

The Emperor's Broker
by George McWatters

The Robbery of the Diamond-Merchant—The Detective of the Bourse and His Plot—Daniel Pereira, the Wealthy Jew—A Call on the Part of the Emperor—The Safe Ransacked—The Old Jew Has Been Doing Heavy Business—Fonier, the Aristocratic Swindler—Madame Du Torville—A Detective Deceived—The Speculator on the Bourse—August Rauchez, the Accountant—Trappe and the Emperor—Political Prisoners in the Fortress of Ham—Trappe Said to Have Executed Napoleon's Flight—How and Why the Emperor Hushes the Matter Up—A Clever Disguise—300,000 Francs Worth of Diamonds and Gems—Madame Fleury—A Female Detective—A Plucky Woman—She Carries a Pistol—A Clever Deception—Glass Instead of Diamonds—A Mysterious Case.

In spite of the activity and skill of the Parisian detectives, there are crimes committed in that great emporium of fraud and vice which never come to light, and others which, though known to the authorities, are hushed up and permitted to be compromised.

Of these latter, the killing of Daniel Pereira, in 1862, is one of the most extraordinary. The facts connected with it have recently come to light, and present a picture of violence, trickery, and corruption, seldom disclosed to the public.

Daniel Pereira was an Israelite, verging on three score years and ten. He had never been married, and resided alone in an old dwelling on the Rue St. Quentin. He was reputed to be immensely wealthy, and such was doubtless the case. For years he had been one of the best diamond merchants of Paris, and had had for his customers the most famous residents of the city, from royalty downward. The back parlor of his residence was his place of business, and there he had a safe containing jewels of immense value, and goblets of gold, whose history made them more priceless than if they had been gigantic gems. For years he had been collecting these mementos of the past, and prided himself on their possession, having repeatedly refused fabulous offers for them.

The diamond merchant was fully aware of the great temptation which his valuable stores offered the lawless and avaricious, and the entrance to his dwelling was guarded all day long by a stalwart servitor, well armed, and all night long by two experienced and long-tried watchmen. These latter had been repeatedly approached and offered heavy bribes, but they had resisted all attempts to induce them to prove faithless to their trust, and had more than once successfully repelled the organized attacks of burglars.

On the forenoon of August 20, 1862, a cab drove up to the door of Daniel Pereira's residence, and a gentleman with a valise alighted.

On ascending the steps, he confronted the servitor and asked:

"Is Monsieur Pereira within?"

"He is, monsieur," was the response.

“Your name and business, if you please?”

“Here is my card,” the gentleman said, adding, in a low tone, “I come from the Emperor.”

The servitor bowed and admitted the visitor. At the same moment two men alighted from the cab and ascended the steps. The door was immediately opened by the gentleman who first entered. The two men passed in rapidly, and the door was closed. The servitor had entered the back parlor an instant before the men were admitted. The three strangers passed noiselessly along the corridor, and the two latest comers placed themselves one on each side the door of the diamond-merchant’s private room.

As the servitor crossed the threshold of the door, he was seized, gagged, and pinioned in an instant. The merchant, hearing the scuffle, approached the door. The gentleman who was first admitted sprang in and grasped him by the throat, at the same time drawing forth a handkerchief and placing it to the old man’s nostrils. The merchant’s limbs grew limp, and his assailant suffered him to fall gently to the ground.

The three men then ransacked the safe, loading themselves with the precious plunder, and filling the valise with the golden goblets and gems. Then the man with the valise passed out to the cab, one of the men bowing to him obsequiously as he quitted the door, and then retiring within the house. The cab immediately drove off. A minute afterward another of the robbers was politely shown out by his companion, and walked leisurely down the street. In a short space the third man passed out, and departed in another direction.

“The old Jew has been doing a heavy business this morning,” remarked Monsieur Thomas, who kept a wine-shop opposite.

At eight o’clock that evening, when the night watchmen reached the dwelling of Daniel Pereira, all was dark within, and their summons was unanswered. After a brief delay, they opened the window, and entered. As soon as they had struck a light, they knew that something unusual had happened. The servitor lay in the hallway, bound and gagged. In the back parlor, the old merchant lay on an old-fashioned couch, dead. Drawers and chamois leather wrappers lay strewn around. When the servitor was released, he was still half stupefied from the effects of chloroform, but he soon recovered sufficiently to give an account of what had happened. The merchant, however, was past all aid, and the finger-marks on his throat showed that the murder had been designed, the chloroform, perhaps, having failed to act with sufficient power. By the direction of the chief of police, the affair was kept secret until the emperor should be communicated with, and the fact that no particulars of the tragedy were ever made public would indicate that such was his pleasure. Measures, however, were taken to investigate the matter, and the two nephews of the dead Israelite were more anxious to recover the valuable property than to avenge their uncle’s death.

The secret police and detective force were employed on the case. The first thing aimed at was to obtain a clue to the cab, in which the three were driven to the house of the diamond-merchant. For this purpose, all the owners of such vehicles were visited, and the men in their employ

questioned. It was found that, on the night of the murder, one Jean Fonier, a driver in the employ of Henri Dinout, a cab proprietor, threw up his employ very unexpectedly and disappeared. This man Fonier had been in trouble more than once for alleged theft, and it was thought more than probable that he had been selected by the three men to convey them to Daniel Pereira's house.

Search was instituted for Fonier, but without success. He was a young man of youth and short stature, with smooth, handsome face, and prepossessing manners. He had not quitted the city, and the impression was that after a time he would venture forth from his hiding-place.

A month passed, however, and his whereabouts was still a mystery. At length, on the 20th of September, one month and five days after the murder, Fonier was recognized as he was getting into a private cab at the opera house. The detective who saw him was too late to capture him if he had felt so disposed, and the cab was immediately driven off. The officer, however, was better pleased to have it so, as it afforded an opportunity of ascertaining where he was residing, and of, perhaps, making further discoveries. The detective sprang into a cabriolet, and gave directions to the driver to follow the private cab. It was driven at a rapid pace to an aristocratic neighborhood, and stopped at an elegant mansion. The officer in pursuit jumped from the cabriolet, as the cab stopped, and made toward it. As he approached, he was somewhat surprised to see an elegantly attired lady alight and enter the mansion. He looked inside the cab, expecting to find there the man he wanted, but it was empty.

"Who is that lady?" the detective asked the cab-driver.

"That is Madame Du Torville," the driver answered. "The wife of the wealthy speculator."

Turning away, the officer returned to the cab and said:

"You missed your quarry; you followed the wrong cab."

"What!" the driver exclaimed, "The wrong cab! I never took my eyes off it the whole time."

"Your eyes are not worth much," the officer said, and he sprang into the vehicle, and was driven away.

In the meantime, the house previously occupied by Daniel Pereira had been sold by his heirs. A short time after the incident just recorded, the detective who figured in it sauntered down to the scene of the crime without any fixed object. He entered the wine-shop opposite, and smoked a cigar, meditating on the mystery of the deceased merchant's death. The landlord, observing that the officer was a stranger, got into a conversation with him, among other things referred to the sudden death of the wealthy Israelite, and pointed out the house which he had occupied for so many years.

"His death was very sudden," the landlord said, "but not unexpected, for my wife says she saw three doctors drive up in a cab that day; all of them were some time in the house."

"Indeed!" the officer said. "I see the house is unoccupied."

“It has been sold,” the landlord replied.

“Do you know who has bought it?” the detective asked, more for the sake of saying something than anything else.

“I did know, but I forgot the name,” was the reply; “but my wife will remember, I dare say. The gentleman’s servant came in here to drink, and mentioned his master’s name. Wife,” the landlord called out, “come hither.”

The woman came and courtesied to the stranger.

“What is the name of the man who has bought the old Jew’s house?” the landlord asked his spouse.

“Monsieur du Torville,” was the woman’s answer. “He is a speculator on the Bourse.”

That was the name of the husband of the woman whom the stupid cabman had followed by mistake, instead of the man Fonier.

The officer drank his wine and paid his score, lighted a fresh cigar, and departed.

Who was Monsieur Du Torville? The detective had an idle hour, and he wanted to find out.

On the street most frequented by the stock-brokers and speculators, there was a small building, the first floor of which was occupied by a banking firm. In the rear was a door, with these words on it:

AUGUST RAUCHEZ,
ACCOUNTANT

Twenty minutes after the detective quitted the wine-shop, he was tapping at the door of Monsieur Rauchez. A voice within told him to enter, and he did so.

A short, stout man of middle age sat at a desk, smoking.

“Good morning Monsieur Rauchez,” the detective said.

“Now, then, be quick,” Monsieur replied, puffing out the smoke. “What is it?”

“I am Frederick Rulon of the secret police,” the detective said.

“I know you,” Rauchez said. “Say on, and be quick.”

“You know Monsieur Torville?” the detective asked.

“Well,” was the reply; “is it business of the bureau?”

“It is,” Rulon answered. “I want to know all about Du Torville.”

“Sit down,” Rauchez said. “A year ago, Du Torville came on the Bourse. He is the Emperor’s broker. That is enough.”

“Where did he come from?” the officer asked.

“How much is there in this?” Rauchez inquired.

“A hundred thousand francs,” the detective replied.

“And you want my services,” said Rauchez.

“As the greatest of Paris detectives,” the officer replied, bowing.

“A fair half, then?” Rauchez said.

“A fair half,” Rulon responded.

“Then be quick, and tell me the whole story,” Rauchez said.

Rulon unfolded the whole story of Daniel Pereira’s murder.

“This is hardly my line,” replied Rauchez; “I’m employed entirely on financial crimes.”

“Wait a little,” the officer said, and proceeded to relate how he pursued the private cab, into which he had seen Fonier enter, and how the cab drew up at Du Torville’s mansion, and Madame du Torville alighted.

“There is no Madame du Torville,” Rauchez said; “he keeps a mistress, and her name is Jeanette Fonier.”

“My God!” Rulon exclaimed, “then she is the sister, without doubt, of Fonier, the cab-driver.”

“Very probably,” was the reply; “and you think there is a mystery. Wait; I will help you clear it up. Du Torville’s real name is Trappe. He was a political prisoner in the fortress of Ham when the Emperor was imprisoned there. He aided Louis Napoleon in the flight, and the Emperor did not forget it. Trappe was in the *bagne* at Toulon for forgery. There was also a suspicion of murder against him. News does not reach a prisoner rapidly, and, not until two years ago did Trappe learn that his former fellow prisoner was emperor of the French. He managed to communicate with Napoleon, and he was released. He is clever, and has been successful. If you asked me how, I reply—he has made money otherwise than on the Bourse.”

“Do you suspect—”

“I do,” interrupted Rauchez, “and that the emperor suspects or knows it to be so; hence the order to keep the matter secret, and the desire on the part of the Jew’s nephews to let the crime be condoned on condition that they get back the plunder.”

“And Fonier?” the detective said inquiringly.

“Fonier is in concealment,” Rauchez said, “in Trappe’s house, and the Madame du Torville whom you saw alight at the door, was Fonier!”

“I see it all!” Rulon said; “he had his disguise in the cab, and, seeing that he was followed, used it.”

“You’re right, without doubt,” said Rauchez.

“Well, we must get back the diamonds,” Rulon said, “emperor or no emperor.”

“Wait,” said Rauchez, and he unlocked a drawer and took out a note book. After examining it for a minute, he said:

“De Torville was absent from the Bourse all day on August 21st, the day of the murder and robbery.

“I will see him—he knows me well, for I arrested him for forgery, for which he was sent to the *bagne*. Come here to-morrow.”

The detective quit the place muttering to himself,

“I am a child, and I know nothing.”

The next day when Rulon called at the office of Rauchez, the latter handed him a letter, and pushed him from the room, saying “Read that, and be quick about it.”

When Rulon reached his apartments, he opened the letter and read as follows:

“I have arranged it all with Du Torville. He will deliver the diamonds and other property for 300,000 francs. At 11 o’clock to-morrow, Madame du Torville will be at home. Show this letter to Madame Fleury, of the secret police, and place the money in her hands. She will wait on Madame du Torville, and pay the 300,000 francs to her, and receive a box containing the property, which she will satisfy herself is correct. Give her an accurate list of the jewels and other things. See her take a cab, deposit the box in it, and come to my office immediately.

RAUCHEZ.”

Next day at 11 o’clock, Madame Fleury alighted from a cab at the mansion of Monsieur du Torville. A servant in livery showed her into a magnificent *salon*, and in a few minutes Madame du Torville appeared, followed by a servant carrying a large leathern satchel. It was filled with

sparkling gems and goblets of gold. Madame Fleury produced her inventory, and compared it with the contents of the satchel. It was correct.

“Here are 300,000 francs,” the female detective said, and she counted out the bills to Madame du Torville.

“This satchel is heavy,” Madame Fleury said.

“My servant shall carry it for you to the cab,” Madame du Torville replied.

The servant was summoned, and bore the precious freight to the cab, closely followed by Madame Fleury. Then he retired. “Madame,” said the driver of the cab, “have you far to go?”

She gave him the direction of Monsieur Rauchez.

“I shall carry this for you, then,” the driver said, “for my harness has broken, and I shall have to leave my horse and cab here until I return.”

“Call another cab,” the female detective said, in an angry and disappointed tone.

“They are hard to find around here, madame,” the driver replied; “but I will carry the bag until you find one.”

“Go on, then,” Madame Fleury said, and then added in an undertone, “I carry a pistol, and if you attempt to quit me, I will shoot you.”

The drive assumed a look of surprise and horror, and then moved off, closely followed by the female detective.

At the end of the street there was a place where he could secure privacy, and, with an apologetic bow, the driver turned into it. The cross street was a crowded thoroughfare, otherwise the female detective would have followed the driver into the retreat, despite all annoyances. As it was, she had to wait outside until he returned, which he did in a moment or two. Madame Fleury gave a sigh of relief as she saw the precious satchel under the driver’s arm. A few blocks on they met an empty cab, and the female detective and her satchel were transferred to it.

When Madame Fleury reached the office of Monsieur Rauchez, she saw the driver of the cab carry the satchel inside.

“Is it all right?” Rauchez asked.

“Yes, thank God,” answered the female detective.

She unclasped the fastenings with a nervous, gratified smile on her face, and threw open the satchel.

It was filled with pieces of broken glass and bricks!

When the disappointed and astonished woman had told the history of the satchel from the time she quitted the house of Monsieur du Torville, Rauchez said:

“I see it all. They bribed the driver while you were inside, and when he turned into that place whither a lady could not follow him, there was some one waiting there who changed satchels with him. That’s all.”

When Madame Fleury and Detective Rulon returned, an hour later, to the Du Torville mansion, they found it in the possession of a furniture broker, who had purchased the contents the day before. Monsieur du Torville disappeared from Paris, and, a week afterward, when certain of his creditors attempted to attach his property, they found that the house purchased by him from the heirs of Daniel Pereria had been conveyed to one August Rauchez. When Detective Rulon found this out, a long time afterward, he made inquiries and discovered that the deed of conveyance was drawn on the very day on which Rauchez handed him the letter of instructions as to how the stolen property was to be recovered.

Nothing further has come to light about the emperor’s broker and his clever confederates.

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