THE CRIME OF THE BOULEVARD

BY JULES CLARETIE

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CHAPTER XI.

M. Bernardet was triumphant. He went home to dinner in a jubilant mood. His three little girls, dressed alike, clasped him round the neck, all at the same time, while Mme. Bernardet, always fresh, smiling and gay, held up her face with its soft, round, rosy cheeks to him.

"My little ones," said the officer, "I believe that I have done well, and that my chief will advance me or give me some acknowledgment. I will buy you some bracelets, my dears, if that happens. But it is not the idea of filthy lucre which has urged me on, and I believe that I have certainly made a great stride in judiciary instruction, all owing to my kodak. It would be too long an explanation and perhaps a perfectly useless one. Let us go to dinner. I am as hungry as a wolf."

He ate, truly, with a good appetite, scarcely stopped to tell how the assassin was under lock and key. The man had been measured and had become a number in the collection, always increasing, of accused persons in the catalogue continued each day for the museum of crime.

"Ah! He is not happy," said Bernardet between two spoonfuls of soup. "Not happy, not happy at all. Not happy, and astonished—protesting, moreover, his innocence, as they all do. It is customary."

"But," sweetly asked good little Mme. Bernardet, "what if he is innocent?" And the three little girls, raising their heads, looked at their father as if to repeat their mother's question. The eldest murmured, "Yes, what if mamma is right?"

Bernardet shrugged his shoulders.

"To hear them, if one listened to them, one would believe them all innocent and the crimes would have to commit themselves. If this one is innocent, I shall be astonished as if I should see snow fall in Paris in June. He will have to prove that he is innocent. These things prove themselves. Give me some more soup, Melanie."

As Mme. Bernardet turned a ladleful of hot soup into her husband's plate she softly asked: "Are there no innocent ones condemned? Do you never deceive yourself?" Bernardet did not stop eating. "I cannot say. No one is infallible, no one. The shrewdest deceive themselves; they are sometimes duped, but it is rare, very rare. As well to say that it does not happen—Lesurques, yes (and the three little girls opened wide their large blue eyes as at a play), the Lesurques of the Courier de Lyon, who has made you weep so many times at the theater at Montmartre. One would like to revise his trial to reinstate him, but no one has been able to do it. I have studied his trial. By my faith, I swear, I would condemn him still—Ah, what good soup!"

"But this one today?" asked Mme. Bernardet. "Art thou certain? What is his name?"

"Dantin—Jacques Dantin. Oh, he is a gentleman—a very fine man, elegant indeed—some Bohemian of the upper class, who evidently needed money and who— Rovere had some valuables in his safe. The occasion made the thief, and there it is."

"Papa," interrupted the eldest of the three little girls, "canst thou take us to see the trial when he shall be sworn?"

"That depends. It is not easy. I will try. I will ask. If thou wilt work hard—Oh, dame," said Bernardet, "that will be a drama!"

"I will work hard."

At dessert, after he had taken his coffee, he allowed his three little girls to dip lumps of sugar into his saucer. He threw himself into his easy chair;

"Ah," he said, opening a paper.

he gave a sigh of satisfaction, like a man whose daily, wearisome tasks are behind him, and who is catching a moment's repose.

"Ah," he said, opening a paper which his wife had placed on a table near him, together with a little glass of cordial sent to them by some cousins in Burgundy, "I am going to see what has happened and what these good journalists have invented about the affair in the Boulevard de Clichy. It is true, it is a steeple chase between the reporters and us. Sometimes they win the race in the mornings. At other times when they know nothing—ah! Then they invent, they embroider their histories."

A petroleum lamp lighted the paper which Bernardet unfolded and began to read.

"Let us see what Lutece says."

He suddenly remembered what Paul Rodier had said to him, "Read my journal." This woman in black, found in the province, did she really exist? Had the novelist written a romance in order to follow the example of his friend? He looked over the paper to see if Paul Rodier had collaborated, as his friend had. Bernardet skipped over the headlines and glanced at the theatrical news. "Politics—they are all the same to me—ministerial crisis—nothing new about that. That could as well be published in yesterday's paper as in today's. 'The Crime of the Boulevard de Clichy.' Ah, good! Very good. We shall see." And he began to read. Had Paul Rodier invented all the information to which he had treated the public? What was certain was that the police officer frowned and now gave strict attention to what he was reading, as if weighing the reporter's words.

Rodier had republished the biography of the ex-consul. M. Rovere had been mixed in South America in violent dramas. He was a romantic person, about whom more than the adventure in Buenos Ayres was known. The reporter had gained his information from an Argentina journal, the Prensa, established in Paris, and whose editor, in South America, had visited intimately the French consul.

The appearance of a woman in black, these visits made on fixed dates, as on anniversaries, revealed an intimacy, a relationship perhaps, of the murdered man with that unknown woman. The woman was young, elegant and did not live in Paris. Rodier had set himself to discover her retreat, her name, and perhaps, thanks to her, to unravel the mystery which still enveloped the murder.

"Humph! That is not very precise information," thought the police officer. But it at least awoke Bernardet's curiosity and intelligence. It solved no problem, but it put one. M. de Sartines' famous search for the woman came naturally to Paul Rodier's pen, and he finished the article with some details about Jacques Dantin, the intimate, the only friend of Louis Pierre Rovere, and the reporter, when he had written this, was still ignorant that Dantin was under arrest.

"Tomorrow," said Bernardet to himself, "he will give us Dantin's biography. He tells me nothing new in his report. And yet"— He folded up the paper and laid it on the table, and while sipping his cordial he thought of that mysterious visitor—the woman in black—and told himself that truly the trial must be there. He would see Moniche and his wife again; he would question them; he would make a thorough search.

"But what for? We have the guilty man. It is 100 to 1 that the assassin is behind bars. The woman might be an accomplice."

Then Bernardet, filled with passion for his profession, rather than vanity—this artist in a police sense, this lover of art for art's sake—rubbed his hands and silently applauded himself, because he had insisted, and, as it were, compelled M. Ginory and the doctors to adopt his idea. He, the humble, unknown subofficer, standing back and simply striving to do his duty, had influenced distinguished persons as powerful as magistrates and members of the academy. They had obeyed his suggestion. The little Bernardet felt that he had done a glorious deed. He had experienced a strong conviction, which would not be denied. He had proved that what had been considered only a chimera was a reality. He had accomplished a seeming impossibility. He had evoked the dead man's secret even from the tomb.

"And M. Ginory thinks that it will not help his candidature at the academy! He will wear the green robe, and he will owe it to me. There are others who owe me something too."

With his faculty for believing in his dreams, of seeing his visions appear, realized and living—a faculty which in such a man seemed like the strange hallucination of a poet—Bernardet did not doubt for a moment the reality of this phantom which had appeared in the retina of the eye. It was nothing more, that eye removed by the surgeon's scalpel, than an avenging mirror. It accused; it overwhelmed. Jacques Dantin was found there in all the atrocity of his crime.

"When I think, when I think that they did not wish to try the experiment! It is made now," thought Bernardet.

M. Ginory had strongly recommended that all that part of the examination should not be made public. Absolute silence was necessary. If the press could have obtained the slightest information, every detail of the experiment would have become public property, and the account would have been embellished and made as fantastic as possible. This would have been a deep mine for Edgar A. Poe, who would have worked that lode well and made the Parisians shudder. How the ink would have been mixed with Rovere's blood! It was well understood that if the suspected man would in the end confess his guilt the result of the singular scientifically incredible experiment should be made known, but until then absolute silence. Everything which had been said and done around the dissecting table at the morgue or in the examining magistrate's room would remain a secret.

But would Dantin confess?

The next day after M. Ginory had put him under arrest Bernardet had gone to the palais for news. He wished to consult his chief about the "woman in black," to ask him what he thought of the article which had been published in the paper by Paul Rodier. M. Leriche attached no great importance to it.

"A reporter's information. Very vague. There is always a woman, parbleu, in the life of every man. But did this one know Dantin? She seems to me simply an old, abandoned friend, and who came occasionally to ask aid of the old boy"—

"The woman noticed by Moniche is young," said Bernardet.

"Abandoned friends are often young," M. Leriche replied, visibly enchanted with his observation.

As for Dantin, he still maintained his obstinate silence. He persisted in finding iniquitous an arrest for which there was no motive, and he kept the haughty, almost provoking attitude of those whom the chief called the greatest culprits.

"Murderers in redingotes believe that they have sprung from Jupiter's thigh and will not admit that any one should be arrested except those who wear smocks and peaked hats. They believe in an aristocracy and its privileges and threaten to have us removed. You know that very well, Bernardet. Then, as time passes, they become, in a measure, calm and meek as little lambs; then they whimper and confess. Dantin will do as all the others have done. For the moment he howls about his innocence and will threaten us, you will see, with a summons from the chamber. That is of no importance."

The chief then gave the officer some instructions. He need not trouble himself any more just now about the Dantin affair, but attend to another matter of less importance, a trivial affair. After the murder and his experiences at the morgue this matter seemed a low one to Bernardet. But each duty has its antithesis. The police officer put into this petty affair of a theft the same zeal, the same sharp attention, with which he had investigated the crime of the Boulevard de Clichy. It was his profession.

Bernardet started out on his quest. It was near the Halles (markets) that he had to work this time. The suspected man was probably one of the rascals who prowl about day and night, living on adventures, and without any home; sleeping under bridges or in one of the hovels on the outskirts of the Rue de Venise, where vice, distress and crime flourished.

Bernardet first questioned the owner of the stolen property, obtained all the information which he could about the suspected man, and, with his keen scent for a criminal aroused, he glanced at anything—men, things, objects that would have escaped a less practiced eye. He was walking slowly along toward the Permanence, looking keenly at the passersby, the articles in the shops, the various movements in the streets, to see if he could get a hint upon which to work.

It was his habit to thus make use of his walks. In a promenade he had more than once met a client, past or future. The boys fled before his piercing eyes, before this fat, jolly little man with the mocking smile which showed under his red mustache. This bright which he inspired made him laugh inwardly. He knew that he was respected, that he was feared. Among all these passersby who jostled him without knowing that he was watching them he was a power, an unknown but sovereign power. He walked along with short, quick steps and watchful eyes, very much preoccupied with this affair, thinking of the worthless person for whom he was seeking, but he stopped occasionally to look at the wares spread out in some bric-a-brac shop or in some book-store window. This also was his habit and his method. He ran his eye over the illustrated papers lying in a row in front, over the socialistic placards, the songbooks. He kept himself an courant with everything which was thought, seen, proclaimed and sung.

"When one governs," thought Bernardet, "one ought to have the habit of going afoot in the street. One can learn nothing from the depths of a coupe driven by a coachman wearing a tricolored cockade." He was going to the prefecture, the Permanence, when in the Rue des Bons-Enfants he was instinctively attracted to a shop window where rusty old arms, tattered uniforms, worn shakos, garments without value, smoky pictures, yellowed engravings and chance ornaments, rare old copies of books, old romances, ancient books with eaten bindings, a mass of dissimilar objects—lost keys, belt buckles, abolished medals, battered sous—were mixed together in an oblong space as in a sort of trough.

On either side of this shop window hung some soiled uniforms, a zouave's vest, an academician's old habit, lugubrious with its embroideries of green, a soiled costume which had been worn by some Pierrot at the carnival. It was, in all its sad irony, the vulgar "hand me down that!" which makes one think of that other morgue where the clothing has been rejected by the living or abandoned by the dead.

Bernardet was neither of a melancholy temperament nor a dreamer, and he did not give much time to the tearful side of the question, but he was possessed of a ravenous curiosity, and the sight, however frequent, of that shop window always attracted him. With, moreover, that sort of magnetism which the searchers, great or small, intuitively feel—a collector of knickknacks, discoverers of unknown countries, bookworms bent over the volumes at 4 sous apiece, or chemists crouched over a retort—Bernardet had been suddenly attracted by a portrait, exposed as an object rarer than the others, in the midst of this detritus of abandoned luxury or of past military glory.

Yes, among the tobacco boxes, the belt buckle, the Turkish poniard, watches with broken cases, commonplace Japanese ornaments, a painting, oval in form, lay there—a sort of large medallion without a frame, and at first sight, by a singular attraction, it drew and held the attention of the police officer.

"Ah!" said Bernardet out loud, "but this is singular."

He leaned forward until his nose touched the cold glass and peered fixedly at the picture. This painting, as large as one's hand, was the portrait of a man, and Bernardet fully believed at the first look he recognized the person whom the painter had reproduced.

As his shadow fell across the window Bernardet could not distinctly see the painting, for it was not directly in the front line of articles displayed, and he stepped to one side to see if he could get a better view. Assuredly, there could be no doubt, the oval painting was certainly the portrait of Jacques Dantin, now accused of a crime. There was the same high forehead, the pointed beard, of the same color; the black redingote, tightly buttoned up and edged at the neck with the narrow line of a white linen collar, giving, in resembling a doublet, to this painting, the air of a trooper, of a swordsman, of a Guisard (a partisan of the Duke of Guise), of the time of Clouet.

Something of a connoisseur in painting, without doubt, in his quality of amateur photographer, much accustomed to criticise a portrait if it were not a perfect likeness, Bernardet found in this picture a startling resemblance to Jacques Dantin. It was the very man himself. He appeared there, his thin face standing out from its greenish black somber background; the poise of the head displayed the same vigor as in the original; the clear cut features looked energetic, and the skin had the same pallor which was characteristic of Dantin's complexion. This head, admirably painted, displayed an astonishing life-like intensity. It had been done by a master hand, no doubt of that, and although in this portrait Jacques Dantin looked somewhat younger—for instance, the hair and pointed beard showed no silvery streaks in them—the resemblance was so marvelous that Bernardet immediately exclaimed, "It is he!"

And most certainly it was Jacques Dantin himself. The more the officer examined it the more convinced he became that this was a portrait of the man whom he had accompanied to the cemetery and to prison. But how could this picture have come into this bric-a-brac shop, and of whom could the dealer have obtained it? A reply to this would probably not be very difficult to obtain, and the police officer pushed back the door and found himself in the presence of a very large woman, with a pale, puffy face, which was surrounded by a lace cap. Her huge body was enveloped in a knitted woolen shawl. She wore spectacles.

CHAPTER XII.

Bernardet, without stopping to salute her, pointed out the portrait and asked to see it. When he held it in his hands he found the resemblance still more startling. It was certainly Jacques Dantin. The painting was signed "P. B., Bordeaux, 1871." It was oval in shape; the frame was gone; the edge was marked, scratched, marred, as if the frame had been roughly torn from the picture.

"Have you had this portrait a long time?" he asked of the shopwoman.

"I put it in the window today for the first time," the huge woman answered. "Oh, it is a choice bit! It was painted by a wicked one."

"Who brought it here?"

"Some one who wished to sell it—a passerby. If it would interest you to know his name"—

"Yes, certainly it would interest me to know it," Bernardet replied.

The shopwoman looked at Bernardet defiantly and asked this question:

"Do you know the man whose portrait that is?"

"No. I do not know him. But this resembles one of my relatives. It pleases me. How much is it?"

"A hundred francs," said the big woman.

Bernardet suppressed at the same time a sudden start and a smile.

"A hundred francs! Diable! How fast you go! It is worth sous rather than francs."

"That!" cried the woman, very indignant. "That! But look at this material, this background. It is famous, I tell you. I took it to an expert. At the public sale it might perhaps bring 1,000 francs. My idea is that it is the picture of some renowned person, an actor or a former minister—in fact, some historic person."

"But one must take one's chance," Bernardet replied in a jeering tone. "But 100 francs is 100 francs. Too much for me. Who sold you the painting?"

The woman went around behind the counter and opened a drawer, from which she took a notebook, in which she kept a daily record of her sales. She turned over the leaves.

"Nov. 12, a small oval painting bought"— She readjusted her spectacles as if to better decipher the name.

"I did not write the name myself. The man wrote it himself." She spelled out:

"Charles—Charles Breton, Rue de la Condamine, 16"—

"Charles Breton," Bernardet repeated. "Who is this Charles Breton? I would like to know if he painted this portrait, which seems like a family portrait, and has come to sell it"—

"You know," interrupted the woman, "that that often happens. It is business. One buys or one sells all in good time."

"And this Breton, how old was he?"

"Oh, young. About 30 years old. Very good looking. Dark, with a full beard."

"Did anything about him especially strike you?"

"Nothing!" the woman shortly replied. She had become tired of these questions and looked at the little man with a troubled glance.

Bernardet readily understood, and, assuming a paternal, a beaming air, he said with his sweet smile:

"I will not fence any more. I will tell you the truth. I am a police inspector, and I find that this portrait strangely resembles a man whom we have under lock and key. You understand that it is very important that I should know all that is to be ascertained about this picture."

"But I have told you all I know, monsieur," said the shopkeeper. "Charles Breton, Rue de la Condamine, 16—that is the name and address. I paid 20 francs for it. There is the receipt. Read it. I beg. It is all right. We keep a good shop. Never have we, my late husband and I, been mixed with anything unlawful. Sometimes the bric-a-brac is soiled, but our hands and consciences have always been clean. Ask any one along the street about the Widow Colard. I owe no one, and every one esteems me"—

The Widow Colard would have gone on indefinitely if Bernardet had not

"You know," interrupted the woman, "that that often happens."

stopped her. She had, at first mention of the police, suddenly turned pale, but now she was very red, and her anger displayed itself in a torrent of words. He stemmed the flood of verbs.

"I do not accuse you, Mme. Colard, and I have said only what I wished to say. I passed by chance your shop. I saw in the window a portrait which resembled some one I know. I ask you the price, and I question you about its advent into your shop. There is nothing there which concerns you personally. I do not suspect you of receiving stolen goods. I do not doubt your good faith. I repeat my question. How much do you want for this picture?"

"Twenty francs, if you please. That is what it cost me. I do not wish to have it draw me into anything troublesome. Take it for nothing, if that pleases you."

"Not at all. I intend to pay you. Of what are you thinking, Mme. Colard?"

The shopwoman had, like all people of a certain class, a horror of the police. The presence of a police inspector in her house seemed at once a dishonor and a menace. She felt herself vaguely under suspicion, and she felt an impulse to shout aloud her innocence.

Always smiling, the good man, with a gesture like that of a prelate blessing his people, endeavored to reassure her, to calm her. But he could do nothing with her. She would not be appeased. In the long run this was perhaps as well, for she unconsciously, without any intention of aiding justice, put some clews into Bernardet's hands which finally aided him in tracing the man.

Mme. Colard still rebelled. Did they think she was a spy, an informer? She had never—no, never—played such a part. She did not know the young man. She had bought the picture as she bought any number of things.

"And what if they should cut off his head because he had confidence in entering my shop? I should never forgive myself, never."

"It is not going to bring Charles Breton to the scaffold. Not at all, not at all. It is only to find out who he is, and of whom he obtained this portrait. Once more, did nothing in his face strike you?"

"Nothing," Mme. Colard responded. She reflected a moment.

"Ah, yes, perhaps. The shape of his hat. A felt hat with wide brim, something like those worn in South America or Kareros. You know, the kind they call sombrero. The only thing I said to myself was, 'This is probably some returned traveler,' and if I had not seen at the bottom of the picture Bordeaux I should have thought that this might be the portrait of some Spaniard, some Peruvian."

Bernardet looked straight into Mme. Colard's spectacles and listened intently, and he suddenly remembered what Moniche had said of the odd appearance of the man who had, like the woman in black, called on M. Rovere.

"Some accomplice," thought Bernardet.

He again asked Mme. Colard the price of the picture.

"Anything you please," said the woman, still frightened. Bernardet smiled.

"Come, come! What do you want for it? Fifty francs, eh? Fifty?"

"Away with your 50 francs! I place it at your disposal for nothing if you need it."

Bernardet paid the sum he had named. He had always exactly, as if by principle, a 50 franc note in his pocketbook. Very little money—a few white pieces—but always this note in reserve. One could never tell what might hinder him in his researches. He paid, then, this note, adding that in all probability Mme. Colard would soon be cited before the examining magistrate to tell him about this Charles Breton.

"I cannot say anything else, for I do not know anything else," said the huge widow, whose breast heaved with emotion.

She wrapped up the picture in a piece of silk paper, then in a piece of newspaper, which chanced to be the very one in which Paul Rovere had published his famous article on "The Crime of the Boulevard de Clichy." Bernardet left enchanted with his "find" and repeated over and over to himself: "It is very precious. It is a tidbit."

Should he keep on toward the prefecture to show this "find" to his chief, or should he go at once to hunt up Charles Breton at the address he had given?

Bernardet hesitated a moment; then he said to himself that in a case like this moments were precious; an hour lost was time wasted, and that as the address which Breton had given was not far away he would go there first. "Rue de la Condamine, 16"—that was only a short walk to such a tramper as he was. He had good feet, a sharp eye and sturdy legs. He would soon be at the Batignolles. He had taken some famous tramps in his time, notably one night when he had scoured Paris in pursuit of a malefactor. This, he admitted, had wearied him a little, but this walk from the Avenue des Bons-Enfants to the Rue de la Condamine was but a spurt. Would he find that a false name and a false address had been given? This was but the infancy of art. If, however, he found that this Charles Breton really did live at that address and that he had given his true name, it would probably be a very simple matter to obtain all the information he desired of Jacques Dantin.

"What do I risk? A short walk," thought Bernardet, "a little fatigue. That can be charged up to profit and loss."

He hurried toward the street and number given. It was a large house, several stories high. The concierge was sweeping the stairs, having left a card bearing this inscription tacked on the front door: "The porter is on the staircase." Bernardet hastened up the stairs, found the man and questioned him. There was no Charles Breton in the house; there never had been. The man who sold the portrait had given a false name and address. Vainly did the police officer describe the individual who had visited Mme. Colard's shop. The man insisted that he had never seen any one who in the least resembled this toreador in the big felt hat. It was useless to insist! Mme. Colard had been deceived. And now how to find in this immense city of Paris this bird of passage who had chanced to enter the bric-a-brac shop. The old adage of "the needle in the haystack" came to Bernardet's mind and greatly irritated him. But, after all, there had been others whom he had looked for, there had been others whom he had found, and probably he might still be able to find another trail. He had a collaborator who seldom failed him—chance! It was destiny which often aided him.

Bernardet took an omnibus in his haste to return to his chief. He was anxious to show his "find" to M. Leriche. When he reached the prefecture, he was immediately received. He unwrapped the portrait and showed it to M. Leriche.

"But that is Dantin!" cried the chief. "Is it not?"

"Without doubt! Dantin when younger, but assuredly Dantin! And where did you dig this up?"

Bernardet related his conversation with Mme. Colard and his fruitless visit to the Rue de la Condamine.

"Oh, never mind," said M. Leriche. "This discovery is something. The man who sold this picture and Dantin are accomplices. Bravo, Bernardet! We must let M. Ginory know."

The examining magistrate was, like the chief and Bernardet, struck with the resemblance of the portrait to Dantin. His first move would be to question the prisoner about the picture. He would go at once to Mazas. M. Leriche and Bernardet might accompany him. The presence of the police spy might be useful, even necessary.

The magistrate and the chief entered a fiacre, while Bernardet mounted beside the driver. Bernardet said nothing, although the man tried to obtain some information from him. After one or two monosyllable answers the driver mockingly asked:

"Are you going to the souriciere (trap) to tease some fat rat?"

M. Ginory and M. Leriche talked together of the Valkyrie, of Bayreuth,

"It is my portrait," Jacques Dantin declared.

and the chief asked, through politeness, for news about his candidature to the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences.

"Do not let us talk of the institute," the magistrate replied. "It is like the beginning of a hunt to sigh for the prize that brings unhappiness."

The somber pile, the Mazas, opened its doors to the three men. They traversed the long corridors, with the heavy air which pervaded them in spite of all efforts to the contrary, to a small room, sparsely furnished (a table, a few chairs, a glass bookcase), which served as an office for the examining magistrates when they had to hold any interviews with the prisoners.

The guardian in chief walked along with M. Ginory; M. Leriche followed them, and Bernardet respectfully brought up the rear.

"Bring in Jacques Dantin," M. Ginory ordered. He seated himself at the table. M. Leriche took a chair at one side, and Bernardet stood near the little bookcase, which was next the only window in the room.

Jacques Dantin soon appeared, led in by two guards in uniform. He was very pale, but still retained his haughty air and his defiant attitude. The magistrate saluted him with a slight movement of the head, and Dantin bowed, recognizing in Bernardet the man with whom he had walked and conversed behind Rovere's funeral car.

"Be seated, Dantin," M. Ginory said, "and explain to me, I beg, all you know about this portrait. You ought to recognize it."

He quickly held the picture before Dantin's eyes, wishing to scrutinize his face to see what sudden emotion it would display. Seeing the portrait, Dantin shivered and said in a short tone, "It is a picture which I gave to Rovere."

"Ah," said M. Ginory, "you recognize it then?"

"It is my portrait," Jacques Dantin declared. "It was made a long time ago. Rovere kept it in his salon. How did it come here?"

"Ah!" again said the magistrate. "Explain that to me!"

M. Ginory seemed to wish to be a little ironical. But Dantin roughly said:

"M. le Juge, I have nothing to explain to you. I understand nothing. I know nothing. Or, rather, I know that in your error—an error which you will bitterly regret some day or other, I am sure—you have arrested me, shut me up in Mazas, but that which I can assure you of is that I have had nothing—do you hear, nothing—whatever to do with the murder of my friend, and I protest with all my powers against your processes."

"I comprehend that," M. Ginory coldly replied. "Oh, I understand all the disagreeableness of being shut up within four walls. But then it is very simple. In order to go out one has only to give to the one who has a right to know the explanations which are asked. Do you still persist in your system? Do you still insist on keeping I know not what secret, which you will not reveal to us?"

"I shall keep it, monsieur. I have reflected," said Dantin. "Yes, I have reflected, and in the solitude to which you have forced me I have examined my conscience." He spoke with firmness, less violently than at the Palais de Justice, and Bernardet's penetrating little eyes never left his face; neither did the magistrate's nor the chief's.

"I am persuaded," Dantin continued, "that this miserable mistake cannot last long and you will recognize the truth. I shall go out, at least from here, without having abused a confidence which one has placed in me and which I intend to preserve."

"Yes," said M. Ginory, "perfectly. I know your system. You will hold to it. It is well. Now, whose portrait is that?"

"It is mine!"

"By whom do you think it was possible that it could have been sold in the bric-a-brac shop where it was found?"

"I know nothing about it. Probably by the one who found it or stole it from M. Rovere's apartment and who is probably, without the least doubt, his assassin."

"That seems very simple to you?"

"It seems very logical."

"Suppose that this should be the exact truth, that does not detract from the presumption which implicates you and from Mme. Moniche's deposition, which charges you"—

"Yes, yes, I know—the open safe, the papers spread out, the tete-a-tete with Rovere, when the concierge entered the room—that signifies nothing."

"For you perhaps. For justice it has a tragic signification. But let us return to the portrait. It was you, I suppose, who gave it to Rovere?"

"Yes, it was I," Dantin responded. "Rovere was an amateur in art; moreover, my intimate friend. I had no family. I had an old friend, a companion of my youth whom I thought would highly prize that painting. It is a fine one—it is by Paul Baudry."

"Ah!" said M. Ginory. "P. B.—those are Baudry's initials?"

"Certainly. After the war, when I had done my duty like others—I say this without any intention of defending myself—Paul Baudry was at Bordeaux. He was painting some portraits on panels, after Holbein—Edmond About's among others. He made mine. It is this one which I gave Rovere—the one you hold in your hands."

The magistrate looked at the small oval painting, and M. Leriche put on his eyeglasses to examine the quality of the painting. A Baudry!

"What are these scratches around the edge as if nails had been drawn across the places?" M. Ginory asked. He held out the portrait to Dantin.

"I do not know. Probably where the frame was taken off."

"No, no! They are rough marks. I can see that. The picture has been literally torn from the frame. You ought to know how this panel was framed."

"Very simply when I gave it to Rovere. A narrow gilt frame, nothing more."

"Had Rovere changed the frame?"

"I do not know. I do not remember. When I was at his apartment the last few times, I do not remember to have seen the Baudry. I have thought of it, but I have no recollection of it."

"Then you cannot furnish any information about the man who sold this portrait?"

"None whatever!"

"We might bring you face to face with that woman."

"So be it! She certainly would not recognize me."

"In any case, she will tell us about the man who brought the portrait to her."

"She might describe him to me accurately, and even paint him for me," said Dantin quickly. "She can neither insinuate that I know him nor prove to you that I am his accomplice. I do not know who he is or from where he comes. I was even ignorant of his existence myself a quarter of an hour ago."

"I have only to remand you to your cell," said the magistrate. "We will hunt for the other man."

Dantin, in his turn, said in an ironical tone, "And you will do well!"

M. Ginory made a sign. The guards led out their prisoner. Then, looking at the chief, while Bernardet still remained standing like a soldier near the window, the magistrate said:

"Until there are new developments, Dantin will say nothing. We must look for the man in the sombrero."

"Necessarily!" said M. Leriche.

"The needle! The needle! And the haystack!" thought Bernardet.

The chief, smiling, turned toward him. "That belongs to you, Bernardet."

"I know it well," said the little man, "but it is not easy. Oh! It is not easy at all."

"Bah. You have unearthed more difficult things than that. Do it up brown. There is only one clew—the hat"—

"They are not uncommon, those hats, M. Leriche. They are not very bad hats. But yet it is a clew. If we live, we shall see."

He stood motionless between the bookcase and the window, like a soldier carrying arms, while M. Ginory, shak-

The chief, smiling, turned toward him

ing his head, said to the chief, "And this Dantin—what impression did he make on you?"

"He is a little crack brained," replied the chief.

"Certainly. But guilty—you believe him guilty?"

"Without doubt."

"Would you condemn him?" he quickly asked as he gazed searchingly at the chief. M. Leriche hesitated.

"Would you condemn him?" M. Ginory repeated insistently.

The chief still hesitated a moment, glanced toward the impassive Bernardet, without being able to read his face, and he said:

"I do not know."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

"Bixley is one of the most grasping men I ever saw. He is always reaching out after things that he has no right to."

"I know it. He isn't satisfied to remain in his own channel. He first started in the dry goods business, then he got to selling shoes; next thing we knew he was handling jewelry; now he has added art to his stock, and nobody knows what he will want to grasp at next."

"Yes, and the other morning I came down town in the same car with him. Just before we reached the crossing where he always gets off a beautiful young lady got aboard. I was going to offer her my seat but what did Bixley do? He jumped up, took off his hat, bowed, got a bewitching smile from her, and then rode a block farther than he intended to go, just to make her believe that he had accommodated her. We've no use for a fellow of that kind!"—Cleveland Leader.

Bamboo Curtains.

"I noticed such a sweet decorative idea in this street yesterday," said a lady visitor to a New Orleans friend while taking a trolley ride near the French market. "It was a house," she continued, "hung at all the second and third story windows with little yellow bamboo curtains. They were perfectly plain and all the same shade, but I have no idea how they set off the place. Why, they simply glorified it!"

"Hu—m—m," mused her friend. "I don't recall the house. Just point it out as we go by, will you?"

Presently the visitor uttered an exclamation. "There it is!" she cried. "The house of the bamboo curtains! I'm sure a colony of artists must live there!"

"A colony of Italians," corrected her friend grimly. "That's not bamboo. It's a spaghetti foundry. They hang the stuff out there to dry."—New Orleans Times-Democrat.

McKINLEY'S HOME LIFE

The President Enjoys the Society of Young People.

DEVOTED TO HIS OLD FRIENDS.

Politics Has Not Destroyed His Faith In Human Nature—Colonel Carey to Be Paymaster General—What It Costs to Live In the Klondike.

WASHINGTON, Jan. 26.—(Special.)—The president is full of sentiment, that good home sentiment which people rather admire and which appeals to those who come in contact with him. Mr. McKinley likes the places with which he is familiar and the men he has known a long time. He likes his old friends and familiar scenes. When he went back to Canton, after having been governor of Ohio, he sought and obtained the same house he previously occupied there. He wanted to make his presidential campaign from that house. When he came to Washington to be inaugurated, he sought and obtained the same rooms he had occupied when he was a member of congress. His friends since he has been president are his old friends, those he made in congress. To a large extent that is true of his newspaper friends. Those who were not well acquainted with him when he was in congress now have considerable difficulty in getting close to him. He enjoys family pictures and sketches of the homes of ancestors and relatives. The president keeps his holidays for his family, and his anniversaries are remembered and kept with great care. The wedding day, the birthdays of both Mrs. McKinley and himself, are never neglected. They are as much a part of his home life as they are of any family in the land. He likes to have young people about the White House, and always has some among its guests. A dinner and dancing party especially for the young people was one of the features of the social season this year.

Has Grown With Him.

The president is a man whose blood runs warm. Most people, and perhaps every one, has felt a thrill on hearing a grand theme or patriotic sentiment. Mr. McKinley is one of those who feel such thrills more frequently than the average man. The sentiment he possesses has not waned as he has grown older, but has grown with him. He has nothing blase about him. Life has not palled upon him nor dimmed the spirit of buoyancy which has been one of his chief characteristics. Practical politics and the ups and downs of life have not destroyed his confidence in human nature nor his friendship for his fellow men. His home life is one of the most tender and beautiful manifestations of a strong man's undying and devoted love for woman, of a husband's anxious and cheerful care of a wife, which has ever come to notice in public life in Washington.

Some Brigadier Generals.

Senator Elkins of West Virginia is making an effort to secure the appointment of Colonel Asa B. Carey as paymaster general. Senator Elkins knew Colonel Carey a great many years ago in New Mexico when the senator was practicing law and the colonel had just been made a major and paymaster after a brilliant campaign in New Mexico. It is quite an interesting fact that a number of the men who were stationed at Santa Fe back in 1865 have risen to considerable prominence in the army. Senator Elkins became secretary of war, W. B. Rochester paymaster general, W. H. Bell commissary general, M. I. Ludington quartermaster general, and the prospects are that Colonel Carey will be made paymaster general. Senator Elkins thinks that this is quite a good record for one post—a secretary of war and four brigadier generals. If Colonel Carey is appointed, he will have to be jumped over the senior colonel, M. W. Glenn, but in case this is done the probabilities are that Colonel Carey will immediately retire and Glenn become the paymaster general for the next two years. Colonel Carey made his record in New Mexico in 1863, being then a young officer in command of a company of regular troops. The Texans of the Confederate army had invaded New Mexico and were driving the Federal troops back very fast. Carey secured permission from the commanding officer to go across the mountains and take the camp of the Texans and was successful in burning up all the ammunition, tents, commissary and quartermaster stores, so that the Texans had nothing left. They were obliged to retreat from New Mexico.

Colonel Carey's Son.

Another interesting story which is told of the Carey family relates to the colonel's son, Edward. In the Santa Fe days Mr. Elkins met Carey by the old adobe barracks, and the army man was smiling all over. In reply to a question he said, "Elkins, I have got the finest boy that was ever born in Santa Fe; no mistake about that." Said Mr. Elkins: "Now, Carey, I will tell you what we'll do. When that boy is old enough, we will send him to West Point and make a great army officer of him." The boy was sent to West Point, and when Mr. Elkins was secretary of war the young man was in West Point and nearly ready to graduate. He became a lieutenant in the Nineteenth infantry and did great work at San Juan hill. All of the other officers of his company were killed or wounded, and he took charge of the command and led them into the fight. For two or three days it was supposed that he also had been killed, but he came out unhurt. "And it is a pretty good record for a boy," said Senator Elkins.

Congressional Notes.

A letter recently received by a senator from a relative in Dawson City shows what the prices are in the Klondike and tells quite a story in itself. The letter says: "Butter is $2 a pound, sugar 75 cents a pound, oatmeal and cornmeal are 30 cents a pound, flour $50 per sack (50 pounds) and milk $1 per can. I can make bread now that is No. 1. When the cookbook says lard, we use bacon grease; milk, use water, but then we get along pretty well and don't live entirely on bacon and beans either."

Some of the members of congress who have been defeated are asked by their personal friends in the house as to the cause of their defeat after condolences have been exchanged. Generally the next inquiry is, "What kind of a man is coming in your place?" Sometimes the answer is to the disparagement of the man, other times his good qualities are pointed out without rancor or bitterness. A western member was asked this question the other day and replied: "Oh, he's a good enough fellow. If they will just raise the dome of the capitol a little and move a few stars out of the way, he will get along all right."

ARTHUR W. DUNN.

SOMETHING LACKING.

Miss Thinn—"Jack told me last night that my neck was like a column."

Miss Fatt—"Yes, dear, he probably meant a want column."—Life.

General Lew Wallace's publishers have told him that more copies of "Ben Hur" have been sold than of any other book ever published in this country.

The smallest things may exert the greatest influence. DeWitt's Little Early Risers are unequalled for overcoming constipation and liver troubles. Small pill, best pill, safe pill.

J. W. O'Sullivan, W. P. Hall, F. Henry Parker, City Drug Store, E. Gosselin, and E. R. Crandall, Wincoski.