

The Female Assassin;
As related by Prince Canbaceres Arch-Chancellor of the French Empire

About the close of the Government of the Directory, the keeper of a *hotel-garni*, in the Rue de l'Universite, waited on the minister of police, and in a state of great agitation, he stated that one of his lodgers, whom he named, had been murdered on the preceding night. He had engaged the lodging about six o'clock in the evening, describing himself as an inhabitant of Melun, who had come to Paris for a day or two on business. After ordering his chamber to be prepared for him, he went out, saying that he was going to the Odeon, and would return immediately after the performance. About midnight he returned, but not alone; he was accompanied by a young and beautiful female, dressed in male attire, whom he stated to be his wife, and they were shown to the apartment which had been prepared. In the morning, continued the hotelkeeper, the lady went out; she appeared to be fearful that her husband should be disturbed; and she desired that no one should enter the room until her return.

Several hours elapsed, and she did not make her appearance; at midday, considerable surprise was manifested at her prolonged absence, and the servants at the hotel knocked at the gentleman's door, but without receiving any answer. It was now discovered that the lady had locked the door and carried the key away with her. The door was broken open, and the unfortunate man was found dead in his bed. A doctor was sent for, and he declared it to be his opinion that the man's death had been caused by a blow of a hammer adroitly inflicted on the left temple. The female never again appeared; she was sought for in vain.

In about a month after, a similar murder was committed. The victim was likewise a man from the country, and his death was produced in the manner I have before described. The affair excited considerable consternation in Paris. Within another fortnight, a third crime of the same kind was committed; and, in all these affairs, the mysterious female in man's attire was involved. It is scarcely credible, but nevertheless true, that eighteen or twenty of these extraordinary murders were committed with impunity! In every instance the little that was seen of the woman rendered it difficult for anyone to give a minute description of her person; all the information that could be obtained was, that she was young, very pretty, little and well-formed. This description of course answered that of many women of Paris besides the murderess.

Meanwhile, Napoleon arrived from Egypt, and possessed himself of the reins of Government. Being informed of the atrocities which had been committed in the capital, he directed that active measures should be taken for the detection of the criminal. He spoke to Fouche on the subject. At that time, the capital was filled with Fouche's spies. One of these spies, a fine looking young man, about twenty, was one evening accosted in the street by a person whom he had first supposed to be a very handsome youth. He passed on; but suddenly the thought struck him that the person who had spoken to him was a woman in disguise and he immediately recollected the female assassin.

"It is she," he exclaimed, "I have discovered her, and my fortune is made."

He turned back and entered into conversation with her. She at first denied her disguise, but finally acknowledged it, and the young man prevailed on the nymph to accompany him home, in the character of a young relation from the country.

“Where do you live?” she inquired.

He named a hotel in which one of the mysterious murder had been committed.

“Oh, no; I cannot go.”

“Why?”

“Because I am known there.”

These words confirmed the suspicions of the police agent. He alluded to his property, and mentioned two hundred louis which his uncle had given him, of which he said he had spent the twentieth part, adding:

“Well, then, if you will not go to my lodgings, where else shall we go?”

The female mentioned a hotel, to which they immediately repaired. The young man was about to leave the room to order supper, when the woman called him back.

“Will it be safe, she said, “to leave your money all night at your lodgings? Is it not likely you may be robbed? Suppose you go and bring it here?”

“Ah!” thought the young man, “the veil is now raised;” and then, without the least appearance of suspicion, he thanked her for her prudent hint, and went away, under pretext of going to fetch the money.

He immediately repaired to the office of the Police Minister, and gave information of the discovery he had made. Furnished with the sum of one hundred and ninety louis, he returned to the house where he had left the woman. He was accompanied by several agents of the police, who stationed themselves at the door of the apartment.

The murderess and her pretended lover sat down to supper. She requested him to hand her handkerchief, which she had left on a *console* behind his chair. He rose to get it, and during the instant his back was turned, she poured a powerful narcotic into his glass.

He did not perceive this, and drank off his glass of wine hastily; but he had no sooner swallowed it, than he exclaimed: “What wretched wine!”

The lady made the same complaint. A second glass was poured out and pronounced better.

Meanwhile, the young man felt his head becoming confused, and his lips growing stiff. With well-acted concern, the woman rose, and threw her arms around his neck, apparently with the intention of supporting his drooping head.

At this moment, he mechanically raised his hand, and he felt the hammer in the side pocket of the coat worn by the female. He felt conscious of the danger of his situation; he attempted to rise and leave the room, but his strength failed him. He tried to speak, but his tongue was paralyzed. By one desperate effort, he made a faint outcry, and then fell on the floor in a state of utter insensibility.

The woman drew the little hammer from her pocket, and laid it on the floor. She then searched her victim, took his purse, and deposited it in the pocket of the waistcoat she wore. She placed his head in the requisite position to receive the deadly blow, and she raised her right arm for the purpose of inflicting it, when the fatal hammer was suddenly wrested from her grasp. The police agents opportunely entered the room at that moment.

On her first examination, she gave the following romantic account of herself. She was of a respectable family and of irreproachable conduct; but having bestowed her affections on a young man who had treacherously forsaken her, she had from that moment vowed implacable hatred to all the male sex; and the murders she had committed were actuated by no other motive than vengeance for the injury inflicted on her feelings.

Would it be believed that there were persons weak enough to pity this unfortunate victim of betrayed affections? The sensibilities of the world, especially of the great world, are often very ridiculous and sometimes very blameable. An effort was made to screen the wretched victim from the punishment of the law. When asked why she committed robbery as well as murder, her defenders could give no satisfactory reply

The criminal, however, underwent the penalty of the law; and certainly, society has reason to rejoice that the punishment of death has not been abolished.

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Subsequently, this story was published in *Prairie du Chien [WI] Patriot* on August 14, 1850, but the two concluding paragraphs above were replaced with the following paragraph:

An effort was made to screen the wretched victim from the punishment of the law. But when asked why she committed robbery as well as murder, she could give no satisfactory reply. A pardon was therefore refused. This is certainly one of the strangest cases on record.