

The Platinum Filling

I.

LITTLE Thady O’Flynn, aged ten, shock-headed and dirty, after seeing his birthplace razed to the ground by the workmen who were opening up Montgomery Avenue, had taken his revenge on the city by stoning the windows of the old International Hotel until every pane of glass was as cracked as the head of a Stockton lunatic. Then, with a company of kindred spirits, he began an exploring expedition through the ruins of the rookeries in the odor and filth of which he had been born and bred. Queer places, indeed! Every plank in the ramshackle hovels a blackened memento of dark scenes, and every shingle as grimy and repulsive as Thady’s own roofing. In fact, O’Flynn, Jr., was unmistakably typical of his surroundings, and they were of that roughest and most detestable slovenliness out of which is born the “hoodlum” of the lowest type.

Two habits in common Thady and his companions possessed. All the bad brood used oaths of the vilest description and in the freest manner, and all these poor little weeds of society used *the* weed of the vilest description and in the freest manner. Thady chewed, but most of his fellow-heathen preferred smoking, and passed about the rank and ancient stump of a cigar with an appreciation of the virtues of equality and fraternity that furnished another evidence as to the materials out of which the swaddling-clothes of Communism are fashioned.

Scuttling into the deeper depths of cellar-puddles like so many rats, and clambering recklessly over every hanging beam and rickety post like so many cats, Thady and friends passed all that murky January afternoon, worrying and pelting a poor Chinese scavenger, like so many little devils, by way of change. It was soon after this latter incident that Thady’s quick eyes were the first to see the workmen rigging half-a-dozen ropes for pulling down a high brick wall that had been standing, ugly and alone, all during the winter rains. Such a treat as the rush of falling bricks with the accompaniments of a crash and much dust was not to be lost.

“See here, fellahs,” shrieked Thady, “they’re a-going to pull down this blank dash wall!”

Instantly cellar-puddle and hanging beam were deserted, and a little yelling crowd began tugging at the end of each rope. The wall bent and swayed, and Thady and friends pulled and yelled the harder. The wall swayed and tottered, shivered and fell with a noise and dust-cloud that still further increased Thady’s communistic leanings—leanings which are simply to pull down and destroy what others have put up. When the flying lime had but half subsided, Thady and friends were in the midst of it.

The wall had not fallen flush to the ground, and there were some ragged fragments still standing. One of these was part of the chimney, and, to peep down into it and up through it, Thady and friends went as fast as their unwashed legs, urged on by curiosity, could carry them. It was Thady who, imp-like, rammed that shock head of his down the broken chimney, and it was Thady who drew back with a cry and a long tress of brown hair in his paw.

“Golly! What’s that?” cried one.

“Them’s woman’s hairs, cried another.

“Thady’s found a sheenyon,” shrieked a third.

The workmen gathered around the *gamin* and examined his find. True enough, it was a long lock of soft brown hair, burnt and singed at the ends, but otherwise very pliant and glossy.

“Perhaps there’s more where that cum from,” suggested one of the workmen, and a search was made in the old chimney, resulting in the discovery of at least what the hair had grown on. The suggestive workman threw a brick down the flue-hole, and out from where the grate had once been there rolled something hard and round—something hard, and round, and white—that struck on a lump of plaster and bounced clear to Thady’s feet; a *memento mori* of an unmistakable nature—a human skull.

Thady, who was too intimately acquainted with his own bones to feel particularly delicate about handling those of other people, stooped and picked up the skull. It was very white, and, as if the grinning piece of mortality were not sufficiently horrible *per se*, there was a deep gash all down one side of the fleshless face, crushing in the bone from forehead to jaw. A blow so smashing must have been given with prodigious force. The front teeth were very small and even, as also were those of the right jaw, but the disfiguring blow had scarcely left one in its socket on the other side. It was at this moment that the writer and Doctor Andros were passing. The doctor saw what Thady held, and being — as will be more clearly seen as the story advances—of an exceptionally curious and investigating nature, he clambered down the *débris* and joined the group.

“Here’s a find, Doctor,” said one of the workmen.

“Woman’s skull,” said Doctor Andros, taking it from Thady’s hand.

“Buried in quick-lime,” said one of the workmen, taking a lump of the burning mineral.

“Thady’s got sum of the har,” shrieked one of the boys.

“Nothing else about, is there?” asked the doctor, after completing a transaction in human hair with Thady.

Boys and men sought diligently, but nothing could be found. Doctor Andros was leaving with the skull in his hand and an assurance that no further trouble need be taken about the matter, and had reached the sidewalk, when he heard a panting behind him, and there was Thady with something held out in his paw.

“What’s that?” said Andros.

“One of the woman’s teeth, I guess,” said Thady.

Sure enough, it was—a hollow molar, that had been filled, and with the filling still in it. Another transaction with Thady — this time in ivory — and the tooth was slipped into the doctor’s vest-

pocket. There was a two-line paragraph in the daily papers, and there the matter was supposed to end.

II.

“That’s a queer-looking thing, Doctor,” said the clerk of the O—— Hotel to Doctor Andros, some half-hour after the occurrence of the facts given above.

The “queer thing” referred to was the skull, which the man of bones still held in his hand. The incidents connected with its discovery were related, and a conversation began between the two, and shortly after among a small group that gathered about the office, having for subject the hundred-and-one violent deaths that yearly occur throughout the country, of whose why, or who, or when, nothing is known. The skull in the hand of Doctor Andros was a good text.

“How old should you say the person was to whom it belonged?” inquired S——, who was standing by, putting his finger on the death’s-head.

“Well, that’s a difficult thing to say,” answered Andros. “The quick-lime in which it was buried has attacked the sutures, and whether they were thoroughly knit or not I can not at present tell. But the teeth are those of a girl; at least, I should suppose so. Most probably, could we build the face up with its original living flesh, and crown the head with its ‘woman’s glory,’ we should have before us a fair, young face, that with every smile would show a row of pretty teeth, and an abundance of bright-brown, almost golden, hair. Perhaps, most likely, her eyes were blue, and they certainly were large”— here the doctor thrust his thumb into one of the empty sockets— “while her other features were small and delicate. And to complete a picture which is, of course, almost purely one of fancy, I should say that she was in figure *petite* and graceful. Do you see her, gentlemen?”

“Tell you what, Doctor,” said the clerk to Doctor Andros, “you have sketched almost to the life a young lady who staid here about three months ago, and about whom there were one or two circumstances of rather strange interest. I think I spoke to you about her; Mrs. Duplessis, I mean.”

“O, the little dumb girl, you mean. I think I do remember your saying something to me about her,” said Doctor Andros.

“Tell us about it,” said S——.

“Well, as a coincidence, it’s perhaps worth hearing,” said the clerk. “Three months ago, a tall gentleman, named Duplessis, who spoke in almost unintelligible English, took No.— for himself and wife. I remember his appearance distinctly. He had a full black— very black— beard, black eyes, and particularly arched eyebrows. He wore an overcoat that was of precisely the same material as his other clothes, and in his cravat a pin with the head made after the fashion of a serpent biting a file. He was absent during the whole of the first day, and three times during the afternoon and evening Madame Duplessis sent down messages to know if her husband had returned. These messages were written in the best and correctest of English. He came home, I heard, just in time to catch the last elevator. The second day he was absent again, and the same anxious messages reached me. About six, I happened to get into the elevator as he and she were

coming down, and so had a full opportunity of seeing the lady closely. Upon my word, Doctor, she *was* just such a pretty little creature as you have described, except that her eyes were brown. I asked her if she liked what she had seen of California, and the girl—Lord! she couldn't have been more than sixteen or seventeen—looked up timidly into her husband's face and made some fluttering motion with her hands.

“My wife is one dumb, sare,’ he said, and she nodded her head and smiled. I saw then that she had as pretty and perfect a set of teeth as I had ever seen. Well, they went out together, but he came back about twelve, alone. Next morning, when he paid his bill, I incidentally mentioned his wife. He said something about ‘friends in town,’ but what I could not distinctly hear. But, of course, it was no business of mine; and that’s the last I ever saw or heard of either.”

The clerk finished his story, most of the listeners went “sampling,” and Doctor Andros, with the skull still in his hand, and the tooth and hair still in his pocket, went to his room.

III.

I transcribe here a few leaves from the note-book of Doctor Andros:

“Brought home a skull and tooth found in a broken chimney by the workmen employed in removing the old houses between Jackson and Pacific streets, in the course of clearing the line for Montgomery Avenue. No other bones found. The face during life must have been horribly mutilated, or rather disfigured, for from the frontal to the maxillary bones extends a regular line of fracture, splintering the bone on each side. Such a blow was, in all probability, almost immediately fatal; for, supposing the murderous instrument to have been, as it most likely was, an axe, then, judging from the width of the fracture in the frontal bone, the blade must have penetrated the brain to some depth. I have said ‘murderous instrument;’ but, of course, that the subject was murdered is only a matter of supposition, although I do not see how such a wound could well have been received accidentally. It must have been a cruel, cruel blow, at any rate.

“I forgot to mention a tress of hair, found at the same time and place, of the finest quality and exceptionally long. It seems so strange that this single lock should have been saved from the burning action of the quick-lime in which the body was most probably buried, or possibly from the shears of those who saw her die. Heigh-ho! how fancy does run loose. Still, the hair *is* long and silken, and if the poor dead girl had that as her sole ornament, she possessed a glorious gift. It is an extraordinary fact that the pulp of the filament....

“Have just been examining the tooth, and am more than ever convinced that the poor girl — I have thoroughly embodied her now—occupied a position above the ordinary. The fact that its fellows are small and that the enamel is beautifully white, proves nothing at all, except that their owner took care of them. But this tooth, which that hideous boy gave me, is filled in a manner and with a substance both unusual.

The filling is of platinum-foil, put in with a vast amount of dental care and skill. Its companion molar must also have been hollow, for a spike, so to speak, of platinum projects from it, and is, in fact, a sort of continuation of the filling of the first tooth. This second tooth, of which the centre was hollow, must have been filled through the first. Now, there are only some three or

four dentists, that I know of, who use platinum as a filling, and one of them, and, I believe, the inventor of the process, is M. Lemerrier, of Paris. ‘Happy thought,’ as *Punch* says; be sure to call on him when there, to inquire as to his success with chloral-hydrate as an anaesthetic. By the by, why not take the tooth with me; it will very possibly interest Lemerrier to see a specimen of the handiwork of a rival or disciple. Yes, and I’ll take the skull, too, and present it to Guy’s; it will, at any rate, show them I haven’t forgotten the old hospital. How well I remember, etc.

“Find I shall be able to get away for my run across the continent much sooner than I expected. Doctor Baylis has consented to take charge of my patients during my absence. I feel almost as jolly as a school-boy at the prospect of a holiday.”

IV.

“Among those who left in the overland train yesterday morning, was Dr. William Andros. We understand that our old friend and respected fellow-citizen intends making a lengthened tour through Europe. We wish him all imaginable pleasure during this holiday, which he has so long needed.” — *San Francisco Paper*.

V.

From William Andros, M.D., to the Chief of Police, San Francisco.

“29 RUE CAUMARTIN, PARIS,

“MY DEAR C——:— I am almost tempted to turn detective, and, if my patients fail me, shall look to you for a position in the force, although I dare say should require in such a profession more patience than ever. See the joke? But *au sérieux*. I have been in Paris nearly a month. I have something to tell you of a rather extraordinary nature, and it *may* happen that I shall need your co-operation, as I now ask your attention.

“Possibly, were you to make a trip to Paris, you would never think of visiting the Jardin Mabille. I did, however, on Sunday evening last, and it may be that this breaking of the Christian Sabbath will prove the means of making you a moving power in a story which is, at all events, growing hourly more interesting to me. I was sitting at one of the many little tables set everywhere throughout the garden, drinking a cup of coffee and smoking a cigar, when there sat down at the opposite side a gentleman whose face seemed so familiar to me that my first impulse was to offer him my hand. But a moment’s reflection convinced me that he was a stranger, although there remained the idea that I had seen the face somewhere before. I have no doubt that while hesitating about the matter, I was at the same time staring rudely, for the gentleman, I found, was glancing somewhat savagely at me over the top of his newspaper. There was something more than displeasure, though, I thought, in the quick, shifting glances of his bright, black eyes. There was suspicion, if not fear! But fear of what? I was now sure that we had never met before. Handsome eyes they were, too, with magnificently curved eyebrows; but with a very perceptible devil peeping out of them. The stranger drank his absinthe, laid down his paper with a scowl in those same black eyes, and left; not, however, before I had seen that in his cravat he wore a pin of odd make — a serpent in writhing convolutions, it seemed. My eyes are none of the best, and yet I knew perfectly that it was an adder biting a file; although, as I say, I did not see this, and although I am sure I had never set eyes on the pin before. You must frequently have been aware

of such psychological phenomena yourself. I puzzled over the matter some little time, but without arriving at any satisfactory conclusion.

“Do you remember my calling on you one afternoon, before I left San Francisco, with a skull, tooth, and tress of hair, found by some workmen near the old International Hotel, while clearing the route of Montgomery Avenue? The hair is still at the O——— Hotel, but the skull and tooth I have with me. The skull I intended for Guy’s Hospital, London, and the tooth for M. Lemercier, the famous French dentist, of whom, very possibly, you have never heard. I came direct to Havre by the *Ville de Paris*, thence to Paris—chiefly to see my little niece Lu, who is here at school—leaving my London visit for a future time. The reason of my taking all this trouble about a tooth is that Lemercier—who, by the by, is an old chum of mine—boasts about his being the only dentist living who successfully fills teeth with platinum, and yet here was one picked up in San Francisco, filled with this material, and in a good state of preservation, although most likely it had been subjected to much hard usage. The chances were ten thousand to one against its being a specimen of his handiwork. And now read what my quizzing him on the fact of having a rival has led to.

“With the tooth in my waistcoat pocket, I called on Lemercier last evening, and, after he had got over his surprise at seeing me, and the conversation had settled down into something like freedom, I brought up the subject of the tooth.

“‘For all I know,’ said I, ‘there may be a score, but, at any rate, here is the evidence that there is *one* other dentist than yourself who uses platinum as a filling.’ With this I produced the tooth; and here I should tell you that it is not only filled with platinum, but its immediate neighbor must have been filled through the one found, for from the side there projects a spur or spike of platinum that must have been driven into the second tooth through the first.

“Lemercier took the tooth, turned it over in his fingers, and then examined it with a powerful magnifying-glass. ‘Yes,’ said he, quietly, ‘I thought so. I fill this one little tooth—these two little teeth, *en effet*—mine one self.’

“‘Good God!’ cried I, starting up. ‘Are you sure of that? That tooth was found in California.’

“‘I care not,’ said Lemercier, ‘if the tooth were found in the Red Sea. *I fill it.* ‘

“For the moment I could hardly speak. Then I told him the story of its discovery and that of the skull. Lemercier looked grave. ‘I did not think she would become an *émigrée*?’ said he. ‘You may be surprised how I should remember the filling of a certain tooth,’ he continued; ‘but you will see I fill at the same time one other tooth through thees. Now, *that* I remember distinctly to do, and remember do I, too, that it was in the head of a fair English mees, who, though I must have pained her much, said no one word.’

“‘Very different from the ordinary run of women,’ I could not help remarking.

“‘She was,’ said Lemercier. ‘She had that great blessing of being born dumb.’

“Lord! how the whole thing flashed across my mind. Just call at the O—— Hotel and ask B——, the clerk, to tell you the story he told me about a Mr. and Mrs. Duplessis, who staid there in September or October last. As there is a heaven above us, I believe the little dumb girl who was a guest there, who did *not* come back with her husband the second night, and the little dumb English ‘mees’ who was a patient of Lemercier’s, are one and the same, and that Mr. Duplessis and the stranger I saw in the Jardin Mabille, on Sunday, are one and the same, too. The question was, what had become of her? You will, of course, say that I am rashly jumping at conclusions, but to me it is only another evidence that Providence and not chance rules the world.

“‘With whom do you remember this little girl came?’ I asked. ‘I am somewhat interested in this matter.’

“‘She came with one of the ladies of Madame Ganil’s *pension*. Wait a moment, and I will give you the address and date.’ He left the room, and returned in a few minutes with a slip of paper on which was written:

“‘M’LLE. IDA GILMORE,
“‘Chez Madame Ganil,
“‘3 Boulevard Sevastopol.’

“And here I find I must conclude this lengthy scrawl; but by the next mail I will send you the result of my visit to Madame Ganil. Wishing you, etc., I remain, etc.,

“WM. ANDROS.”

VI.

From William Andros, M.D., to the Chief of Police, San Francisco.

“29 RUE CAUMARTIN, PARIS.

MY DEAR C——:—As I promised in my last, of the 20th, I am going to trouble you with an account of my call on Madame Ganil. Its result, I am sorry to say, has not surprised me. I had my little niece Lucy for an interpreter, as I am rather shaky in what was once almost a mother-tongue to me. I rang the bell of the gloomy-looking house, where a great deal of *politesse* and a very little of anything else is taught, and was admitted by a grim-looking man, and shown into a grim-looking room adorned with specimens of the pupils’ handiwork in the way of hideous and grim-looking crayon sketches.

“Madame Ganil, a pleasant-looking little woman of any age from thirty to fifty, soon made her appearance, holding my card in her small bony hand.

“‘Ah, I have the honor of addressing Dr. Andros, the famous American physician of whom I have heard so much? What an angelic child!’

“This last sentence cleared away my bewilderment. She evidently thought Lu to be a prospective pupil, and hence the pleasant fiction of my fame. I did not at that moment attempt to undeceive her on either point, but with Lu’s help managed to let her know that I had come principally to inquire for a certain Miss Ida Gilmore who had been a pupil there.

“‘Monsieur is some relation of the *pauvre enfant*?’ said Madame Ganil, with an odd look at me.

‘I kicked Lu’s trim little *bottine* under the chair, and answered, ‘Yes, I—I am her uncle.’

“‘Indeed,’ said Madame Ganil, ‘I had no idea she had an uncle. She never spoke of one.’

“‘For the simple reason that she never knew she had one—living,’ said Dr. Andros the liar, bold as brass. ‘I have been so long in America that I question whether any relative of mine except this child—’

“‘Her cousin?’ interjected the Ganil, quick as lightning.

“‘Her cousin,’ assented Dr. Andros just as quickly— ‘was aware of my being alive.’

“‘*Dans ce cas*’ said Madame Ganil, ‘I regret to inform you that your niece is dead.’

“Her loving uncle put his pocket-handkerchief to his eyes, while little Lu looked sufficiently startled at the inexplicable style of the conversation, to aid the deception wonderfully.

“‘Of course,’ said Madame Ganil the artful, ‘you know that the *chere petite* Ida was hopelessly *deaf!*’

“‘Pardon, Madame, dumb, you mean,’ said Dr. Andros the sly.

“‘Dumb, of course, I mean,’ cried the Ganil. ‘What an old piece of forgetfulness I am. Well, her friends in England—she was brought here by a lady, a Madame Geelmore—’

“‘My only sister,’ said I, desperately.

“‘Ah!’ said Madame Ganil, ‘she did not resemble you. As I remarked, Madame Geelmore did not wish her to go to an asylum, however good, and so brought her to me, hoping that the gentle discipline and tender surveillance for which this establishment has a humble reputation, would do somewhat toward lightening the toil of her studies in the French language, for which she had a particular predilection. But doubtless Monsieur has heard all this before.’

“‘Partly,’ said I; ‘but will Madame charm me by proceeding?’

“Madame bowed, and went on: ‘When she had been a loved and loving inmate of this quiet establishment for two years, and was then seventeen years of age, her father and mother both died——’

“‘That was last summer,’ I interrupted. (You see I was guessing with a vengeance. This time again, fortune, or Providence rather, favored me.)

“‘Yes, late in the summer,’ said Madame— ‘died, as I said, leaving her as we supposed’ (with an

apologetic duck toward me), ‘entirely friendless and unprotected. At that time, August, the Vicomte Montmarte, a well-known and most estimable *gentilhomme*, who had met her at the house of Madame Lefevre, mother of one of my dearest pupils, honored her with the offer of his hand and title.’

“‘He did not marry a penniless wife,’ I said, still following up my desperate plan. ‘Ida *must* have had some money of her own.’

“Madame gave me another queer look, but hiding it with a polite smile, almost instantly added:

“‘Monsieur, as one of the family, must certainly be aware that the *dot* of Mademoiselle Geelmore was by no means of the largest. Monsieur assuredly would not impute motives of a mercenary character to the Vicomte Montmarte?’

“‘Most assuredly not,’ said I; ‘the vicomte has my most profound consideration. Will Madame tell me: Is not the vicomte a tall, handsome man, with a full black beard, black eyes, and particularly arched eyebrows?’

“Talk about the queer look in Madame Ganil’s eyes at first!— that was nothing to the anxious and, it seemed to me, frightened face she turned to me to ask, ‘Have you seen my—the vicomte here—in Paris?’

“Diamond cut diamond, eh! ‘No, Madame,’ I replied.

“‘And yet you have described him?’

“‘Madame forgets that so “estimable and *well-known* a *gentilhomme*” as the Vicomte de Montmarte is possibly known outside of Paris.’

“Madame put her nervous hand to her heart, and continued hesitatingly: ‘Well, they were married on the 5th, at the church of St. Joseph, and went to England for their wedding trip. Five months ago, the vicomte called here in deep mourning. I divined the frightful truth. The dear, dear vicomtesse was dead. Yes, she had died in England, and was buried somewhere out of London— Westmoreland, I think.’

“I could no longer restrain myself, but started up and shouted, ‘That’s an infernal lie!’

“Madame Ganil evidently understood enough of what I said, to be aware that it was something very dreadful. Lu shrieked a little shriek, and Dr. Andros sat down with the consciousness that he had made an ass of himself.

“A little oil was thrown on the troubled waters by my asking for one of the school circulars. Madame left the room to fetch one, and at the same time brought back the portrait of one of the dearest, prettiest girls I ever saw. It was Ida Gilmore taken in her bridal dress, and any greater prize for a man to clasp in his arms and call his own, I could not imagine. Madame Ganil would not part with it, however. I promised—lie again—to call with Lucy on the next day, and left.

“And now, C——, I’m going to ferret this thing out and find that villain, Montmarte, if it takes my whole life. I look for your assistance when the time comes, and remain, yours, etc.

“WM. ANDROS.

“P. S.—Lu tells me that so suspicious and strict are the schoolmistresses in Paris, that to get any information from them or free access to the pupils is a matter of difficulty, usually great and sometimes extreme. So my suspicions, due to Madame Ganil’s queer conduct, have possibly no foundation. But, *nous verrons*. W. A.”

VII.

From William Andros, M. D., to the Chief of Police, San Francisco.

“52 AVENUE JOSEPHINE, PARIS.

“My dear C——:— It is as much as I can do to write what I have to, ‘decently and in order,’ but I will sink my natural excitement and tell my story as quietly as possible.

“So convinced was I when I left Madame Ganil’s that the man whom I had met in the Jardin Mabille was none other than the Vicomte Montmarte, that I felt myself perfectly justified in calling the aid of the police. For this purpose I visited, the Rue Jerusalem, and obtained the assistance of as quiet and meek-looking a little man as was ever made a nonentity of at home. To him I simply confided the fact that I wished the address of the Vicomte Montmarte.

“‘Never heard of him,’ said the little man. ‘What is his description?’

“I drew his portrait as fully as I could, and the little man departed. By nine the next morning I had the address: ‘52 *Avenue Josephine*.’

“I took a carriage and drove there instantly. No. 52 is a large boardinghouse and certainly not the place that a vicomte would live in, and seeing a bill of *appartements meublés*, I at once took a couple of rooms that were vacant. That very evening I saw Montmarte going down the stairs. I followed him until he went into a *café*. One minute afterward I entered too. I can not weary you with the account of how our intimacy grew. ‘Suffice it to say,’ that the elderly American gentleman of particularly simple and lamb-like demeanor, by reason of this said demeanor, coupled with his very apparent ignorance of all things Parisian, was most politely assisted out of a muddle which he had purposely got into with the *garçon*, by him of the black eyes and hair. The acquaintance thus commenced was not allowed to drop. To our mutual surprise we found we were both staying at the same house. We exchanged cards, mine having the address, New York; his the name of *Victor Ganil!* This name staggered me for the moment, as you may well suppose. So there was something in Madame Ganil’s reticence after all. *Le beau Vicomte Montmarte was the schoolmistress’ son!*

“Circumstances make the man. I did not know before what an actor I could be; I read the name without betraying the slightest surprise. Madame evidently did not know of her son’s being in Paris, or she certainly would have warned him that some one wanted him.

“That evening I sent for M. Renard, the mild little detective, and gave him job No. 2. On the 5th of August, 1873, the Vicomte Montmarte and a Mademoiselle Ida Gilmore were married in the church of St. Joseph. I wanted a copy of the record. If not at St. Joseph, search every Catholic church in Paris.

“Next afternoon I met Victor Ganil at the *café*, and, as if things were hastening rapidly to an end, the villain wore not only the strange pin, but the suit, overcoat and all alike, of which B—— had spoken. I invited him to come to my room in the evening for a game of casino. To this he almost eagerly consented.

“(My hand trembles so that I can hardly write.)

“I left Ganil at four, with the understanding that he should meet me at half-past seven. I had not been sitting in my room ten minutes, when Renard brought me the intelligence that no entry, either civil or religious, had been made of such a marriage as I had spoken of to him! I determined to *act* instantly, and begged Renard—who did not betray the slightest notice of my excitement — to take me before the Chief Commissioner of Police. To him and Renard I told the whole story as clearly and minutely as possible, also stating my plan of action for the evening. The two conversed apart for a moment, and then M. le Commissaire, turning to me, said:

“‘Renard shall be at your apartments at seven, and shall act as the event requires.’

“Punctually to the minute the mild little man made his appearance, and after a short consultation took his place in the bed-room, the transom over the connecting door being left open. Ganil was a little late. I was afraid he would notice my agitation, and so busied myself at once with getting out the cards. There was a drawer in the table on my side, and in it I had placed the skull and tooth, only wishing I had the hair, too. Ganil I managed to seat with his back to the bed-room door. After some time I succeeded in screwing my courage to the sticking-point, and began:

“‘Do you know, Monsieur Ganil,’ said I, ‘you remind me uncommonly of a gentleman — a countryman of yours, by the by—whom I once met in America?’

“‘Indeed!’ said he. ‘Tens—was that in New York?’

“‘No,’ I answered. ‘Little casino— it was in San Francisco.’

“Try as he would, he could not keep his mouth from twitching and his face from growing pale.

“‘I was never there,’ he answered, but so hoarsely that I scarcely caught what he said.

“‘No, I did not expect you had been,’ I said, smiling a rather sickly smile. ‘But if you have no objections—fours— I will tell you a queer little story about your compatriot. One day in the middle of last October, a lady and gentleman named Mr. and Mrs. Duplessis (French, as you perceive by the name)— your play — staid for a couple of days at the O—— Hotel, San

Francisco. She was a pretty little child, with brown hair and brown eyes, and he, as I have said, a gentleman who somewhat resembled you. You are taking an eight with a nine, Monsieur Ganil.’

“‘*Pardon,*’ said he, ‘so I am.’

“There was something in his eye that told me I had better waste no time, but there was something in his eye, too, that told me I had not much to fear; the man was a coward. I continued:

“‘This little Madame Duplessis was left behind in San Francisco by her husband, although it’s a very strange thing that nobody afterward heard of or saw any such little lady. I should tell you—you’ve dropped a card, *mon ami*— that she was *dumb.*’

“‘Your horrible story discomposes me — hadn’t we better change the subject?’ murmured he.

“‘You have rightly *guessed,*’ said I; ‘the story *is* a horrible one. Nothing more was heard of either husband or wife, until some four months ago, when an old Frenchwoman, who was dying, confessed to the police that Madame Duplessis had been barbarously murdered with an axe, in her house, on the very night her husband left the city. No wonder you start, Monsieur; it was a cold-blooded, devilish murder. The old woman described the deed most fully, and told how the husband had struck the poor girl as she lay senseless from a first blow—struck her with the axe so savagely that the once pretty face was almost hacked in two. The body was dismembered and buried in quick-lime, the old woman said; but the skull, unconsumed, was discovered by the police.’

“(I did not know, C——, that I had such inventive powers until then.)

“Ganil was shuffling the cards nervously, but without saying a word, and I braced myself up for the final scene.

“‘Since I have been in Paris,’ I continued, ‘I have discovered— it will not interest you to know how— that Monsieur Duplessis had an assumed name, this time one of a higher grade; that of the Vicomte Montmartre. I have discovered, too, that under this title he seduced the poor English girl, Ida Gilmore—I can call it nothing else, for the marriage by which he entrapped her was a false one—and then, knowing her to be friendless and alone, and knowing, too, that he would enjoy her little fortune were she dead, and tiring of the affection of the poor little dumb creature, took her to the other end of the world to get her out of the way, and then returned to Paris with the trumped-up lie that the murdered girl had died, and was buried in England.’

“We had both laid our cards down, and were looking fixedly at each other, Ganil’s face white and working convulsively; mine, I have no doubt, just as pale, but set, for God knows I felt hard and stern enough.

“‘There is a proverb in English, Monsieur,’ I continued, ‘that says, “murder *will* out,” and there never was a truer one. I have now simply to tell you that I have discovered that Mademoiselle Ida Gilmore was an inmate of the *pension* of a Madame Ganil, and that you ‘(here I put my hand in the drawer and grasped the skull)—’and that *you*, her most miserable son, are the sham

vicomte and sham Duplessis that you are Miss Gilmore's MURDERER, and that this is the skull of your victim!

"I dashed the white thing down in front of him, and leaped up. He eyed it for a moment as if fascinated, then, with a shudder and a howl, he too leaped to his feet, seized a chair and swung it aloft.

"Curse you, American devil!" he yelled, "you shall never live to say you have caught me!"

"At me he leaped, and that so suddenly that I should not now be writing this, but that in the same moment the chair was seized from behind, and a quiet voice said, '*Douccment, doucement, mon cher.*' In that same moment M. Renard had slipped a pair of steel bracelets on the trembling wrists of the white-faced wretch. In that same moment, too, the door was burst, open and a distracted, weeping little woman rushed in. It was Madame Ganil! She comprehended the scene in a moment, and flinging herself at her son's feet she moaned out, '*Oh, mon fits! mon fils! why did you not tell me you were here? I then might have saved you, might have saved you, mon fils!*'"

Let the doctor's letter end here; there is little more to say. Mother and son were torn apart, for the mother's guilt ended with connivance at the false marriage. The son confessed his greater crime— not differing after all, except in details, from the semi-fictitious description given him by Dr. Andros. The tooth of the platinum filling had found a mighty tongue to cry aloud for vengeance; and the slow, terrible sword of Justice is at last laid bare— let us hope, never to find its scabbard till judgment to the last awful jot and tittle be executed on the murderer of Ida Gilmore.

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The table of contents credits the story to T.J. Vivian.