

## *A Felon Hunt*

A few days subsequent to the mournful catastrophe recorded in the last paper; whilst our hearts still vibrated with cruel regrets, which the fate of poor Laboudie would have excited in the flintiest natures, my comrades and I caught an echo—a doubtful, confused one—through the resonant police-meshes, carefully arranged, and wound up by the Lyonese authorities, of the fleeing felon's footsteps. A man, answering precisely to the pen-portrait of Durand, had, it was asserted, arrived in Paris by diligence, but unfortunately some seven or eight hours before that portrait, and otherwise general description, reached the gendarmerie. The fugitive from justice had, it seemed, a very narrow, and, it was hoped, but temporary escape, he having been detained some little time in custody upon suspicion of having robbed a lady, travelling in the coupé, of her purse. As, however, the purse was found where the lady *might* have accidentally dropped it, and the man's passport was, as usual, *en regle*—he travelled as Alexander Querault—he was, as a matter of course, liberated, and when the despatch left Paris, the police had not succeeded in tracing him, nor did they feel at all confident of being able to do so.

This report a Commissaire de Police of Lyons, with whom I was in immediate communication, remarked, was an unsatisfactory one. No date was given of Durand's supposed arrival in Paris, nor was it stated by what diligence he had travelled. There must also have been criminal delay in some quarter, as a full description of the assassin, and other ample details should have reached the capital before the individual detained upon suspicion of robbery would appear to have arrived there. The commissaire doubted, therefore, whether the suggestion of Durand's having sought refuge in Paris, might not be an after-surmise, based upon insufficient grounds. The commissaire might, however, be mistaken upon that point, and I with Cremieux and Marin were directed to proceed with all dispatch to Pont de l'Arche, a village somewhat higher up the Seine than Rouen, and place ourselves in communication with Colonel Cazou, who resided there. The colonel, it was added, was a son of the Professor Cazou, for whose murder Durand had been sentenced to the galleys, and was extremely anxious that his father's assassin should not evade the vengeance of the law. Colonel Cazou had communicated with the Paris Prefecture of Police, as well as with the authorities of Lyons, and would in every possible way assist us to arrest the fugitive.

This last intimation was a pleasant one, meaning as it no question did, that Monsieur Le Colonel Cazou was willing to supply those golden stimulants to zeal and perseverance which in all countries possess such potency.

We did not linger on our way to Pont de l'Arche. Colonel Cazou, an officer, *en disponibilite*, lived, we found, in a handsome place, and was reported to be a man of wealth. *Tant mieux*.

Meanwhile Colonel Cazou, with *brusque*, military frankness and decision, had in a very few minutes said all he had to say; which was not much, touching the grave affair in hand.

His father had been murdered by Durand under circumstances of peculiar atrocity; the assassin (who the colonel incidentally remarked, had never belonged, as he once boasted he did, to the military navy of France,) having received many favours at the hands of his aged victim. The jury who had found attenuating circumstances in the case, were a set of imbeciles, or worse: and he had not a much higher opinion of the mass of the Paris police, industriously as they were for ever

trumpeting their own praises. It was for this reason he, the colonel, had urgently requested the officials of Lyons to follow up the pursuit of the escaped Forçat by special agents of their own selection.

Monsieur le Colonel was polite enough to add that he was pleased with the account he had read of my late exploit, and hoped I and my comrades would be equally successful in the present instance. If caught this time, remarked the colonel, with grim humour, MM. les Jures will hardly dare interpose their absurd formula of “circonstances atténuantes,” between the *scelerat* and the scaffold. This is all I have to say. You will take refreshments before leaving, and here is a slight earnest of the recompense I shall rejoice to present you with as the guerdon of success. One moment. Durand is a native of Chalons-sur-Marne. He is destitute of money, and may have relatives there who will supply him with means and a temporary hiding-hole. The Paris police say that his native town is the last place in the world he would think of fleeing to. That, to my mind, is not so sure. He is an adept in disguises, and might argue that the officers of justice would not, reasoning after their fashion, dream of seeking for him there. *Bon voyage, messieurs*, and fortune, success, attend you. You will, he added, as we were leaving the room, you will, it is understood, personally confer with the Paris police; but I have not much hope in that!

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Neither had I, after my first interview with the officers who had, or who supposed they had, detained Durand upon suspicion of having purloined the lady’s purse. They were not favourable examples of their class, and had the air of men, who, if commissioned to apprehend a fugitive from justice, would ask to be furnished with the name of the street, and the number of the house in which he was to be found.

I could not even satisfy myself from their confused, and in some particulars, contradictory description of the man’s features and person, whether it was, or was not Durand they had held in temporary custody.

It being essential that this preliminary point should be cleared up without delay, I obtained the name of the hotel where the lady, Madame Justin, a stranger in Paris, who had missed the purse, was staying. Her recollection of the man might be more distinct than that of the gendarmes.

Madame Justin referred me to the commissionaire who had attended her from the moment she set foot in the capital. She herself was near-sighted, besides which she never retained a vivid recollection of strange physiognomies. The commissionaire was below, and I might see him at once.

I saw him at once, and quickly satisfied myself that it was really Pierre Durand, that had been suspected of the purse-robbery.

“Have you,” I asked, “seen the man since?”

“Yes, Monsieur. About an hour only, perhaps less, after he had been liberated. I saw him go into a wine-shop in the Rue Bac, and having formed in my own mind very decided conclusions as to

his character and profession, and being also somewhat thirsty, I followed him in—but not, you comprehend—obtrusively.”

“Yes. Well?”

“He asked for some one; the name I forget—and was told that person no longer lodged there, but he could have his address, if he wished. He asked for it, and it was copied for him out of a book.”

“Will you have the kindness to point me out this wine-shop?”

“Certainly, Monsieur. I shall do so with pleasure.”

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“There stands the Garçon who copied the address,” said the commissioner.

“I remember the circumstance perfectly well,” said the Garçon. “I gave the man the present address of a person who once lodged here—Armand Truchet.”

“Truchet! Did you say Truchet?”

“Certainly I said, Truchet,” replied the Garçon, with a stare of surprise at my brusque vehemence; “Armand Truchet—teacher of the violin? There, monsieur, is his address, at your service.”

I thanked the man, and left with the commissioner.

“No. 12, Rue Dobré, *chez le Sieur Jaudron*,” remarked the commissioner. “I happen to have a slight acquaintance with Philippe Jaudron, *ancien soldat de marine*, and a miserly misanthrope to the ends of his nails. Perhaps, Monsieur, I could introduce you to him,” added the sharp-witted commissioner, “in a manner that—that would lull suspicion.”

“You will render me a great service,” I replied, and we agreed upon the form of introduction.

We walked on, and I took out of my pocket the Lyons paper, from which the *Gasette des Tribunaux* had copied the report of the murder in the Rue Mazard. For the first time I observed that the name of Truchet, as being the real name of the murdered woman, did not once occur, and that if this Armand Truchet were really the son, the thought of whom exhaled with her last sigh, he might have read the report without suspecting that Durand’s victim was his own mother. This in a considerable degree weakened the doubt I could not, after all, help entertaining that Armand Truchet, teacher of the violin, could really be that son, as Durand’s recourse to him in his extremity, would else be inexplicable. The assassin had read the journals, and knew he could palm off any fiction upon the son of his unfortunate paramour. Then the previous conference with Jaudron, *miser*, who probably know something of his lodger’s previous history, might, under judicious management solve all doubt, and enable me to decide how I might best engage the son to assist in hunting down the murderer. Ha! ha! The scent was strong upon the trail, and

the red-herring that would draw me off wasn't spawned yet. So mentally crowded the newly-pledged detective officer, his nascent plumes inflated by the self conceit engendered by one solitary success.

Le Sieur Jaudron was at home, and we were ushered into a dark, dreary, half-furnished room, where the sour old crout was sitting in sour, half-starved state. His threadbare redingote was buttoned up to the chin, suggestive of economy in linen, and a medal glittered upon the left breast of the faded garment, received no doubt in recompense of the loss of his right arm.

M. Jaudron recognised the commissioner with a slight, condescending nod; me, he regarded with silent, grim interrogation.

"M. Le Bon," said the commissioner, with a profound salutation, "who is interested in your lodger, M. Armand Truchet."

"Well! and then?"

"I wish to ascertain, M. Jaudron," said I, "if the young man Truchet, lodging with you, is the particular Truchet of whom I am in search, a question you will I hope be able to solve."

"Well! and then?"

The devil take his "well, and then?" I was puzzled for an immediate reply, but presently said, "Much depends, monsieur, upon clearly ascertaining, before proceeding further, whether I am on the right track or not."

"Monsieur Le Bon, recently arrived in Paris, is not the only person interested in Armand Truchet. I, for example, am interested to the extent of eighty-seven francs, fifteen centimes. That, if you please, is a positive interest. Is Monsieur Le Bon's of the same tangible sort?"

"Not precisely. This, in brief," I went on to say, "is the exact situation. If Monsieur Jaudron is in possession of such information as will satisfy me,—and I am well nigh satisfied already,—that the Truchet lodging here is the Truchet whom I seek—if he will favour me with a sketch of the said Truchet's general character, and procure me an interview with him, if he prove to be the right man, concealing from him that Monsieur Jaudron and I have had any previous talk together, I will myself cheerfully pay the eighty-seven francs, fifteen centimes. Permit me to add, that no harm is intended towards Armand Truchet."

"Bon, Monsieur Le Bon, I accept. The proposal offers at least a chance of payment; and else I have none, for the poor devil's very fiddle, I have this morning discovered, is hypothecated at the Mont de Pieté. Commence your interrogatory, monsieur."

"The first question I have to put is a comprehensive one. What do you know of M. Armand Truchet?"

“What do I know of M. Armand Truchet? Well, I positively know that he is a broken down violinist and musician of some talent, whom several weeks’ illness, and his own wretched folly, have reduced to absolute penury; that he has not one franc in the world, and owes me, as I have said, eighty-seven francs, fifteen centimes. *Au reste*, he has told me he was born at Brest, and that his mother, a widow, lives somewhere in that part of France.”

“Born at Brest, and his mother a widow. Good. Does he express affection for his mother!”

“Yes; but that does not cost much, you know. Still let me be just. Armand Truchet, but for the detestable vice of not paying, is not a bad fellow; very far from it; and lately I have heard him express great anxiety about his mother.”

“Do you remember a stranger, a middle-aged man, calling upon your lodger upon such a day? (which I named).

“Do I remember?” exclaimed Jaudron, with sudden heat. “I should think I do remember. That was the rascal that carried off my eighty-seven francs, fifteen centimes!”

“What do you say?”

“*Morbleu*, I say that Scélérat, in less than five minutes, got hold of my money, and made off with it as if a troop of gendarmes were at his heels. I am going to explain. On that very morning an amazing piece of good fortune fell to Truchet. A man called to say that a manuscript song which he had left somewhere for sale, heaven knows how long before, had been at last disposed of for one hundred francs, over and above the charge for commission. Better still, he had brought the money in solid hundred-sous pieces, which I, being with Truchet at the time, saw counted out upon the table. The man gone, Truchet desired me to bring him my *memoire*, at once, receipted. I came down to do so, and was copying it neatly out, when that robber knocked at the door, asked for M. Truchet, and was directed to his room, *au troisieme*. Certainly, not more than five minutes had passed when he came down, and flew off as I have told you.

“*Eh bien*, my *memoire* is made out, receipted, and I, in my turn, ascend to M. Armand Truchet’s apartment. I find him pale as stone, and trembling as with ague in every limb.

“How is this?” I exclaim, startled even more, you comprehend, by observing that the five franc pieces had disappeared from the table, than by Truchet’s agitation. “Where is the money?”

“Gone! every franc! I have given it away.”

“Gone! Given away! Thousand thunders, are you mad!”

“With that he falls to weeping, tearing his hair, prancing about, and gesticulating, exclaiming like a madman. I tell him, severely, that that comedy of cheats does not impose upon me, and that if my money is not immediately forthcoming I send for a Huissier. Well, the end for the time was, that he pledged me his sacred word of honour, that if he did not find means of paying me on such a day, which was yesterday, he would hand me over his violin. To be quite sincere, I must state that that violin, which I knew to be worth at least between two and three hundred francs, had

been the inducement to trust him so far. Ha! What happens? Yesterday, the day of payment arrives, as days of payment will. Truchet goes out early—does not return till I have gone to bed. This morning I present myself, demand payment, or the violin. Bah! He is again in despair!—again weeping, gesticulating, prancing about, grinding his teeth, and the end of all that *blague* is, he confesses that the violin is pawned, and that the money, two hundred francs, are gone after the one hundred francs. He had pledged me his sacred word of honour; at the Mont de Pieté he had pledged something much more valuable—his violin. Conceive, Monsieur, the rage I was in! But hard words, after all, wont coin crown pieces, and I had given up my debt as lost, when Monsieur Le Bon fortunately appears upon the scene, and unless I deceive myself, is so well pleased with the facts I have disclosed, that my eighty-seven francs, fifteen centimes are as good as pouched.”

“Quite, Monsieur Jaudron: here they are. You will afford me an opportunity of seeing M. Armand Truchet.”

“Nothing more simple,” replied Jaudron, as he hastily gathered up the money. “Armand Truchet is within; he lodges, as I have said, *au troisieme*, at the first door on the right. Monsieur has, therefore, but to ascend the stairs, and he is, in a moment, in presence of his friend, or enemy, as the case may be, and which is not the slightest concern of mine.”

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A tall, attenuated young man, with his mother’s decided cast of features; but tempered, softened, partly it might be by sickness, disquietude, poverty, into an almost feminine expression of timidity, and beseechfulness.

My entrance startled him; his wan cheeks burned, his eyes flashed with fear. He bubbled out that he was ready to go with me.

“I am an agent of the criminal, not the civil law, M. Armand Truchet,” said I. “In plainer words, I am an officer of police. You, Monsieur, are accused of a grave crime, which the penal code visits with a terrible penalty.”

“I—I,” he stammered, dropping into a chair, and glaring at me with dilated eyes, “I accused of a grave crime!”

“Yes, you, Monsieur. The great crime of having sheltered, and otherwise assisted, an assassin, well knowing him to be one, and an escaped Forçat, to evade justice. The real name of the escaped Forçat is, as you well know, Durand!”

“Ha!”

The hot sweat stood in thick drops upon Armand Truchet’s forehead, but, by a supreme effort, he rallied himself, sufficiently to ask, in a faint voice, what proof there could be adduced against him. He had, I saw, prepared himself, as well as he could, to meet such an accusation.

“There are abundant proofs. Durand himself called upon you not long since, when you gave him one hundred francs to aid his escape, and you have since forwarded to him about twice that sum, obtained by pledging your violin at the Mont de Pieté.”

The terrified young man threw up his arms, as one might who feels himself to be mortally wounded—lost! then bowed his head, and hid his face in his spread hands, moaning piteously.

“There is one mode, I am instructed to say, by which you may shield yourself from punishment.”

“And that?” he hoarsely murmured, without removing his hands.

“Enabling justice to capture the assassin.”

“I cannot,” was the reply. “More than that,” he added, in a firmer tone, “I would not, if I could.”

“You both can and will, Armand Truchet. Have you had news of your mother lately?”

“What is that you say?” he almost screamed, and bounding to his feet. “News of my mother lately, did you say?”

“News of your mother lately. Of Madame Truchet, Adèle Truchet, who assisted Durand, condemned in another name, to escape from the Bâgne at Brest. I grieve, Armand Truchet, to say that I bring tidings of her—sad, terrible tidings!”

“She is taken! she is in prison!” he murmured, sinking back into the chair. “I expected so.”

“Yes, she is in prison—in the prison of the grave! Sent thither,” I continued, speaking with a passion which remembrance of the bloody deed always excited, and which almost drowned Armand Truchet’s prolonged, spasmodic scream, “Sent thither by Durand, who killed her with his own hand in my presence. Wretched son! you have befriended, perhaps saved from the scaffold your mother’s murderer!”

With impetuous volubility I ran through the history of the affair, with its tragic catastrophe. When I had ended, it was plain that for some time at least I had been talking to deaf ears. Armand Truchet had fainted.

It were needless to transcribe our interview in detail after the unfortunate young man recovered his senses. I had attained my end so far, that he would join heart and soul in the hunt after Durand. It seemed, then, that Colonel Cazou’s eighty-seven francs odd, judging from the giver’s point of view, had not been ill-bestowed.

Yes, it so seemed; but when we came to particulars, I feared that I had, after all, made a fool’s bargain. Durand, as I might have guessed, would be the case, had not trusted the secret of his hiding-place to Armand Truchet, and the money since forwarded had been applied for through a man who brought a most pathetic letter from Durand, which Truchet handed to me, stating, in substance, that Madame Truchet, who was too ill and harassed in mind to write herself, was in

pressing need of all the money her son could raise to enable them both to escape from France through the cordon of police that was rapidly closing round them.

Armand Truchet did not even know the name of the man who brought the letter, much less where to find or look for him. This was exasperating; the scent of the trail, which I had deemed to be so fresh and strong upon the ground, vanished utterly. Peste!

What could be done? Would it be worth while to act upon Colonel Cazou's suggestion—hunt up the locality—Châlons-sur-Marne—where the murderous dog was littered! I much doubted it. To the department of the Marne (Champagne) was a long journey to be undertaken upon mere hap-hazard conjecture. Once more, what could be done?

Suddenly Armand Truchet threw a gleam of light upon the dark path.

“In a letter addressed to my poor mother,” said he, “which I enclosed in the parcel containing the money, I told her that was all I could possibly raise then, but that a *vaudeville*, purchased long ago of a clever friend of mine, and for which I had composed the music, was under consideration by the directors of a Paris minor theatre, and if it should be accepted, I should not only be able to redeem my violin, but send her a considerable sum, should she still be in need. Now, it is possible the messenger will again call to obtain the additional plunder.

“Sacred Blue! it is certain that he will call,” I joyfully exclaimed, “if, meanwhile, he hears of nothing to alarm him. Did you say it was likely you would *soon* hear from the theatre?”

“Yes; in a very few days, probably.”

“Excellent! And if the fellow does return in a few days it will be quite certain that Durand has not fled to Chalons-sur-Marne. Now, let us carefully consider how best to set, and conceal the net in which we propose to catch, first, the tiger's jackall, next, the tiger himself.”

That was easily enough settled. Armand Truchet would remain quietly at his lodgings, furnished by me with fifty francs in readiness for Durand's envoy. Marin and Cremieux, who, I was pretty sure, were personally unknown to Durand, would, by Monsieur Jaudron's permission—paid for, of course—occupy a room in the house, and stealthily following the man, mark him down. Then one would return to me, leaving the other on guard, and we could act according to circumstances. My motive for not remaining on watch myself was because I deemed it likely, that Durand, doubtful of the fidelity of his accomplice, where money was concerned, might, himself, in disguise, be prowling near at hand, in which case the sight of me following his messenger would be quite sufficient notice to him to take the key of the fields without loss of time.

Monsieur Jaudron awaited me below; his object being to understand if he was to look to me for Armand Truchet's future *loyer, etcetera*. I satisfied him upon that point, and agreed with him for lodging Cremieux and Marin, whose mission, I explained, was to seize the middle-aged stranger who had plundered easily-gullible Armand Truchet of his money, or, should not the culprit present himself again, any emissary of his—an enterprise which met with M. Jaudron's hearty concurrence.



The arrangement was not more than three days old, and Colonel Cazou, who had come to Paris on other business, had not many minutes left me, quite satisfied with my management of the affair so far, when Truchet arrived in breathless haste. The messenger had called, accepted somewhat sourly, the fifty francs, and gone away, followed by Cremieux and Marin.

“Capital! Then we may expect a speedy summons to the scene of action. I mean the unearthing of Durand, who, rely upon it, is hidden in some obscure hole in Paris. It is quite certain that the man whose agent has reappeared today, cannot be at Chalons-sur-Marne.”

“I am not so sure of that. The man had this time no letter. He came, he said, because *I told* him I should be very shortly in receipt of money, and he knew that by certain parties money was much needed. I don’t *remember* telling him that I might soon receive a sum of money. It is, nevertheless, possible that I did. I was so agitated at the time that I cannot pronounce positively one way or the other.”

“*Peste!* Then it is quite possible that this visit is a private speculation on the man’s own account.”

“It struck me,” continued Armand Truchet, not noticing my remark, and following the current of his thoughts, “It struck me, I had not noticed the man’s features on the former occasion having been, as I said, so agitated,—that he strongly resembled Durand.”

“Durand himself, skilfully disguised?”

“No, no, certainly not. Durand himself could have brought a letter in his own handwriting. No, no—a hundred times, no. But, I remember to have heard that the cruel villain had a brother who—.”

A heavy, hurrying step was heard ascending the stairs. I sprang to and opened the door. [Cremieux], as I expected.

“Quick! quick! We have traced the robber to his *repaire*, but he may not remain long.”

We hastened along the street at Cremieux’ heels, and were just within sight of Marin, when a man issued from the house over which he was keeping watch, and walked straight towards us. Armand Truchet, with much presence of mind, fell back in our rear. Cremieux and I kept on, and passed the fellow so closely as to assure myself he was not Durand, and that his likeness to the murderer was strongly marked.

He took no notice of us. With Truchet, whom he met some twenty paces further on, he exchanged a furtive glance, but did not stop to speak.

I turned back, Cremieux and Marin following. Speaking sideways to Truchet, as we passed each other, that is, not turning my head towards him, I enjoined him to continue in the direction he

was going. This was necessary, as the fellow had already once looked back over his shoulder, in seemingly uneasy observation of Truchet.

The man, who was respectably dressed, made several *detours*, and at last stopped before the *Messageries*, in the Quartier Latin; hesitated for a moment, and then, as one may say, *plunged* in. I followed, Cremieux and Marin remaining *en surveillance* outside.

The clerks were busy for a moment, and as our man appeared to be terribly nervous and disquieted; glaring about him with restless inquisition, I, directly a clerk was at liberty, stepped forward, inquired the fare by Diligence to Versailles, and proceeded leisurely to disburse the sum named.

“*Eh, bien!* Monsieur,” said a clerk, abruptly addressing Durand’s double. “What do you want?”

“I wish to know when a diligence starts for Châlons-sur-Marne?”

Châlons-sur-Marne! My heart leapt to my mouth!

“There is no diligence direct to Châlons-sur-Marne,” said the clerk, “but—” and he proceeded to give explanations, which I need not repeat, as to how Châlons-sur-Marne might be most expeditiously and easily reached.

The man listened attentively, but left the office without having made any arrangement.

Of course, we followed, apart from each other, and having watched him to his domicile, I, leaving my *confreres* in charge, proceeded in search of the Commissary of Police, with whom I had been ordered to communicate if any promising fact should come to light.

Monsieur le Commissaire was decisive, if not discreet. The man was to be instantly arrested, his place searched, his papers seized, and with him brought without delay before the Commissary himself.

I doubted the wisdom of so summary a procedure, and began, with great deference, to object, but was at once peremptorily silenced. Let us admit that it *was* preposterous, upon the face of it, for a mere provincial—amateur police-officer to set up his opinion against that of a veteran Paris Commissary. Be it so, but for all that, I felt perfectly sure that the clumsy, routine process of arresting, rummaging, cross-questioning, in rude, unscrupulous search after evidence, was not the likeliest way to obtain it.

However, there was nothing for it but to obey the great man’s orders; two officers were directed to go with me, and I was enjoined to have Armand Truchet in attendance. This last order, as I had foreseen, might give rise to a grave difficulty, and I managed to dispatch a note to Colonel Cazou, soliciting his immediate attendance before the Commissary, who, I had no doubt, would hear reason from the lips of a rich and influential colonel of dragoons.

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The seizure of Charles Marbœuf, half-brother, as it proved, to Durand—both sons of the same mother, by different fathers—was easily effected. His occupation, or trade, was that of an ornamental bookbinder, and he bore in the neighbourhood, we found, an excellent character as a sober, quiet, intelligent man. He was perhaps ten years younger than his uterine brother.

After the first emotion of surprise at finding himself in the hands of the officers of justice, Charles Marbœuf subsided into a quiet gravity of demeanour, looking on with sad composure at the ransack of his place, the seizure of his papers, the fifty francs he had received that morning of Truchet, and about the same sum of his own money. He had filled his pipe, and rather hastily, immediately after our entrance, but it would not draw, though he lit it several times. An old, short pipe, too, but which would not yield one single whiff!

The search over, and the order given to be gone, Charles Marbœuf placed his pipe upon a ledge over the fire-place, which he could only reach upon tip-toe, and where once placed, no one in the room could see it.

I remembered that when filling the pipe he had turned his back towards us, and, as I supposed, took the tobacco out of his waistcoat pockets. I must get possession of that pipe, thought I, and, if possible, unobserved by the officers or prisoner.

“*Diable!*” said I, as soon as we were all fairly in the street, and hastily feeling my pockets, “I have dropped my pocket-handkerchief within. I won’t be a minute.” I was not *half-a-minute* in securing and concealing the pipe.

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Colonel Cazou was at the office before us; and I felt quite satisfied, from the Commissary’s demeanour towards that officer, that the apprehended “difficulty” would be overleapt and set aside.

The preliminary *proces-verbal* was conducted after the prescribed form. Charles Marbœuf had to give a minute account of himself; of his birth, parentage, occupation, earnings, where and for whom he worked, and a hundred other things, very remotely, if at all, connected with the business in hand.

“You called on Armand Truchet, and received of him two hundred francs. Who sent you for that money?”

“The letter of which I was the bearer states by whom I was sent.”

“Yes, by the assassin and escaped Forçat, your uterine brother. Where is he now?”

“I do not know, but I believe he must before this have embarked for America.”

“How, then, were you to deliver to him the fifty francs you obtained today.”

“Directly I should hear from him, the money would be forwarded.”

“Did you see Durand in Paris, some short time since, when he obtained the first hundred francs?”

“I did not. It chanced that I was from home on that day.”

“Where were you, and how employed.”

“At the Sieur de Frosny’s, repairing the binding of some books in his library.”

“Where was Durand when he sent you with the letter?”

“Concealed in my apartment.”

“When did he leave?”

“Immediately after receiving the money.”

“You committed a grave crime in aiding his escape from justice.”

“He is my brother, Monsieur, after all.”

“If your father, you were bound to denounce him.”

“That may be, Monsieur; but blood is thicker than water.”

“At the Messageries today, you inquired as to the best mode of conveyance to Châlons-sur-Marne. With what object?”

“I thought of going there, Monsieur. Châlons-sur-Marne is, as I have said, my birth-place; but I found the cost would be more than I could spare in the present state of my purse.”

“Is Durand at Châlons-sur-Marne?”

“I have already declared, Monsieur, that I believe he has embarked for America.”

Really, I believe that Monsieur le Commissaire would have gone on for another hour pumping, with his dry sucker, to no purpose, had not Colonel Cazou began to manifest signs of extreme impatience at such pompous trifling. The papers seized were merely receipts, business memoranda, and the like; they were, however, formally sealed up, the examination was read over, subscribed, and Charles Marbœuf was conveyed to prison.

“It will also be my duty,” said the commissary, “to detain Armand Truchet, seeing that—”

This was Colonel Cazou's cue. "One word with you, Monsieur," said the colonel. The obliging functionary instantly complied, and after a low-toned conference, not lasting more than two minutes, M. le Commissaire resumed his seat.

"I was about to remark, Armand Truchet, that it would be my duty to detain you as an accomplice in the crime of aiding the escape of a fugitive from justice, but being informed by Monsieur le Colonel Cazou, who is deeply interested in effecting the capture of the assassin, that such detention might defeat that end, you are at liberty to depart. Bear in mind, however, that you are under surveillance, and may at any moment be taken into custody."

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"I told you what a set of grave impostors most of those fellows are," growled the colonel. "That commissary is not more bouché than many of his fellow-officials. I trust you will adopt a likelier mode of tracking Durand than laboriously pumping liars for lies. Remember my hint," he added, "Châlons-sur-Marne! And that commissary must, forsooth, ask Marbœuf if his brother were there! L'Imbecile!" and away strode Monsieur le Colonel, in highly discontented mood.

I was impatient to examine "the pipe," and my lodging being a good way off, I suggested the disirableness of dividing the distance by dropping in at a quiet tavern, and smoking a quiet pipe, with the accompaniments. This was cordially agreed to by Messieurs Cremieux, Marin, and Truchet, who made choice of the very first we came to.

Tranquilly seated, and most pleasantly enjoying ourselves, with the consciousness, than which nothing gives so keen a zest to enjoyment, that we had earned a right thereto. I, scarcely heeded by my companions, drew forth "the pipe," continuing the while to blow a curling, opaque cloud from that between my teeth.

The point of a penknife easily removed a thin layer of tobacco, showing that the bowl of the pipe was filled with paper, tightly pressed down. Not surprising that the pipe would not *draw*. Carefully I drew forth the paper, and found it to be the torn fragment of a letter. The missing portion had, I concluded, lit pipes instead of filling them, and the fragment itself must have fallen into the fire, so scorched and burnt in holes was it.

The hand was large and bold, and after some time I made out the following shreds of sentences:—

"As much money .. frontier impassable by sea or land ... Does Armand ... safe with Tre ... Come yourself ... don't write ... letters opened here.

• • • • •

This was all, except parts of words of which no meaning could be made. It was much. Especially, "Come yourself," coupled with Marbœuf's visit to the Messageries, was significant and promising. The conclusion seemed inevitable, that Durand had fled to, and was secreted at, Châlons-sur-Marne. Surely, thought I, Colonel Cazou, must have other ground than mere

conjecture for an opinion thus curiously corroborated. A dim remembrance, perhaps, of something he had formerly heard of Durand's likelier haunts when pursued for his first murder.

"Safe with Tre," eh? That is hardly so sure, my man; but we shall soon see. It is the end which crowns the work!

Having silently formed my own conclusions, not without exciting the wonder of my companions, as to what the jagged, scorched piece of paper, I was turning and twisting about might be, I gratified their curiosity, and asked their advice.

Armand Truchet promptly decided that the writing was Durand's, and all agreed that a fine opening to success, and the reward of success, had been hit upon.

"It is delicious, charming, that," said Cremieux, a brave fellow, but one who, if awarded the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour, would be likely to estimate its value chiefly by the pension attached. "It is delicious, charming, that," said he, pointing with his pipe to the paper, "and the discovery is for us alone, no doubt. No dividing the reward with Monsieur le Commissaire and his people?"

"Certainly, no dividing with Monsieur le Commissaire and his people! I am going to tell you, my friends, what in my opinion we should do. Without delay I wait upon Monsieur le Colonel Cazou in the Boulevard des Italiens, show him that we have at last hit upon the track of his venerable father's assassin, and at the same time point out that to follow it vigorously up will be immensely and immediately expensive. "

"It is well judged," said Cremieux; "but I would not say immensely. Immediately, *parbleu!* is exact; for after all money is the essential thing."

"Monsieur le Colonel Cazou," said Marin, "is a man who will correctly appreciate the situation, when sketched by our friend Duhamel."

"It is agreed, then, my friends," said I, rising. "I go at once, and request audience of Monsieur le Colonel Cazou. Taking a fiacre, I shall not be long absent. In the meantime, Vogue là Galère. If Cremieux, when I return, is able to sing 'Matou et Minette,' I shall pronounce him to be the most abstemious of gendarmes. *Au revoir!*"

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"Well, my friends," said I, in less than half-an-hour afterwards, "M. le Colonel Cazou is so delighted that he would give us the Bank of France if it were his. Seriously, we are handsomely provided, and can enter, *en campagne*, with gay hearts and heavy purses. We start for Châlons-sur-Marne tomorrow, at twelve precisely. And now, *mon vieux*, for 'Matou et Minette.' "

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The dull journey to Châlons-sur-Marne accomplished, we found ourselves in a picturesque old town of about twenty thousand inhabitants, amongst whom, guided by such light as “safe with Tre;” we had to ferret out an astute rascal, whose life depended upon keeping himself closely concealed.

It is, in one sense, astonishing how rapidly confidence of success, which a favourable incident will, in young, sanguine minds, send up to fever-heat, sinks below zero, when the positive value or bearing of the favourable incident comes to be calmly considered. Like the casual smile that hurries the pulse, and fires the eye of the youthful lover, and the calm glance of surprise at his emotion, which chills and disenchant him.

In sober truth, I began to suspect that my heedless self-sufficiency had placed me in a very awkward position, from which I should hardly escape without ridicule—the most formidable weapon in the devil’s armoury.

In the first place, why, in the name of all saints, had I brought Armand Truchet all the way from Paris to Châlons-sur-Marne? Of what use could he possibly be except to swell the bill of costs? I knew Durand by sight as well as he did, and other knowledge of the scélérat, or his relations, was not, we soon found, to our dire dismay, to be obtained at Châlons-sur-Marne.

Three or four aged individuals, of whom we made covert inquiries, had indeed heard of a “famille Durand.” But they had disappeared long since.

This was positively all the result our four clever selves arrived at after about seven days’ sojourn in Châlons-sur-Marne, except that at Colonel Cazou’s expense, we had aired ourselves pleasantly in the Promenade du Jardin, which there margin the Marne, in which we were told there were three thousand ash trees; and that we obtained the privilege of visiting M. Jacquemin’s champagne stores, that, upon one occasion, furnished barrack-room for six thousand soldiers for six months, and the excavated galleries of which were said (and I believe it) to be more than two leagues in length!

Wonderful, but wearisome! We lodged at a principal hotel, known by the startling sign of La Haute Mère de Dieu. “Suppose,” said Cremieux, one afternoon—the idea of losing his share of the reward promised by Colonel Cazou, ten thousand francs, no less, for the capture of his father’s murderer, terribly discomposing Cremieux—“Suppose,” said he, “we question the chief garçon here, who is not without intelligence, as to whether there is a village within a few leagues of—we know very well there is no street in Châlons—the name of which begins with Tre—There could be no harm in that, I suppose!”

“None whatever, Cremieux. We will do so at once.”

“Tre—Tre,” repeated the garçon, reflectively. “No, I think not—I am sure not;” and he ran glibly over a score of names of villages, but no Tre, appeared as a first syllable.

“There are individuals enough in Châlons,” he said, whose name begins with Tre, Tremouille, Tregonay; and, for example,” added he, with a laugh, “there is that terrible Trebuchet, who has been arrested for the robbery and murder of a commis-voyageur three or four days since.”

“Trebuchet! Where does he live?”

“At about a league from Châlons, at a drear, solitary place, though not very distant from La Grande route du Nord.”

“What is he, if you please?”

“What is he? Well, Monsieur Jacques Trebuchet is vigneron (vine-dresser) by profession, larron (thief) by general report; assassin, by general suspicion. Monsieur Camille Dulau,” continued the waiter, “Monsieur Camille Dulau, commis-voyageur (commercial traveller) has mysteriously disappeared under circumstances, which at least prove one thing, that he did not reach the inn, about four leagues distant on the north road, where he intended stopping for the night. Jacques Trebuchet has been arrested; the only evidence against him being, as I hear, his evil reputation.”

A growing tumult in the street caught the man’s ear, and he hurried to the window. So did we. About a dozen gendarmes were escorting a swarthy, thick-set man, wearing a blouse, amidst a hurricane of maledictions from the furious crowd, directed at the escorted man, who, but for the protection of the gendarmes would have experienced a *tres mauvais quart d’heure*, if indeed the mob would not have disposed of him in half that time.

“As I anticipated,” exclaimed our garçon, “Jacques Trebuchet has been liberated for want of legal evidence against him. The gendarmes are escorting him out of town. Ah, well, the good time will come one day, I have no doubt.”

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“Cremieux,” said I, when we were again seated, “that proposal of yours to interrogate the garçon was an inspiration. I strongly suspect, do you know, that Tre spelt out would be Trebuchet.”

Cremieux and Marin both said it was very probable.

“It is more than probable,” broke in our generally taciturn companion, Armand Truchet. “It is certain. I heard a long, long time since the name of Trebuchet of Châlons-sur-Marne mentioned as a relative of Durand. Yes,” continued Armand, in his sad, desponding way—his mother’s dreadful death sat very heavy at his heart, the burthen as yet unlightened by time—” yes, the name recalled itself to memory, and I remember, moreover, that it was Trebuchet who assisted with money in effecting Durand’s escape from the Bâgne at Brest. I have been,” he added, with bitter vivacity, as one may say, ” rather an encumbrance than a help in this felon hunt—de trop, in fact—but now, it may be, that I shall be able to render good service.

“Listen, my friends,” continued he, “it is certain, that Marbœuf, since his arrest, has not been able to communicate with his half brother. We knew also that no account of Marbœuf’s arrest



has appeared in the public journals. Well, would it not have been quite natural that Marbœuf, having reason to fear that he was suspected of complicity with Durand, and might be at any moment apprehended, should have confided to me the secret of his brother's hiding-place, to the end that I, the case occurring, might forward the money required?"

"Well, yes. But, no; after a moment's reflection, no, decidedly. Marbœuf would be likely to do nothing of the kind. He would naturally fear that Armand Truchet might take it into his head to go and see his mother, alleged to be ill and with Durand."

"It is true," said Armand. "At a second view, the project I had conceived does not look so hopefully as at first."

"If you now," I resumed, after a few minutes' thought, "If you now were to present yourself boldly at Trebuchet's; tell him your name is Armand Truchet; that you knew long since he was a relative and friend of Durand's, and that upon hearing Marbœuf had been arrested, you had determined to visit *your mother* and Durand for whom you had brought a considerable sum of money. Do you comprehend?"

"Perfectly. But—"

"An instant, till I have done. Trebuchet, supposing we are right as to Durand being secreted in, or somewhere near, his place, Trebuchet would no doubt say that your mother had removed to some distance for the benefit of her health—"

"He would also assure you," interposed Marin, "that he himself would take care she received your money safely. It is charming that, *nom de Dieu*."

"And if refused the money, knock the bearer on the head, and help himself," grumbled Cremieux. "Excuse me, Monsieur Duhamel, but your judgment does not appear to be as clear as usual."

"Don't go so fast. Hear, before you pronounce judgment. Armand goes to Trebuchet's in broad day, at about noon tomorrow, we will say. He will positively refuse to part with the sack of five-franc pieces he has with him, except to Durand himself. Trebuchet cannot for a moment suspect the good faith of a young man presenting himself alone with a bag of money, and one, too, who he must know has already befriended Durand."

"*Eh ! bien, non*," said Cremieux; "that might be so. It is difficult to imagine there could be a fool in all France who knowing Trebuchet, his reputation, I mean, would do such a thing."

"Armand Truchet," I continued, "having expressed himself firmly on that point, that he will only give the money to Durand himself, he, if Trebuchet still hesitates, will turn to leave, bringing the affair at once to a crisis—"

"Ah, *par exemple*, that is quite sure. Splitting a man's head with an axe, or driving a knife through his heart would be a decided crisis, I should say—to him."

“Judas!—It would then be known for a certainty whether Durand is concealed by Trebuchet or not. One grand point achieved. Now, then to provide for Armand Truchet’s personal safety while playing his part.

“Some half-an-hour before Armand Truchet leaves La Haute Mere de Dieu, you, Cremieux, you, Marin, and myself shall have left for Trebuchet’s on horseback, in full gendarme uniform, armed of course. You have your uniforms with you; I can easily procure one.—[We had brought official instructions to the local authorities to assist our search by every means in their power.]—I must also disguise myself; whiskers and a wig will do that.

“Well, we are *en route*, and from the exact description of the locality, we will take care to obtain, easily discover, Trebuchet’s den. One of you will ride up to the door, and inquire if any of the inmates has seen—What is the name of the fellow who committed the burglary the other evening, and is supposed to be lurking in the neighbourhood? Never mind; we can ascertain in the morning. The people at Trebuchet’s are asked if they have seen such a person! ‘No,’ will be the answer. You grumble out, as you turn away, that he must be thereabout somewhere—an excellent excuse for our remaining in the immediate neighbourhood!”

“I have been thinking, too,” said Armand, “that it is very improbable Trebuchet, butcher and villain as he may be, would attempt my life, except under circumstances of strong provocation or temptation.”

“I have that idea also,” said Cremieux, “and our friend Duhamel’s rough outline of a plan is, I admit, clever, but incomplete. We shall have smoked out more than one pipe, I answer for it, before it is fully settled. In the first place, comrades—”

The discussion went on, and was continued far into the night. When we separated, everything, with help of the waiter’s intimate acquaintance with the *locale*, had been arranged, and success, if no vexatious *contretemps* occurred appeared all but certain.

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At about three o’clock in the afternoon of the following day, four mounted gendarmes were leisurely trotting out of Châlons, in the direction of the great north road. The foremost, one Rozier, a local gendarme; the others, Cremieux, Marin, and myself, my own seat, I cannot but admit, not being so perfectly assured as I could have wished.

It is Rozier who will call at Trebuchet’s and ask if Laroche, the burglar, has been seen thereabout. This had been deemed prudent, Trebuchet being acquainted with the features of every gendarme within ten leagues. A strange gendarme, therefore, inquiring for a local burglar, might excite suspicion. We had also started three hours later than I at first intended, it being quite evident that only behind the curtain of night could our contemplated *coup-de-theatre* be successfully prepared.

A dull, dreary day for that part of France: overcast, and the east wind cutting our faces sharply. We were at the end of November.

Trebuchet's was a straggling, rather extensive, half-ruinous building, and had formerly been a hostelry, *not* of honest repute. It lay in a hollow, and, except partially towards the road, was hidden by ash-trees, rendered almost impassable by thickly-growing, rank underwood.

Our new friend, Rozier, checked his horse as we came in sight of the place, to tell us a long story of a young lady and gentleman, of birth and fortune, who had, however, been compelled to marry clandestinely, or not at all. This gentle couple were driving, on the morning of their wedding day, in a calèche and pair, towards Châlons, accompanied by a man and woman servant, and hoping to reach the town without being tracked.

Unfortunately, at a turn of the road, not far from the hostelry now occupied by Trebuchet, the manservant caught a glimpse, or more correctly, said he did, of a pursuing carriage.

A hurried consultation took place, and the manservant ventured to suggest that they might baffle their pursuers, by turning out of the high road, and remaining for the night at the "Aigle Blanc," almost close at hand. This counsel was acceded to, and bride, bridegroom, calèche, horses, man and woman servant disappeared from the face of the earth, as if swallowed up by an earthquake.

No trace whatever could be discovered of the ill-fated party, till about thirty years afterwards, when a woman dying at the Hotel Dieu, revealed the whole story. She was the woman-servant in attendance upon the newly-married pair; the man-servant was her husband, whom she had introduced into the family as her cousin. Both had been servants at L'Aigle-Blanc. The bride had taken with her jewels of rare value; the bridegroom a large sum in gold, it being their intention to travel in Italy and Germany till the wrath of the parents (on both sides) had cooled down. They were murdered at L'Aigle Blanc, now Trebuchet's den.

"I should not have troubled you with this common-place story," added Rozier, "did it not afford a striking illustrative of the facilities for concealment the place affords. After the woman's confession, the most vigorous search was made to discover some relic of the unfortunates who had so miserably perished on their wedding day. My grandfather, who assisted at the search, declared that the place was ransacked throughout. From roof to cellar. Well, what happened a few years after that fruitless search? Why this. A fire broke out on the premises, and the firemen of Châlons, to arrest its progress, pulled down a portion of the building, by that means discovering the skeletons of the lady and gentleman, identified by portions of raiment that had not fallen into dust. The place of concealment was between the outer and inner walls, a sufficient portion of the latter, to admit the bodies, having no doubt been pulled down, and immediately built up again. The mob would have made a bonfire of the place, and I have always regretted that they were not allowed to follow their humour. There are also known to be artfully concealed ways of leaving the place through passages running through the chalk as in M. Jacquemin's wine-cellars. I repeat," added Rozier, "that I mention these things to prove to you that if we cannot suddenly lay hands upon the man you seek, it is a hundred to one that we catch him at all. But it is time I rode onward."

The Châlons gendarme put spurs to his horse, and in a few minutes was thundering at Trebuchet's door with the handle of his sabre, we remaining about two hundred yards off.

The door opened, and a ruddy fire-light shot through into the fast-deepening gloom.

Trebruchet himself answered the question addressed to him by the gendarme, who presently sprang off his saddle to adjust, as it seemed, something about the horse's bit, which he could only manage by getting the horse's head, and his own too, within the door, nearer the fire-light. The bit adjusted, he remounted, but instead of immediately joining us, took a leisurely circuit of the straggling premises.

At the same time, and whilst Trebuchet remained at the door, observing us, no doubt with some anxiety, Armand Truchet came in sight, close at hand. Startled at finding himself in the presence of gendarmes, the man stopped, appeared undecided whether he should or should not go back, but finally resolved to keep on. It was very well done, indeed.

He could not, however, be allowed to pass unquestioned by mounted officers out in search of a burglar, and I rode smartly (as I could), towards him.

"Be sure, Truchet, to say that you are expected back at Le Coq tonight. That, [Trebuchet, knowing that we shall see you enter his house] will ensure safety under all circumstances." He said he should forget nothing, and would play out his part, happen what might.

Having thus satisfied myself that Armand Truchet neither was himself, nor had seen the burglar Meudon, I slowly rejoined Cremeiux and Marin. Armand Truchet appeared to be wonderfully well received by Trebuchet, and after a brief colloquy, both entered the house, the door being heavily barred after them. Matters were evidently *en bon train*, unless, indeed, a countermine was being prepared for us.

Rozier presently joined; "The dog," said he, "has swallowed the bolus, and in less than ten minutes will be in no condition to give trouble. There is a banquet preparing yonder," he added, "and plates as, I managed to ascertain, were laid for *five*. Now, Trebuchet, his two sons, and the old woman, are but four. That looks promising. It is time, however, is it not, that we returned to Châlons?"

This was assented to, and certain that we were keenly watched, we rode off towards Châlons, as if abandoning our quest for the night. At the distance of half a league, we turned, and at a rapid pace, [much too rapid for me,] made a wide *detour*, which brought us to within about five hundred yards of the back of Trebuchet's place, from which we were separated by a thick belt of trees and rank underwood. Tethering our docile horses, we proceeded cautiously on foot.

Bright lights gleamed through the window-shutter crevices, and as we neared the house, we could hear voices in high glee, though not the words. Evidently Armand Truchet must have met with a cordial reception!

The dog was quite dead. We quietly removed him and his kennel, at the back of which, and hidden by it, was an aperture through which we could pass into a cellar immediately beneath the revellers, after removing some half-dozen iron bars.

This was more easily effected than we could have supposed. The wood in which the ends were inserted was so rotten that we pulled them easily away. No need, consequently, of the files we had brought.

Safely in the cellar, immediately beneath Trebuchet and company, whose boisterous merriment was now articulate, though indistinctly; and if Fancy—Hope—did not fool me, I could distinguish Durand's voice.

A lantern was kindled, and we sought for the trapdoor opening upwards into Trebuchet's eating and drinking apartment, and which Rozier assured us had no fastening on the upper side. We soon found it at the end of the cellar furthest from the fire-place, overhead, near which sat Trebuchet and his merry men.

It was led to by about a dozen fixed wooden steps. Cremieux creeping softly up, tried the trapdoor. It yielded easily. There was no longer any doubt that we could burst at any moment upon the gay company.

We had still to wait with feverish impatience. Several signals had been agreed—upon a peculiar stamp on the floor, a loud catching, choking laugh, and if the company should be hilariously disposed, a particular song—

“Gai! Gai! chantons, amis,  
De ce qui se passe à minuit dans Paris,  
Gai! Gai!”

volunteered by Armand Truchet, was to tell us that the decisive moment was come, and Durand himself there. If Durand was not there, and it did not appear likely he would be, we were to leave as we came, and wait at some little distance for Armand Truchet.

The mirth grew boisterous. They began to sing! First a verse in chorus of the Carmagnole.

Applause, shouting! Some one is asked to sing. Armand! A fearful moment for the young man, if he is about to give the song, well knowing, as he does, that though we shall certainly overpower the rascals, he will be in mortal peril during the few moments that must necessarily elapse between our appearance and our actual grip of the ruffians.

“*Chantez donc!* Sing, camarade Truchet, sing!”

We loosen our sabres in the sheaths—each of us has a loaded pistol, cocked, in his hand; and Cremieux leading, we softly ascend the steps.

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Armand Truchet had been received in the most friendly manner by Trebuchet. So thoroughly duped was that worthy by the manner of his approach, and the plausibility of his story, that he at once admitted him without hesitation into his house. After a few minutes further conversation, he boldly, “sans façon,” said Durand was not far off, and intended starting the next morning to join Madame Truchet, who was at a place about ten leagues distant. They intended to leave the country immediately, Durand himself having been terribly frightened by the visit of those *gredins* of gendarmes about the absurd *commis-voyageur* affair, they having narrowly missed finding him.

Trebuchet endeavoured to persuade Armand to entrust him with the bag of five-franc pieces for delivery to Durand, but finding the young man determinedly obstinate upon that point, and knowing quite well that to knock him on the head would certainly cause his own head, and probably those of his sons, to fall into the basket before many months had passed, he, having first seen the gendarmes ride off on their return to Châlons, left the room, and in about ten minutes returned with—Durand, who looked frightfully pale and haggard.

The fierce rage burning at the son’s heart leapt in flame from his eyes; the hand mechanically held out to take that of Durand, shook as with palsy; actual contact with the murderer’s fingers was beyond endurance; and the young man snatched away his hand with a scream of disgust and abhorrence!

Durand recognised, could not but recognise that he was confronted with a mortal enemy—by a son who knew he was the murderer of his mother! Still, he must have reasoned, there could be no immediate danger (it was no doubt a *reconnaissance*, to ascertain if he, Durand, was really there) since a sane, and at the same time, a timid man, as he believed Armand Truchet to be, would never place his own throat within reach of four sharp knives, the possessors of which would be sure to do their work on him, whatever ultimately befel themselves.

Yes, Durand and Truchet perfectly understood each other, and knew they did.

Durand seated himself close by Armand Truchet, and when supper was served, ostentatiously drew a bright, broad-bladed knife from his bosom, and remarking that he had ground it to a fine point and edge that very morning, helped himself therewith to the viands.

Trebuchet and sons, who did not perceive that anything was amiss, ate and drank voraciously, and the meal dispatched, burst into truculent laughter and drunken song.

“Hark! What noise is that?” cried Durand. “Did you hear, Trubuchet? At the back there!”

“To the devil with your noise,” shouted Trubuchet; “why, thunder of hell, if but a mouse stirred there, Rouge-Gueule would give tongue!”

“True—true,” said Durand, but with ashen, quivering lips, and darting a sinister glare at Armand Truchet; “true, Rouge-Gueule is thereabout.”

All this time Armand Truchet had been compelling himself to gulp down brandy, in order to brace his [nerves] for the death-struggle close at hand, and of which he, himself, was to give the signal.

Trebuchet and sons roared out a verse of the Carmagnole, and then a song was demanded of Armand Truchet—of Monsieur le Parisien.

The decisive moment was come, and by a supreme effort Armand Truchet rose to the height of his self-imposed task. At first the words of the song were scarcely audible to himself: another effort, and outrang through the place—

“Gai! gai! chantons amis,  
De ce qui so passe à minuit dans Paris,  
Gai! Gai!”

Up flew the trap-door, and Cremieux shouting, “Surrender Scélérats,” and with us following, burst upon the astounded villains. Trebuchet and his sons, were secured without resistance.

Quick as we were, Durand was quicker.

“Traitor!” screamed he, brandishing his bright knife aloft, “follow thy mother!”

Armand Truchet fortunately caught Durand’s arm by the wrist, and a fierce struggle ensued. Soon, however, the superior strength of Durand prevailed his arm was again free, the knife uplifted, and though I was anxious that he should die upon the guillotine, as an example to kindred villains, no choice was left me. I was close to him, and placing the muzzle of my pistol close to his ear, I pulled the trigger at the very moment the fatal stroke were about to descend upon Armand Truchet.

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The play is over. Let fall the curtain!

Experiences of a French Detective Officer, 1864