

# Donaldsonville Chief.

Two Dollars a Year.

## FORGIFTS.

They sent him round the circle fair. To love before the prettiest there. He found to say the choice he made A creditable taste displayed; Although I can't say what it meant— The little maid looked ill content.

His task was then anew begun— To kneel before the whitest one. Once more that little maid sought him, And bent him down upon his knee. She bent her eyes upon the floor— As if she thought the gaze a bore.

He circled then—his sweet behoar To kiss the one he loved the best. He kissed the little maid, he did. And then—though why I can't decide— The little maid looked satisfied.

—Century Magazine.

## NAPOLÉONVILLE LETTER.

A Complete and Impartial Account of the Great Scandal Case which Occupied the Court for Two Days and Nights—A Holy Man Charged with an Unholy Action—The Pictures of the Court, Officers, Bar and Participants.

NAPOLÉONVILLE, La., June 29, 1892.

### DEAR CHIEF:

On Friday, the 23rd inst., your correspondent boarded the splendid steamer St. Mary, Capt. S. B. Bell commanding, for this town. It is superfluous to say that I was courteously received and entertained by the gentlemanly officers of this popular Lafourche packet. I was, moreover, grateful to find Catherine Cole, the talented correspondent of the New Orleans Picayune among the lady passengers, en route for Thibodaux. She seemed industriously engaged in taking observations of the various objects of interest with which this lovely Lafourche country is replete. She is not particularly prepossessing in person, yet there was a great deal strikingly fascinating in her large, bright blue eyes, amber hair, well developed chest—not turned up—nose, capacious mouth, that universally conceded index of mental force, which, together with a small, neatly formed foot, tastefully increased in an exquisite little garter made up a tout ensemble entirely acceptable to the most fastidious critic.

On reaching this place I discovered the town intensely agitated over the most flagrant scandal that ever figured in the criminal records of Assumption, of which I will endeavor to draw a brief sketch, divesting it as nearly as can be accomplished, consistent with the facts of the case, of its revolting "limbs and flourishes."

Father Cyrille Véniat, who has been for the past twenty-five years Curate in charge of St. Philomene church at Labadieville, and two young girls, Octavie and Olivia Devillat of Thibodaux, both pupils of St. Philomene Convent located about two miles below the aforesaid village, were the principal characters in what might be appropriately designated the great sensational drama of St. Philomene Convent. Upon my arrival at this centre of civilization, I was authentically informed that the venerable Father was in the custody of the Sheriff, a warm, personal friend, with one of whose deputies he was observed promenading the streets, usually oscillating between the Court-House and the St. Napoleon presbytery, the residence of his host, Father Wells.

The Father is a stoutly built, vigorous looking man, with dark complexion, small black eyes, sharply pointed nose and thin, closely compressed lips. There is nothing absolutely sinister in his facial expressions; forsooth, when he smiles, bright rays of benevolence illumine the countenance. Although he is 60 years of age, he appears much younger and would be taken by the uninitiated for a hale, hearty, well preserved man of 45. About a quarter of a century ago he was placed in charge of a primitive little structure, surrounded by a frog pond, in the delectable village of Labadieville. This house of God scarcely merited the name of chapel at the time he assumed its control, but was probably so designated; subsequently a small brick church was built on the site of the ruins of the old one. The latter was in the way of a cyclone several years ago and experienced considerable injury to its tenacity, evidences of which still exist, the cyclone's ugly damages never having been repaired. The front of this tottering edifice is guarded by a duck pond, and entrance to its sacred precincts can only be effected by a narrow one-plank bridge. Father Véniat's circumstances, upon assuming the functions of Curate of the original church, were very limited, but by dint of indomitable energy, foresight and prudence he has accumulated considerable wealth. The Convent was duly inaugurated under the auspices of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, and by reason of a liberal patronage was placed upon a solid basis and is now flourishing. This institution, Father Véniat is, I am reliably informed, has donated to the Sisters, and still sustains it with a generosity characteristic of his liberal disposition.

The preliminary examination was fixed for Tuesday, 27th ult., at 10 A. M., by Judge Knoblock. Long before the time named the roads leading to Napoleonville were teeming with people who had brought in requisition every conceivable mode of transportation. Such a mass of white males has never been witnessed in this town. The immense number of attendants from Assumption was perceptibly increased by the citizens of Lafourche and Ascension. An unbroken line in progress the previous day was resumed on Tuesday, and was not dispersed until late in the night of that day. It was slowly suspected that the case was purposely spun out to weary the dense crowd of spectators in the hope that many of them might return to their homes and possibly not return the following day. Whether this suspicion was well founded or not, it was evident that the postponement of the case until 6 o'clock Wednesday morning had the desired effect. At an early hour on Wednesday the Court-House was

densely packed, not half of the people present being able to obtain seats. Judge Knoblock promptly opened court at 8 A. M., and soon thereafter the Immaculate Sisters, eight in number, filed down the aisle and were assigned seats in the jury box. Fathers Bonchet, J. B. and M. Lechaire, Welte, Menard and Chappens of New Orleans occupied chairs within the bar alongside of Attorneys Capt. Lewis Guion, L. U. Poise, Capt. J. B. Whittington, Edward Gaudet of New Orleans, Judge Carver and E. N. Pugh of your parish, W. E. Howell of Assumption, District Attorney E. O'Sullivan, Messrs. Clay Knoblock, brother of the Judge presiding, and Walter Guion counsel for accused and Thomas D. Badaeux. Father Véniat accompanied by his counsel appeared amid the most profound silence. There appearing on the original affidavit made before Prosper Davigne, Justice of the Peace, by Verrier the uncle of the Misses Devillat, some defects, one as to the date of the commission of the alleged offense and the other as to a misnomer of one of the girls, District Attorney moved for a new affidavit, which after some argument was consented to by counsel and evidenced by the court. The error in the date would have enabled the defense to establish an alibi, hence the action of Mr. O'Sullivan. Clay Knoblock then asked for a separation of the witnesses, and that Verrier the affiant be prohibited from holding any communication with his niece. He was therefore entirely excluded from the other witnesses and placed in a separate room. Attorney Badaeux also a witness was at his request excepted from the rule of exclusion.

Judge Arthur F. Knoblock of Lafourche, the presiding Judge, was elected without opposition to his present position as a Democrat. He is a quiet, dignified, scholarly gentleman and has discharged his judicial duties so far with ability, fairness and energy.

Mr. E. A. O'Sullivan, District Attorney of the District, is an Irishman by birth, and like Judge Knoblock was elevated to his present position without opposition. He is a tall, straight, handsome young man, with large blue eyes, regular, expressive features, sports a full sandy beard and long hair kept carefully parted. His prosecution in this case was characterized with consummate skill as well as legal and oratorical ability.

Hon. Clay Knoblock of Lafourche, counsel for defense, is a native of Lafourche parish, and although he has only entered actively upon the practice of his profession since the war, has attained great eminence at the bar; in short, he may be put down as one of the most successful and astute advocates in Louisiana. He was a member of the State Convention of 1879, in which he took a high stand as a debater, and evinced rare qualities of sound statesmanship.

Walter Guion, Esq., of Assumption, also for the defense, is a young lawyer, who to all appearances is physically rather delicate. The war materially interfered with his academic education and like many courageous young men of wealthy parents when found at the close of the war cast upon their own exertions, he obtained an honorable situation with that model clerk, Judge Alfred Tate, now the competent Sheriff of Assumption. While thus employed he devoted his leisure hours to the study of law under the direction of his brother-in-law, Gen. F. T. Nicholls. He is not an orator in the common acceptance of that term, lacking many of the requisite to constitute one. His command of language is excellent, never wanting for the right word to express his thoughts; but his voice, while distinct at close quarters, has a plaintive, mournful sound. His manner, however, is solemnly earnest and his methodically prepared arguments are direct, logical and marked with deep research.

Mr. Verrier, the affiant, is a small, well preserved Frenchman, aged about 60 years, has grey hair, black and ferocious moustache. He is a gunsmith by trade and has enjoyed a good reputation in Thibodaux, where he has resided for the past fifteen years. He is reported to be in good pecuniary circumstances.

Octavie Devillat is a young school girl of medium size, passably good looking, and appeared in court neatly attired in light colored summer garments and jaunty straw hat gaily trimmed with bright ribbons. I was not very favorably impressed with the expression of her countenance. It indicated a certain degree of effrontery not exactly in consonance with what my old school-mate was wont to set down for my copy. "Modesty is a quality that highly adorns a woman." She evinced a fair share of intelligence in her examination, and to the delicate questions propounded by Mr. O'Sullivan in the purest French by this accomplished linguist, answered readily and without the least timidity. To me, she appeared as perfectly versed in the matter under investigation as the District Attorney.

Olivia Devillat the younger sister, aged about ten years, attracted my tenderest sympathy and esteem at first glance, as I gazed upon her bright, intelligent and truthful dark eyes. Of the two, I would have attached more credence to her testimony judging from a physiognomic standpoint.

Of the trial and its incidents I will only render an account of such statements as bear directly and substantially upon the merits of this deplorable affair, for so I consider it to be in any civilized community, it matters not as to its judicial fermentation. The State rested mainly upon the testimony of Verrier, the two Devillat girls and such other circumstantial occurrences as could be legally invoked in its behalf. The District Attorney commenced with Verrier, who simply recited the revelations made to him by his niece, but admitted on cross-examination that his first intention, on being apprised of the misconduct and his reverence was to seek Véniat and

kill him upon the spot. Upon consultation, however, with other friends, he sought the legal advice of Thomas Badaeux, Esq., a young Thibodaux attorney. After having advised with Mr. Badaeux, whether with the advice and consent of his counsel, Monsieur Verrier attempted to heal the wounded honor of his niece by proposing to Father Véniat that he would abandon the shotgun policy provided his reverence would pay \$8000 cash; \$5000 drawing 10 per cent. interest, secured by mortgage on real estate, the annual interest of which was to be applied to the maintenance of the establishment of the elder niece. This proposition of Verrier was indignantly declined by Father Véniat, Lawyer Badaeux was correct in his advice to Verrier, to the effect that the surest way by which he could secure the punctual payment of the annual stipulated interest to provide for the support of the present and accidental future, was by first mortgaging on unimproved real property. His concise and lucid written statement to the court went very far, but not conclusively toward establishing a case of blackmail. Some comments upon the strong corroborating evidence of Mr. Badaeux, whose unsullied reputation as a lawyer, citizen and high-minded, honorable man, virtually exonerated Father Véniat. It was asserted that as all business affairs confided by client to lawyer are deemed sacred and privileged, Badaeux should not have disclosed any conversation thus held between him and Verrier; but where the life of a man depends upon the refusal of a lawyer to make disclosures, as in this instance, I am free to confess that Mr. Badaeux is not amenable to the slightest reprehension.

The elder Devillat girl minutely delineated every circumstance of her seduction with such precision of manner, calm narration and directness of statement as led to the conclusion that she had set down nothing in malice nor did she anything extenuate. She furthermore exposed the alleged wrongs committed by the Father against her sister. Then came the younger sister Olivia, who flatly contradicted her sister, asserting most emphatically her own innocence and that of the Priest and other pupils in the Convent. This strange and unexpected contradiction was explained by the patriotism of Verrier, who says that the little girl was separated from her uncle Wednesday night, and was sent under the control and influence of the Priests and Nuns, or in other words that she had been tampered with and thus made to state the reverse of what she had previously stated to a reputable citizen of Napoleonville, at whose house she was staying on the Monday and Tuesday preceding the trial. But there is no evidence of her having been subjected to such extraneous and corrupting influences. At this stage of the examination the court considered the State had collapsed from its own inherent weakness, and so notified its representative; but the defense insisted upon its right to introduce the Nuns, Convent pupils and other friends and adherents of the Father, in order to sweep away every doubt as to his guilt. The evidence being naturally favorable to the accused, his counsel submitted the case. Whereupon the District Attorney in a brief, appropriate and eloquent speech yielded up the ghost and a round of applause from the dated partisans of the Rev. Cyrille Véniat, who, with his brother Curates and their allies, proceeded to the Assumption Church to test the merits of the plethoric larier of Father Bonchet and those "old wines in new bottles." In the meanwhile the ill-fated, discomfited girls, with heads bowed down with shame eternal burning on their youthful cheeks, added to the withering stings quivering cruelly into their blasted, hopeless souls, wearily went their way homeward to seek that hither bright, joyous home, but now converted by this overwhelming calamity into a moral dungeon filled to the brim with impenetrable darkness and gloom. Sad and melancholy indeed, is the fate that lies before them!

On the day succeeding the trial, the Father, accompanied by several Priests and a numerous retinue, fully armed and equipped, it is said, took up the line of march for the Holy Land—Labadieville—where it was rumored his advent would be forcibly resisted. This, however, proved unfounded, and the church militant invested Little Grenada without molestation. Hurs a grand festive board was spread, which grained under the weight of viands rich and rare.

The circumstances which surrounded this previous affliction to society at large should have, in my opinion, precluded such ostentatious demonstrations, and, it really seems to me that such solemn occasions should rather be characterized with that gravity and stately dignity commensurate with the serious, painful reflections and baneful effects they are spontaneously calculated to inspire in the minds of an enlightened and thinking community.

Those who participated, under undue excitement no doubt, in these thoughtless proceedings may yet have ample cause to regret their connection with it; for it matters not what may have been the merits or demerits of this unfortunate affair, the lightning scar of odium will forever attach to those involved in the scandal, whether innocent or guilty. But Ivanhoe has returned to the Holy Land, and now challenges the proud knights of Labadieville, where he serenely officiates at St. Philomene to the combat. O tempora! O mores!

KU KLUX.

For sick headache and acid stomach Bally's Saline Aperient will give entire relief.

Evidence that the Dead Sea was once a part of the ocean has been presented to the Paris Academy of Sciences.

Any woman who feels poorly and is full of aches and pains once a month, should not hesitate to use Dr. Drenge's English Female Bitters.

## ADVERTISEMENTS.

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### SAW MILL,

DONALDSONVILLE, LA.,

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### ALL KINDS OF

### Sawed Lumber,

on short notice and at mere advantageous terms than can be obtained elsewhere. With improved machinery and modern facilities, this mill will challenge competition in quantity, quality and cheapness of its work. Those who patronize it once will not fail to recognize the superiority of its advantages. FELIX LABLANC, Proprietor.

### A. ROCH,

### GROCIER,

Renovated from Railroad Avenue to corner of Cheimachon and Atalapha streets, Opposite the Court-House, DONALDSONVILLE LA. Fresh Staple and Family Groceries, etc., at lowest prices.

### City Hotel,

Cor. Railroad Avenue and Iberville Street Donaldsonville, La. P. LEFFREY, - - - Proprietor

The bar is always supplied with the best Wines and Liquors. 1629-ly

### Forget's Restaurant,

No. 107 Customhouse street, bet. Royal and Bourbon, NEW ORLEANS, LA. Meals at All Hours.

ROOMS AND BOARD BY THE DAY, WEEK OR MONTH AT MODERATE PRICES.

### For Sale.

SIX CENTRIFUGALS, German pattern, guaranteed in perfect order, with shafting, pulleys, etc., all complete. To be sold with or without mixer, and in pairs or alternate. Apply to Leads & Co., New Orleans, next Donaldsonville to McCALL BROS.

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### POPULARITY OF

### Alcock's Porous Plasters?

Because they have proved themselves the Best External Remedy ever invented. They will cure asthma, colds, coughs, rheumatism, neuralgia, and any local pains.

Applied to the small of the back they are infallible in Back-Ache, Nervous Debility, and all Kidney troubles; to the pit of the stomach they are a sure cure for Dyspepsia and Liver Complaint.

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### THE LIVER AND ITS FUNCTIONS.

It has become a well established fact that the larger portion of diseases to which the human race is subject, are due to some derangement of the Liver. This organ is the most important. The venous blood, as it returns to the heart, passes through the Liver, and in the passage the impurities are also the secretions of the various organs of the body are eliminated. The Liver is the great excretory organ of the body, and it is the duty of the Liver to get rid of the impurities of the blood, and to secrete the bile, which is the great solvent of the food. If the Liver is diseased, the bile is not secreted, and the impurities of the blood are not eliminated, and the result is a general debility of the system, and a variety of diseases, such as Biliousness, Headache, Indigestion, Constipation, etc.

**PRICKLY ASH BITTERS** is a medicine of pure vegetable origin, and is the only one that will cure Biliousness, Headache, Indigestion, Constipation, etc. It is the only one that will cure the Liver, and it is the only one that will cure the Gall Bladder. It is the only one that will cure the Kidneys, and it is the only one that will cure the Bladder. It is the only one that will cure the Stomach, and it is the only one that will cure the Intestines. It is the only one that will cure the Skin, and it is the only one that will cure the Hair. It is the only one that will cure the Nails, and it is the only one that will cure the Teeth. It is the only one that will cure the Eyes, and it is the only one that will cure the Ears. It is the only one that will cure the Nose, and it is the only one that will cure the Throat. It is the only one that will cure the Lungs, and it is the only one that will cure the Heart. It is the only one that will cure the Brain, and it is the only one that will cure the Spine. It is the only one that will cure the Joints, and it is the only one that will cure the Bones. It is the only one that will cure the Muscles, and it is the only one that will cure the Nerves. It is the only one that will cure the Senses, and it is the only one that will cure the Intellect. It is the only one that will cure the Will, and it is the only one that will cure the Soul. It is the only one that will cure the Body, and it is the only one that will cure the Mind. It is the only one that will cure the Spirit, and it is the only one that will cure the Life. It is the only one that will cure the Death, and it is the only one that will cure the Resurrection.

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On motion, duly seconded, the Council adjourned.

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