

The Art Detective

[Paris correspondence New York Herald]

In Paris there is an art studied and carried to a perfection unknown in any other country; I mean the art detective, in the practical application of criminal jurisprudence. As a medical man, M. Tardieu has accomplished in this respect real miracles, tracing out the most mysterious and hidden crimes by indications which remind one of the scent of the savage or the inscrutable tact which he displays in hunting a victim. This difficulty in tracing crime, and its successful results, forms the greatest part of the interest which popularly attaches to evil deeds; and now that a murderer is more easily detected than of old, criminals go more warily to work, and the result is more terrible and more romantic crimes than ever. There is preserved in the office of the Cour d'assises de Calvados, a handkerchief which once in such an affair cost two men their lives. I will give the story as told in a newspaper. Several years ago in Caen the shop of a Jeweler was robbed. The poor man surprised them, gave chase, and was brutally murdered by them in the street. Everything was done to detect the criminals without avail. The great Detective Melin, who brought Charpentier from America, tried and failed. There was at Caen a central commissaire of police, a Monsieur Ducheylard, brother-in-law of the Duke of Malakoff, and this man applied himself steadily to the work. The thieves had left a jimmy (*rosignol*), a simple iron bar, and a handkerchief.

Some time after Monsieur Ducheylard found that in a low drinking house, where rooms were also hired, two men had entered themselves as August Chemist, merchant, from Mulhouse, and Joan Graft, merchant, from Strasburg. Their passports were perfectly right.

Still it seemed strange to M. Ducheylard that two merchants, respectable men, should board at such a "crib" as this was. Something was wrong. At any rate "it would do no harm to take a look". The writer once knew a detective—a master of his art—who always had this phrase on his lips. So he took a look. He found out the girl who washed for these men, and showing her the handkerchief, asked her if she had ever seen it before, she recognized it at once as the property of one of them, even to a stain and a "mend". The clue was obtained, and the men were arrested. Others were engaged with them—all were caught in different parts of Paris, and the two were guillotined.

No less singular is a case probably without parallel. For two years past the police in Paris were accustomed to receive notes in a carefully disguised female hand, pointing out certain malefactors, or indicating crimes which were contemplated or had been committed. Frequent intimations were given that the letters would be discontinued if any effort should be made to discover the writer, and places indicated where answers might be sent. This unknown seemed to throw her whole heart into the business, supplying the police with a cypher for the letters and aiding them in every way. A circumstance at last made it necessary for this eccentric amateur detective to reveal herself to the *chef de la police*. She proved to be a young woman of excellent family and education, but whose uncontrollable taste for profligacy had thrown her continually among the vilest associates. A keen sense of right and wrong had, however, rendered her miserable, and caused frequent fits of remorse, until she resolved to do good by punishing the

crimes which frequently came to her knowledge, and to this end she had consecrated all her energies and talents which were really wonderful.

“She was the most wonderful woman I ever met,” said my informant. “She was as bold as any man, as crafty as any woman, and as true as steel.”

From the day in which she became known to the police she was never again heard of. Not that she was found out and murdered by criminals, but that she could no longer carry on her strange work in such complete secrecy as before.

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