides.” “That was clever,” cried Vidocq, “do you often work like that? Come again to-morrow. I daresay I shall find you a job.” The would-be agent went off delighted, taking with him Vidocq’s gold watch and the contents of his pockets. The thief had made the most of his time, and, while explaining his action in robbing the woman who had sold him the fowls, had repeated the trick upon Vidocq as he stood before him.

Vidocq was no doubt the father of the now famous French detective police, and its unsavory origin has been often quoted against it. The authorities themselves were ashamed of using such means for the repression of crime, and after ten or a dozen years Vidocq was dismissed from his employment, only to resume it, after the Revolution of 1830, in a private and unofficial character, secretly approved of by the authorities. He still hoped to return to the Préfecture, and sought to bring it about by proving his value. One of his agents concerted with several old convicts to carry out a burglary in a rich man's house. Vidocq was able to give early information, and the police were in a position to capture the burglars in the act. Such an arrest brought much credit to Vidocq, who was reinstated in his old office. But the thieves were in due course arraigned for trial, and one of them informed against Vidocq's agent, as having suggested the crime. The judge ordered the arrest of the agent. Vidocq reported that he had left Paris, and was not to be found. Again the thieves accused. The judge now learned that the agent was actually employed under Vidocq, and the agent was then taken, tried and sentenced. Vidocq was again discredited, and the detective office or bureau, now known as the "Police de la Sûreté," was re-organised on a new and perfectly straightforward basis.

The character of Vidocq looms large in the annals of French crime. His was a strange personality, and he did some wonderful, although unworthy, not to say infamous, things. A good picture of him is preserved by M. Moreau Christophe, long Inspector General of French prisons. Vidocq, he tells us, was gifted with extraordinary audacity. His courage was almost unexampled. He had an amazing fertility of resource, and was endowed with remarkable physical strength. He belonged in turn to the two extremes of society. He might late in life be called an honest man, but he certainly had been a thief. His nature was strangely contradictory and had two sides, both in manners and in conduct. He was garrulous yet discreet; always a boaster, yet cunning and secretive. Although prompt to execute, he was much given to thought before action; when he seemed to make a chance stroke it was the result of careful previous calculation. His appearance was peculiar. Of middle height, but built like a small Hercules, he had a large head, carried on a short, sinewy neck. His yellow hair was thick and close grown; he had a flat nose, open nostrils and a large humorous mouth, fleshy cheeks with salient cheek-bones, small, piercing green eyes, which glittered under prominent thick eyebrows. A phrenologist was called in to examine his head without knowing his name, and reported on his cranium as combining three types: "that of a liar, a diplomatist and a sister of charity." To

this M. Moreau Christophe adds the suggestion that he would have been better described as “an ape, a fox and an old humbug.”

Vidocq’s character was despicable, but his underground methods, exercised for the protection of society, were largely adopted by the police of the day. If the ex-thief thief-taker betrayed his old associates, his action contributed to the reduction of crime; but there was no such excuse for the official guardians of law and order who encouraged, indeed actually manufactured, crime. Men who had come into power at the Restoration stooped to support their authority by seeking to prove that the monarchy was still threatened by conspirators, eager to reëstablish the fallen régime. Rumors of dangerous plots were constantly current, and, as they were mostly insignificant or imaginary, it was necessary to invent them. For this purpose a special police was called into existence, known at the time as the *Police provocative*. Agents were employed to instigate and incite those who were unguarded in the expression of their Bonapartist leanings to join in some combination against existing authority. Traps were laid, sham conspiracies started and simple folk drawn into them, only to be betrayed and denounced by the treacherous agents, who had led them on. Often enough honest workmen were persuaded, by specious counsels and unlimited drink, to band themselves together to overthrow the government; and when committed beyond explanation or avowal they were arrested and thrown into gaol. This system of provocation largely prevailed under the Bourbons. A very shabby trick was played upon Colonel Caron, who was concerned in the so-called conspiracy of Colmar. He had been arrested on suspicion, but was released and was living quietly at Colmar, when a secret agent came to him, pretending to be in trouble with the police for his known political leanings. Colonel Caron opened his heart to this traitor, revealed particulars of a plot in progress, all of which were duly carried to the Prefect, who gave the agent orders to lead his victim on. A rising was planned, and everything was ready. Colonel Caron put on his uniform to head the conspirators, and when he rode out with cries of “*Vive l’Empereur*,” he was arrested by his own supposed followers, who were agents in disguise. For this he lost his head, while the police agents were handsomely rewarded.

The Saumur conspiracy was similarly fatal to General Berton. He had long been more than suspected of heading a conspiracy centred at Saumur, for the necessary evidence had been gained through the abominable practice then in force of tampering with private correspondence in the post. The warrant for his arrest had been issued, but he saw the officers approaching from his window and escaped through a door leading into the garden. The authorities were determined

to take him and sent a secret agent to hunt him up. The agent ran into him at length at Thouars, where he was in hiding with a supposed fellow conspirator, an ex-sergeant Wolfen, who was in reality another agent of the police. The general was presently arrested and tried as a traitor, and in due course suffered death.

Another case on all fours with these was that of Colonel La Bédoyère, who, to make the story blacker, was denounced by a police officer under the greatest obligation to him. This Colonel La Bédoyère was an ardent adherent of the Emperor Napoleon, whom he had joined on his return from Elba. He was engaged at Waterloo, and found it advisable to disappear after the Hundred Days. He took refuge in the country, and was safely concealed for some months; but then, in the teeth of the strong protests of his friends, came back to Paris, where he was arrested and thrown into the Conciergerie. Some devoted friends arranged for his escape from prison, but they could not see their way to passing him out of Paris. Release from the prison was to be effected by buying over an employé with a bribe of 10,000 francs, but the rest was not easy, and there were no generous English officers to offer the same help that had been given to La Valette. When the agent, above mentioned as being under obligation to La Bédoyère, was found, he promised to see the Colonel safely through the barrier. When all had been satisfactorily arranged, the scoundrel went straight to the Prefect, and gave information, both of the intended escape and the persons who were to assist in it. Shortly after this La Bédoyère was sentenced to death and was shot, while the agent received promotion and a considerable sum as a reward. The sequel is worth telling as a proof that Nemesis waits on such contemptible conduct. The man was looked upon with disfavor even by the police, retired into private life and became engaged in a commercial undertaking, which presently failed. His misfortunes deepened. He was constantly a prey to remorse, and eventually he took his own life.

Whatever the faults of the system of police espionage and criminal detection, of which Vidocq was the first to make systematic use, it was the premier attempt at anything like a well equipped detective organisation ever made; and as such it must be regarded as the foundation of the whole detective establishment of the police system of to-day.

CHAPTER V
THE COMBAT WITH CRIME

How French justice secures convictions—Services of spies and informers utilised—The “coqueurs” or “moutons” largely found in French prisons—Baseness of the average “mouton”—One youth plans the murder of his own father—Another offers to murder his cell-companion to save him from the scaffold—The skeleton of Madame Houet brought to light after thirteen years—Clever detection in the case of Lacenaire—A whole series of murders exposed, committed by this bloodthirsty assassin—Some remarkable cases—Detection often follows—The difficulty of disposing of the remains—L’Huissier, Prevost, the “woman of Clichy” and Voirbo.

French justice has always been open to the reproach of using unworthy means to arrive at its end, commendable enough in itself—the conviction of the criminal. The services of spies and informers have always been utilised in a clandestine fashion. The rule has long obtained, and indeed is still in force, of employing an agent to insinuate himself into the confidence of accused persons to worm out secrets and betray them to the authorities. The most favorable opportunity is offered by the intimacy of cell association, and it is seldom that the spy fails to come upon the secret, however carefully concealed. The system is still in force, and has been tried in notable recent cases, such as that of the truculent and mysterious Campi, the murderer. The *coqueurs*, the unofficial attachés of the police, are as old as the hills, and are to be found in every country; but their ignoble business is perhaps more widely followed in France than elsewhere. They are of two classes, those at large and those in confinement,—the latter being very generally found in French prisons. The first class live with and on the criminal class, in whose operations they ostensibly take part, so as to gather the knowledge that makes them useful to the police; but they are actively engaged in them when they find it safe and profitable. More often they prefer to inform and take the reward, but when times are bad they have been known to invent imaginary schemes and persuade their friends to undertake them, betraying the dupes when they were compromised and fully committed.

The treacherous business of provocation is said to have been carried further in the troublous times of the second Revolution. The police were then directly charged with having invented a serious disturbance in order to make short work of a number of political prisoners. In 1832 St. Pélagie was full of such prisoners. There was great unrest within the prison, mutiny was constantly imminent, and the discontent was encouraged by an absurd rumor circulated that they were being poisoned by the authorities. It was a period of great effervescence in Paris, for the cholera, then a new and fearful epidemic, was raging, and the story was spread that the government was actually propagating it in order to reduce the number of its political foes. At last the disturbance came to a head, and there was a serious outbreak. The prisoners rose in revolt, smashed the furniture, ill-used their keepers and by degrees gained possession of the inner gates. At the same time an insurgent band, consisting of a couple of hundred Republicans, had assembled and were bent upon breaking open the prison to release their friends. It was believed to be a concerted movement, and was on the point of success, when the troops arrived. A large body of the municipal guard advanced, and, dispersing the crowd, entered the prison, where their attack was violently resisted. The revolted prisoners were formally ordered to surrender, but sturdily refused. The troops felt compelled to open fire, and many casualties resulted. When peace was restored, the ringleaders were arrested and removed, and brought to trial at the Assizes, where many were sentenced to *travaux forcés*. The authorities were then charged, as has been said, with having instigated the disturbance, but no proof of this accusation was ever produced, and the Prefect of Police indignantly repudiated the charge.

Sainte Pélagie

Famous as a place of detention in Paris for political prisoners on their way to the guillotine during the French Revolution, holding at one time as many as three hundred and sixty persons.

The business of the *mouton* is one of great danger, and calls for considerable address. Detection or even suspicion that a man is so employed enforces him to vindictive retaliation. He may expect sooner or later to be roughly handled, probably murdered. These are the individuals who share the cell of the accused on purpose and draw him into conversation and unguarded admissions, which will be brought in evidence against him, or they help the judge in his line of interrogatories, the French method of prosecution. There is a larger class of *moutons* known in prisons as the *musique*, composed of all who from the

moment of arrest are prepared to confess their evil deeds, name their associates and reveal their whereabouts and how they might be taken. Often the *musiciens* are retained on the service of the police, and inhabit a prison for months together, or so long as they can be useful during a protracted trial.

The baseness of the average *mouton* is almost inconceivable. No ties of blood or association are respected. Brother will denounce brother, a father his son. Cauler tells a story of a young thief, who interested him and whom, after receiving much valuable information from him, he permanently engaged as a *musicien*. One day another prisoner came to the chief of police to give him some facts about his young protégé. The latter had confided to him that he knew a certain way to effect his escape, if he could only lay his hands on a substantial sum of money. “You can get it for me, if you choose. When you are released go to the banking house of Monsieur ——. My father is the cashier, and keeps his safe on the entresol, first door to the right. He is always alone between four and five of an afternoon, making up his accounts. Ring the bell, and when he opens the window say you came from me, and have a particular message for him. He will be sure to admit you, and directly you enter stab him in the heart. You will find his keys in his inner breast pocket. Open the safe, take out all the cash, keep half, and let me have the rest when next we meet.” M. Cauler was greatly horrified, and sent at once for his *musicien*, whom he taxed with this supposed crime. The lad tried to deny it, but was confronted with his intended accomplice, and confessed. “Take him away,” cried the indignant police officer, “never let me see him again.”

Another story is told that may well be placed along with the above, in proof of the base ingratitude of which a convict may be guilty. A man had been sentenced to death, and was awaiting execution with horror, not so much from dread of the guillotine as of the disgrace that would fall upon his family from such a case in its records. A fellow convict also sentenced to death sought to console him. “You dread the dishonor of the public execution,” said he. “I’ll tell you how you can avoid it, and die in another way.” “Suicide, do you mean?” “Not at all,” was the reply. “Listen to me. I have not the smallest hope of a reprieve; the proofs are overwhelming. Now, no one can be executed twice, so I may safely kill as many people as I choose. I will tell you what I will do for you. I have a knife concealed in a safe place, and some night when you are sound asleep, I will come and make short work of you. It need not hurt you, for I will do it with one blow.” Strange to say the man, over whom death hung with absolute certainty, disliked the idea of losing his life a day or two before the inevitable time. He went at once to the

governor of the Conciergerie, where he was lodged at that time, and told the whole story, saying he went in fear of his life, and wished to be put in another part of the prison. The friendly murderer was highly indignant when he heard of this treachery, and next time a man complained to him of his impending disgraceful death, advised him to throw himself over the staircase and take his own life.

The origin of the word *musique* may interest the curious reader. It arose from the practice of collecting together all the *coqueurs* and spies having secret information in a circle, when the recognition of some unknown new arrival was considered essential. The latter was then placed in the middle of the circle, very much as a bandmaster stands when surrounded by the musicians. An objection to this custom was that the quality of these informers was thus revealed, and exposed them all to the vengeance of their victims and their friends. Strange means were adopted for circulating the news. The same Chenu mentioned above tells us how, when he was in the exercising yard, a projectile dropped at his feet, launched by some hand beyond the walls. When picked up it proved to be a small pellet made of chewed bread. "*Un postillon*," cried someone, and all gathered round in a group to hear the message, which was known by that name, contained in the piece of bread: "Avril, who is now in Bicêtre through the treachery of Lacenaire, wishes all friends to know."

The revelations of an ancient comrade served in a rather remarkable case to bring home a great crime, which for nearly thirteen years had remained undiscovered. An old convict, named C——, in 1833, came to the police, and offered at the price of 500 francs to give them full information concerning the murder of the Widow Houet, and to indicate how the body might still be found. This murder had occurred in 1821, in the rue Saint Jacques, and was that of an aged woman of seventy, possessed of a considerable fortune. She was the mother of two children, a boy and a girl. The latter was married to a certain Robert, who had been a wine merchant, and who was not on the best of terms with his mother-in-law. One day a stranger, whose identity was not fixed till much later, called on the Widow Houet, who was alone, having sent her servant out some distance. The visitor after a short parley left, taking the old woman with him, and she was never seen again. After this disappearance suspicion fixed on the son-in-law, Robert, who was arrested, and with him a friend named Bastien, who had also been in the wine trade. Nothing came of the inquiry which followed, and both the accused men were released. Three years later they were again arrested on supposed fresh evidence, but were again released. At last the man C——

came forward with full particulars. Robert, it appeared, had approached Bastien with proposals to murder the old woman, whom he hated. As Robert had never paid over the share promised, Bastien confided the whole story to C——, and showed him the copy of a letter he had written his accomplice, in which were the following words:

“Do not forget the garden of the rue de Vaugirard 81, you know. Fifteen feet from the end wall and fourteen from the side one. The dead sometimes come back.” Bastien had carefully preserved the plan of the garden, on which was marked the spot where the corpse had been buried. This garden belonged to an isolated house, which had been rented by Robert, and Bastien was engaged in digging a deep pit in it. He bought a cord, provided himself with quicklime; then one Sunday morning he called upon the Widow Houet, with a message from her daughter and son-in-law, that they expected her to lunch in the new house. Here let Bastien speak for himself: “The old woman knew me well as a friend of her children, and accompanied me in a cart to the rue de Vaugirard. On entering the garden and reaching a quiet corner, I slipped my rope round her neck and strangled her. When certainly dead I buried her, threw in quicklime, covered up the grave and went to breakfast. There was one guest short, but Robert asked no questions. I knew he was satisfied with me. I had done my part in the business, but he would not perform his, and never yet has he paid me my price, the half share of the widow’s fortune. After waiting patiently all these years and finding him ever after deaf to my demand and unmindful of my threats, I resolved to denounce him, through you.”

This was the message brought by C——, and in response, warrants to arrest the Roberts, man and wife, were issued by the police. The culprits had already left Paris, but were followed and brought back. Meanwhile Bastien was taken into custody after a hand to hand encounter. He was searched, and in a pocketbook found upon him were the plan of the garden and the compromising papers relating to the Widow Houet’s estate. The case was clear. Nothing remained but to verify the facts by disinterring the corpse. It was necessary to proceed with great caution, lest the body should be removed by friends of the accused. A watch was set upon the house now occupied by a master pavier, and his sympathies were enlisted by warning him that he was to be the victim of a midnight robbery. He consented to allow two agents of the police to be stationed in the garden, and they took post there for several nights in succession, but nothing happened. At last after careful examination the position of the buried body was fixed by Bastien’s plan, and a party of diggers from the great cemetery

of Père La Chaise came, accompanied by a doctor, to open the ground. The body of a woman was come upon at considerable depth, in fair preservation thanks to the quicklime. The rope was still around her neck, and she still wore a gold ring. The evidence was conclusive as to the murder, but the criminals were allowed the benefit of extenuating circumstances, and the capital sentence was commuted to *travaux forcés* for life.

About this same date a murder was committed in Paris, which will always fill a prominent place in French criminal records, from the hideous personality of the principal performer. Few members of the race of Cain are more widely known than the bloodthirsty monster, Lacenaire, of whom the saying is preserved: “I think no more of slaying a man than of taking a drink of water.” His detection and delivery to justice were due to the help afforded by treacherous confederates, who played the *musique*. The circumstances, with some account of the central figure, and the methods pursued, may well find a place here.

On December 14, 1834, an old woman, the Widow Chardon, residing in the passage Cheval Rouge of the rue St. Martin, was brutally done to death, and her son, who lived with her, was also killed. Both had been struck down with the same hatchet. The state of the premises, locks forced, furniture smashed, their contents strewed about the room, showed plainly that robbery had been the motive of the murder. A fortnight later another murder was attempted, and was all but successful, upon a banker’s clerk, who called, in the French fashion, to collect money on a bill or note of hand, which had been due, and was payable at the private address given by the acceptor, by name Mabrossier, No. 66, rue Montorgueil. The clerk climbed to the fourth floor, where he found the name Mabrossier inscribed in white chalk upon the outer door. He knocked, and was admitted into an empty room, where two men were evidently awaiting him. The door was slammed, and he was attacked murderously. The clerk was young and muscular, and fought sturdily for his life, uttering such loud cries for help that the miscreants were alarmed, and fled down-stairs out of the house.

The only clue to the outrage was the name Mabrossier, and he was known sufficiently well to the concierge, who gave a description of him. The machinery of the police was set in motion, by which the names of all who pass the night in hotels and common lodging-houses are inscribed day by day on the register, and the name Mabrossier was found finally in a low den kept by one Pageot. Close to it was another name, Ficellier, recorded the same day, and the landlord remembered and described his visitor. The portrait exactly fitted a certain

François, at the time in custody, having been arrested within the last few days for fraud. The landlady, when pressed, also admitted that Mabrossier had previously been a lodger under the name of Baton.

The police pieced together the scraps that were coming to hand. M. Cauler, who was in charge of the case, openly taxed François with being Ficellier, and, on the shrewd suspicion that Baton was Mabrossier, arrested him, but was forced to release him for want of more definite evidence. Then a prisoner in La Force volunteered the fact that Baton was the intimate of one Gaillard, who sometimes passed under the name of Baton, but who, in one of his disguises, corresponded exactly with the much wanted Mabrossier. The next step was a hunt for Gaillard, and the name was soon found on another hotel register. They knew him well, there, and when asked whether he came often, or had left any traces, a bundle of songs was produced and a letter, said to be in his handwriting, containing an offensive diatribe on the prefect of police. Suddenly a light broke in on the police. The writing of the word “Mabrossier,” chalked upon the door in the house, where the assault was committed, was identically the same as in this letter.

It was now well known that Gaillard was wanted, and assistance was offered by another inmate of La Force, Avril by name, who declared that if let out for a week he would put Gaillard into the hands of the police. Nothing came of this boast, and Avril went back to gaol. Recourse was again had to François, who was fetched from the prison to be interrogated at the Prefecture. In the cab, en route, François made a clean breast of everything. He knew all about the murder of Mother Chardon; he had heard the whole story from the principal actor, Gaillard, who had thus a second and more serious crime to his charge than the attack on the bank clerk.

Gaillard’s identity was next placed beyond all doubt. Avril, the same prisoner who had fruitlessly sought Gaillard through Paris, confided to the police that the murderer had an aunt of the same name, a well-to-do person, who lived in great retirement. A visit was paid to her, and inquiries made as to her nephew, “Gaillard.” “His real name is Lacenaire,” she replied, “and I never wish to see or hear of him again. He is a miscreant, and I constantly go in fear of my life for him.” So the search was narrowed down to the real man Lacenaire, who fortunately was arrested at this very moment under the name of Levi Jacob, on attempting to pass a forged bill of exchange. He was brought at once to Paris, and, when visited in his cell by the head of the police, readily confessed himself

the author of the crimes, of which he was suspected. When asked to name his accomplices, he refused until he heard that both François and Avril had informed against him, when he turned upon them and gave them completely away. They had betrayed him, and he would not spare them! It served him right for taking accomplices!

This was the burden of his recital in the many interviews he had with the police. “Always work alone, it is the only safe method. Partners and comrades can never be trusted.” Lacenaire gave many proofs of this from his own personal experience. Once at Lyons he was returning home from an orgie, when he met on the bridge of Morand a well-dressed gentleman, upon whose white waistcoat glittered a fat gold chain. The man staggered slightly, and was clearly under the influence of drink. They were quite alone together upon the bridge, and Lacenaire fell upon him, seizing his throat with one hand and emptying his pockets with the other. Then, after he had secured the watch and chain and well-filled pocketbook, he lifted the victim in his arms and threw him bodily into the river Rhone, which flowed rapidly beneath. “I never heard who this man was, nor did I think of the incident again,” said he. “Having worked alone, I was never discovered.” Again, when residing in Paris, just after his release from prison, he frequented the gaming-house, Palais-Royal, and watched the lucky players with the idea of following them in the street to rob and murder them. He followed a man, who had won 30,000 francs, and, catching him in a lonely place, threatened him with his life unless he surrendered at once the contents of his pockets. The approach of a passing patrol frightened Lacenaire, who took to his heels without the plunder. He escaped because he was alone. Had he been trammelled with an accomplice they would probably have got into each other’s way, or at least Lacenaire would have been obliged to think of some one beside himself. “Had I not worked with Avril in the murder of Mother Chardon, he would never have been able to betray me.”

The life and death of Lacenaire attracted considerable attention. There was much to interest the public, albeit unhealthily, in the personal record of this remarkable criminal, who came of decent parents, had been well educated, and yet yielded to the most ignoble passions; who from petty thief passed through all the phases of commonplace crime until he threw off all restraint and became a wholesale murderer. While honest society viewed him with horror, he became a hero to his fellows, who would have imitated him had they dared, but were satisfied to glorify him, to tattoo his name upon their breasts and to accept him as their chief and model. He was born in a village near Lyons, and graduated with honors at

the college. Then he went to Paris and read law. When his father's failure in business left him without resources, he enlisted, served for a time, came back to Paris and soon lapsed into crime. He could not bear the idea of an empty pocket, and was ready for any evil deed, that would fill it. The first committal to prison introduced him to friends, by whom he was willingly led astray, and prepared him for the criminal designs that took possession of him. When finally tried for his life, he was no more than thirty-five, and had been guilty of at least thirty heinous offences. His execution undoubtedly rid the world of a monster.

Some of the more atrocious and abominable crimes of French evil-doers will fitly find a passing reference here. They are mostly characterised by the traits peculiar to the worst side of the Frenchman,—of devilish ingenuity in design, savage resolution in performance, cynical apathy and indifference in the face of the forthcoming results, alternating often with sham emotion and hypocritical grief. Types re-appear constantly, crimes are repeatedly reproduced, generation after generation, by criminals who lack all originality in their actions, generally inspired by the same motives. The greed for gold, the craving for sensual self-indulgence, consuming passion and bitter jealousy and an unappeasable thirst for revenge, have at all times influenced the weakly moral sense and accomplished the most diabolical deeds. In murder cases, the disposal of the body is one of the chief difficulties that faces the perpetrator of the crime. It may be possible sometimes to leave the tell-tale evidence upon the theatre of the crime, but the danger of detection is greatly enhanced thereby, and murderers have therefore usually adopted some other plan of concealing or removing the corpse. There is nothing new under the sun, and some of these methods of disposal are to be met with in the earliest criminal records, and have found imitators down to the present day. One case may be quoted in which a number of workmen repairing the Pont de la Concorde fished a large parcel out of the water, and on opening it found it contained human remains. The bundle had been cleverly packed and tied in a common corn-sack, with an outer cover of packing-cloth. Shortly afterwards a second parcel, exactly similar in form and contents, was found at no great distance from the first. It was presently learned that a woman named Ferraud, otherwise Renaudin, who had lived in the street des Egout Saint Martin, had recently changed her domicile, and had been helped in the move by a certain L'Huissier, a furniture maker. Nothing more had been heard of him until a near neighbor vouchsafed his new address. L'Huissier was found there, in bed, surrounded by the effects of the murdered woman. He had let her an apartment in the same house, and accompanied her there; had secured her property and promptly killed her. Then he had made up his parcels, and, hiring a hand-barrow,

wheeled his burden to the river, to which he consigned it. The case is interesting as one of the first instances of dismemberment as a means of disposal.

Forty years later human remains were found in the bedroom of a hotel in the rue de Poliveau, and were presently discovered to be those of a milkwoman, who employed Barré, a notary's clerk, who concerned himself with the investments of any one who would trust him. The milkwoman was one of the number. She had come to Barré's rooms to charge him with the sale of certain scrip, but was murdered when off her guard. Other similar cases were those of the "Woman of Clichy," whose husband murdered her and buried her on the banks of the Seine. The criminal here was an old soldier, wearing the military medal, and nicknamed the "decoré." A third case was that of Prévost, a police sergeant, who had killed a tailor's traveller, who had called upon him in the hopes of disposing of some of his stock. When arrested and brought to trial it was proved that this was the second murder of which Prévost had been guilty. His first victim had been a housekeeper to a gentleman, who had made her his heir. She desired to buy the good-will of a small business, and consulted Prévost, at whose advice she realised part of her property, and brought it to him to complete the purchase. She dined with Prévost, having the money in her pocket, and was put out of the way that he might secure it.

The most famous case of all is one of the most recent, and made the reputation of M. Macé, the well-known chief of the French detective police. Here a suspicious parcel had been found in a well in the centre of an apartment house. A second parcel was presently recovered, with identical contents. Both parcels were tied up in black glazed calico, the ends of both were knotted in a peculiar way, and both were stitched with black cotton. These facts threw suspicion upon some journeyman tailor. It was soon discovered that an inmate of the apartment house, who was a working sempstress, received the visits of a tailor, who brought her work. Attention was thus directed to this man Voirbo. His antecedents were investigated, and it was found that an aged man, a miser with means, often in Voirbo's company, had disappeared. The crowning point in this case was the cleverness shown by M. Macé in discovering that the dismemberment had taken place in Voirbo's own rooms. The tiled floor in the living room sloped in one direction, and M. Macé, readily judging that if a body had been disposed of in the room, the blood would have flowed that way, at once emptied a decanter upon the floor. The running water led him to a spot under which, when laid bare, a quantity of dark matter, proved later to be dry human blood, was disinterred. Voirbo was challenged with the crime, and confessed, but

before execution committed suicide.

Crimes of the character indicated above are numerous enough in the criminal annals of France, but they by no means constitute the whole of her calendar of crime; and in the next chapter we pass on to others not less fearsome.

CHAPTER VI
CELEBRATED CASES

Parricide—Benoit and his mother—Donon Cadot—Combinations for crime—Soufflard and Le Sage—The mysterious case of Madame Lafarge—A strange story—The Duc de Choiseul-Praslin kills his wife in the faubourg St. Honoré—Evidence clearly against him—Poisons himself and escapes justice—Suspected in Paris that special favor was shown him on account of his rank—Failure of justice in this case one of the supposed causes of the French Revolution of 1848.

The crime of parricide was so little conceivable in ancient law that no mention of it appears in the early codes. Six centuries of civilisation elapsed before the Roman law-makers devised a special penalty for the child who slew his parent. The guilty offspring was sewn up in a leather sack, and drowned in the sea; in this it was the custom later to enclose a dog, a cock, a viper and a monkey. The case of Benoit, quoted below, was by no means isolated. At the trial of Edward Donon Cadot in 1844, the public prosecutor admitted that there had been ninety-five parricides in France in the course of ten years. Only a short time before had the special penalty inflicted in addition to death, that of mutilation by striking off the offending hand, been suppressed.

The causes that have inspired this horrible offence are in all cases generally the same; either the impatient heirs, weary of waiting for their inheritance, have hastened the departure of the obstacle, or they have resented the duties imposed on them by the prolonged existence of an aged and useless parent. These reasons have too often weighed in France, especially with the peasant class, at once avaricious and greedy, and the most hideous stories of the savage cruelty of children towards their parents are to be found in French criminal records; and this even in quite recent times.

A singularly savage instance of matricide is on record; that of Frederick Benoit, who murdered his mother at Vouziers, in 1832, and committed a certain murder

at Versailles, for which he suffered death in Paris. This Benoit was the third son of the Justice of the Peace at Vouziers. The father was in the habit of visiting a mill he owned at some little distance, and passing the night there. Madame Benoit, when left alone, was always a prey to apprehension, for they kept a considerable sum in cash in the wardrobe, near her bedroom. This fact was known to young Benoit. One night, when the judge was absent, an alarm of robbers was raised, and several neighbors rushed in. Frederick met them on the threshold with the news that the thieves had escaped by the window, but he begged some one to rouse his mother at once. On entering her room she was found lying dead upon her bed, with her throat cut from ear to ear. Death must have been instantaneous, but her head was enveloped in a woollen petticoat, undoubtedly to stifle her cries.

Circumstance did not support the theory that thieves had broken into the house. All the windows had been securely closed at bedtime. The shutters could be opened only from within. Besides there were no signs of muddy footmarks brought in from outside, where it was raining hard. Nor, last of all, was the existence of the money in the cupboard, 6,000 francs in gold, known to any one outside the family circle. The inquiry seemed naturally limited, therefore, to the persons actually occupying the house that night,—Frederick Benoit and a young girl, a cousin, who served as domestic. As the boy was barely twenty and the girl not seventeen, the police could not bring themselves to suspect them. Several arrests were made, but guilt could not be fixed upon any one. Then all at once the second murder was committed by Benoit, who killed a youthful companion, with whom he was on the most intimate terms. They had occupied a room together in a small hotel at Versailles. At midday Benoit had gone out, but no sign was made by the other. In the evening, about 7 o’clock, the servants went up and found the door locked from the outside. They entered by another door, and discovered the body of the second young man with his throat cut. “Precisely as my mother was killed,” remarked Benoit, when subsequently arrested, and brought into the presence of the body at the Morgue.

Witnesses now appeared, who had heard the deceased declare that his life was in danger from Frederick Benoit. “I know what he has done, and he will certainly kill me some day to save his own skin.” Benoit was accordingly arrested. A search in his lodgings in Paris revealed a razor case, from which the razor had been removed, and a quantity of gold inserted, wrapped up as *rouleaux* in fragments of the *Constitutionnel* newspaper, to which his father, the judge, was a subscriber. Further incriminating evidence now came from the last confession of

the girl Louise Feucher, his cousin, to the effect that she had been his accomplice in the murder of Madame Benoit. She had fled from the house in Vouziers to Paris, and fallen into bad ways, which had led to her imprisonment in Les Magdelonnettes, where she entered the hospital, and died.

Frederick Benoit was duly convicted, sentenced to death and executed. It came out in the course of the trial that his mother had had a strong presentiment of impending evil. On the night of the murder, when her husband was absent, she carefully inspected the house with her son, the intending parricide, and made all secure. “The nights are long (it was the month of November); we never know what might happen,” she said, closing all doors and shutters, and looking to the locks and fastenings. She could not protect herself from the danger already within the house. Her murderer was in a room close by, and he accomplished his purpose with a single blow, while she still slept, and passed, without a struggle, instantaneously from life to death.

M. Donon Cadot, a prosperous banker of Pontoise, was found murdered in his offices on January 15, 1844; and suspicion fell upon his second son, who lived with him. He was a widower. His household was limited to one general servant, and his economy was so rigid that he passed for a miser. No doubt he was very illiberal to his son. On the day named, one for the settlement of bills and notes of hand, the banker was at his desk by 9 o’clock, ready to meet his engagements, and transacted business for a time, but at the half hour the doors were found closed, and the son, answering for his father, declared that he had been called away for a time. He had not returned by four in the afternoon, and the son on the premises, Edward, summoned an elder brother, who lived in the town, to attend to the business of the bank. Together they found a sluggish stream of mingled blood and ink, flowing under the office door. Forcing it they discovered the lifeless corpse of their father within. He had been battered to death by some heavy instrument.

The motive of the crime was revealed by the forced safe and empty drawers of the desk. Everything of value, bills, bank-notes, cash and a quantity of plate had been carried off. The first named, many hundred in number, and amounting in all to some 300,000 francs, being unnegotiable, were returned by post. Other bills, however, were presented, and the bearer of one of them was traced to his home, where a number of the papers were found in the same handwriting as the envelopes which had come through the post. This fixed the suspicion on a man named Rousselot, and he was brought to confess that he had participated in the

crime. He had committed it at the instigation of the son Edward, who was moved by greed and jealousy. A long trial followed, resulting in the conviction of Rousselot and a sentence of life at the galleys, but the evidence was not deemed conclusive against the son, and he was released.

A common feature in French crime has always been the systematic organisation of offenders in bands, where a number of them contrive to act in concert under chosen leaders. There have been many of these associations from time to time working on a wide scale and doing enormous damage. The *chauffeurs*, so called from their methods of torture to extort confessions of hidden wealth, were a product of the revolutionary epoch, and a revival of the baneful bands, that have constantly ravaged France from the Middle Ages. The extensive operations of Cartouche, one of the most daring and successful of thieves on a large scale, were rivalled by the terrible band directed by Hulin in the forest of Montargis, and the exploits of Pontailler, who worked close up to the walls of Paris.

The depredations of a number of the worst criminals spread terror through the capital in 1836 and the years immediately following. Now again, as when Vidocq was charged with pursuit and discovery, serious robberies were of constant occurrence, and were rightly attributed to associated action. Very many ex-convicts, those regularly released, and yet more who had made their escape from durance, were at large. Some five or six thousand infested Paris alone. The police were ever on the alert, but failed to put their hands upon the ringleader, until all at once an atrocious murder was committed in broad daylight in the populous quarter of the Temple.

Among the respectable dealers of that neighborhood was a family named Renaud, father, mother and daughter, who kept a shop for the sale of mattresses and bedding. One afternoon in June, Renaud meant to take his wife and daughter for a walk, and sent the girl to their private residence, hard by, to help her mother to dress. She found the rooms securely locked, and, thinking her mother was within, asleep, went down to ask her father if she should be awakened. On her return she met a man coming down in a hurry, and a second, following. But still her mother’s door was closed. Still no answer came to her knocking, and she again sought her father, who now ascended and broke into the room with a hatchet. Madame Renaud was lying dead upon the floor, bearing many wounds. It was subsequently found that a bag of gold had been abstracted from the room, a quantity of silver money and several pieces of plate. Beyond question the strange men first seen were the authors of the crime. As the men reached the

street a woman had met them, and heard a sound of silver rattling down on the pavement. Some one also cried after them: “Here! You’ve dropped a silver spoon;” and the smaller of the two paused to pick it up and run on. Others noted them as they passed, and that their clothes were much stained with blood. But they went on, and entered a café, where they called for two glasses of sugared water. Their haggard looks attracted attention, and they were seen using the water bottle to wash their hands below the table. Evidently disturbed, and dreading further observation, they got up and hurriedly left the café.

The description given of these two men fitted with that of a couple of convicts recently released from Toulon. Search was made for them, and, as it progressed, the police came upon several confederates, all members of a gang in which these two, by name Soufflard and Le Sage, were leading spirits. With a third, called Micaud, they formed the executive of this criminal association. They had all been at Toulon together, and were known there as the most violent and intractable prisoners. When a new act of insubordination was planned, a new series of thefts, this trio always originated or were concerned in it. Le Sage in particular was a terror to his keepers. He had a sister of the same type as himself, a half savage peasant woman, who hawked bread about in a basket, but whose real occupation was that of spy, who hunted out jobs for execution, promising great profit to those who could bring them off. She had trained a small son to assist her, a precocious child, who was an adroit thief on his own account. Inspired and guided by these chiefs, a number of lesser practitioners were kept constantly busy. Crimes multiplied throughout Paris; jewellers’ shops were broken into, and private apartments by force or with false keys; shops were explored by pretended purchasers of goods, and their weak points laid bare and a descent made next night.

Le Sage, who had been locked up for a brief space in La Force, was, on his release, informed by his sister of the chances offered by the Renaud establishment in the Temple. He saw at once that robbery could hardly be effected without violence, which he did not shrink from, but he wanted a stalwart companion. Soufflard, who was also at large, was thirsting for some “big thing,” and willingly joined in the attack upon the Renauds. The crime once committed, the police were soon on the track of the murderers, guided by the indications of false friends. Le Sage was taken first, and easily identified. Soufflard, who had three separate domiciles, and was very wary, was only caught through the help of a jealous comrade, who denounced him. Trial and conviction rapidly followed, but Soufflard after the sentence, evading the supervision of the warders, who

were removing him to the Conciergerie, swallowed a quantity of arsenic, and died of the effects. Le Sage also committed suicide by hanging himself in his cell.

Crime is of no class, and in all countries and in all ages, high born offenders, as well as low, have stood in the dock to answer for their misdeeds. There are two cases about this period that may be quoted here in proof of this particular statement; one the alleged poisoning of her husband by Madame Lafarge; the other, the horrible murder of the Duchesse de Choiseul-Praslin by her husband, the Duke, at their mansion, the Hotel Sebastiani in the Faubourg St. Honoré, Paris. Both take rank with the most celebrated cases, and attracted extraordinary interest, which has but little abated even now.

The case of Madame Lafarge is still an unsolved mystery. Grave doubts as to her guilt prevailed, and many learned lawyers have maintained that she was the victim of judicial error. The accused, Marie Fortunée Cappelle, was a young lady in good society, well educated and well bred, who had married a manufacturer at Glandier in the Limoges country, not far from Bordeaux. She was the daughter of a colonel in Napoleon's Artillery of the Guard. She was well connected. Her aunts were well married, one to a Prussian diplomatist, the other to Monsieur Garat, the General Secretary of the Bank of France. Her father had stood well with Napoleon, had held several important military commands, and was intimate with many of the nobles of the First Empire. Marie lost her parents early, and, being possessed of a certain fortune, a marriage was sought for her in the usual French way. She was not exactly pretty, but was distinguished looking, with a slim, graceful figure, a dead white complexion, jet black eyes and a sweet, sad smile.

The husband chosen was a certain Charles Pouch Lafarge, a man of fair position, but decidedly the inferior of Marie Cappelle. He was in business as an iron master, and was deemed prosperous. He said he had a large private residence in the neighborhood of his works, a fine mansion, situated in a wide park, where his wife would be in the midst of agreeable and fashionable society. Great, almost indecent, haste was shown in arranging and solemnising the marriage. Within five days the bride started for her new home, and quickly realised that she had been completely befooled. M. Lafarge at once showed himself in his true colors as a rough, brutal creature, who treated his wife badly from the first. The family seat at Glandier was a fraud. It was a damp, dark house in a street, surrounded with smoky chimneys. The park did not exist, nor did the pleasant

neighbors. She had been grossly deceived, and the reality was even worse than it appeared, for Lafarge was in serious financial difficulties, and had been obliged to issue forged bills of exchange to keep his head above water. The unhappy and disappointed wife, when face to face with the truth, made a determined effort to break loose from Lafarge. On the very day of her arrival at Glandier, she shut herself up in her room, and wrote him an indignant yet appealing letter, in which she threatened, if he would not let her go, to take arsenic. And this, her first mention of the lethal drug, was remembered against her in later days, when she was tried for her life.

Peace was patched up between the ill-assorted couple, and Marie was persuaded to withdraw her letter and promise to do her best to accept the position, and make her husband happy. “With a little strength of mind,” she wrote to an uncle, “with patience and my husband’s love, I may grow contented. Charles adores me, and I cannot but be touched by the caresses he lavishes on me.” He must have been willing enough to secure her good graces, for he wanted her to part with her fortune to improve his business. He had discovered a new process in iron-smelting, which promised to be profitable, and his wife lent him money to develop the invention. Then he hurried to Paris to secure the patent, and while absent from Glandier, where his wife remained, the first event occurred on which the suspicion of foul play was based. Madame Lafarge was now so affectionately disposed that she desired to send her portrait to her husband. The picture was to be accompanied by a number of small cakes prepared by the mother-in-law, and Marie Lafarge wrote to beg her husband to eat one at a particular hour on a particular day. She would do the same at Glandier, and thereby set up some mysterious *rapport* with her husband. When the parcel arrived, the picture was found within, but no small cakes, only one large one. The box had been tampered with. When it left Glandier, it was screwed down. It reached Paris fastened with long nails. Lafarge, on opening it, broke off a part of the large cake, and ate it. That night he was taken violently ill. The cake presumably contained poison, but the fact was never proved, still less that Marie Lafarge had inserted the arsenic, which it was supposed to contain. The evidence against her was that she had bought some of this baneful drug from a chemist at Glandier. The charge was definitely made, but on weak evidence, the chief being the purchased arsenic and her manifest agitation when the news came from Paris that her husband had been taken ill. On the other hand, there was nothing to show that she had substituted the large poisoned cake for the small ones, or that no one else had handled the parcel. Here crept in the notion of another agency, and the suggestion that some one else might have been anxious to poison

Lafarge. This idea was by no means extravagant, and it cropped up more than once during the proceedings, but no proper attention was paid to it. Had the clue been followed, it might have led inquiry to the possible guilt of another person.

Lafarge returned from Paris a good deal shaken, but the doctor promised that with rest his health would be restored. On the contrary it got worse, and with symptoms which to-day would undoubtedly be attributed to arsenical poisoning. Marie Lafarge would have constituted herself sole nurse, but the mother-in-law would not agree, and would never leave her alone with her husband. Witnesses deposed to having seen Marie take a white powder from a cupboard, which she mixed with the chicken broth and medicine given to Lafarge. Another witness declared that the patient cried out “that his medicine burnt out like fire.”

All this time Marie Lafarge did not conceal her possession of arsenic. She bought it openly to kill rats, she said: a very hackneyed excuse. It had been bought through one of Lafarge’s clerks, Denis Barbier by name, upon whom rested strong suspicion from first to last. Barbier was a man of bad character, passing under a false name. He had been the secret accomplice of Lafarge in passing forged bills, and a shrewd theory was advanced that all along he was scheming to supplant his master and take possession of his property after he (Lafarge) had been made away with. Barbier’s conduct was such that the Prussian jurists who investigated the trial afterwards declared that they would have accused him of the crime rather than Madame Lafarge.

The trial was no doubt conducted with gross carelessness. A post-mortem was made, but not until it was insisted upon, and it was very imperfectly performed. When at length the corpse was disinterred, only an infinitesimal quantity of arsenic was at first found in the remains, but when the most eminent scientists of the day were called in, it was established by M. Orfila that the deceased had been poisoned. The circumstances of the case fixed the guilt upon Madame Lafarge. She was very ably defended by the famous Maitre Lachaud, but the jury had no doubt, and condemned her by a majority of voices. At the same time she was given the benefit of extenuating circumstances, and sentenced to *travaux forcés* for life, with exposure in the public square of Tulle. This decision, although supported by science, was not universally approved. Many believed in her innocence to the last, and the number of her sympathisers was legion. She endured her imprisonment at Montpelier, where she remained for many years, engaged almost continually in literary work. Her “Memoirs” and a work entitled “Prison Hours” were largely read. She also conducted an enormous

correspondence, for she was permitted to receive and send out an unlimited number of letters. No less than six thousand passed through her hands. At length in 1852 she petitioned the head of the State, and was released with a full pardon by Napoleon III.

It is impossible at this length of time to settle a question so keenly debated by her contemporaries. The possibility of her having served for another's crime hardly rests on any very strong basis, and the circumstances that led to her arraignment were very much against her. It must not be forgotten, moreover, that she was charged with a crime other than that of theft, and was convicted of it. In this again she may have suffered unjustly. A school friend, who had become the wife of the Vicomte de Leautaud, accused her of having stolen her diamonds, when on a visit at her house. Marie Lafarge freely admitted the diamonds were in her possession, and pointed out where they might be found at Glandier, but she refuted the accusation of theft, and declared that the Vicomtesse had entrusted the diamonds to her to be sold. Her former lover threatened blackmail, and Madame de Leautaud was driven to buy him off—this was Marie's explanation, which Madame de Leautaud repelled by declaring that it was Marie Lafarge who was threatened, and that the diamonds were to be sacrificed to save her good name. In the end, the case was tried in open court, and Madame Lafarge was found guilty, although there were many contradictory facts. It was strange that the Vicomtesse so long refrained from complaining of the theft, and made so little of the loss. Marie, on the other hand, scarcely secreted the jewels, and was known to have a number of fine loose stones, for which she variously accounted—one story being that they were a gift, another that she had owned them from childhood. A sentence of two years' imprisonment was passed upon Madame Lafarge, but it merged in the larger term, when she was convicted of having poisoned her husband.

The murder of the Duchesse de Choiseul-Praslin by the husband shocked all Europe, not only on account of the horrible details of the deed, but from the high rank of the parties concerned. The Duke held his head high as the representative of an ancient family, and his unhappy victim was one of the leaders of French fashionable society. She was the daughter of one of the first Napoleon's famous generals, the Count Sebastian, and when in Paris they resided at the Sebastian Hotel in the Faubourg St. Honoré, in the Champs Elysées. In August, 1840, the family came from their country seat, the magnificent Chateau of Vaux, constructed by the famous Fouquet, Louis XIV's finance minister, who fell into such irretrievable disgrace, and died after long years of close imprisonment.

It was not a happy marriage, although ten children had been born to them. But the Duke and Duchess had become estranged as the years passed by, and were practically separated. Although still residing under the same roof, they held no communication with each other. What is now called incompatibility of temper was the cause, and the Duke was a masterful, overbearing man, who wanted his own way, and had his own ideas as to the bringing up of his children. He would not suffer his wife to have any voice in their education and management, but claimed to control them completely through their governesses, who were quickly changed if they failed to give satisfaction. One at last was found to suit, and the fact served to suggest a motive for the crime. Whether or not there was really an intrigue between this Madame Deluzy and the Duke, it was strongly suspected, and the Duchess certainly detested her. The Duke put the governess in a false position. He preferred her society, and lived much with his children committed to her charge, in a remote wing of the house.

These relations continued unchanged for several years, and the Duchess, although consumed with jealous rage, would have ended them by pleading for a divorce. Here the King and Queen intervened, and sought to reconcile husband and wife. Madame Deluzy left the Praslins to take a situation at a school, the head of which, not strangely, asked for a personal character from the Duchess. Curious stories had been put about, which must be cleared up before the new governess could be engaged. The Duchess refused pointblank to give a certificate, although the mistress came in person with Madame Deluzy to seek it. No doubt the Duke took this refusal in very bad part, and it is believed a violent quarrel ensued, although no record of it was preserved. But it is a fact of the utmost importance as supplying the motive for the crime committed the same night, or rather in the small hours of the following morning.

At four o’clock agonized cries disturbed the sleeping household. They proceeded from the Duchess’s apartment, and were compared by those who heard them to the yells of a lunatic in a fit of fury. Frantic ringings of the bell, rapid and intermittent, were the next sounds, followed by deep groans, the thud of blows and the fall of a heavy body. The servants rushed down, and found an entrance through doors, which had been locked from within. All the external doors and shutters giving upon the gardens were closed, their fastenings intact; only that of an antechamber, leading to the staircase which communicated with the Duke’s bedroom on the floor above, was open. He was apparently still undisturbed, and it was not until the servants had penetrated to the inner apartment, where they found the Duchess lying prone in her nightdress and deluged with blood, that the

Duke appeared on the staircase. He was greatly agitated, asked excitedly and repeatedly what had happened, and struck the wall and his head with his hands. When he saw the corpse he cried: “Who can have done this? Help! Help! Fetch a doctor. Quick!”

The doctors arrived, and close behind them the commissaries of police, who began their investigation immediately. That murder had been committed was clear from the slashed and stricken state of the corpse. There were quite a dozen wounds. The throat was cut down to the bone, the carotid artery and the jugular severed. Gashes in the hands showed that desperate attempts had been made to ward off the murderous blows by catching at the blade of the knife used. The poor woman had fought a hard fight for her life. Later, a close examination of the Duke proved that he had been wounded. His left hand was lacerated, and the thumb had been bitten, deep scratches with nails convulsively used,—all these bore witness to the struggle, and turned suspicion to the Duke. This was strengthened by other telltale facts. His bedroom was in the utmost disorder, water had been poured into the basin to wash off traces of blood, and several garments wringing wet were hung up in the place.

When called upon to state the facts as he knew them, the Duke made a very lame defence. He had roused from a sound sleep by loud cries, but, believing they came from the street outside, he waited until he thought he heard steps in the garden; then he rose, put on a dressing-gown, took a loaded pistol, and went down to his wife’s room. He called to her, but received no answer, and then lit a candle, by the feeble light of which he discovered her where she lay bleeding to death. Overcome with horror, he said, he ran back to his own room to wash off the blood with which he was now covered, and again descended to join the servants, who had now arrived upon the scene. The replies to the many serious questions put to the Duke were considered highly incriminating, and as by this time the highest officers of justice had reached the spot it was decided that the supposed murderer, whose guilt seemed clear, should be taken into custody. The King (Louis Philippe) was absent at his seaside residence, the Castle of Eu, and a special messenger was despatched to the coast, asking that the House of Peers should be summoned as a high court of justice to deal with the crime.

Meanwhile an order of arrest was issued, and the Duke would have been conveyed to the nearest prison but that a disturbance was dreaded. Great crowds had assembled near the Hotel Sebastian, and feeling ran high against the aristocratic criminal. A day was thus wasted, and when the Duke was removed at

length to the Luxembourg lock-up he was too weak to walk, and could barely speak. It was thought at first that he had been attacked with cholera; for that dread epidemic was just then ravaging Paris, and he exhibited some of the symptoms of that disease; but there was presently little doubt that when left unobserved in his own house he had contrived to become possessed of some poison, and had attempted his own life. When searched, on leaving his house, a phial was found in his pocket, containing laudanum mixed with arsenical acid. Remedies were promptly applied, but failed to counteract the evil effects of the strong dose.

The “instruction,” or preliminary inquiry, was, however, continued, despite the condition of the accused and the constitutional difficulties which demanded the intervention of the House of Peers. But the Duke grew weaker hourly, and could frame no replies to the questions, and was beyond doubt dying. At the last, just three days after his commission of the crime, he made full confession of his guilt. Nothing had been proved against Madame Deluzy. She had been charged with complicity, but was in due course discharged.

The crime of De Choiseul-Praslin occurred at a time when political passion ran high, and the reign of Louis Philippe was approaching its term. The feeling against the aristocracy was greatly embittered; the republican opposition was strongly moved by this atrocious murder committed by a Duke and Peer of France upon an unoffending wife. A report gained ground and could not be discredited, that the authorities had permitted him to evade justice; that the story of his death was quite untrue, and that he had been allowed to escape to England. There were people who afterwards declared that they had met the Duke, walking with Madame Deluzy in a London street, and when the funeral took place an attack was threatened upon the hearse so as to verify the matter. All this increased the popular excitement, and the government was fiercely denounced for daring to shield a titled criminal from the consequence of his acts. No doubt the Praslin murder was a contributory cause of the Revolution of 1848 and the downfall of Louis Philippe.

CHAPTER VII
THE COURSE OF THE LAW

The depot of the Prefecture—Procedure on arrest—Committal to Mazas—Origin of Mazas—First inmates victims of the coup d'état second of December, 1852—Description of Mazas—The régime—The cells—The prisoners and their dietaries—Method of conducting divine service—Escapes from Mazas—Chief Parisian criminals have passed through it—Demeanor of the convicted upon arrival and while waiting the extreme penalty—Abadie and Gilles—How affected.

He of whom the law falls foul in Paris finds himself in due course at the depot or prison of the Prefecture. This has been called the universal prison, for it is the portal through which all offenders, all actual or suspected law breakers, must necessarily pass. It receives, examines, rejects and releases, or commits for further proceedings, a whole world of people. The continuous stream passing in and out includes all classes, men and women, old and young, the healthy and the infirm, Parisian and provincial, natives and foreigners of nearly all nationalities. It has well been called a place of deposit, in which all are impounded who have gone astray under suspicious circumstances. Every one is brought here,—the criminal and the degenerate; the luckless and the unfortunate; the vagabond, the lost or abandoned, the weakminded and the unprotected. Three times in every twenty-four hours, the cellular omnibuses lodge all they find in their rounds of the sub-police stations, the *violons*, so called from the well-known musical instrument, and also from an instrument by which prisoners' feet are bound.

The process of arrest and treatment at the *violon* has been graphically described by one who has been through it. "As soon as my name had been inscribed on the register, the brigadier in charge promptly ordered me to empty my pockets, and not to forget anything. After this, to make quite sure, I was personally searched, and everything of value, and much that was not, was taken from me; my collar, my necktie, one cigar, my penknife, watch, purse and even my braces, were all put into my pocket handkerchief and tied up. As they were taking me away to

the cell I begged that my braces and pocket handkerchief might be returned. The rude answer was, ‘You must hold up your trousers with your hand, and blow your nose as best you can. That’s enough;’ and I was very summarily locked up in one of three cells at the end of the passage; a dirty looking place, smelling like a rabbit hole, and already occupied by a ragged creature, who immediately demanded tobacco; and, on my saying I had none, asked me to stand treat for some food as he had not eaten since the day before. I ordered this out of compassion, and he devoured it voraciously, then went soundly to sleep upon the wooden guard bed. It was bitterly cold, and towards morning my companion, saying that he was half frozen, battered at the door, and asked permission to go out into the large room and warm himself by the stove, a privilege accorded to me also.

“At an early hour the omnibus came, and I was taken to the depot, where I was registered in the outer office, and then passed in to undergo the ordeal of the *petit parquet*, where I was subjected to the interrogations of one of the substitutes of the Procureur of the Republic. The work is done quickly. Time presses. There are many cases to be examined and disposed of.”

The plan of procedure is the same for all. Where the offence is venial the culprit is speedily set at large. Others whose guilt is clearly proved, or who make a clean breast of it, are passed on without a moment’s delay to the correctional police. It is only for those who are charged with grave crimes, with robbery, forgery, murderous assaults, and the like; whose cases are surrounded with doubt, or who obstinately refuse to confess, that the whole machinery of the French law is set in motion. The accused is then handed over to the tender mercies of one of the *juges d’instruction*, in order that, at all costs, the ends of justice may be assured. The examination was conducted until recently in a manner abhorrent to all ideas of fair play. It is the rule in a free country that no man need incriminate himself. In France the accused was fully expected to do so. He was, indeed, forced into it if he would not do it of his own accord. Under the system which prevailed till quite recently the judge in turn cajoled, beguiled and hectored the accused. He set pitfalls and wove snares; he repeated his questions in a dozen different forms; he had recourse to *coups de théâtre*, and openly produced the *piéces de convictions*, the weapons used in a murder to confront a supposed criminal, or brought him face to face with the reeking and revolting remains of the victim. Sometimes judge and accused were fairly matched, and there was as much fence and finesse, as much patient cunning and persistency on the one side as on the other. Sometimes the moral torture was

more than the prisoner could bear, and he abandoned his defence. It is of record that a murderer, maddened by the assiduity of the interrogating judge, cried suddenly: “Yes, I did it. I can deny it no longer. I’d rather be guillotined than be bullied like this.” But in most cases the process of investigation ordinarily extended over many days. The prisoner was brought up again and again before he was finally arraigned. Even then there was a further delay before he was convicted and received sentence. All this time he spent at Mazas, the old *maison d’arrêt cellulaire*. He now goes, after sentence, to Fresnes, on the outskirts of Paris, the imposing prison recently erected to replace Mazas.

But Mazas had a history. It was associated with the chief criminality of Paris for more than half a century, and a detailed account of it should be preserved. It was the first tardy effort of the French to follow in the path of prison reform, and was first opened on the nineteenth of May, 1850, to receive the seven hundred inmates of the then condemned La Force. Elsewhere prisons and their inmates had occupied a large share of public attention in the first half of the nineteenth century. The United States led the way with plans of amelioration, and the prisons of Auburn and Sing-Sing were conspicuous examples of the new order of things. In England, Millbank Penitentiary had been erected regardless of cost, after a scheme originated by John Howard and Jeremy Bentham, and had given place after thirty years of experiment to Pentonville, built under the auspices and personal supervision of some of the most distinguished Englishmen of the day. France alone lagged behind. The question was discussed there, but little more than talking was done. Two eminent publicists, MM. Beaumont and De Tocqueville, had visited America in 1837, and published a valuable monograph upon the penitentiaries of the United States. In 1840, an energetic and philanthropic prefect of Paris, Gabriel Delessert, converted, by his own authority, the boys’ prison of La Petite Roquette into a place of cellular confinement. Still, it was not till 1844 that the principle of isolation and separation for all prisoners was accepted even theoretically, in France. Five years more elapsed before Mazas, the first French prison built in accordance with modern ideas was ready for the reception of prisoners.

It must be confessed that, although French prison administrators were slow to put their hands to the work, when once it was undertaken they did their best to make the new establishment a success. The best models of the time were adopted and closely followed. The architect of Mazas, if he did not exactly imitate Sir Joshua Jebb, the eminent English engineer who gave the model for prison construction to all the world, was clearly inspired by him. In its main outlines

Mazas greatly resembled Pentonville. The ground plan was much the same. There was the same radiation of halls or divisions from a common centre. The same tiers of cells rise story above story. The size of the cells (ten feet by six), the method of ventilation and warming, by means of hot water pipes with extraction flues and furnaces in the roof, are nearly identical in the French and English prisons. Nor was it only in the construction of Mazas that the French authorities sought to secure the perfection of the new arrangements. With a tenderness for the welfare of the occupants of the prison, which contrasted almost violently with their previous apathy as to the treatment of criminals, they tested its sanitary fitness by filling it for a time with paupers, before it was opened for prisoners. No evil effects having appeared among the former it was deemed safe for the latter and presently became the place of detention for all male *prévenus* or prisoners awaiting trial. Such it long continued, and has only been replaced by Fresnes since 1898.

The newly constructed prison of Mazas played its part in the Napoleonic *coup d'état* of 1853. It became for the time being a political prison. When the Legislative Assembly was invaded and the Chamber forcibly dissolved, two hundred of its members met at the Mayoralty of the Tenth Arrondissement. The place was surrounded by the troops. An order to disperse was issued, with the alternative of a transfer under escort to Mazas. Their leaders were already imprisoned, among the number Generals Cavaignac, Lamoncière and Bedeau; Colonel Charras, MM. Thiers, Broglie, Odillon, Barot and Remusat. It was feared that to commit a larger number to gaol might create a disturbance, and the deputies now arrested were confined in the barracks near the Quai d'Orsay. The only interesting fact connected with this high-handed treatment of political opponents by the founders of the Second Empire was that M. Thiers had been the minister who, in 1849, had decreed the building of Mazas, and was, as we have seen, one of the first to occupy it. History repeats itself. Often before, as in the cases of Hugues d'Aubriot at the Bastile and Cardinal La Balue at Loches, men had been cast into cells of their own creation.

Mazas, in the half century of its life, was always a striking object on the boulevard of the same name, which had been so called after a distinguished soldier of the First Empire, the Colonel Mazas who was killed at the Battle of Austerlitz. It was well known to all travellers to the South of France from the busy Gaol de Lyon, and with its grim façade of dark granite was in strong contrast to the bright boulevard crowded with vehicles and animated passers-by. It was the privilege of the present writer to pay it a lengthened visit in its palmy

days, and he may be permitted to draw upon his own experience in describing it.

The outer approaches were easily passed. A first gate was unlocked by a warder in dark green uniform, with white metal buttons, bearing the badge of an open eye. This gate led into an inner courtyard, surrounded by storerooms and waiting rooms with the façade of the director's residence—bright with masses of green creeper growing luxuriantly on one side. On the ground floor was a second portal where another Cerberus kept guard. To the right of this second entrance was the office of the *greffier*, or registrar of the prison, whose business it was to examine the credentials of all who would penetrate into the body of the prison. It was his business also to take a minute description of all prisoners on their reception, a formality known as the *écrou*, or enrolment upon the prison books. These books are voluminous, but are very accurately and carefully kept. The *signalement* of the prisoner gave all information concerning him, a full account of his personal appearance, of the clothes he was wearing, and of his position in life.

The *greffier* satisfied, a few more steps led us to another door, and this passed, we were in the *rond point*, or central hall of the prison. In the middle of this was a circular office and observatory, with sides entirely of glass, where a superior warder was posted to exercise a general supervision over the long corridors of the radiating wings. There were six of these wings arranged in three tiers or landings, each containing two hundred cells, after making due deductions for cells appropriated as bathrooms and *parloirs d'avocats*, or places where prisoners have private interviews with their attorneys. The whole prison at that time accommodated some eleven hundred souls. Although displaying a strong family likeness to prisons of its class, there was nothing particularly striking about the interior of Mazas. The prison was not very trimly kept. There was an absence of that spick and span cleanliness, that glittering prison polish, that freshness of paint and whitewash, which are generally deemed indispensable in every first-class prison. Untidy bales of goods, containing work just completed by the prisoners lay here and there awaiting removal; there was a good deal of litter about, and a suspicion of dust and soot. The walls throughout were stained a muddy, yellowish brown, which could not have been renewed for years. The passages were floored with brick, as were also the cells. Odors the reverse of fragrant in places assailed the nostrils. The system of introducing fresh air and extracting foul, although based on sound principles, did not seem to be thoroughly effective. Flushing was carried out by hand from water-cans supplied to the prisoners, and was altogether unsatisfactory. But with the cells and their

furniture no great fault could be found. The former were light and airy, the latter supplied their occupants with those bare necessaries which are usually conceded to the inmates of prisons. The prisoner's bed was a hammock with a mattress stuffed with wool or hair, and he had sheets and one blanket; in winter two blankets. A small table was built into the wall, about the centre of the cell. Over it was a gas jet, and close by was a straw-bottomed chair, attached to the wall by a chain just long enough to allow the prisoner to move his seat to and fro. Besides these he had an earthenware basin, a tin dinner dish, a large tin bottle for water, a drinking cup, a wooden spoon and spittoon. The cell walls were adorned with official notices: the regulations of the prison, in which all that the prisoner must and might not do was set forth with considerable prolixity; an inventory of what the cell contained and a list of prices, approved by the Prefect of the Police, of the articles of consumption which the prisoner might buy at the prison canteen with the money he earned or was sent him by friends. Prisoners unconvicted were, naturally, not compelled to work in prisons, but they were invited, even persuaded, to do so, and were at liberty to expend half the money they might earn in purchasing small comforts or adding to their daily fare. Those who preferred it were permitted, as elsewhere, to supply themselves altogether with food; and in cases where the *prévenu* was of good family, if he or his friends were in funds, his meals came straight from a good restaurant or his own home.

The inmate of Mazas could not well complain of the neglect of the authorities, nor, judging by outward appearances, of the harshness of their rule. In addition to many minor indulgences, he was permitted to purchase a certain fixed quantity of wine, three double decilitres of good ordinary Bordeaux,—"*vieux, pur, naturel, franc de goût,*" it is set forth in the canteen notice,—and as much tobacco as he could smoke when and where he pleased. He had an excellent library of books at his disposal, and might see his friends from outside when he chose. In some respects, indeed, he might deem the official solicitude for his welfare a little exaggerated and misplaced. The law was before all things anxious that he should do himself no harm. The precautions against suicide were many and minute, and included the deprivation of all dangerous weapons, with constant observation, extending, if necessary, to the unceasing companionship of two or more fellow-prisoners. With the recalcitrant *prévenu* who refuses to plead guilty these cell-comrades had other duties to perform. They acted also as *moutons*, (the prison spies already spoken of), and wheedled the unconscious prisoner into incautious confessions, of which full use was made later. Thus the notorious murderer, Troppmann, confided his secret to his prison attendants, and greatly assisted the prosecution thereby. In his case the most extraordinary care

was taken to prevent his laying hands upon himself. During his long detention he was not allowed to shave, lest he should injure himself with the razor. He appeared in court with a long beard, which his advocate insisted should be removed. The demand was only reluctantly conceded; and the operation was carried out under the close surveillance of a number of officers after putting him in a strait waistcoat and tying him into a chair.

Except, however, where the ends of justice seem to require a special departure from the rule, isolation, that is, the complete separation of prisoners one from the other, was strictly maintained at Mazas. All the arrangements of the prison were based upon this idea—the private boxes of the *parloir*, or visiting cell; the separate compartments in the exercising yards, where each prisoner ranges like a beast in a menagerie up and down a narrow cage, in shape like a wedge cut out of a plum cake; all are meant to secure the great end. Even the method of conducting divine service was such that every prisoner could attend mass without seeing or being seen by his neighbors or leaving his own cell. This was effected by establishing an altar on the top of the office in the *rond point*, or central hall. The *aumonier*, or prison chaplain, who officiated here, could be seen from every cell in the prison. All the doors were bolted ajar by a very ingenious arrangement. The long steel bar which usually secured the cell was shot for the time being into a ring projecting from the casing of the door, and thus a long, narrow aperture was left facing the altar, but only a few inches wide. This system no doubt prevented the intercommunication possible in an open chapel; yet, while this can be reduced to a minimum where discipline is strong and supervision effective, the prisoner alone in his cell was under no surveillance at all. He could behave just as it suited him. A close observer, Maxime du Camp, examined thirty-three cells, and observed what their inmates were doing while mass was being said. Three only were reading their missals and following the priest; one was on his knees; one was standing uncovered, looking towards the altar; one had opened his prayer book, but for choice was looking at the *Magasin Pittoresque*; one other, with his head buried deep in his arms, was shaken by a paroxysm of tears.

Escapes were rarely attempted at Mazas, and if tried were scarcely ever successful. Once a practised locksmith contrived to remove the fastenings of his cell during the night, to get through the bars beyond and lower himself into the yard, where he found a scaffold pole, and raising it against the first wall climbed up by it to the top. It helped him also to descend to the far side, where he came upon the night watchman wrapped up in his cloak and sleeping peacefully. The

boundary wall had still to be surmounted, but the scaffold pole was too short. Foiled in this direction the fugitive retraced his steps and now attacked the grating of the chief sewer which passed under the outer wall, flowing towards the river. He climbed down it, but unhappily for him found that the Seine was in flood, and, being unable to swim, was all but drowned. He managed to extricate himself, however, and, being now thoroughly worn out and disheartened, he returned to his cell, where the evidence of his fruitless efforts remained to convict him next morning. Two other prisoners made a somewhat similar attempt. They also removed their windows, lowered themselves by ropes made from their bed sheets, and, gaining the yard, forced the grating of the sewer by means of bars taken from their iron bedsteads. They entered the sewer, and, traversing it for some distance, were stopped by a much larger grating, which separated the prison branch from the main sewer. This they also forced and were at liberty to issue forth, if they pleased, upon the Seine. But by this time the alarm was given; the fugitives were traced into the prison sewer; all the sewer mouths were closely watched, and the two men were re-captured a couple of days later.

Mazas as the prison of the *prévenus*, the receptacle of all persons accused of serious crime and detained on reasonable presumption of guilt, was intimately associated with the passing criminality of Paris for fifty years. Every Ishmaelite, charged with raising his hand against his fellows, passed through its forbidding portals to emerge once more, if fate was kind to him, or if convicted, to disappear into its inner darkness. Confinement in a trial prison is the most painful phase in the criminal’s career. He is a constant prey to sickening anxiety, or the plaything of exaggerated hope. He alternates between overmuch confidence and dreadful despair. His surroundings affect him according to his quality. The cellular isolation, which is his almost invariable lot, may be grateful to the victim of circumstance, whether really innocent or by no means hopelessly bad. The old offender, on the other hand, suffers acutely, it is said, not so much from remorse as from boredom and disgust; less from the prickings of his conscience than self-reproach at having played his cards badly and failed in his latest attempt at depredation. In any case the days are long when spent in a separate cell, awaiting judgment, the nights dark and often sleepless and interminable. We have authentic assurance that the end of it all, the very worst, —conviction, sentence, the heaviest, the extreme penalty of the law,—comes as a distinct relief, and although a certain, shameful death is now before him, the condemned prisoner sleeps soundly on his final return from court. The prisoner condemned to death is generally worn out with the struggle for life. He is

wearied, mentally and physically, and wishes, as a rule, to forget the horrible episode which has kept his faculties tense-strung, and, for a time at least, he sinks into apathy and is more or less callous of his impending fate. Now and again, and this is specially characteristic of the French prisoner, he is defiant with cynical bravado. He may be passive, or active, as in the case of Camp, who, when he reached his cell on return from the court which had sentenced him, was seized with a fit of fury, and, catching up a log of wood as a weapon, rushed at a warder and attempted to murder him. A curious trait in all condemned men is the survival of hope to the very last.

In France, where in capital cases an appeal to the law for the revision of the proceedings is the rule, the convict is always buoyed up by the chance of reprieve, and never finally yields until the officials enter his cell on the last dread morning, and he is awakened to hear the words, “It is for to-day.” This means that death is imminent, and that within a few minutes, half an hour at the outside, the guillotine will have done its work. It is a cruel process, that of postponing all knowledge of the exact day until it has arrived; although in France murderers will exhibit the most ferocious tiger-like attitude when it comes. “Dread anticipation never leaves them,” a French chaplain, l’Abbé Crozes, of the Grande Roquette, has recorded. “As the inevitable day approaches they are consumed with the liveliest fears, and are possessed with one single idea, that of escaping death.” Two miscreants, guilty of the most bloodthirsty murders, Abadie and Gilles, who waited for three months before the end came, told the same good priest that every morning at four o’clock they awoke in an agony of terror, and only recovered about six, when the hour for communicating the dread news had passed for the day. A similar story is that of the French noble, lying with the rest of the prisoners in a Revolutionary prison, who, as often as he heard the list for execution each morning and missed his name, cried out with intense relief: “The little man has another day to live.”

The French practice of withholding from the criminal information as to the day of his death until almost the moment for execution has arrived is cruel enough; but this chapter has shown an amelioration in French prison conditions of such extent that the cruelty of that practice may be condoned.

CHAPTER VIII
MAZAS AND LA SANTÉ

Notable inmates of Mazas—Dr. de la Pommerais, the poisoner—Execution—Strange story of execution—Troppmann—Massacre of the Kinck family—Father suspected—Found to be Troppmann—His motives and measures—Troppmann's trial and conviction—The theft of the Duke of Brunswick's diamonds—La Santé Prison similar to Mazas—Its interior described—Labor on "contract" system—Objections—Variety of products—Mild rule—Religious tolerance—Prison library—Dietaries—No canteen and extras.

The great prison of Mazas received criminals of all sorts and of all degrees of atrocity in its day; and we may here review the cases of several of the most notable of these. The crimes of the French poisoner De la Pommerais followed so closely on those of Palmer, the English doctor who ruthlessly dealt death to so many of his friends and relations, that it is quite possible that the first named owed something of his inspiration to the example of the latter. The facilities offered to medical practitioners for the administration of lethal drugs have often tempted doctors to commit murder when greedy for gain. This Frenchman came to Paris from Orleans in 1839, when four and twenty years of age, and set up in practice as a homœopathist. He gave lessons in that branch of science, opened a dispensary, and gave medical advice for small fees to the poorer classes. He was a pretentious youth, who sought to pass as a man of title, and called himself the Count de la Pommerais. He also craved the decoration of St. Sylvester from Pope Pius IX and the cross of the Legion of Honor, but obtained neither, as may well be imagined.

His fictitious rank, however, brought him a wife; the orphan child of a military doctor, whom he married much against the wish of her mother, a lady of some private means. Madame Dubrizy as she was named, lived only a couple months, and died in horrible suffering after having dined with La Pommerais. She had retained her fortune in her own hands, for she distrusted as well as disliked her son-in-law. He had produced securities as his contribution to the marriage

contract, which she found were only borrowed for the occasion: by her death he came into her money.

Strong suspicion of foul play was aroused when a second sudden death occurred among his acquaintances. A Madame de Pauw, widow of one of his patients, died suddenly, although she did not appear to have suffered from any previous illness. The police had kept an eye on La Pommerais for some time past. His *dossier*, "social character," was recorded at the Prefecture, and spoke of him as a dangerous intriguer, who was in the habit of visiting this Madame de Pauw frequently, although they were in very different stations in life. He made a great show, and was well received in society, but she was reputed a mere pauper. On this same *dossier* it was stated that he had probably poisoned his deceased mother-in-law, although there was no direct proof that he had done so.

Now the police ordered a post mortem on Madame de Pauw, which was entrusted to the eminent toxicologist Doctor Tardieu, who expressed his belief that she had been poisoned, but could find no trace of the drug. The cause of death had been certified as a fall down-stairs. Then the deceased's sister informed against La Pommerais, stating that he had effected a large insurance upon her life. Here the influence of Palmer's evil example was obvious. Next the criminal himself gave ground for fresh suspicion by his greediness in seeking payment of the policies which he held. They had been effected in eight different offices, and for a total amount of 550,000 francs. The guilty intention was clear, for the woman was in great indigence, and the first premium of 18,840 francs had been produced by La Pommerais. Further evidence was abundantly forthcoming when the doctor was presently arrested. A great quantity of different poisons was found in his surgery, especially digitaline, a preparation from the common foxglove, well known for its baleful effect upon the heart.

The actual arrest was made by the then head of police, M. Claude, who has told the story in his "Memoirs." They were acquaintances, and La Pommerais had so far presumed upon it as to ask M. Claude to back him in soliciting the appointment of medical officer at Mazas prison. When the law was to be set in motion Claude kindly thought to break the blow to the man at whose table he had dined, and went in person to serve the warrant. He found the two, man and wife, at breakfast. "Good news," he began, "you are to have Mazas. I want you to come there with me now." The criminal changed countenance for a moment, but the police officer reassured him. "The fact is," he went on, "the director of Mazas has never been favorably disposed towards you, and he may object, still,

to your appointment. You must let me bring you together, and we will talk him over." La Pommerais yielded with rather a bad grace, and, on reaching the cab at the door in which two policemen were already seated, he knew his fate. This miscreant had one redeeming quality; he was devotedly attached to his wife, and it is said that when about to kneel down at the scaffold under the fatal knife he gave a last kiss to the priest in attendance, "pour Clothilde."

A very curious story was communicated to the press immediately after his execution, which has since been definitely contradicted. It was to the effect that a certain Doctor Velpeau had obtained a promise from La Pommerais that he would make him some sign after he had passed the threshold of the grave. Velpeau is reported to have said to La Pommerais: "When the knife falls I shall be there, just in front of the scaffold, and I shall arrange that your head, when decapitated, comes at once into my hands. I propose to whisper into your ear, 'Monsieur, as we have agreed, will you now, on hearing my voice, lower your right eyelid three times, keeping the left eye open?'" Velpeau declared that he carried out his part of the compact, and was prepared to swear that the severed head had twice made the sign as arranged; but the eyelid would not lift a third time, and, although Velpeau again and again asked for the sign, none came, and the head assumed a fixed rigidity. Death had put an end to the convulsive spasms by which possibly the previous signs had been produced. The story is extravagant and apocryphal, for the Abbé Crozes, when invited to give his opinion, settled the matter by declaring that Velpeau had never had any conversation with the dead man, and as a matter of fact was not present at the execution at all.

France contains in her criminal records one of the worst murders ever committed in any civilised country. The Crime of Pantin, as it was called at the time, was the wholesale massacre of a family—father, mother and six children—with the sole idea of becoming possessed of property to which no survivor could lay claim. Troppmann, who perpetrated it, laid the plan with such devilish ingenuity that for a long time the guilt was attributed to the father, Jean Kinck, assisted by his eldest son, and the first inquiries were centred upon them.

On the morning of the twentieth of September, 1869, at an early hour a workman, in crossing the plain of Pantin beyond the Buttes-Chaumont, to the northeast of Paris, noticed the traces of much blood spilt upon the ground, and near them a blood-stained handkerchief. Further on he saw protruding above the ground a human arm imperfectly buried, and using a spade he dug up, first one

body and afterwards five more,—the body of a woman and those of five children. Some of the clothes carried buttons with the address of a tailor in Roubaix, who recognised them as having been ordered by a fellow townsman, by name Jean Kinck. This Kinck was absent from home. He had summoned his wife and children to join him in Paris on the nineteenth of September. They had duly arrived and taken rooms at a hotel near the Northern Railway Station, where the husband was already staying, having registered himself the week before under the name, Jean Kinck of Roubaix. He did not meet his wife on arrival, and she seemed much upset, but went out almost immediately with all her children, and never returned. Next morning, however, Jean Kinck came in, went up to his room, changed his clothes and again left, but before the discovery of the corpses was generally known.

Suspicion was soon drawn to this supposed Kinck, and it was found that some one like him had bought a pick and shovel at a toolmaker's shop, which, later in the evening, he had carried off in the direction of Pantin. No doubt he was bent on digging the graves of his victims. Full details of his appearance, his condition and ways of life presently arrived from Roubaix. He was fifty years of age, gray haired, short of stature and well built, an industrious, enterprising brush maker, anxious to extend his business; for which purpose he had left Roubaix five weeks previously for Alsace, where he already owned a house. He meant to sell it and buy a larger one, in which he could live, and, at the same time, carry on his trade. Madame Kinck, a native of Turcoing, did not favor this project. She did not want to move to Germany, as she did not speak the language, and differences had arisen between the pair, supplying some motive for the murder. Three days passed before any satisfactory information came to hand. Nothing had been heard of the father, Jean Kinck, nothing of the son, but the father had left Roubaix in the beginning of September, the son Gustav eight or ten days later: it was generally believed that the Kinck who appeared at the hotel of the Northern Railway Station was Gustav, as the personal description tallied with him better than with the father.

Now, as so often happens in mysterious criminal cases, a bolt came from the blue. Jean Kinck, or some one passing for him, was suddenly arrested at Havre. Chance had strangely intervened in the interests of justice, and detection followed in an entirely unexpected manner. News was telegraphed to Paris that Jean Kinck had been arrested at Havre under peculiar circumstances. On the morning of the twenty-third of September a young man entered a café on the sea front at Havre, and became engaged in conversation with a sailor, whom he met

there. He was anxious to know what steps to take to secure a passage for America. “Your papers must be in order,” was the first answer he received, and it came, not from his friend, but from an officious gendarme, who was loafing about the place, and inspired by the restless spirit of interference which so constantly disturbs the official mind. “You have your papers of course?” He received a negative reply. “No? Then you must come with me to the police office.” There was nothing for it but to obey, and they started off together, chatting pleasantly, but the stranger was manifestly uneasy, and when there was a sudden stoppage in the traffic he slipped aside and ran towards one of the basins of the dock. The gendarme followed close in his tracks, shouting, “Stop him, stop him! He is a murderer,” and there was little hope for the fugitive amidst the gathering crowd. But with one bound he sprang into the water, caught a floating buoy, and hung on there between life and death until he was fished out by some of the sailors with ropes and boat-hooks, and brought to shore half drowned. He was carried to the hospital, where he was put to bed and interviewed at once by the Commissary, to whom he would make no reply. He was a young man of about twenty, short, dark, with black eyes, a long beaky nose and close cut hair, a description which answered in many respects, save that of youth, to the missing Jean Kinck. His identity was established, however, beyond all doubt by the papers found on him. All of them were documents connected with the Kinck family. There was a contract for the sale of a house in Roubaix; notes of hand signed by Kinck in favor of people of the town; the contract of a house from another proprietor, and a number of private papers and letters in a pocketbook with a morocco purse, trimmed with copper, containing several coins; a silk handkerchief and some five-franc pieces; a valuable gold watch, a second watch, a small ring, a medallion and a pocket knife. Doubts were still expressed as to the identity of Jean Kinck, and it was generally supposed that he was Gustav. But then other letters were found in his possession, addressed to a certain Troppmann, and eventually it was proved that this was really his name.

The police paid an immediate visit to Roubaix to make further inquiries, and found that this Troppmann was a personal friend of Jean Kinck. In the house were a number of letters purporting to be from the husband, but, as was explained in one of them, written by another hand because Kinck had injured his wrist. These were the letters that had persuaded Madame Kinck to come to Paris. When the judges undertook the interrogation it was proved beyond doubt that these were from a mechanical engineer, an Alsacian by birth, who had long been intimate with Kinck, and constantly visited him at the drinking shop of the “Re-

union of Friends," of which Kinck was proprietor. Troppmann, when questioned, freely admitted these facts, and it was soon plainly seen that he bore the marks of a recent struggle with some enraged female. His cheeks were torn and scratched with many wounds; there were marks of nails that had gone deep into his flesh. Troppmann, who was brought without delay to Paris and confronted with the corpses in the Morgue, made no difficulty of recognising and identifying them; and he went so far as to confess that the murder had been organised by the Kincks, father and son, with his knowledge, although he had taken no active part in it. He refused to throw any light upon the whereabouts of the Kincks. As the inquiry proceeded, witnesses came forward who recognised Troppmann as the person who had bought the pick and shovel at the tool shop, and all that was now needed was to prove a motive for the crime. His possession of Kinck's watch and valuables was *prima facie* evidence, and there were those who spoke as to the close relations that had existed between them. Troppmann was greedy for money, and was continually proposing schemes, promising great profit to Kinck if he would go into them. He was for ever begging him to advance capital, but Kinck was cautious, and would not risk a sou. Not less did Troppmann devise plans, by which he might bleed Jean Kinck, and the last seemed likely to succeed. He declared that he had discovered in the Alsacian mountains a plentiful supply of precious metals, gold, silver and mercury in large quantities, ready to be extracted by any enterprising hand.

Jean Kinck's movements were at last traced. He had left Roubaix on the twenty-fourth of August, three or four weeks before the discovery of the bodies at Pantin, saying he would return in a few days. He went into Alsace, and was met by Troppmann, with whom he travelled by diligence to Soultz. This was the last heard of him, although letters not in his own hand reached Madame Kinck at Roubaix. A search had been made, however, in the neighborhood where he had last been seen, and his body was at last found, not far from Wattwiller, in a forest at the foot of the ruins of the ancient stronghold of Henenflung. It had been buried beneath a heap of stones raised high above the grave. The cause of death was not immediately apparent, but doctors presently reported that he had been poisoned with Prussic acid administered probably from a flask. No doubt he had been inveigled to this spot by fictitious reports of the presence of gold. Thus the last victim was accounted for, Gustav Kinck, the eldest son, having been disinterred some days before at no great distance from the other bodies in the plain of Pantin. The chain of damning evidence was complete. Link by link it wound round the accused, and definitely secured conviction upon trial. But every point had first been elicited beyond all doubt by the "instructing" or

interrogating judge at Mazas, although Troppmann long took refuge in persistent denial of every fact or in obstinate silence. At last came the confrontation. The prisoner, who was examined throughout at Mazas in a large cell in the infirmary, was taken down to the Morgue, and suddenly brought into the presence of the corpse of Gustav Kinck, but then just discovered. He was seized with violent emotion, hid his face in a handkerchief, and refused to look at his murderous handiwork. “Come now,” insisted the magistrate, “confess that you struck the blow.” “No, no, it wasn’t I.” And he repeatedly asserted that the elder Kinck had taken his son’s life. This was his line of defence in court, greatly elaborated by his counsel, Maitre Lachaud, perhaps the most famous and eloquent advocate who has practised at the French bar; but he also asserted that Troppmann had accomplices, who should have been arraigned with him, and he insisted that it was wickedly unfair to allow one culprit to bear the whole brunt of the crime. The jury, however, remained unmoved by his impassioned appeal, and almost immediately found Troppmann guilty on all counts, on which the judge, never having accepted the theory of accomplices and satisfied that the law had laid its hand upon the real perpetrator of the crime, sentenced him to death. He was sent to the Conciergerie to await removal to the Grand Roquette.

Troppmann spent his last hours in a vain combat with the authorities, but after maintaining it for some days he fell into a state of prostration, and, when he came out to die, was already a broken-down, worn-out, old man of fifty, more than double his years. When they came to warn him for execution, he essayed to appear unconcerned, and, throughout the remainder of the painful scene, fought hard, but of course fruitlessly, for his life. Although subjected to the “toilette” and secured by straps and cords, he managed to break loose when on the scaffold, and strenuously resisted as they led him to the block. When his neck was laid under the axe of the guillotine, he pushed it so far forward that the axe on falling would have struck his shoulder, but the executioner held him in his place and deftly touched the spring which released the knife, and all was over. But the dying man in his frantic resistance had managed to get the executioner’s hand into his mouth and bit it fiercely.

The trial of Troppmann was in its way a public scandal. The court was crammed with curious spectators, whose morbid minds drew them to stare at the hero of this horrible tragedy as though he were a wild beast in a menagerie, about to be subjected to physical torture. People of the highest rank and fashion demeaned themselves to gain places in the audience by any means; by social intrigues, by using private influence with the judges and officers of the court. Troppmann was

the centre of attraction, the cynosure of every eye. His features and demeanor were closely scanned, his dress was commented upon critically. It was noted, also, that he was clean shaved. This was on the demand of his counsel, who hoped that his small, youthful face, which when smooth and hairless looked like that of a lad of fifteen, would impress the jury with the idea that he could not possess the strength to handle a knife with such deadly effect as had been exhibited in the cruel wounds of his victims. Before the barber, however, was permitted to use the razor, Troppmann was put into a strait-waistcoat (*camisole de force*); he was tied down in a chair, with one warder on either hand, ready to seize him and check any attempt at self-destruction. Troppmann laughed at these precautions, and plainly hinted that he had means of suicide at his disposal, of which they had no idea. It was known that Troppmann had himself manufactured the prussic acid he gave to Kinck. But he disdained to use them or to bring discredit on his family, a rather far-fetched nicety in a miscreant who had been guilty of such crimes.

They were not all murderers who passed through Mazas, although some were top-sawyers in the criminal business, such as Shaw, the Englishman who stole the Duke of Brunswick's diamonds. It will be remembered that one of the most marked features in the eccentric character of the late Duke of Brunswick was his passion for precious stones. He long made Paris his principal home, and resided in a quaint old mansion in the Beaujour quarter, a house with red walls, massive gateways and innumerable bolts and bars. The Duke, a worn-out voluptuary, a faded old beau, who, on the rare occasions when he showed himself in public, came out painted, made up and bewigged, lived here quite secluded among his treasures, which he kept in an enormous iron safe. These jewels were valued at £600,000, a splendid collection, accumulated at great cost, and carried off by him when he fled from his principality. They served no purpose but to gratify his greedy passion for possession. Except when he had taken them out to gloat over them, these priceless gems never saw the light. He took the most painful care of them. They were lodged in an inner apartment, to reach which it was necessary to pass through the Duke's study and bedroom. There were electric wires communicating with many bells to give warning of the approach of any unauthorised person; other bells were attached to the triggers of revolvers to fire them off automatically at any intruder. It was the Duke's craze, not altogether unfounded, that thieves were always aiming at him. He thought that all the world wanted to rob him. At his particular request two police officers watched constantly over him, seldom letting him out of their sight, and keeping a careful eye upon his treasure house. The fact that the Duke of Brunswick's house was

full of rich booty was known to every depredator in Europe, and a thousand plans were devised to break in and rifle it. At last England acquired the questionable credit of overcoming all obstacles, and carrying off the Duke's diamonds.

In 1863 the Duke had an English valet, a very confidential personage named Shaw, a native of Newcastle-on-Tyne. He had got the place in the ordinary way through a registry office, supported by first-class references, all forged; he proved himself to be a very excellent servant, quiet, attentive, much liked by both his master and his fellows. He was really the agent and confederate of a gang of thieves who had especially selected him for the job they had in view. It was his business to become familiar with the safe and its surroundings, taking the first opportunity to "lift" its contents when he could do so without danger to himself. The safe stood in a receptacle behind an iron door in the wall at the head of the Duke's bed, and a silk curtain hung in front of this door, which was secured with special locks. These might be picked some day, but in behind was the great safe with its alarm bells and automatic batteries of firearms. There was infinite danger in interfering with these. Only the practised hand of some one in the secret of the machinery would dare to risk it. Shaw was patient and bided his time.

One day (December 17, 1863) the Duke sent for a working jeweller he employed, meaning to have certain changes made in the setting of some of his stones. In anticipation he opened the inner safe and, contrary to his custom, left it open. This did not escape Shaw, who was in attendance, but he hoped little from it until he saw his royal master, wearied of waiting for the jeweller, go out without relocking his safe. The Duke was satisfied to secure the external door at the head of the bed.

This was Shaw's opportunity. He had a picklock, and soon used it with good effect on this the first obstacle. There was no second or inner defence, and the safe door being ajar the machinery did not work. He was, in fact, master of the situation, and with all haste made the most of it. The Duke's treasures lay at his mercy, jewel-cases, diamond stars, bags of gold. He soon filled his pockets and hurried out, being careful to close the outer door and pull the curtain across, hoping that the abstraction might not be immediately observed. Having packed a small valise with a few effects he told a fellow-servant to take up his service with the Duke, on the ground that he was unwell, and then slipped out of the house.

The theft was, however, quickly discovered, and the French police were put on the alert. Shaw immediately betrayed himself by addressing an anonymous letter to a royal personage in London, in which the writer offered to restore to their rightful owners, the English royal family, certain jewels wrongfully detained by the Duke of Brunswick, on receiving a reward of 100,000 francs. This letter was at once handed over to the authorities in Scotland Yard, who passed it on to Paris. A postscript was added to the letter, stating that the writer would meet any messenger sent with the money at Boulogne. Acting at once on this clue, the French detectives hastened to Boulogne, and, visiting every hotel, soon found a young man answering the description, who was arrested and taken back to Paris. The diamonds were found in his possession. This Shaw, a tall, very thin young man, with a pale, intelligent face, and very bold, prominent eyes, was soon recognised by the police as a professional thief of English extraction, who had worked much abroad, and was indeed a cosmopolitan rogue, having committed many great robberies in the capitals of Europe, generally by the same means. He was sentenced to twenty years (*travaux forcés*), although the Duke, dreading the publicity of the Assize court, would not appear to prosecute.

The prison known as La Santé was situated in the rue de la Santé close to the Boulevard Arago, upon the left bank of the Seine. Founded and completed in the palmiest days of the French Empire, it was the newest and certainly long the best prison in Paris. Enthusiastic Frenchmen have, indeed, declared that it was the best and most beautiful building of the kind in Europe, but the statement is rather far-fetched. Coming twenty years later than Mazas, it was a marked advance upon that penitentiary, which it resembled in many respects. It consisted of two distinct divisions, or “sides,” and the inmates of each were subjected to different systems of imprisonment. In one, unbroken cellular confinement was the rule, in the other, prisoners occupied separate sleeping cells at night, but took their food and exercise, and worked together during the day. The former régime was applied to all sentenced for the first time, the latter to *récidivistes*, or habitual offenders, who fell into trouble again and again. The cellular division, that first reached when the threshold of the prison, with its sleepy gatekeepers and punctilious *greffier*, was passed, was cleaner and tidier than Mazas as I saw it, and altogether better kept. There were the same radiating wings, extending like the spokes of a wheel round a central nave, the *rond point*; in which was the same glass house or observatory, with an altar on top, towards which all the cell doors, as to their Mecca, religiously turned for the Mass. The cells were warmed and ventilated by an arrangement of hot water pipes and fresh air flues, just as is seen in every modern prison since the days of Sir Joshua Jebb. The cells at La

Santé were spacious and fairly clean; their furniture and fittings of more modern design than those of Mazas. The hammock was replaced by an iron bedstead, the table was a flap, fastened on hinges to the wall, and a three-legged stool replaced the rush-bottomed chair chained by the leg. The floor was boarded, not paved with bricks, and no small pains were taken to polish the oak planks, which were rubbed vigorously till they shone like parquetry. All parts of the cells were not so entirely above reproach, and a severely critical eye would detect a certain want of neatness in the interior economy of many. Here and there rubbish was suffered to accumulate and lie untouched. Upon a shelf in one cell was a quantity of broken bread; in another several clay pipes and a half empty wine carafe; the walls of a third, occupied by a prison bookbinder, were hung with scraps of tawdry decoration, crucifixes, hearts, monograms shaped out of the gold leaf and colored paper which he used in his trade. Prisoners were permitted, too, to deface their cells with impunity by scribbling on the notice boards and writing on the walls. Remarks upon the articles supplied from the canteen appeared upon the price list. Expressions of regret, vows of vengeance, even, were recorded upon the boards of rules. The prison almanac, prepared by the good chaplain for the special behoof of prisoners, with appropriate texts and maxims, served really as a calendar, such as school boys keep, to mark off the days as they slowly dragged along towards release.

Behind and beyond the cellular quarter of the prison was the “associated” prison, consisting of two spacious quadrangles, in which were the exercising yards and the lavatories, while around it were arrayed the ateliers, or workshops, and the dining halls. Upon an upper floor were the sleeping cells, each containing a bedstead, and nothing more, each lighted by means of a large barred opening above the cell doors, through which shone the light of gas lamps in the corridors. The crowded ateliers of La Santé, instinct with busy life, were an interesting and instructive sight, and from them a fairly good idea could be obtained of the peculiar conditions under which prison labor is utilised in France. This is everywhere accomplished through the intervention of a contractor or employer from outside, who provides tools, materials and instructors, and takes in return half the earnings of the prisoners. The other half, known as the *pécule*, goes to the prisoner himself, and this is again sub-divided into the *pécule disponible* and the *pécule reservé*, the former of which can be drawn upon and expended by the prisoner in adding to his creature comforts whilst incarcerated; the latter, accumulating from day to day, to be handed over to him upon his release to provide means of support during those early days of freedom, when a man is hesitating between honesty and the temptation to relapse into fresh crime.

The contract system appears open to many grave objections; for instance, that it introduces “lay” or outside influences, erecting in the prison a second authority, to which prisoners look for praise or blame rather than to the constituted chiefs of the place. At times a certain antagonism might arise between the two; the one looks naturally to profits, the other to maintenance of effective discipline, and where the first was affected, the latter would no doubt sensibly suffer. As an instance of this may be quoted the case of prisoners sentenced to very short terms, who, if they are not already acquainted with some trade, do absolutely nothing at all whilst in prison. To teach them a *metier* would be to waste time and materials, and there is in France no “penal labor,”—as it is commonly understood in England,—no sharp, correctional employment, such as the treadwheel, stone breaking, or oakum picking, the execution of which requires no special previous knowledge or skill. As a matter of fact, therefore, prison has but few horrors for the offender committed for less than a week, except in the temporary loss of liberty; and in all that relates to physical comfort, indeed, in food, shelter and clothing, he is often far better off inside than out. His confinement may be irksome and monotonous, time may hang rather heavily on his hands; still he manages to get pretty comfortably through his days, lounging lazily about the refectories, or ranging up and down in the exercising yards, pipe in mouth, and gossiping with any one he meets.

These idlers, it must be confessed, were, at La Santé, the exception and not the rule. There was no little stir and bustle in the workrooms; the occupations were many and varied; the prisoners were industrious and often exhibited no mean skill. Parisians are naturally a quick-witted and nimble-fingered race, whose talents, when in durance, prison contractors know well how to turn to the best account. At La Santé we found tailors at work upon clothes for the slop shops, shoemakers and cobblers making excellent slippers and shoes. Here a cabinet-maker completed a drawing-room chair; there, by his side, an upholsterer covered another in damask or silk. Long rows of prisoners, seated upon benches, manufactured feather brushes for dusting furniture, or dolls and children’s toys, or paper boxes for bonbons and patent medicines, or frills of the same material for the cooks and confectioners. Some were staining and coloring sheets of paper for the bookbinders, to be subsequently varnished and polished; others, in large numbers, were employed upon the manufacture of papier-mâché boot buttons through all the various stages of inserting the eyelet holes in rows upon the pasteboard, stamping out the buttons, trimming them, hardening them and varnishing them. A certain air of contentment, if not of actual good humor, was visible on every side. Prisoners met my eye, and did not immediately hang their

heads and look down. Silence was the general rule, but they talked *sotto voce* to one another, and to me if I cared to address them. One man, proud of his English, told me of “another English gentleman,” who recently came to La Santé. “As a visitor?” “Oh, no, as a *detenu* (prisoner).” Others, if I appeared interested in the work in hand, would explain all its intricacies, and return my salutation with the bow of a finished courtier when I took leave. All the while the warders in charge exercised an easy-going surveillance, and were evidently neither hard taskmasters nor severe disciplinarians.

In the workshops, as elsewhere, it was obvious that the prison rule did not err on the side of severity. Every care was taken to assure the moral and physical comfort of the prisoners. There were chaplains of all persuasions, and intolerance was unknown. For Roman Catholics, naturally the largest number, there were the regular services in the *rond point*, with which a large associated chapel communicated. There was a special chapel for Protestants, and a synagogue for Jews. A well-stocked library, annually replenished, provided literature of nearly every kind for all who cared to read. The books were carefully selected, but included works of fiction, which are often forbidden in the prisons of some countries. The only novels permitted however at La Santé,—and the choice implies a high compliment to English literature,—were translations of Dickens, Fenimore Cooper, Bulwer-Lytton, Marryat and Scott, which were admitted confessedly on account of their morality and purity of tone. These, it was said, were the books in most constant demand.

The hospital arrangements at La Santé, which was long a central depot for all male prisoners requiring prolonged treatment, were also excellent of their kind. The wards were large and lofty, and were well warmed by a clever contrivance, consisting of two concentric iron cylinders, one within the other, between which hot water circulated, while fresh external air was passed in at the base and diffused from the centre and top after being warmed. The clothing of all prisoners was good and sufficient, although custom had nicknamed the prison shirt *la limace* because it had all the rasping roughness of a file. As to food, the inmates of La Santé certainly could not complain. The diet of English prisoners of similar category may have been more varied, but it was scarcely more replete. There were two regular meals at La Santé, one about eight o’clock in the morning, the other at three. Both consisted of a pint, or more exactly, two-thirds of a litre, of thin soup, not unlike a poor Julienne, but tasty and carefully made by officer cooks, who winked pleasantly when I praised it, and agreed with me that it was *pas mauvais*, “not so bad,” after all. Twice a week, on Sundays and

Thursdays, four ounces of cooked meat, without bone, were added, and on these days the prisoner got about twenty-seven ounces of bread. When there was no meat the bread ration was nearly thirty ounces. But the foregoing did not comprise all that the prisoner had to eat. Those who were in funds, whether from private sources or from the *pécule disponible* already referred to, were permitted to sweeten prison life and eke out prison fare by various articles of food on sale at the canteen. The list was long, and the prices were not extravagant. For a few centimes smoked herrings could be bought, or a slice of cheese, fresh and salt butter, sausages, cooked ham, liquorice, boiled potatoes and a fair allowance of red wine. Tobacco unlimited could also be purchased, a privilege often peremptorily forbidden elsewhere in many prisons, as are indeed all such toothsome additions as those just enumerated.

But La Santé passed away, absorbed into the new and extensive establishment at Fresnes on the outskirts of Paris, designed to remodel the entire penal system of the French government. La Santé was a long step forward in penology; and Fresnes, the next and a still longer step, has now to be described.

CHAPTER IX
TWO MODEL REFORMATORIES

Long survival of two ancient prisons, St. Pélagie and Saint Lazare—Both now doomed—The former used for debtors and political prisoners—Saint Lazare principal prison for the female criminal—A detestable place—Originally a convent—Warders are nuns—Piety of inmates—Prayer before trial—Devout inscriptions—Convict marriages with brides from Saint Lazare—Female criminality in proportion to male—Crimes of passion and greed most numerous—Stealing in shops and large stores—The better side of the female in custody—Maternal affection—Universal love of children within the walls—The two Roquettes—Alpha and Omega of crime—Juveniles in La Petite Roquette—Reformed régime—Separate cells replace associated rooms—First agricultural colony—Juvenile depravity largely due to La Petite Roquette.

Among the prisons of Paris two long survived which were really a standing disgrace to France. These were St. Pélagie and Saint Lazare. They were types of a bygone age. Both were ancient edifices, centuries old, planted in the very heart of crowded localities. They were radically vicious in construction and very backward in the system of discipline in force. In both, continuous association and unrestrained intercourse were permitted among prisoners, so that contamination and deterioration were the inevitable results.

St. Pélagie received only males—those sentenced correctionally to terms of thirteen months and less, and with them were incarcerated offenders against the adulteration laws, fraudulent bankrupts for small sums, and traders who used short weights. All were herded together indiscriminately, the only exception being made in favor of journalists sentenced for contravention of press laws, all of whom came to it, where they were subjected to a special and entirely different régime from the ordinary prisoners.

St. Pélagie stood in a quiet and retired part of Paris behind the Hôpital de la Pitié

and the labyrinth of the Jardin des Plantes. It was essentially a prison on the associated plan and found no favor in the sight of French prison administrators who are warm adherents of the principle of cellular separation.

Nothing much can be done with a building not originally intended for the uses to which it is applied. It dates from the seventeenth century, and the charity of a good lady, Marie Bonneau, widow of Beauharnais de Miramion, who created it as a refuge for her unfortunate sisterhood, and gave it as patron the dancer who turned saint,—with whom Charles Kingsley made us acquainted in his novel of "Hypatia." It was also appropriated for debtors and later for political prisoners, more especially those who offended by their too critical pens. A block known as the "Pavilion" was given over to them exclusively, to which no strangers were admitted; but these litterateurs might be seen all over the prison at any time and beyond their own quarters, commonly called "greater" or "lesser Siberia;" the "big" or "little Tomb." Their confinement was not irksome, and we are told that they often obtained permission to leave the prison and visit the theatre at night, even to sleep out, always on their solemn promise to return honorably. The famous Proudhon was allowed to take an afternoon walk unattended, beyond the walls. Some of the inmates amused themselves by playing blind man's buff in the dark passages, and once a mock trial was organised at a sham revolutionary tribunal. By and by the play was repeated in grim earnest. During the Commune there was another trial within St. Pélagie, ordered by Raoul Rigault, the Communist Prefect of Police, on a prisoner who was promptly sentenced to death and shot.

A good deal of work was done at St. Pélagie. Prisoners were very industrious and produced good results. One form of trade was the manufacture of paper lamp-shades. Another was that of chignons when this particular style was in fashion. The raw material came from all quarters; the hair merchants bought it from living heads and the chiffoniers picked it up out of the streets. Possibly had the origin of these adornments been better understood, ladies would have been a little loath to wear them. St. Pélagie has now disappeared and cannot be greatly regretted.

Saint Lazare was long the principal prison for females in Paris. Within its vast *enceinte*, which includes gardens, fountains and trees, and which is now doomed to early abolition, were collected women of all categories,—those awaiting trial; those sentenced for short terms, and those doomed to go beyond the seas; young girls, some of them quite children, committed to prison at the instance of their

parents, “for correction;” and last of all, the unhappy, “*filles publiques*,” who whether “*soumises*” or “*insoumises*,” whether officially inscribed on the police rolls or independently practising their profession, have offended against one or other of the stringent enactments by which the fallen sisterhood are controlled in Paris. The various classes, it is true, are kept as far as possible, even scrupulously apart; but all are practically under one and the same roof and really do intermingle rather freely. The system cannot but be demoralising in the extreme. It is strongly condemned by all earnest, thoughtful Frenchmen, who characterise Saint Lazare as a detestable place, which should forthwith cease to be a prison. “Every young girl,” says Du Camp, “who enters Saint Lazare for correction, leaves it corrupt and rotten to the core.... She is lost unless a miracle intervenes, and the day of miracles is past.” While such association continues, all efforts, and they are many, to protect the still pure or win back the fallen to virtuous ways, cannot but be made in vain.

Hospice de la Salpêtriere, Paris

Hospital or almshouse for helpless and insane women. Formerly it was a house of detention as well as a hospital, and the treatment was extremely brutal. As many as ten thousand persons have lived within the walls at one time.

Saint Lazare was originally a convent, and with its spacious interior, great dormitories and wide refectories was well suited for a religious house, but it was quite unfit to serve as a prison. The hideous herding together of so many classes, of innocent and guilty, of the absolutely bad and vicious with the young and still unspoilt, is a disgrace to civilisation. Yet great attention is paid to discipline, and ghostly ministrations abound at Lazare. Priests and chaplains there are many to preach and confess; philanthropic ladies come from outside to exhort and expound, and the whole establishment is under the watchful control of a religious sisterhood, that of Marie Joseph, an order which has continuously charged itself with prison labors, and whose devotion and self-sacrifice are beyond all praise. A religious atmosphere prevails. These poor women exhibit often a remarkable piety, very touching in such a place. When a party of prisoners is on the point of starting for the Palace of Justice, every woman expecting sentence kneels before a sacred image and prays for mercy from her earthly judge. This sentiment is further exhibited by the writings on the walls, which are not strictly forbidden as in most gaols. One familiar with them has collected some of the most striking, such as: “God is good, He will have pity on the unfortunate.” “Holy Virgin, I give you my heart; deign to take me under your protection and do not visit my early sins too hardly upon me.” It has well been remarked that the moral effect of Saint Lazare and its surroundings works wonderfully in aid of conversion and reformation. The spectacle of the sisterhood, brought there by a high sense of duty and not merely to earn a living, has an excellent influence upon the fallen and misguided creatures who are under their charge, to whom they devote their unstinting efforts. Another note, that of hungry, unsatisfied affection, can also be read in these inscriptions: “Whoever comes into this cell, your sufferings will never be so acute as when you are separated from the person you love;” again, “My love languishes in this cell, and far from thee whom I adore I constantly groan and grieve.” Sometimes the very opposite feeling finds voice: “Henriette loved her man more than any one, but to-day she hates him.” “I am dying to see him, and if I find he is unfaithful when I come out I will have his neck broken. It is through him that I am here, but I love him all the same with all my heart.” “I cannot forget my dead

love which has lodged me here; when I am released my lover may expect to meet me armed with a revolver." Some are buoyed up by inexhaustible hope: "This is the first day of my instruction (interrogation); the judgment of God is everything, that of man nothing." "Let us endure our tribulations without murmuring; if they are undeserved our sins will expiate."

Too often the male sex exhibit a very different spirit. With them it is an ardent passion for vengeance, inditing hatred for a treacherous companion, misplaced pride in their evil deeds. It is "Death to the judge!" "We will avenge our sufferings!" "Vive anarchy!" "Vive the revolution!" "Some day we will blow up all the prisons!" Innumerable phrases like the following are to be met with: "I will kill you when I get out;" "Death to the spy Fernand, who got me here; I will cut him open." "I should have been acquitted, but my wife betrayed my real name; let her look out!" "B—— the victim missed his vengeance on his miserable brother, but it will come yet," and so on. The régime of isolation apparently does not stimulate very edifying thoughts.

Reference has been made in another volume of this series to the marriages of convicts under the sentimental idea of regenerating society in New Caledonia. A matrimonial agency was set up in the office of the Marine and Colonies. It was the rule to send a call for the names of female prisoners selected by governors as suitable to be sent out as wives. As might have been expected, no great success attended this scheme. The marriages were never idyllic and seldom even happy. Here are a few of the brides and their antecedents: Catherine P., twenty-four years of age, a bad character, had three natural children, strangled the last with the strings of her apron; Angelique F., hopelessly bad, had two children, last crime, scaled the wall surrounding the house of an aged woman of eighty, robbed her, and on leaving, set fire to the house, not only burning her victim to death, but causing the destruction of three neighboring houses; Julie Marie Robertine C., twenty, a hopeless drunkard, stole a child and buried it alive. Nevertheless applications were made by convicts on the eve of embarkation to be supplied with a wife from Saint Lazare. One wrote, "I am under sentence of eight years for forgery and daily expect to embark for New Caledonia. My family have cast me off, but I am in great hopes that if they thought I was on the way to rehabilitate myself they might be willing to help me. The only way I can see of recovering my position is to marry before I start for the Antipodes. I can have no hope that any respectable person would accept me, and I must have recourse to some one who like myself has come within the grip of the law. Will M. Laumonier (this letter was addressed to the chaplain of La Grande Roquette) put

my proposal of marriage before any inmate of Saint Lazare, who might be disposed to accept it?" Unfortunately orders for removal came before any matrimonial alliance could be arranged, but it was by no means an isolated case.

Another letter was received by the chaplain (l'Abbé Crozes) much to the same effect. A convict sentenced to six years' hard labor and ten years' supervision was equally anxious to marry before his departure, and had already made his choice, but he appealed to the chaplain to assist him in arranging the preliminaries. He is described as a horrible looking ruffian, pale faced and weakly, who pretended to be very much in love; but he would make no admissions as to where he had met the girl who was barely sixteen years old. The chaplain interviewed her and found that the girl had obtained the consent of her parents, and the convict was greatly rejoiced. But next day a letter came from the father directed to l'Abbé Crozes, to the effect that his daughter had been deceived, and that he could not consent to her marriage with a convict under sentence of six years. The chaplain then sent for the man to communicate this refusal. But it was evidently no great disappointment. "You are not upset?" he asked. "Not the least in the world," replied the philosophical bridegroom. As the abbé left the prison he saw his friend sitting at the bar of the canteen with three companions merrily employed on a substantial repast.

One more story of a proposed convict marriage. A cunning plot underlay this. The convict's scheme was that when taken to the church and afterwards to the mayor's office, he proposed to escape. His intention was to call a halt at a wine-shop and ply his escort, two police inspectors, with drink, and when he had succeeded in making them drunk to get away. But his escort shrewdly penetrated the design, which failed entirely, and the wedding party ended in the return of the bridegroom to his gaol.

The whole question of French female criminality centres within this prison of Saint Lazare. It is a remarkable fact that fewer crimes are committed by females than males in France, and the rule obtains the world over. The proportion varies, according to the statistics presented at the Prison Congress in Stockholm some few years ago. It is more than three per cent. in every hundred of both sexes combined, in some parts of America, North and South, in Japan and India, but it rises to ten per cent. in the United States, to twenty per cent. in China, and throughout Europe it ranges from ten to twenty-one per cent., the latter being the rule in Switzerland. The proportionate number of women accused of crimes in France is between fourteen and fifteen as against eighty-five and eighty-six men.

A very intelligible explanation is offered. There are many crimes which women are not tempted to commit, for which they miss the opportunity, or lack facilities and strength. For example, they are seldom convicted of peculation and embezzlement, forgeries and robberies with violence and resistance to authority. Their crimes are mostly inspired by passion and greed. This last named motive reached its climax in the case of the woman concerned in a singularly atrocious murder, who, when asked why she had been a party to the crime, coolly answered, “I wanted a new bonnet very badly.” There is one crime, however, that specially recommends itself to the woman criminal,—that of poisoning,—a fact attested by criminal records in every country and notably in France. It is hardly necessary to quote the numerous instances in which women of all classes have taken advantage of facilities so freely offered to those constantly concerned in domestic affairs. The mistress of a house; the cook in her kitchen; the nurse by the bedside; each of these has it in her power to administer noxious drugs without interference and not seldom without detection. For centuries the crimes of the Marchioness de Brinvilliers, a Frenchwoman, have shocked the world and rivalled the wholesale misdeeds of Lucrezia Borgia. The mystery of Madame Lafarge has already been referred to in these pages. The most determined poisoner ever known was the French woman Helene Jegardo, who dealt death to all around her with a white powder which was always kept by her for use in preparing food in her kitchen.

As regards crime in general it is universally agreed that a woman’s influence for evil is often exercised over others. “*Cherchez la femme*” is constantly quoted by French officers of justice, and it is asserted that the woman plays a commanding part in all associations of criminals so commonly encountered among the Latin races. The organised “band” is very characteristic of the criminal methods in France. It is recruited from all classes and all categories; the lowest classes, habitual thieves and depredators, have no monopoly. There have been bands like that of the “Habits Noir,” the well-dressed people who ravaged Parisian society for some time, and who were directed and assisted by ladies in good position. This band worked very systematically. It had its own agents and men of business, bankers and money lenders and a whole army of blackmailers. A long list might be drawn up of the organisations that have flourished in France. We need not go back to the *chauffeurs*, the product of the general unrest after the French Revolution, when provincial France was at the mercy of the most active and determined gangs of robbers. The females of these bands rendered the most valuable assistance in seeking outlets for the exercise of their evil practices. After them there was the “Thiebert” band, the largest ever known, numbering

some eight hundred members and admirably organised with an effective subdivision of labor. Again, the “Graft” band, a corporative society not unlike the well known firm of English notoriety and addicted mostly to commercial frauds. The Lemaire band was peculiar, not only in its extensive depredations, but because it was mainly composed of the members of two families, a curious instance of the effect of heredity toward the criminal bias.

The organised band still exists, and some of the most baneful have flourished in modern times. That of Vrignault and Chevalier was broken up in 1786 in a trial in which a hundred and fifty culprits were charged. Chevalier with a certain Keippe, a devoted friend, were the moving spirits, and they were well served by women who had passed through Saint Lazare. Two of the women, Piat and Conturier, are said to have surrendered and allowed themselves to be condemned, although really innocent, in order that they might also be transported to New Caledonia—an act of devotion which, according to the director of Saint Lazare and the Parisian police, was by no means rare. Abadie, who subsequently suffered on the guillotine with his confederate Gilles for murdering a woman at Montreuil, desired to revive this method and re-organised the broken up band of Chevalier in a systematic fashion. He was a lad (no more) of extraordinary intelligence and possessed the keenest criminal tendency. It is said of him that he had been educated on criminal fiction and studied his business in the well-known novels of Ponson du Terrail. He had a mania for writing, and, having been reprieved, it was thought that he might assist in the conviction of accused persons by becoming an official informer. He spent his time in addressing letters to the instructing judge, full of false confessions and unsupported charges. In forming his band he adopted the code established by Chevalier, which has been preserved. It is a curious document, showing his logical mind and his practical methods. He formed his society of fourteen, twelve men and two women, and he strictly forbade any of the members to enter into close relations with others. No one was permitted to commit a crime without the express consent of his chief. They were armed with revolvers, hunting knives, loaded canes and knuckle-dusters. They were obliged to possess a certain number of disguises; among others, a workman’s blue blouse, and they were ordered to work when not at their business. They were fined if found drunk in a wine-shop. A daily wage of six francs was accorded to them with an additional ten francs out of the day’s thieving. The women were to act as spies, and to take places as servants in the neighborhood in houses marked for plunder. Those who joined the society were not at liberty to leave it under pain of death. Other regulations of the same tenor laid down strict rules of conduct, and there is little

doubt that had the society lasted it would have added greatly to contemporary crime; but it was broken up by the discovery of two murders committed within the first year. Abadie had many imitators, such as the band of the “Bois de Boulogne,” organised by Houillon and Leclerc. In all these it was abundantly proved that the females were the moving spirits. They seldom acted themselves where violence was necessary, but they advised, indicated and encouraged the crimes. They were obeyed readily by their confederates, who were afraid of them, knowing that if dissatisfied or distrustful they would pitilessly betray any one. They were often impelled by jealousy, that powerful incentive in the female character which has led to the invention by French women of that cowardly method of obtaining revenge, the throwing of vitriol in the face of those who offend them.

Of the minor crimes committed by the feminine offender, that of theft is the most common, abundant opportunities for practising it being afforded them, especially in the great shops of Paris. In many cases prevention is preferred to prosecution. A very close supervision is exercised by private police agents disguised as floor-walkers and salesmen, who watch the counters and promptly lay hands upon the light-fingered, who are haled at once to ransom, obliged to surrender the goods or pay for them and fined in proportion to the value of the article stolen. It has been calculated that out of a hundred shop-lifters taken red-handed, quite one quarter are professional thieves, another quarter are impelled by dire necessity, and the remaining half are believed to be kleptomaniacs.

The worst side of the female criminal has now been indicated. She is not all bad, and will exhibit pleasanter traits. She is full of sympathetic kindliness for the unhappy sisters she meets, and is especially affectionate towards the small children and the babies in arms, who are plentiful enough in this abode of misery. The maternal instinct is strong in Saint Lazare, and there are to be seen within its walls many evidences of the deep natural affection a mother has for her offspring. It is pretty to see the pride of the most degraded when one takes notice of her child and praises its looks. How she bursts into jealous rage if her neighbor’s child gets more attention! The strongest help to discipline is exercised through the child, and a woman otherwise incorrigible, whose evil temper no punishment can bring into subjection, will yield abjectly and display exemplary conduct if threatened that she shall be separated from her child. One wretched woman who had been sentenced to a long term bore it quite unconcernedly until her child died, and then, in despair, sought to take her own life. Another woman fiercely refused to part with her dying child. She covered it constantly with

kisses, and said more than once in heart-broken tones: “Forgive thy mother, sweet, for having brought thee to die in a prison.” In Saint Lazare as elsewhere, the humanising influence of the child is greatly felt; the prison nursery, the babies’ yard, are bright spots of the dark picture. Everybody wants to pet them, the wildest and most intractable creature has been known to control herself and mend her ways by being entrusted with the care of a child, not necessarily her own, and even to lavish extravagant affection upon it.

It has been said that Saint Lazare will shortly be emptied and a new prison erected on more satisfactory lines. Much greater care will be shown in classification, and the evils of promiscuous intercourse will be as far as possible removed. The wholly abandoned will no longer be able to corrupt the youthful offender who enters prison for the first time. At the same time, prolonged cellular confinement will be inflicted with such judgment as to avoid the dangers that might affect the mental balance of easily impressionable women.

The stranger in Paris, who, whether impelled by morbid fancy or the desire to pay a tribute of respect to the illustrious dead, proposes to visit the great cemetery of Père la Chaise, must approach it by the street of La Roquette. The street runs straight from the Place de la Bastile, and through a great portion of its length is a narrow, mournful thoroughfare, bordered by tumble-down tenements and small shops, devoted mostly to the sale of white, yellow or lilac immortelles and to the preparation of tombstones and other gloomy adjuncts of the undertaker’s trade. But within a stone’s throw of the gates of the cemetery, where the street widens a little, stand two imposing edifices, face to face, one of which is the Prison des Jeunes Detenus, the other the Depot des Condamnés. Both take their names from the street of La Roquette. It was chance, perhaps, which thus planted these criminal resting-places upon the very threshold of death’s domains, but there is bitter irony in it. Still more bitter is the administrative accident, if such it be, which has decided the separate uses of the two establishments. They are the Alpha and Omega of crime. One, La Petite Roquette, as it is called, receives the embryos, or first beginners, the little gamins of Paris, children with inherited tendencies, perhaps, towards vice, but who are as yet only on its brink; the other, styled La Grande Roquette, was long confined to the *haute volée* of Parisian crime, to the old stagers in this nefarious profession, whose misdeeds had earned for them either lengthened imprisonment, transportation beyond the seas, or the extreme penalty of the law, for La Grande Roquette was “the antechamber to the guillotine.” The first-named owes its origin to the philanthropic desire of the authorities after the Bourbon restoration to improve

the prisons of France, which were in deplorably bad order. The food was insufficient and unwholesome, the inmates when sick in the hospital slept three and four in a bed. Especially did the prisons for juvenile offenders need betterment. A so-called Prison Society was created to work to that end. A first measure was to give the young a quarter in the various *maisons centrales*. The prisons were better ventilated and kept cleaner; regular rations were issued, and employment found. The moral side alone was neglected. There was no separation, no distinction between classes, and the young and untainted associated freely with old and hardened offenders. In July, 1831, lads under sixteen years of age were collected in a wing of St. Pélagie and afterwards in the Magdelonettes. At the same time the Government authorised a society for the protection of young criminals, to place them out with employers where they might complete their sentence.

A distinguished publicist, Gabriel Delessert, now came in office as prefect of police in Paris, and was so deeply impressed with the existing evils of the children's prison of La Roquette that he entirely reconstructed it and revised its discipline. This prison of La Roquette had been built in 1825 for females, and had served as such until 1836, when it was adopted as a receptacle for ill conducted and weakly boys, broken by poverty and precocious vice. Here they consorted with others of their class, steadily deteriorating, so that those who entered bad were discharged much worse, and soon fell into fresh and more serious crime. M. Delessert made a strenuous attempt to save them, and decided to seek their amendment at some reformatory establishment in which they could be kept aloof from evil surroundings, isolated and carefully educated by a system of useful labor and good advice from teachers of unquestioned moral character. The interior of La Petite Roquette was completely transformed. Separate cells took the place of the large associated rooms, a marked improvement was seen in the young prisoners, both in demeanor and conduct, with an immediate diminution in the percentage of reconvictions. He was greatly assisted in these most creditable reforms by a worthy priest, the same Abbé Crozes, chaplain of the Grand Roquette, whose name and deeds already have been frequently mentioned. Strict separation was the leading principle of treatment. These children were for the most part kept alone, living in single cells, working in seclusion and seldom meeting their fellows, even for exercise or play, until the Abbé Crozes introduced the method of exercising singly, and fenced off portions of a yard and the separation at chapel into individual boxes, shutting off the sight of neighbors and concentrating attention in front.

This was the time when prison reformers were crazy about preventing personal contamination, and the régime as applicable to those of tender years did not please all. M. De Metz, the founder of Mettray, that famous agricultural colony for French juveniles, was a magistrate of advanced ideas, who had been sent by his Government to examine and report upon the cellular régime as recently established in the United States. He came back satisfied that it was wholly unsuited for youthful offenders. He much preferred the associated life for them as it obtained in Holland and Belgium, and he strongly advised its adoption. In 1839 he planned a *société paternelle*,—a farm school in fact, to receive young criminals and if possible amend them. His motto was "the moralisation of the man by the cultivation of the soil," and he set himself to collect friends to put his ideas into effect. With another philanthropist, who was a landed proprietor, he secured and endowed the institution known as Mettray on an estate near Tours. Good progress was made, and in 1840 a first house was built, in which forty juveniles were received as into a private family, the head of which was the "father" or master, who was always with his boys, exercising parental control. He knew them by heart; their character and disposition. Each family (there are now twenty houses) is distinct, and has no connection with any other except during work, recreation or divine service. The houses stand in their own ground; they are three stories, divided into living rooms, studies and dormitories.

Mettray was planned on a sound basis, and attained such excellent results that it has been made a model for general imitation, especially in France, where many such agricultural colonies are now to be found, all on the family principle, with numerous houses and extensive well-managed farms. The results obtained at Mettray have been highly satisfactory. Fully half of those who have passed through it have taken to honest labor, as artisans or in the fields. Many have entered the army and the Government service, earning decorations and promotion. A large percentage have married and become respectable citizens. Some hostile critics—notably the Russian Prince Kropotkine, who spent some time in various prisons—speak ill of the Mettray system as cruel in its discipline, but general opinion in France does not condemn it, and admits a great debt of gratitude to M. De Metz, in which indeed the whole world joins. Mettray was the starting point in the movement towards child rescue and the systematic efforts for the protection and reclamation of the juvenile with a natural bias towards crime, so often encouraged to evil deeds by the misfortune of birth and heredity, the evil influence of home surroundings, or worse still the absence of good example or moral training.

Juvenile depravity has unhappily long been prevalent in France, and is strongly marked. This is largely due to a faulty system, mistaken methods of treatment in the various prisons and especially in La Petite Roquette. Intercommunication between its inmates, despite strict discipline, is easy and frequent, and the most depraved exert a baneful influence over the whole. Most youthful crimes have originated in La Roquette. “My parents ought not to have sent me here” (under the law which permits a parent to try imprisonment to mend incorrigible children), said one lad. “They thought to reform me; it has been altogether the reverse.” “My first offence,” said another, “was stealing fruit, and it brought me to La Roquette. When one comes once, one returns often.” “The cell does not keep us apart, and we go out far worse than when we enter,” said still another. Hence the prevalence of serious juvenile crime. “A French child,” writes an experienced magistrate, “organises a murder as he would a pleasure party.” One was so light-hearted on his way to commit a great crime that an accomplice rebuked him saying, “If you laugh too much our coup will fail.” Another, who had already committed murder, wrote on his cell wall: “When one’s pockets are empty it is easy to understand why there are criminals.”

This prison as it now stands covers much ground and has considerable architectural pretensions. It consists of six wings grouped round a central building, with which they are connected by light iron bridges. This central building is circular and three storied. The lowest, or basement, contains the kitchen. The *parloir*, or place where the prisoners see their friends, occupies the second. The chapel is on the top floor. The wings have also three stories, and the cells on each story open from a central passage, lighted at the end, while the whole interior is warmed very indifferently by stoves. The régime of the prison is based upon the principle of isolation; a system which might, if carried to any extreme of severity, prove cruelly harsh to prisoners of tender years. The solitude enforced is not unbroken, however. Each boy, whatever his age (and this varies from eight or nine to sixteen or seventeen), works in his cell, sorting flowers for immortelles, the staple product of the neighborhood; polishing brass work, manufacturing and gilding chairs; but he is visited constantly by the *contremaître* or contractor’s foreman, who teaches and superintends; by the brigadier and wardens of the wing, or by the Director—the governor and chief of the establishment, who is continually going his rounds. The present head of the boys’ prison is a kindly and sympathetic person, who tempers the rigors of discipline by the warm and lively interest he takes in his flock. It is almost touching to see how the eyes of the little waifs brighten as he enters their cells; how one greets him with a cheery “*bon jour*,” and another catches his hand and

kisses it. They will prattle to him of their doings or the homes where they are probably unhappy and which they scarcely regret. They will lament their misdeeds, and make many promises to behave better another time.

After all, they are not badly off in La Petite Roquette. Ill-used, half-starved gutter children have been heard to speak in high praise of a place where they were well housed, well clothed, treated kindly and,—strange experience for them,—where they got something to eat every day of their lives. The confinement within four walls, at an age when life is full of spring and movement, is no doubt irksome to these little Arabs of the streets; but the Administration does its best to provide them with certain regulation amusements. In the exercising yards they may be seen behind the iron bars trundling hoops; and squads of them, each standing alone in his own separate compartment, are exercised in the "extension motions" by word of command —"*un*," "*deux*," "*trois*," and so forth; words which they are obliged to repeat in a shrill treble, with the double idea of enforcing attention and, by tiring their voices, of removing all desire to chatter among themselves.

In many respects, the establishment is a model one; and it does, in fact, serve as such for those who conduct juvenile reformatories in all civilised quarters of the globe.

Saint Lazare, indeed, is still in use; and only in December, 1905, after having been repeatedly condemned, could it be said that its days were numbered. A General Council of the Department of the Seine at that time voted a sum for the erection of an entirely new prison. The authorities were urged to begin at once the demolition and ex-propriation of the establishment. No doubt the cost of the new site and new buildings will be sensibly assisted by the sale of the present premises, situated in the heart of Paris and on very valuable property.

CHAPTER X
A MODEL PENITENTIARY

Fresnes—Final stage in the criminal career—The last chosen site for the guillotine—History of the guillotine—Earlier models of the instrument—The Italian "mannaia"—The "Maiden" used in Edinburgh and some cities in Yorkshire—Opinions on capital punishment—The alternative—Condition of eighty murderers who escaped the death sentence, when seen at Ghent ten years later—La Grande Roquette—Its inmates—The condemned cell—The march to the scaffold—Principal executions in late years—Verger murders the Archbishop of Paris in 1857—Avinain and other cruel murderers—Campi and Marchandon who took life boldly in the best parts of Paris—Execution of the hostages during the Commune—The site still preserved and honored—Passing of La Roquette—New and imposing prison of Fresnes on the outskirts of Paris—Opened in 1898—Closing considerations.

France, in building the prison of Fresnes, may be said to have given to the world a model penitentiary. It is the perfection of penal architecture and structural fitness for the purpose intended. Before proceeding to its consideration, however, let us take up the story of La Grande Roquette and the later annals of criminality with which it is identified.

Immediately opposite La Petite Roquette is the great prison of the same name. As I have already suggested, it is the final stage in the criminal career which began in some minor offence, punished by a few days' detention in the boys' prison, and here ends at the scaffold upon the Place de la Roquette. It is more by administrative design than definite design that these two extremes, the criminal cradle and the place of final doom, are thus brought into close juxtaposition. Various sites in Paris have been used from time to time for the dread performance of "law's finisher" commonly styled in stilted legal language the "*executeur des hautes œuvres*," the official instrument for completing capital punishment. He was the agent of High Justice and might hold his head above his

fellows who feared and hated him because he was the vindicator of the law. The office was not exactly honorable, but it was lucrative, and its holder enjoyed many privileges. He was entitled to levy taxes on food, upon all the corn brought into the market, and on fruit, grapes, nuts, hay, eggs and wool. He collected a toll on all who passed the Petit Pont (the bridge near the Châtelet). Every leper paid him a fee, and he acquired, by right of office, all the clothes of which his victims died possessed. But he carried a badge of shame, a ladder embroidered on the breast of his coat and a ladder on the back. His office was hereditary; son succeeded father, and if the next in succession was of tender years a substitute was appointed, but the rightful executioner, sometimes no more than seven or eight, stood by the headsman as if to sanction his proceedings. The Sansons filled the awful post for seven generations, nearly two hundred years. They were for the most part in good repute and highly esteemed by their royal masters. Louis XI indeed made a chosen companion of his executioner, Tristan L'Hamitte, whom he ennobled.

The ceremony of inflicting death was performed anywhere in early days, often from choice in the theatre of the crime. For a century or more the Place de la Grève was the favored spot, and was used until the revolution of 1830, but the scaffold was sometimes erected at the Halles (the central markets) or the Croix du Trahoir or in almost any wide street or square. The Barrier of Saint Jacques was substituted for the Place de la Grève in 1832. It was a convenient distance from the Conciergerie, in which prison the condemned found their last resting-place. The execution was fixed always for the afternoon, and the drive through the crowded streets was considered a scandal, so that a further change was decreed.

The prison of La Grande Roquette had spare accommodation available. This place had been in existence some years under the name of Little Bicêtre, and had been used as a *dépôt des condamnés*, in which were lodged all sentenced to *travaux forcés* while awaiting further removal to the seaport *bagnes* or the great central prisons. The concentration of so many desperate characters under one roof led them to feel their strength and measure it against authority in a serious outbreak in 1886, in which the Director would have lost his life, but for the courageous intervention of a veteran chief warder. From that time forth the worst criminals were no longer sent to La Grande Roquette, but retained in the central prisons after sentence, from which when condemned to transportation they were collected by agents and taken on to St. Martin de Ré to take ship for the Antipodes. The *bagnes* were abolished some time before those of Brest and

Rochefort in 1850, and Toulon in 1872.

But one quarter in La Grande Roquette was especially appropriated to convicts condemned to death, and they proceeded after a more or less lengthy detention direct from their cells to the guillotine. These were in all cases the most notable murderers only, for increasing reluctance to inflict the extreme penalty has been exhibited in France, and successive presidents of the Republic, from President Grévy on, have constantly commuted sentences to penal exile and spared lives that were clearly forfeited. For the last forty years all who were actually executed passed through La Grande Roquette, and a brief survey of the principal malefactors and the circumstances attending the last dread event will be given here.

A few words as to the guillotine; that instrument now invariably used for capital punishment in France. It has played so large a part in the modern French history that it will be interesting to trace its origin back to the days of its godfather and supposed inventor, a certain Doctor Guillotin, who in the Revolutionary times was very eager to improve the system of capital punishment, which he desired should be uniform for all; and he had fixed upon decapitation as the best and simplest process. But the headsman had always been an uncertain performer, a bungler often who could not command his nerves, and who often slashed and wounded his victim without dealing the death blow. Doctor Guillotin earnestly recommended in the Convention that every criminal should be decapitated by means of some mechanical contrivance. This passed into law, but before the contrivance had been settled upon, Guillotin, at his wits' end, applied to Charles Sanson, at that time the official executioner, for guidance. In their joint researches, they came upon an old Italian wood cut giving a presentment of the "mannaia," an ancient machine much used in Genoa and particularly for the execution of Guistranin and other conspirators. The picture might have served also for the Halifax "Maiden" of which more directly. In both, the axe was suspended between two uprights, the culprit knelt beneath it, and the executioner held the rope. It was also found that a French Marshal, De Montmorency, had been beheaded in 1631 by means of a sliding axe.

Difficulties of detail remained; chiefly, that of retaining the person about to suffer in the proper position long enough for the descending blow to take fatal effect. Then a friend, one Schmidt, a manufacturer of musical instruments, brought Sanson a rough sketch which met all objections and was in fact the model for the real machine. It seems very closely to have followed the lines of

the Halifax “Maiden.” It was immediately accepted by the Convention, not without laughter. Dr. Guillotin in describing his machine made use of some strange expressions. He assured his audience that with it he “could drop off their heads in a twinkling, and they would not suffer in the very least.” The only sensation might be that of a “slight freshness about the neck.” Before closing finally, the Assembly desired other opinions and applied, among others, to a Doctor Louis who was at that time physician to Louis XVI, still seated upon his tottering throne. The following curious incident is touched upon in the Sanson “Memoirs.”

While discussing the model, Doctor Guillotin and the executioner paid a visit one day to Doctor Louis. A stranger came into the room, who seemed greatly impressed with the invention, but disapproved of the shape of the axe, which was that of a crescent. He did not believe it would act properly upon all kinds of necks; “not on mine for instance,” said the objector, taking up pen and ink, and drawing an oblique edge instead of the half moon. Sanson, the expert, was consulted, and gave it as his opinion that the question should be tested by actual experience. When the machine was completed, it was taken to Bicêtre and set up for trial on three corpses in the presence of a numerous company, including that of a number of prisoners, who looked out from the windows above. The oblique knife edge was found to be by far the more effective, and that model was adopted for all time.

The most curious part of the story is, that the stranger who suggested the improvement in the axe was King Louis XVI, himself, a skilled locksmith and mechanic, having learned a trade after the manner of all royal children. His own neck within a few months’ time was to be subjected to the supreme test, which succeeded perfectly. I have no wish to deprive Doctor Guillotin of any credit that may attach to this invention, of questionable utility, except in simplifying the act of killing and minimising the pain inflicted upon the victim; but he was certainly not the first inventor of the manslaying apparatus with which his name is for ever associated.

Two centuries before the Revolution, an instrument very similar to the guillotine was in use in Scotland, and known there as the “Maiden.” James Douglas, Earl of Morton, died by it in Edinburgh in 1587, thus adding to the long list of inventors who paid the penalty of death by their own contrivance. The “Maiden” had been often used in Yorkshire for the summary execution of thieves taken in the act, and the best account of it extant is found in “Holinshed’s Chronicles,”

which describes the custom prevailing in Halifax and the machine in use. He records the law or custom, that whosoever commits a felony or steals to the value of fourteen pence or halfpenny shall be beheaded in the market. “The engine wherewith the execution is done is a square block of wood which does ride up and down in a slot between two pieces of timber that are framed and set upright, of five yards in height. In the nether end of the sliding block is an axe keyed or fastened with an iron into the wood, which being drawn up to the top of the frame is there fastened by a wooden pin, to the centre of which a long rope is attached, that cometh down among the people, so that when an offender hath made his confession and hath laid his head over the nethernmost block, every man seizeth the rope to show his willingness that judgment should be executed, and pulling out the pin the axe is released to fall with such violence that had the neck below been that of a bull the head would be dissevered and roll away to a great distance.” If the theft had been that of any fourfooted beast the rope was to be fastened to it, so that when driven away it would extract the pin.

France was then anxious to make a change in the method of carrying out execution, if indeed capital punishment were to continue in force. But there is now a strong tendency to abolish it altogether, as is the rule already in Italy and Belgium, the substitute in both countries being prolonged solitary confinement, which is really synonymous with a death sentence of a lingering and painful kind. The life spared on the scaffold must be passed in solitary confinement with the inevitable fatal consequences of such treatment. I shall never forget the painful impression made upon me when I came across some seventy or eighty murderers collected in one apartment in the prison of Ghent, all of whom had spent ten years or more in the cells of another prison, that of Louvain. They were all either senile idiots or imbeciles prematurely aged. They had been kept alive in deference to ultra-humanitarian sentiment, but at the price of something worse than death. It does not seem probable that the death penalty will disappear from the French criminal code, but a strong feeling prevails that better arrangements should be made for carrying out the sentence. Many are strongly in favor of adopting the British practice of performing the execution in private, within the limits of the gaol, that is to say, and in the presence of only a few officials. The selection of these last presents some difficulty, although it has been overcome in England, and is after all no more than the justifiable demand on public servants to perform their duty, however trying. One suggestion has been, to make it incumbent upon the jury that convicted to be present; but the fear of grave consequences has put this aside. It has been thought, not without reason, that juries would hesitate to find a verdict of guilty if they were to be compelled to

witness the dread consequences of their judgment. The desire for private execution has been emphasised in France by a scandalous incident that occurred at Dunkirk towards the end of 1905. A double murder of the most cruel and dastardly character had been committed, resulting in a double execution. A great mob had assembled, and, under the influence of strong excitement, stormed the scaffold when the second head fell, determined to carry off the decapitated corpses. The police were powerless to prevent the outrage. An extraordinary and probably unparalleled incident occurred at this execution. The victim had been a woman, and the widowed husband, thirsting to avenge her, had offered the authorities the sum of 10,000 francs, to be paid to the funds of any public charity, if they would allow him to act as executioner,—to the extent at least of touching the spring by which the knife of the guillotine was released. The strange request was refused; but as a particular favor a special place in the first row of spectators was secured for the aggrieved husband.

The prison of La Grande Roquette, when I visited it, struck me painfully from its gloomy and imposing architecture; and the effect was heightened as I passed into the inner yards, where behind a tall iron railing the bulk of the prison population were at exercise. As they patrolled it in couples, backwards and forwards, their wooden sabots made a hideous clatter on the stone pavement, which did not, however, drown the hum of their voices as they gossiped idly with one another, smoking their pipes in pleasant company. They were a rough, evil-visaged lot, for this was at a date anterior to the disturbance of 1886, before mentioned, and they were mostly habitual criminals (*récidivistes*), who had been convicted again and again. They could only be ruled by a strong hand, and the director, M. Beauquesnes, a resolute and determined man, had been specially selected for this responsible post. Before his time murderous assaults by prisoners upon their officers were common enough. Many trades are carried on in the prison, and desperate ruffians bent on mischief always found tools and dangerous weapons of offence ready to their hand. Outrages of this kind are now unknown. “How did you get the better of them?” I asked M. Beauquesnes, almost anticipating his answer as I met his clear gray eyes. “By constant surveillance, by being always on the lookout for mischief, and crushing it before it could make head.” “Your warders are all armed, of course?” “Not in the least. It is better to depend upon moral than physical force.” It did not seem to me fair or safe to leave officers entirely defenceless among so many desperate and easily excited prisoners without even the protection of a baton or club, and the evil result was presently seen in the outbreak already mentioned.

From the yard I passed into the workshops,—long, low, dark rooms in which gas is never lighted, for labor begins and ends with daylight. The trades followed were of the prison class, such as shoemaking, tailoring and so forth. Industry and orderliness were generally observable, but I seemed to detect a certain unsettled air. The prisoners gazed furtively from under their peaked caps at a strange visitor and seemed continually on the lookout for something to happen. They were in fact constantly expecting the order to “move on,” and any day the van might arrive to take them elsewhere. It might be to the other end of the world.

This kind of removal, still known at La Grande Roquette, is horrible, because it is final and irretrievable, and the journey is to that unknown bourne from which no traveller returns. The French system of dealing with condemned prisoners cannot be commended. It is cruel in the extreme, from the long uncertainty in which the individual is left as to his ultimate fate. He has made his last petition, the final appeal from the legal tribunal to the possibly more merciful Chief of the State, and he awaits the decision for weeks and weeks in the condemned cell. The delay is sometimes horribly prolonged. One man waited forty days, and was a prey the whole time to painful visions at night. He dreamed of the guillotine and saw his head rolling in the sawdust. He awoke with screams of terror and cried out perpetually, “The knife! The scaffold! I see nothing else!” The agony of the delay is intensified from the well-known fact that the dénouement, when it comes, will be abrupt and with the briefest possible notice. Only on the very morning of execution is the prisoner roused, generally from profound slumber, and warned suddenly to prepare for immediate death. All this time, since his sentence and reception at La Roquette, he has occupied the condemned cell, one of three rather large chambers near the hospital at the back of the prison. He has never been left for one instant unattended. Two warders have been with him, and have watched him closely day and night. Time was when, to render assurance doubly sure, the convict was kept continually in a strait-jacket or *camisole de force*. The priest of the prison has also been his constant companion. From the condemned cell the prisoner is taken by a rather long and circuitous route to the outer office, near the inner gate of the prison. Here the executioner and his assistants receive him and commence the “toilette of death.” The man is pinioned and bound by a variety of intricate straps. Thence, when he is ready, the procession passes across the courtyard to the outer prison gates. It is but a step. Once through them, the scaffold is immediately reached, the last act commences, is soon played, and the curtain promptly falls. Barely fourteen seconds elapse, it is said, from the time the convict steps on the scaffold to the moment when decapitation is effected. There is but a short fruition, therefore, for the sightseers

whom morbid curiosity has attracted to the spot, even if they see anything at all, which is doubtful, as the guillotine is placed on the ground level, and is surrounded by a double line of mounted gensdarmes.

On the very night that the guillotine was being erected in the Place de la Roquette for the execution of the poisoner La Pommerais, a marvellous escape was effected by a child prisoner from the reformatory prison opposite, the little Roquette.

At nine o'clock in the evening a lad of barely thirteen years, by using his knife, cut away the metal covering of his window in which the ventilator worked, then climbing up on a chair placed on top of his bed he got his head through, and looked down into the courtyard; it was quite empty, the night was dark; the only sound within was the monotonous footstep of the night watchman. But beyond the wall, there was a movement as of a crowd collecting, and from time to time the sound of a hammer and other tools. The boy knew what was on foot, for the story of La Pommerais and his approaching execution was known within the reformatory, and it was also known that the dread event was fixed for next morning. "Everybody is busy," said the fugitive, "no one will think of me." So he worked his little body through the ventilator, and reached the cornice between the first and second floor. Resting his feet on this narrow ledge and holding to his window by one hand, he stretched the other towards the next window and caught it, creeping thus from window to window till he had passed six of them. He was every moment in the utmost danger, for he hung on merely by his fingers and the soles of his heavy shoes. He said long afterwards that he suffered agonies in the hour occupied in thus creeping along. A single slip would certainly have precipitated him into the yard below. He was almost at the end of his strength, his arms ached horribly, and his hands were torn and bleeding. He took courage, however, saying to himself: "If I fall I shall be killed, if I stop I shall be recaptured; I must certainly go on."

Now the moon came through the clouds, and he knew that his shadow would be seen from below. At that moment he heard his name called, "Molutor, Molutor," and he shivered, feeling sure he had been detected. But the voice was that of a fellow-prisoner, the occupant of the cell, the window of which he was passing, who had recognised him. But with true loyalty to his class he did not betray him. On the contrary he tried to help him, and after reconnoitring around encouraged him by saying there were no warders in sight. Stimulated by these encouraging words, the lad, who had already reached the fifth window, made a renewed

effort, and passed on to the sixth, next the angle of the building, and there seized the water pipe. At this moment the clock struck midnight. Then followed strange noises. Looking down, he saw beneath him the open space of the Place de la Roquette, in which a crowd was slowly gathering, and some workmen were moving forward an oddly shaped machine, which he easily recognised. They were about to erect the scaffold. The machinery for the guillotine and its purpose were perfectly well known to the fugitive. At this moment it is said he shuddered, not so much at the pressing danger of his situation, and the near certainty of death if he slipped, but with inward despair at the life that lay before him. Surely it was useless to compass his escape, to risk so much to get away now, if some little time ahead he would inevitably arrive at the guillotine, led step by step, passing from court to court and judgment to judgment, until he mounted this same scaffold, and expiated his offences as this same La Pommerais was about to do. Not the less did he complete his escape. He slipped down to the ground on the other side, gained the outer wall, and climbed it. Then he waited until the square was thronged to get away. When the crowd was seized with horror at the sound of the falling knife and the thud of the severed head in the basket he would escape. At the supreme moment, when a shiver of horror affected the spectators, he alone kept his head, and, with sure, cautious step, slipped in amongst the people and passed unchecked to the boulevard Voltaire.

A criminal drama which horrified all Paris in 1857 and had its suitable dénouement on the Place de la Roquette, was the murder of the Archbishop of Paris, Monseigneur Sibour, a dignified ecclesiastic, who was universally loved and esteemed in his diocese. The Archbishop was on his way to put on his vestments for the mass in the church of St. Etienne du Mont. The procession was on the point of entering the sacristy when a man, dressed in black, rushed in behind the Archbishop, who was carrying aloft the Episcopal Cross, and with his left hand caught hold of him and twisted him sharply round, while with his right he struck him in the ribs with a knife. The wound was mortal, and the Archbishop almost immediately fell dead, while his murderer was seized and roughly handled by the indignant crowd. The police proceeded at once to interrogate him and soon learned who he was. In appearance short and thin, with a not unpleasing countenance, carefully dressed in black, he proved to be one Louis Verger, an unfrocked priest. He confessed that the murder was premeditated, and that he had come to the church with the set intention of committing it. He had no animus against the Archbishop, but desired to aim a blow at the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Thence his outcry when he struck the fatal blow, “No more goddesses!” “Down with the goddesses!” He

was quite calm and self-possessed afterward, and the suggestion that he was insane quite fell to the ground. When he was received at Mazas his mental condition was inquired into, but there was no symptom of derangement. His first demand was for food, for he had eaten nothing that morning, fearing to interfere with the steadiness of his nerves. When questioned as to the motives of his crime, his answers were clear and logical, except that he was fanatically hostile to certain doctrines, and especially to that of the celibacy of the clergy. In his parish he was constantly at difference with his parishioners, with whom he had many quarrels, and he was at length removed to another parish. He went to London to work under Cardinal Wiseman, the new Archbishop of Westminster, and on his return to Paris obtained fresh preferment at Saint Germain L'Auxerrois. He was still turbulent and constantly a thorn in the side of the Archbishop. His state of mind was held to be doubtful, but the doctors declared him more dangerous than mad. He preached the most violent diatribes against ecclesiastical authority, and richly deserved the sentence of suspension that was decreed against him within a week of his murderous attack upon the Archbishop.

No doubt excessive vanity and the desire to pose as a public character were strong temptations to the crime he committed. He was always greatly pleased when people came to see him and he gloried in his crime as a new *cause célèbre* which long would be the talk of the town. He maintained this attitude all through his trial, and at times behaved scandalously by insulting the judge and ridiculing the procedure. The audience was furiously incensed with him, and more than once it was necessary to suspend the proceedings. Public feeling was entirely on the side of the murdered Archbishop. At the same time there can be very little doubt that he was an irresponsible being, a maniac suffering from exaltation, eager always to "show off;" and it would have been a bitter disappointment to him if he had been put away in an asylum.

His conviction came as a matter of course, but he did not accept it without protest, exclaiming contemptuously, "What justice! What justice!" He cried out that he would appeal to the Emperor (Napoleon III), and he assured his father, when the old man visited him, that he would not abide by the sentence. Nevertheless he was removed from the Conciergerie to La Roquette, and here in his last abode he tried to play the hero, and with much satisfaction frequently repeated the details of his crime. He denied that he felt any remorse for having struck down "*ce pauvre Monseigneur*," but was not glad that he had done it. "My work was over," he would say, "and I dropped my arms to my side like the workman who has finished his task." The appeal made for reprieve was very

ably maintained by his advocate, but was quite fruitless. There could be no doubt as to his guilt, and no pity for the criminal in the Emperor. Again and again the condemned man prayed to be permitted to write to the head of the state, and was very indignant when the privilege was denied him. Still he had access to friends outside, and hoped for some reversal of sentence through their good offices. He could hardly believe his ears when they came to him on the morning of execution to make the last dread announcement, which was conveyed by the Abbé Hugon, who was acting as *aumonier*, and who was accompanied as usual by the Chief of the Police, the director of the prison and other officials. “It is useless,” he repeated, “I know you all; you are not speaking the truth and have only come to see what effect the bad news would have on me. I do not, I cannot believe it. I know the Emperor, and feel sure he will not abandon me.”

At last the dread reality forced itself on him, and his demeanor completely changed. His air of nonchalant bravado suddenly disappeared, and a fierce passion for self-preservation seized him. He grew livid with fury, and with a wild gesture of repulsion he waved them away. “Be off, I want no priests, no relics, no cross,” he cried. “Do not think that I will go quietly to the scaffold. I’ll have no scaffold. You will have to carry me there in pieces,” and he set himself to resist vigorously, clinging to his bed, rolling himself in his blankets, struggling with the warders, shouting, roaring, swearing and blaspheming. Then the director of La Petite Roquette thought of calling in the executioner, although by law he is not permitted to enter the condemned cell. M. Heinderich came when summoned, an embodiment of superior force, a perfect Colossus, six feet in height, with broad shoulders, clear-eyed and full of resolution, the picture of a self-reliant veteran. “Come, Verger,” he said quietly, “you will not come of your own accord? we must take you then by force!” The prisoner was conquered, and without more ado allowed himself to be secured. Then he was led like a lamb to the outer office where his “toilette of death” was quickly performed. At length he broke down, and cried with bitter tears, “How terrible it is to die without relations or friends.” He listened with gratitude to the consoling words of the priest, confessed, received absolution, and almost immediately was a dead man.

A notability of the guillotine was Avinain, executed in 1867 for a series of murders, all having similar features. Several corpses were picked up, all of which had been very carefully dismembered by some hand practised in dissection. In all, the head and limbs had been skilfully removed from the trunk; but death had first been inflicted by strangulation or many terrible wounds. The remains had generally been found in the neighborhood of the Seine, and

suspicion at length attached to a certain Jean Charles, otherwise Charles Alfonse, who had lived in four different houses on the riverside. The police now discovered that there were stables and sheds forming part of these several dwellings. In one building they picked up a saw, a hammer and an axe, which evidently had been used for the purpose of dismembering the bodies. These, according to French custom, had been exhibited at the Morgue, and one of the articles was recognised by a young man as having belonged to his father, who had recently disappeared. The deceased was a forage merchant. He had come to Paris to sell a cartload of hay, and had met Charles, with whom he agreed on a price. The purchaser very civilly offered him the accommodation of his stables for the night and a bed at his house, so that the purchase might be completed next morning. It appeared in the trial that before this another person had sold forage and had accepted hospitality for the night, but when the host came, insisting that the light should be extinguished for fear of setting fire to the barn, he carried in his hand a hammer; and the guest, a little suspicious, declared that he always slept with a light burning, and in a very significant fashion took out his knife as though to use it in self-defence. There was little doubt that this man with the hammer was the same Charles already indicated, and the police proceeded to inquire into his identity. He proved to be one Charles Avinain, a butcher by trade, who had recently been a convict in Cayenne. Since his return from transportation he had frequently been in trouble, and was now easily traced and arrested by means of clues furnished by his wife and daughter. He still lived at the riverside, and nearly made his escape from the police by means of a trap door in the floor of the basement which opened on to a passage. Several murders were brought home to him, committed either with hammer or knife. His victims were mostly forage merchants, and he had dealt with the bodies in the same barbarous fashion. It is recorded of him that he never exhibited the slightest remorse, until the very last moment, and then it was under the influence of overwhelming terror as he trod the steps of the scaffold. He had always repulsed the chaplain, but in the end accepted his ministrations, confessed, and received absolution.

Moreux, who had murdered a girl to rob her and give a present to his beloved, put down his pipe quietly, when he received the news, saying, “I did not think it would be before next Wednesday,” ascended the scaffold quickly, and remarked to the chief warder in bidding him good-bye, “You see what comes of evil behavior.” Toly, who tried to kill a warder when first locked up, took his sentence very calmly, and faced death with great self-possession. He spent his last night at cards, but received the chaplain with great emotion and deep

sentiments of repentance. Coutalier had murdered his wife with one blow of a hatchet, and bore up well until he saw the guillotine, when he threw himself back violently, but soon regained his impassiveness. Many were at great pains to proclaim their innocence. It was so with Boudas, an ex-priest, whose consuming desire was to become rich. He poisoned two wives in succession, so as to secure their inheritances. It was clearly proved against him, but he reiterated as he knelt and laid his head on the block: “Let every one know that I am not guilty.” Gervais sacrificed an aged companion, a well-to-do dealer in antiques, because he wanted means to marry. His awakening on the last morning was a frightful scene. “I can’t, I won’t believe it. It is impossible. The law is about to commit a terrible crime.” He fought the executioner so hard that he had to be led twice to the block. But he died smiling with that curious, artificial grin that relaxes the muscles of the face at moments of great nervous derangement, and has no connection with real laughter. Billoir hated his wife for her extravagance and slovenliness, murdered her, and threw the body into the Seine. He was an old soldier of good character and distinguished service, but Marshal MacMahon, the President, positively refused to pardon him. He was quite overwhelmed with the shock when told the fatal news, but speedily recovered himself, and, crossing his hands on his breast, respectfully saluted the chaplain.

Welker, one of the worst and most inhuman of his class, who had murdered a pretty child of eight, showed the most abject cowardice. It was necessary to carry him bodily to the scaffold, and place him in position under the knife. A corpse was really guillotined, for he was already dead with fright, and had pardon come at the eleventh hour it could not have benefitted him. Menesclon has left a name more execrable than Welker, for his victim was an infant of four, whom he was believed to hold in strong affection, lavishing gifts upon her constantly. One day she went into his room, and the child was never seen again. After many denials that he knew anything about her, a neighbor was drawn to his room by the nauseating smell of burning flesh, and on forcing his door he was found stirring up a blazing fire in his stove. Menesclon was barely saved from the fury of the people when the story became known. He was interrogated, and gave his own account of the affair. He had invited the child into his room to give her some flowers. But she irritated him by crying, and, being unable to quiet her, he suddenly seized her by the throat and choked her. When she was dead he thrust the body between his two mattresses, and slept the whole night through. Early next morning he set himself to get rid of the horrible evidence of his crime in the manner already described. This miserable creature was one of the lowest type of his class. He had been graduated in the lowest schools of vice, beginning

as a child at La Petite Roquette, to which he had been committed at the instance of his parents as perfectly unmanageable at home. He passed thence into the navy, after having been the despair of many workshops in which he had been employed, at last having assaulted and robbed his father. He had developed into an undersized weak creature with a hideous, pimpled face, low forehead, furtive manner and foxy eyes. He was quite indifferent at his trial, showed no remorse for his crime, and rarely answered the questions put to him, which threw into strong relief the enormity of his conduct. Service in Senegal had left him with an incurable deafness, which heightened his stupidity. He gazed without flinching at the *pièces de conviction* lying on the table before him. Close by was a copy-book filled with verses, for he had poetical aspirations and was a bit of an artist. His cold-blooded unconcern culminated in his last answer to the question why he had committed the crime. “I can’t tell you,” he replied, “but you are at liberty to do the same to me.” Menesclon exhibited the same impassibility at the last hour. He heard his fate with his hand to his ear, the better to catch the words, and merely said, “*Ah, bon!*” when he understood; and then walked quietly to the scaffold.

One or two later cases possessing some of the same features may be included here,—those of Michel Campi and of Marchandon,—which throw up into strong relief the insecurity of life, even in the most crowded parts of a large city. In the first instance a peaceable old gentleman and his sister were murdered at three o’clock in the afternoon in the rue du Regard, not far from the avenue de Clichy. In the other a lady of good position and ample means was done to death in the middle of the night by her own man-servant, whom she had only engaged the day before.

The case of Campi is as follows: On the afternoon of a tenth of August, a man rang at the door of an apartment in the rue du Regard where resided Du Cros de Sixt with his sister. They were both old people. He was well to do and secretary to a religious society. Their residence was in a pavilion apart from the principal building. Mlle. du Cros answered the door in the absence of their maid, and Campi at once struck down the old lady with a succession of violent blows with a hammer. Mlle. du Cros fell screaming and her brother rushing out was treated in the same manner. Then the miscreant, opening a large knife, cut the poor woman’s throat and next wounded M. du Cros mortally. Now the concierge came to the rescue, found the two bodies lying in a pool of blood, and hurriedly called in the police. When they arrived they found the murderer in one of the rooms hunting for plunder. He was forthwith arrested, and without difficulty,

although he later explained this to the instructing judge by saying that had he not broken the handle of his hammer, he would have taken other lives. Robbery was judged to be the motive of the crime, but Campi's advocate wished to suggest an idea of vengeance, although no proof of this was ever forthcoming. There was some mystery about the man and his relations with M. du Cros which never came out. Campi was certainly acquainted with M. du Cros and his sister, who survived for a couple of days. When questioned, she begged piteously not to be forced to reveal the secret of the man's identity. Campi was perfectly well known to the police as a criminal, who had been in prison frequently, but his secret antecedents were never brought to light. He was said to have served in the Carlist ranks in Catalonia. He belonged originally to Marseilles, and his connection with the Spanish insurgents was attested by Carlist officers who recognised him. The mystery about him was never definitely cleared up, and it served only to increase the interest attached to him at the time of his trial. The account given of his last appearance differed little from those of other executions, but he was most anxious to show no weakness, declined all assistance, and cried: "I would rather walk alone. I am not in the least afraid." When he saw the guillotine, he exclaimed contemptuously, "Is that all!" The exact truth as to his identity will never be known, but those who knew him maintained to the last that he was not a thief; that he was essentially an honest man, who would not stoop to murder for mere gain; and that some family scandal would have been revealed if the whole story of the crime had been laid bare.

In the case of Marchandon, his intention to murder his new mistress without loss of time was shown by the fact that he only hired for a single day the clothes in which he presented himself in the rue de Sèze. He had secured employment in many houses by means of a forged certificate of character, which was so unsatisfactory that it roused the suspicions of the Princess Poniatowski, who had engaged him, but would not allow him to enter her house. She had gone at once to the registry office to warn them, but found that Marchandon had already been placed elsewhere, in fact, with Madame Cornet, his future victim. He proceeded promptly to carry out his crime. Having secured a livery coat as already described, he waited at table, and, after receiving his orders for next day, he went up to bed in the garret. About one in the morning he went down again and entered Madame Cornet's apartment by means of a key which he had secured, and hid himself between the salon and the bedroom. When Madame Cornet had undressed and gone to bed, Marchandon attacked her. Her piercing screams disturbed the concierge who slept above. He got up to call the chambermaid,

believing that Madame Cornet was taken ill. The two came down-stairs together and knocked at the door, but received no reply. They listened at the door for a time, and then left, thinking all must be right, as she was moving about. It was the murderer whom they heard, busied in getting rid of his blood-stained clothes, and hunting for valuables.

The first clue to the detection of the crime was the discovery of the hired livery coat, which was recognised by its owner when he was found. With it came the identification of the man-servant. He had a snug little home of his own in Compiègne, where he lived with his wife very comfortably. When arrested in the course of the day, he was just sitting down to a little dinner of croutons and roast fowl. The establishment was run with the means Marchandon acquired in Paris and brought down to his wife, the proceeds, no doubt, of his thefts. At one time he was in the service of the well-known M. Worth, the dressmaker of the rue de la Paix, but always managed to get down to Compiègne in the evening for dinner, bringing with him fish or fruit, or some other delicacy. He was a man of simple tastes, very popular in his own neighborhood. The raising of poultry was his favorite amusement, and he delighted in growing flowers. He was not without a certain sense of grim humor; and a witness deposed in court to his having exclaimed, when reading his newspaper the day after the murder of Madame Cornet, “Why are people so careless as to engage their servants without proper characters!”

The two Roquettes, small and great, were much mixed up with the painful drama of the Paris Commune. The junior prison was for some time appropriated to military prisoners. Paris, as the insurrection grew, became more and more crowded with troops, and some penal establishment was much needed. When the Commune was in full swing, La Petite Roquette contained about four hundred soldiers of all branches of the service, who in their turn gave place to the juveniles brought back from other prisons. These, to the number of 127, were retained until the end of May, when they were released and sent out armed to take part in the defence of the barricades. They soon returned clamorous for shelter. Later, La Petite Roquette was utilised as a place of safe custody for all regular soldiers found in Paris who had refused to ally themselves with the Commune. Some twelve hundred of these more than filled the prison.

A darker shadow lies upon La Grande Roquette, for it was made the place of detention for the so-called hostages of the Commune. Many persons of rank and authority were arrested by the Communal authorities as a means of imposing respect upon the government of Versailles, now moving its troops forward to recover Paris and re-establish law and order. Some idea of the savage and bloodthirsty spirit that possessed the insurgents had already been seen in the murder of the two generals, Clément Thomas and Lecomte, who had been arrested and mercilessly shot at Montmartre. Early in April it was decided to arrest Monseigneur Darboy, Archbishop of Paris. It is said that the same priest, Abbé Lagard, Archdeacon of St. Genevieve, who had warned Archbishop Sibour that Verger had threatened to take his life, now desired to put M. Darboy on his guard. The trustful prelate could not believe that anyone wished him evil, but the very next day after the fight at Châtillon, an order was issued to two Communist captains to secure the persons of the Archbishop and some of his clerics, and convey them to the Conciergerie, where they were arraigned before three members of the Committee of Public Safety, Rigault, Ferré, Dacosta. “My children,” began the Monseigneur, “I am here to render you any satisfaction.” “We are not your children, but your judges,” replied Rigault. “For eighteen centuries you and men like you have been locking up humanity; it is now your turn.” Sentence of death was then and there passed upon them. “These are not men, but wild beasts,” protested the Archbishop, who was forthwith removed with his secretary to the depot of the Prefecture, whence they were transferred to Mazas. The possession of these and other hostages inspired the Communists to open negotiations with Versailles, backed by the threat that they would kill their prisoners unless their terms were conceded. But indeed, this political murder had been resolved upon the first moment of their arrest, and on the morning of the twenty-fourth of May, 1871, they were all brought from Mazas to La Grande Roquette, where the Governor gave a receipt for their bodies worded as follows: “Received forty priests and magistrates.”

By this time the troops stationed at La Roquette had been strongly reinforced, and on the evening of the twenty-fifth of May another detachment arrived. It was frankly admitted that they were the “platoon of execution.” A list was handed to François, a low creature who had been a carpenter, containing the names of all his prisoners. These names were called out one by one, Darboy, the Archbishop, first. “Let me get my coat,” said Monseigneur, but some one called out, “You will not want it,” and taking him by the arm they led him down to the garden that runs round the interior of the prison. This was the first *chemin de ronde*. The

second was reached by turning to the left, and again to the left, and was well out of sight of the ordinary prison and the hospital. The hostages then appear to have been arranged according to rank from right to left. The Archbishop first, then M. le President Bonjean, and then the rest of the priests. Just before the final act, the Archbishop raised his hand to bless and absolve his companions, six in all, who faced the firing party at thirty paces distant. At the word of command the execution was completed. In those days of massacre the guillotine was deemed too slow, and the bullet took its place.

At daylight next morning the same process was repeated with the fifteen remaining hostages, who were led out one by one and formed up under the same wall. Nowadays the many sympathisers with the victims of this dastardly act, who come from all parts of the world to visit the scene of the murder, will find a marble tablet fixed in the wall over the exact spot where they fell. It bears the inscription: “Respect this place which witnessed the death of the sainted and noble victims of the 24th of May, 1871.” An iron balustrade keeps off irreverent feet, and is constantly adorned with wreaths of immortelles. A large number of hostages remained, many of whom were gensdarmes. They were removed from prison and massacred in a body at Belleville.

After many essays at improvement the prisons of Paris have entered upon a stage of approximate perfection, and the capital is now possessed of a penal establishment that compares with any in the civilised world. The great prison of Fresnes, after four years in building at immense outlay, was completed and occupied in July, 1898. It is situated on the very outskirts of Paris, replacing a number of old-fashioned prisons. It covers a wide extent of ground. The entrance is on the Versailles road (on the left of the visitor coming from Berny station), where the great edifice with its imposing, but not too florid, architecture, presents a view of many lofty parallel blocks, flanked by smaller buildings appropriated to the service of the prison.

Passing first the gatekeeper’s lodge, in front of which stands the Governor’s residence of ambitious dimensions, we enter a long avenue, well planted with trees, and find on the left other dwellings occupied by the superior staff, and on the right a great block of 156 cells in three tiers. This cell house is the *quartier de transfèrement*; in other words, the place of passage in which are accommodated all the classes till now found in La Grand Roquette. Those sentenced to long terms exceeding one year will in due course move on elsewhere to the colonial establishment beyond the sea, or the *maisons centrales*,

the district prisons in or near Paris. Further on is the main building, housing close upon two thousand cells, arranged in three grand divisions, each separate and distinct and containing 508 cells. Each affords ample provision for the different categories of prisoners to be lodged, *prévenues* or those waiting trial, short term prisoners and juveniles. The first design was to receive females at Fresnes, but Saint Lazare is eventually to be replaced by another especially constructed prison for their reception. The main entrance of this principal quarter is in the centre, with a gatekeeper's lodge on one side and a military guard under an officer on the other. Beyond and behind them are the extensive yards and buildings required in attending to the services of the prison, the storehouses for food and clothing, the kitchens and bakeries and laundries, and the plant for the generation of electricity. All these are on the left, while on the right is the reception ward with four hundred cells of ample dimensions, each having a cubical content of eighteen yards.

With such an extensive acreage the inconvenience of great distances to traverse is met by transverse tunnels and many lines of railways serving all parts of the prison. On the prison galleries too, there are the trams to carry the day's rations and necessaries from cell to cell. There are lifts everywhere, and many staircases in the most convenient places. The cells are all very spacious, their decoration and fittings artistic, and in the best modern style, with varnished walls, washing arrangements in porcelain, and a plentiful supply of water. The warming and ventilation are on the best principles. The only fault to be found with the modern plan of prison management is that over-much attention is paid to material comfort. The condition of the wrongdoer in durance is far superior to his way of life when at large. He goes back to it improved in physique, better able to endure its hardships, and possibly fortified against relapse.

Whether when he finally emerges he has benefitted morally may be doubted. It is impossible with so large a population, spread over so large an area, that there can be any reformatory process as applied to individuals. Fresnes is open to the serious objection that it is too large for effective moral discipline, and that government of some 2,500 persons, four-fifths of whom are criminals of many varied classes, would make excessive demands upon even a heaven-born administrator and philanthropist.

As we have seen in the closing paragraphs of this volume, the great prison of Fresnes exemplifies the best practice of modern penology in the incarceration and discipline of those whom society, for its own protection, isolates from itself.

But punishment is not necessarily reform; and it may be doubted whether the redemption of the criminal will ever be accomplished by model prison structures alone. France, in common with all other nations, has this further step of reformation yet to take. But little indication of what its nature shall be, in France or elsewhere, has been given; for its revelation we must look to the future.

END OF VOLUME IV.

Transcriber's Note:

Inconsistent spelling and hyphenation are as in the original.

version posted on the official Project Gutenberg-tm web site (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original "Plain Vanilla ASCII" or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg-tm License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg-tm works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works provided that

* You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg-tm works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, "Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."

* You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg-tm License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg-tm works.

* You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.

* You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from both the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and The Project Gutenberg Trademark LLC, the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg-tm collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain "Defects," such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg-tm trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg-tm electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you 'AS-IS', WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg-tm work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg-tm work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg-tm

Project Gutenberg-tm is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg-tm's goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg-tm collection will

remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg-tm and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's principal office is in Fairbanks, Alaska, with the mailing address: PO Box 750175, Fairbanks, AK 99775, but its volunteers and employees are scattered throughout numerous locations. Its business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's web site and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

For additional contact information:

    Dr. Gregory B. Newby
    Chief Executive and Director
    gbnewby@pglaf.org

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg-tm depends upon and cannot survive without wide spread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg Web pages for current donation

methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg-tm electronic works.

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg-tm concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg-tm eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg-tm eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our Web site which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org

This Web site includes information about Project Gutenberg-tm, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.

linked image
back