

Arrested for Murder
—OR—
Adventures of a Young Man

I HAD been staying at Geneva during the autumn months, passing my time very pleasantly, now in a boat on the lake, watching the golden sunset, or perhaps in the moonlight night, when at each splash of your oar there arose thousands of golden watery gems which, ere they fell, were silvered by the moonbeams. But the evenings were now becoming chilly, and I knew that before long the days would also be cold; so I bade adieu to the fair lake, and took my way homeward.

I arrived in Paris intending to stay only a few days, but I was disappointed, as some little business I wished to transact there kept me lingering day after day. Now, this would have been pleasant enough at any other time of the year, but at this season how could I amuse myself, if it were not for the theatres and the bal de l'opera!

One night, while the cold rain beat against my window-panes, and the wind, still colder, whistled in fearful gusts up the street, I lay on my lounge poring over Victor Hugo's last novel, and trying to understand it, the wood fire glowing on the hearth, I dropped my book and looking at the clock, saw it was just a quarter past seven; then I thought of going to the theatre, it was not yet too late; and so I decided I should go to the Opera Comique, as I had seen on a poster they were going to play "Une nuit au Chateau," which I thought might counteract the dullness the rain generally leaves me. Well, I enjoyed myself pretty well, for meeting a friend there, we passed our time very pleasantly, especially between the acts, when we usually descended to fortify ourselves with punch and cigarettes, before leaving the theatre and emerging into the night-air.

At length the play was over, and we went into a cafe near by and refreshed ourselves still more, and played a quiet game of ecarte. After the second game was over, my friend proposed we should go somewhere and try our luck, or, in other words, "fight the tiger." I agreed and he hailed a fiacre. We got in and he told the driver to let us out at some number I do not recollect, in Rue Feuve des Petits-Champs. We rattled along at a good pace, and after some time, drew up before a very respectable-looking house, in which there appeared no light and whose inmates I thought had long since retired to rest; but when we stood on the upper steps I could see there was a blind over the fan-light, through the chinks of which came a dusky, red glimmer. My friend rang the bell; the sound of footsteps followed, and the door was opened, then, after a few whispered words from my friend, we were shown up two pair of stairs, and were ushered into a large saloon which seemed to be an addition in the rear. Folding doors, which had been drawn back, showed there were two rooms which now seemed but one.

We entered amid confused sounds from various parts of the room. At one side were four roulette tables on another side was rouge et noir, and dispersed liberally around the room were a number of small, round tables and chairs, at which several gentlemen were playing ecarte, pique, &c. I remarked there were also some ladies who sipped their liqueurs, some playing and others looking on. My friend and I sat down and played ecarte, he telling me in the meanwhile that the house

was kept by a rich lady who had three others beside, but this was the smallest and most private of all. "You see that clerical-looking personage leaning against the mantel-piece?" he said. "Well, that's her detective; and that young lady with whom he is conversing, and whose golden hair looks still brighter beside his raven locks, is his daughter. Take care you never get caught in her toils," added my friend. I assured him there was not any danger of that. Little thought I then in what a strange place I would afterward see her.

After getting tired of our *ecarte* and champagne my friend suggested that we should try our hand at roulette, and we went over to the table. The keeper was just calling out, "Choose your colors, gentlemen," and then when the ball ceased rolling, "Red wins this time," while he raked the shining pieces in from the losing colors. I put a five-franc piece on the black. The ball rolled, and I won. I left the money still there, and won again.

I had left off playing for a few minutes and was standing at the side-table, eating some roast fowl, when I noticed a young man, dressed very well, but rather flashy. What called my attention to him was the glitter of his diamond studs, which sparkled with that white and peculiar glow which only pure gems emit. He had been playing very high during the evening, and though winning now and then, must have lost rather more than he gained. He addressed me, as we stood there, by saying: "Young man, why don't you cover the red sometimes when you play, if you're afraid to go any higher?"

I said: "I am not afraid, but I only play for amusement."

"You must excuse me," he said, "for giving you a hint, but I did not think you were not a gambler; I, myself, only play for amusement's sake, but still I like to win, if only to be able to balance my play, and if one plays only on one color, he is sure to lose sooner or later; the black, no doubt, wins often, but if you have luck and win your gains are so much more as you ascend from black.

Our conversation continued in a like strain for some time, when we agreed to try our luck once, and it being only about half-past one o'clock, we took our places at the table.

"I played very coolly on black and red, venturing coolly on the blue, and had my share of luck, for, in about an hour and a half, I found myself in possession of nearly 800 francs, my friend, in the meantime, playing on high colors, and the young man with the diamonds playing on them too, but losing heavily, and drinking deeply of champagne between each roll of the ball. But this time, as I judged, he must have lost nearly 1,000 francs. Soon he came around to my side, touched me on the shoulder and said: "Can I speak to you one moment?"

I said certainly, and followed him into the refreshment saloon. Arrived there he said: "I would ask a great favor of you, were I sure it would not be inconvenient," at the same time taking from his pocket a small, jeweled watch. "Would you lend me five hundred francs until tomorrow, and take this as security?" he said. I took it in my hand; it was a beautiful piece of workmanship, and

I was surprised to find it was a lady's. I pressed the spring, it flew open; some letters caught my eye, and I saw there was something engraved on the inside. I held it closer, and read, "Claude a Mariette," and underneath, in a different style of letters, "Un oubli." I was too polite to inquire into or remark anything about it, so I said: "I will let you have the amount, but I must tell you first that I leave Paris tomorrow." He said: "That makes but little difference; I cannot get money till morning, but we can meet at noon at the Cafe de Londres, Rue de Faubourg St. Honore, if you will not leave before that hour." I mentioned that would be agreeable, and gave him the money, putting the watch in my pocket.

He thanked me and went once more to the gaming table, while I joined my friend, and we sat down to watch the different games around us. I did not mention the loan I had made to him, as he would have said, no doubt, that I was a fool, and I did not care to be laughed at; and besides, I thought I had at least the worth of my money.

We staid in the saloon until about four o'clock, and I parted from my friend outside. He was to leave for Egypt early in the morning. He traveled for a London house, and we expected to meet again at Paris in the Spring, to which place I expected to return.

I went home in good spirits. I had nearly three hundred francs more in my pocket than when I had left my rooms—the five hundred I had lent the young man not included. I went to bed, but I could not sleep. I took out my watch and read the inscription once more—"Claude a Mariette," "Un oubli," and wondered what it could mean. Perhaps it might have been a present which had been returned, I thought, but alas! I could only guess. I fell asleep at length, and dreamed about cards, watches, dramas, roulette, &c., and so I enjoyed myself in dreamland until about eight o'clock, when I dressed, packed up my things, and went out to a restaurant near by and breakfasted. I afterwards strolled around until half-past eleven, and then went up Rue du Faubourg St. Honore to the Café de Londres, which I entered, called for some brandy, lit a cigar, and took up a newspaper to pass my time away till he should come. I had been reading some time, and now it wanted but five minutes of noon. He did not arrive. I read till twelve o'clock; still he did not. I waited until half-past, then went to the proprietor and told him if a young man should call for any one of my description, to tell him he would find me at my rooms any time up to three o'clock. He promised me he would do as I requested, and I left the cafe.

I could not understand this. Had I been taken in by a sharper?

I thought not; to make sure, however, I went to a jeweler on the Boulevard des Italiennes, showed him the watch, and asked its value. He examined it, and said: "We sell watches of that pattern at 1,000 francs each." I felt a little surprised. I went to my rooms, thought the matter over, but could not fathom the mystery. Here was a man who pledged his one-thousand-franc watch to me for five hundred, and did not come claim it. There was but one way of solving it, and this was, that perhaps he had lost heavily, and could not raise money enough to redeem it. Perhaps he had forgotten our place of meeting. I thought myself justly entitled to it until redeemed. I waited till six o'clock at my rooms, and then went back to the cafe. He had not come

there to look for me since I had left it, so I went once more to my rooms and decided to leave.

I left that evening for Roueu, and having some business, I decided to remain there a few days. I thought no more of the watch, or of my friend who wore the diamonds, until one morning in reading the paper, I saw a column headed by the words, “Atrocious Murder.” I read it; it was this:

“On Tuesday evening, a canalman noticed a body which had been left dry on the bank of the Seine, near the Point Neuf. He managed to get it into his boat, and he nearly fainted at the awful sight he beheld[.] It was the body of a young man, whose throat was cut from ear to ear. He was elegantly dressed, but his clothes were all torn, as if he had struggled hard for life. His body now lies at the morgue, but has not, as yet, been recognized. Nothing was found on his person but two letters, the contents of which it, is said, will, no doubt, give some clue to enable the detectives to trace the murders and arrest them before many days; until the arrest is made, everything is kept secret. It is, however, whispered that a beautiful young woman, named Mariette Gaudoin has been arrested as a suspected accomplice of the murderer. We will keep our readers informed, from time to time, as further developments may present themselves.”

I laid down the paper, went to my room, and began to think on what I had read. First, Mariette was the name inscribed on the watch, and it was also that of the murderer’s accomplice. Then I thought of such characters, who usually frequent gambling houses, and that the young men who had given me the watch might be in some way connected with the murder.

I reasoned with myself for some time, and then came to the conclusion: That the watch I had was the property, perhaps, of Mariette Gaudoin, the suspected accomplice of a murderer; that the young man who pledged me that watch was most likely the murderer. If not, why did he not meet me and redeem it? I remembered the date; the murdered man had been found on the evening of the day on which I was to meet the young man in the Café de Londres. Perhaps he heard it, and feared to come, as he might have been arrested.

The more I thought on the matter, the more I felt convinced my suppositions were correct. Then I began to think of what course I should pursue. Ought I send the watch to the police headquarters at Paris, and state the facts? I came to the conclusion it would be a bad plan, as I would surely be arrested, and perhaps detained for many months as a witness, or, at least until the case could be disposed of; and besides I thought the watch did not belong to the murdered man, and that the detectives could work up the case well enough without me. So I decided to keep myself quiet, and not say anything. I thought next of selling the watch, but I gave up that idea, as the name was engraved on it. So I concluded I would keep it, saying nothing, watch the papers, and leave France as soon as I could. I staid in Rouen but one day more, and then took the train for Dieppe, in which place I intended to rest a few days and see the papers, as I was becoming more interested each day. The papers, however, contained nothing new—merely a resume of the facts already stated, with the usual addition. “The detectives expect hourly to arrest the murderer.”

One evening, while in the billiard-room of the hotel, a young man invited me to join him in a game. I consented, and we played for an hour or so, after which we went up to his room, smoked, and played piquet. He remarked while playing that we looked so much alike we might be taken for brothers. I had not noticed the likeness between us until now, but it was very great. The similitude merely consisted in both of us wearing a rather long red beard, and hair the same color; but, then, his eyes were blue, mine gray, and he had a scar over his left eye. Still one of us might have been taken for the other at a distance.

We played till midnight, and I left him, going to my room; but an indescribable feeling came over me, and I could not sleep. I tossed about my bed and then got up, lit a cigar, and sat at my window, looking down on the “Quai Henri Quatre” smoking.

It had just struck two from the church of St. Jacques when I saw a carriage drive up to the door, and three men got out and entered the hotel. I wondered where they could have come from in a carriage at that time of night. I sat smoking and thinking when a light rap came to my door; I unlocked it, it was my friend with whom I had been playing billiards. He had a valise in his hand, and appeared in a hurry, but not in the least excited.

“They have just sent a carriage for me; my father is not expected to live till morning; take care of this for me until tomorrow,” he said, leaving the valise in my room.

All this passed so quickly, I had not time to think, and he had passed downstairs, and I did not dream of following him being undressed. I went back to the window, and saw the carriage drive off rapidly. Then I said to myself, “Why did he not take the valise with him, as he had a carriage?” but then, I thought, he had needs to travel quickly, and did not wish to be bothered with luggage. I was not long smoking and thinking when another rap was at my door. I opened it, and a tall, military-looking personage walked in, while another had come in my window from the balcony. I was handcuffed almost before I had time to speak; then another gentleman walked in. The tall [gentleman] said: “Sir, you are arrested on the charge of murder, so please just keep as quiet as you can.”

I nearly fainted. The idea of my being arrested as a murderer! I sank into a chair, while one of them said to me: “I’m glad you have fetched your luggage with you, sir; much obliged to you, for you’ve saved us a heap of trouble. Why, we’ve been following that leather valise at the door for the last few days; but we always come up with the game.”

“That is not my valise,” I said, “that belongs to a gentleman downstairs.”

“See here, young man,” said the tall detective, “the less you say about that the better. You may tell us what you like now; but you’ll be contradicting yourself by-and-by.”

“But I tell you it is not mine. I am not a murderer; and I protest against this arrest and outrage on my liberty,” I said. The other detective interrupted me.

“Young man,” said he, “it’s a pity you were not brought up to the law business; you would have made a first-class shyster. We’ll give you a chance to talk to the judges when we get back to Paris, but you can’t talk to us.”

In the meantime, the tall detective had forced open the valise, and after some searching, found three diamond studs very much like those I had seen on the young man in the gambling saloon. I felt myself growing pale.

“I say, Henri, I thought we were on the right track,” he said, “let us search him now.”

Then they commenced to search my clothes, took out everything from my pockets, and, at last, came to the watch.

“Young man, I’m afraid it will go hard with you,” he said.

I tried to explain, but it was of no use. They made me dress myself, took everything they could find belonging to me in the room, and I was marched downstairs between them. They brought me into the parlor of the hotel, and two of them stayed with me, while the other went out to see if the carriage was all right, as he said. A sudden thought struck me. I said that was the young man’s carriage—he who had left me the valise. The detective only smiled. I told him what had passed, and how I had seen the carriage driven away. A thought seemed also to have struck him. The detective who went after the carriage came in; the other whispered something hurriedly to him, and he went quickly out again.

After this I was brought upstairs to my room. They bolted the windows and locked the door. All this had been done so quietly, and in such a short space of time, that no one but the hotel-keeper and a few waiters knew anything was passing.

They then procured paper and ink, and the tall agent said: “Now, if we are mistaken, or if it should happen that you’re only an accomplice, tell us all you know truthfully, and you may get off much easier. I have my own opinion about that valise,” he added, “but tell me truly, how did you come into possession of the watch?”

I told him all. He smiled significantly and when I had finished, said: “Well, you may be innocent, but I suppose you’re aware that the young man who was found with his throat cut is the same who pledged you that watch, and whose diamond studs, which you must have remarked that night, have been found in your valise, or that of your friend, as you call it. Now why did you not make it known that you had the watch, when you must have guessed it belonged to Mariette Gaudoin, the former mistress of the murdered man, to whom he had made it a present, but who returned it?”

I told him I had thought of doing so, but I had seen by the papers that she had been arrested as an

accomplice, and I had no particular wish to get myself mixed up in the affair.

The truth now flashed across my mind. The man who had left me the valise sought to shift the murder on my shoulders; and he was the murderer.

I shuddered.

The agent now told me he had sent after the other man, and that he would, no doubt be arrested before morning. I asked him how he would find out where the carriage went to. He replied: “Why, you see it is a frosty night; my agent will get on a horse, follow the tracks of the carriage, and will probably overtake it before two hours, if he has left the town as there is but one road leading to Rouen, and no trains leave here before eight o’clock tomorrow morning, at which hour you and I will start for Paris; so if you have an inclination to sleep, you can do so.”

I slept but little that night. The next morning we left for Paris. I was allowed the privilege of a newspaper, and could not help smiling as I looked over the news, rumors and facts of the great murder, which editors had hashed up for their morning readers. After reading, I slept most of the way, dreaming of diamond studs, prisons, hotels, valises and agents de police, and wondered at the reality when I awoke only to find the gray eyes of the agent fixed upon me—those eyes that looked so bright, though they had not closed in sleep for perhaps two nights before he had arrested me.

We arrived at Paris at last, and I was at once conveyed to prison.

That very day a young lady came into my cell, accompanied by a police agent, in whom I recognized the one with the golden hair, whom I had seen in the gambling saloon in the Rue Neuve des Petits-Champs.

The agent said, pointing to me: “Do you recognize that man?” She replied, without hesitation, that she did.

“Well, we are ready to take your deposition, mademoiselle,” and the agent added: “Henri, come in and witness this.” A turnkey entered. The young lady commenced in a silvery voice as follows: “I saw this man in a *mansion de jue* in the Rue des Petits-Champs; he was playing at the same table with the murdered man, whom I have also recognized at the morgue. Sometimes they would leave the table and take their refreshments together in the saloon. They drank in company several times, and had some private conversation. The prisoner left the house before the murdered man, who did not leave until two hours later, and had not won much that night.”

This deposition she signed with her name, Eugenie Dumont.

Here the interview ended, and I was left alone to reflect.

I heard the next day, from one of the keepers, that the friend who had left his valise with me had been captured at La Forge, near Rouen, where he had made a desperate resistance, but had been overpowered.

I spoke to the tall agent, and asked him to recommend me a good lawyer. He did so, and sent for him. In the meantime the agent said that the other prisoner was very much like me, with the exception that he wore a mustache, and I wore a beard. I remarked: "He had a beard, too, when I saw him last," "Oh, we know all that," said the agent. "When we entered the hotel he saw his game was up, and he put his valise in your room, cut off his beard, trimmed his moustache, went strait to our carriage, which was waiting, and told the driver coolly to drive him to another hotel; then paid and discharged him. Of course the driver never suspected anything, as he thought the murderer was one of my party. But the coolest part of the business was, that he came as far as Rouen, on the same train with ourselves, at least, so he himself says. In his room at the hotel, we found a large clasp-knife with the blood dried in the interstices; also the hair he had cut off."

The agent then told me the prisoner had confessed; and in his confession had stated that he had followed me from Rouen to Dieppe, to shift the murder on me, as I looked so much like him, and as he had seen me leave the gambling house, while he lay in wait for the murdered man, and as he knew the detectives were on his track.

What a singular stroke of luck it would have been in his favor, the fact of my having the watch, had chance not fixed it otherwise!

Next day, through the kindness of the agent and the efforts of the lawyer, I was released on bail. I appeared at the trial, which was very long, and was called several times to the stand.

The clue the detectives discovered the murderer by, was the fact that they had found two letters on the murdered man from Mariette Gaudoin to Claude Belin. By means of these they found Mariette, and from her obtained information that Claude had been in the habit of gambling. Then they found he had been in the house at which I met him. I was at once suspected and an agent started after me, having my [description], which coincided exactly with the murderer, were it not that he had a scar over his right eye.

The detectives then got on my track; and it so happened that the murderer saw me at Rouen, where his keen eyes soon recognized me, and he determined to throw his guilt over me, thinking, no doubt, any personal resemblance to him would help considerably to that end. Little thought he, however, that the police agents were following so closely in my footsteps, and that he was making his own capture the more easy.

The trial was at length over, and as I stood there, while the Judge sentenced him to death, I shuddered when I thought of the quiet game of cards he and I played together at the dead hour of midnight in his own room, where he might easily have murdered me, had he felt so inclined, as I never carried any arms. I shuddered again and hoped he would be forgiven.

He saw me and a bitter smile flittered across his face. He beckoned me to come to him. I went over and he whispered hoarsely in my ear; “Do you forgive me? I played my last hand with you, and did not cheat. Adieu.”

I felt his cold hand in mind; and he pressed it, and said: “Gambling has brought me here! Beware! Farewell!”

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