

THE MYSTERY OF MONTMARTRE.

Their persons matched their costume. One would have taken them for two Calabrian brigands in livery. "It's true they don't look up to much," said the pretended servant; "but never mind, all this puzzles me, just the same; I wouldn't mind entering the American's service myself. Eh, Monsieur Labriche, if you hear that he has decided to engage a valet, you might put in a word for me?"

"It might be managed, my lad; I'll speak to the steward, Monsieur Paddy, as they call him, when he comes here for his grog, and if you'll call again one day this week—"

"I'll certainly call, and I hope that to-day you'll do me the pleasure to have a drink with me. I'm going to see a countryman of mine to-day, who lives at Ternes, and I've no time to stop. Your health, Monsieur Labriche."

"Thanks, Antoine; I'm at your service."

Monsieur Antoine paid his reckoning and walked out, after having shaken hands with the good publican. That which Servon had learnt was not calculated to allay his suspicions. Monsieur de Pancorvo's grooms looked quite capable of plundering a passer-by, and for a man so rich and so fashionable not to have a single Frenchman in his service was at least remarkable.

The viscount did not wish to pursue his investigation further that day. He confined himself to walking around the house, and he noticed at an angle of the garden a small, low door which opened on a deserted lane.

If this transatlantic gentleman was really a robber chief, this door had just the appearance of being used for his nightly sorties. Servon determined to watch this exit, and returned home more resolved than ever to dog Monsieur de Pancorvo's steps.

On the day after this first reconnaissance he was preparing to commence without delay some real investigations, when the strangest chance gave a fresh direction to his researches.

On that day, about 6 o'clock, the viscount was at the club and was intending to dine there. In order to make certain of obtaining a place at the large table it is necessary to write one's name beforehand on a register kept for that purpose. Servon, engaged in an interminable game of whist, and fearing that he should be forced to dine alone, rang for a footman and sent him to write his name in the book.

The game over, it occurred to him to go and look at the names of the other diners, intending to erase his name if he saw that of any bore. He was looking carelessly at the list, when he was suddenly struck with the peculiar character of the hand in which his name was written. He recognized it immediately.

It was that of the letter containing the bank notes, which he had at that moment in his pocket and could compare at his leisure.

Doubt was impossible. The Viscount de Servon's rescuer was a footman—a footman at the club; the mystery became complicated.

On this discovery Servon felt vaguely that he was losing all trace. So he resolved to settle the question immediately. He called the mysterious servant and examined him with eager curiosity. He even stared in his face so long that the man betrayed some slight embarrassment; but in vain he scrutinized his face and person, nothing recalled him to his mind.

The man was of medium height, of a brownish complexion, with large black whiskers, exactly the appearance of a footman in an aristocratic family.

Servon said to him point blank: "It was you who wrote me this letter, then?"

And at the same moment he drew the envelope from his pocket and showed it to him. The servant looked at it an instant, and replied quite collectedly that the writing did not resemble his, but that he had not written it, and endeavoring to be at once stupid and respectful, he added: "Why should I have taken the liberty to write to Monsieur le Viscount?"

Servon was tempted for an instant to continue his questions; but he saw the ridiculousness of his position, and cut them short with a gesture.

The man withdrew without adding a word.

Matters were getting more and more entangled. Servon went to the steward of the club, and pretending to be in want of a valet, said that he had noticed this one and inquired as to his antecedents.

"He is one of our best servants," said the steward. "He is exact, honest and zealous. His only fault is his mournful face, which the gentlemen don't like. Monsieur de Pancorvo was complaining of it only yesterday; he says it brings him bad luck at cards."

"How long has he been at the club?"

"Less than a year; he came with a very good character. He has almost always been in service with foreigners, and he speaks several languages."

"How old is he?"

"I don't know exactly, and I confess," he added, "that I should be very sorry if you deprived us of him."

Servon learnt, in addition, that this mysterious footman's name was Loiseau, that he was not married, and that he lived alone in a small room close by. With all this information he was not much further advanced. However, he did not give in, and he managed to grasp a few

salient facts in the midst of this chaos.

That the letter had been written by Monsieur Loiseau there was hardly any doubt. Only he might have written it for some one else. But it was evident he knew the thief and his plans, and that both were in the club. Allowing that this thief was Pancorvo, it was necessary to discover some affinity, some bond of union between him, and the footman, in order to explain their connection.

Upon this Servon was struck by certain coincidences. Both had entered the club about the same time; both had lived for a long time abroad; both could speak several languages.

It was possible that the footman had been placed there by the same occult influence of Pancorvo, with an object easy to guess; to give him information as to the habits of the members, their winnings, the money which they usually carried on them—all those things which servants know better than any one else. It remained still to be explained how the viscount had claims on the gratitude of one of these rascals, but he did not profess to be able to guess it at the first attempt.

The steward's information was correct. Monsieur Loiseau lived at No. 42 Rue de la Michodiere, on the fifth floor.

A talkative portress informed Servon, with the inducement of a lous, that her lodger led a very regular life. He paid his rent regularly, never had any one to see him, and was hardly ever at home except to sleep, during the morning after his night duty at the club.

The compassionate woman even went so far as to lament the hard lot of club servants, obliged to pass all their nights in this manner, for she said that poor Monsieur Loiseau never came in before daylight.

Provided with this information, Servon inquired at the club of the manner in which the servants' duties were organized, and he learnt that the footmen only passed one night out of three there. If Loiseau slept from home every night, it was doubtless because he spent his nights in some other manner. Decided as he was to leave no stone unturned in order to attain his object, there was but one course for the viscount to take; to track this footman as a hound tracks a stag.

Thanks to the lessons he had had from the actor, and to his first attempts in the neighborhood of Pancorvo's house, he felt that he was clever enough to disguise himself well enough to escape recognition. He had even made himself tolerably accomplished in the art of following any one without being himself noticed.

Two days after, Servon, disguised as a market porter, was seated on a bench opposite the club. He was charmed with his disguise, which included a hat with a broad turned-down brim, very convenient for hiding his face, and a stick which at a pinch might have served as a defensive weapon. He was smoking a short pipe, duly colored, and he had stuffed a table napkin under the neck of his coat, so as to give himself a pair of high shoulders similar to those of porters. His most intimate friend would certainly not have recognized him.

He had already seen a number of men that he knew go into the club without having noticed him, and he felt quite confident of the success of his disguise. Twelve o'clock was striking, if twelve o'clock does strike on the boulevards, when Monsieur Loiseau made his appearance. He had taken off his livery and attired himself in his brown overcoat, which gave him the appearance of an inhabitant of the Marais. His whole appearance was that of an unpretending and honest man, so much so that the viscount was afraid for a moment that he had been mistaken; but he had crossed the Rubicon, and he decided to see the thing out.

He allowed Monsieur Loiseau, then, to walk about twenty paces in front of him, which is the best distance to see without being seen, and began to follow him with the heavy step and clumsy gait which his character demanded. Servon was quite delighted at the talent with which he acted his part. But his joy was damped when he saw that the man, instead of proceeding toward the Faubourg Saint-Honore, where he hoped to see him enter Monsieur de Pancorvo's house, went in an exactly opposite direction.

As a matter of fact, Loiseau, leaving the boulevard, began to traverse the Chaussee d'Antin. He walked at a measured pace, without hurrying himself and without looking at the passers-by. He had every appearance of a thoughtful man following his usual direction. Servon was still in hopes that he would turn down the Rue Saint-Lazare in order to gain the Faubourg Saint-Honore, but he soon had to abandon this idea. Monsieur Loiseau turned into the Rue Blanche, travelled the whole length of the Rue Pigalle, and finally arrived at the barrier, which he crossed without hesitation.

Once on the outer boulevard, he turned to the right and soon entered a steep, narrow street, which ran up the hill of Montmartre.

He had no idea that he was being followed.

With his head hanging, and bent as if beneath the weight of some grief or crime, the man walked on without looking round. He was evidently little troubled about being followed, or at least he had no suspicion that such was the case. All at once Servon lost sight of him. He had just disappeared at the top of some very steep steps with which the street ended; but the viscount quickly ran up the worn stones of this species of ladder and caught sight of him again. This time Monsieur Loiseau had stopped before a garden gate. He was glancing un-

easily around him, and held in his hand a key which he was preparing to introduce into the lock.

The viscount heard the sound of a closing door, and advanced cautiously. He was in a street running parallel with the boulevard, and forming consequently a kind of ledge on the hill of Montmartre, unlike the other thoroughfares in this neighborhood which almost all run up towards the top of the hill. This street, having a few houses on the left-hand side, was bounded on the right by a low wall, from which could be seen the large trees of a terraced garden. In the middle of this wall a wooden gate served as an entrance, and Monsieur Loiseau had just gone through it.

Was he at home? Had he come here to commit a crime? Servon thought to himself that, after all, Loiseau had no occasion to go to Pancorvo's house for his orders, since the American came to the club every evening.

The night was too dark to see where the garden extended; but Servon judged that it must belong to a house built almost on the top of the hill. A light which presently made its appearance over the top of the trees showed him that he was not mistaken. The footman had, then, a secret dwelling, and of a truth the place was well chosen for the accomplishment of some shady transaction. It was monstrous.

Fully satisfied with the first discovery, Servon waited for about two hours, in order to lend a hand in case of crime; but the house remained dark, funeral and silent.

He descended towards Paris, after having well noted the spot, and went and changed his clothes, and was careful to put in an appearance at the club before going home.

III.

On the afternoon of the next day, without this time disguising himself, the viscount set out to explore. He knew that Loiseau had to be at his duties again at midday, and he was certain of not being disturbed in his observations.

He found the flight of steps and the deserted street again without difficulty, and recognized the garden gate where the man had disappeared. This half-rotten wooden gate seemed to hold together with difficulty. Through its crumbling bars was to be seen a kind of rockwork archway in the most horrible taste; but beyond a pretentious object there was nothing to be distinguished but an inextricable mass of climbers and shrubs, which gave the place the appearance of a Corsican maki.

An admirable scene for a murder. From this thicket sprang tall trees, formerly no doubt forming avenues which had gradually disappeared in an undergrowth of brambles. Higher still than this virgin forest Servon saw, not without difficulty, a house as regular as the garden. It exactly resembled a tower, the Leaning Tower of Pisa even, for it was a good deal out of the perpendicular. This curious building, standing in the left-hand corner of the grounds, had a ground floor flush with the garden, a first story which must have been gained by a terrace, and a second which almost looked over the tops of the trees.

Each story was provided with one single window. The house, built entirely of brick, seemed ready to fall to pieces, less from age than from disease. It was a young ruin, the ugliest object in the world.

The viscount wondered what ridiculous citizen had had the idea of erecting this sham obelisk in the midst of these old trees which would have so well accompanied a chateau in the eighteenth century style; but he had not come here to engage in architectural studies, and he began to explore the place.

The flight of steps which had brought him to the gate continued to ascend on the right of the garden, from which it was separated by a very low wall. He mounted this difficult road, and he found about half way up another wooden gate, as worn-eaten as the first, and which, as a matter of fact, seemed disused, for a vigorous nut-tree at its entrance hid it. He continued his ascent, and finally emerged in a small square space at the end of which he saw the old church of Montmartre.

At this point the wall of the garden turned suddenly to the left and entirely hid the house. A carriage-gate, in better condition than the others, stood in the middle of the wall. The iron chain which was hanging at the end was most probably attached to a bell, and indicated the official entrance to this strange abode. The little square was deserted, and Servon was able to examine and reflect at his ease.

He took note of the topography of this Castle of the Sleeping Beauty; but he was not much further advanced when he said to himself that boldness would pay him best. Being quite certain that Loiseau was not at home, he ventured to ring.

The sound of a cracked bell was heard, but no one answered. He tried again two or three times. A sepulchral silence reigned in the house.

But the din attracted to the door of a neighboring house a dirty and horribly wrinkled old woman who said, in a trembling voice:

"There's no one there! There's no one there!"

Servon seized the opportunity, and asked whether Monsieur Loiseau did not live there.

"I don't know; there's no Loiseau, no Loiseau," muttered the old witch, and she re-entered her hovel with the mechanical swiftness of a cuckoo in a Black Forest wooden clock.

All this had a weird effect. Rather disconcerted, the viscount was about to walk away, when he espied, seated on a bench in the square, a respectable-looking man warming himself in the sunshine. He went quietly and sat down by his side, and began a conversation by a remark on the view, which was a magnificent one.

It just happened that Servon had fallen in with a kind of Joseph Prudhomme, who happened to inform him that the air was much purer in Montmartre than in Paris, a fact of doubtful interest just at that moment. The young man listened to these stereotyped phrases until, by an adroit transition, he managed to inquire the reason why the garden which lay at

their feet remained thus deserted.

"Master," said this denizen of Montmartre, raising his voice, "I've lived here fifteen years, and I've always seen the place in the same state as you see it to-day. I've been told it belongs to a very rich foreigner who lives in the colonies. They do say that a terrible crime was committed there once, and that it is haunted at night; but, like me, you are too sensible to believe such tales."

"Yes, certainly," interrupted Servon, "but I thought the house was inhabited just now."

"It has been, sir, for the last six months, by the landlord's steward. He came from abroad last summer, but he doesn't show himself much."

"Do you know him?"

"No. He's a man who passes all his days and even all his evenings in Paris."

"Does he visit no one?"

"I don't think so. Would you believe, master, that he has never set foot in the Cafe des Acacias, where the best society of Montmartre meets?"

"He's evidently not a man of taste," said Servon, smiling, "but what do you think of his not seeing any of his neighbors?"

"I don't think it's natural, and I'm inclined to think that the gentleman has something to do with the police."

"Ah! Really?"

Servon humored the old simpleton for some little time, in the hope of getting something more definite out of him; but the ancient inhabitant of Montmartre gave him no further information, for the very sufficient reason that he knew nothing.

The viscount returned home from his expedition a little more curious, but no wiser, with regard to Monsieur Loiseau. One result, however, of this first inquiry was the knowledge that this doubtful individual led a mysterious existence, and that this mystery must have a cause; but this cause was precisely the unknown quantity, which he was anxious to discover.

The problem took more and more hold on Servon; it was constantly on his mind, and he thought to himself that he should soon arrive at a solution of it, as Newton did of the law of gravitation—by always thinking of it. Frequenting the club more and more assiduously, with the sole object of keeping a watch on Monsieur de Pancorvo and Loiseau, he did not lose a gesture nor a movement of the two men whom he so watched. Monsieur de Pancorvo occasionally allowed a compromise remark to escape him, but Monsieur Loiseau was impenetrable. At any rate, if these two men knew one another they played their part well, for it was impossible to discover the slightest sign of intelligence between them. The footman always performed his duties with exemplary zeal and Monsieur de Pancorvo continued to show himself to be a fine player, which was all the easier in that he almost always won.

Since the attack of which the viscount had been the victim, no ill had befallen any of the players, at least in the street; for, as a matter of fact, some one had ransacked the rooms of a good Angevin, who had come to pass the winter in Paris, and who had been a heavy winner at cards. Having effected an entry by means of false keys whilst he was furiously gambling at the club, the thieves had forced open and emptied the desk, where he kept his winnings, which at that time amounted to a considerable sum. The countryman complained loudly, and the affair created a great sensation, which gave rise to all kinds of remarks.

Servon thought it best not to join in with the gossip who discussed the subject, but he learned for certain that on the night of the robbery Monsieur de Pancorvo was not at the club. To tell the truth, the viscount was the only one to remark the fact, for the noble foreigner had many friends, and passed for a perfect gentleman. Servon's brain was turning. Like those of all men who are possessed of one fixed idea. He made every effort to drive out this persistent preoccupation; but he only succeeded in arriving at a kind of compromise between the curiosity which was urging him on and his own natural good sense. Accordingly, he solemnly promised himself to think no more about it, after one last attempt, he did not find a key to the mystery.

He had noticed that it would not be a matter of difficulty to introduce himself into the garden at Montmartre by the side door which opened on to the steps, and he imagined that, once inside, he would be certain to discover some means of observing the enemy at close quarters. So he resolved not to defer this decisive expedition, and he promised himself that it should be the last.

He chose the costume of a street loungeur. He put on a dirty blouse, a tattered hat and a wig of splendid curly hair. When the viscount was thus attired he admired himself, but a sad reflection forced itself upon him; a few rags and a blackguard's hat were sufficient to change the most fashionable man into the most ardent cut-throat. Servon chose a night when Loiseau was not on duty at the club, and he did not set out until after midnight, not having occasion to follow any track this time. On the contrary, it would be better to give the man time to settle himself in his strange abode, in order to observe him at his ease.

How? The viscount knew not, as he wended his way towards Montmartre.

On this particular evening the weather seemed to have been expressly chosen for a gloomy enterprise.

One of those terrible hurricanes which come to us sometimes from the Atlantic was passing over Paris. Fearful gusts shook the houses, and a heavy rain beat upon the windows. The few belated foot-passengers walked along with the bodies bent to the storm, and kept close to the houses, so as to avoid the tiles, which rattled down on all sides. Chimney pots toppled down here and there with a terrible crash.

The night was an awe-inspiring one. Servon wondered whether this cataclysm was a warning from heaven, and for an instant he thought of turning back; but he said to himself that he was only in for an unwashed bath after all; that such a

night would be certain to keep inquisitive people out of the way, and that the storm would favor his nocturnal enterprise. Accordingly, he continued bravely to ascend towards Montmartre, his elbows tucked in, and his head low—in spite of the torrents of rain which beat down from the north-west—like a ship running before the wind.

In the whole length of the Rue Pigalle he met not a soul, and he passed the barrier without seeing the custom-house clerks, carefully stowed away in their sentry-boxes. On the outer boulevard Servon had great difficulty in finding his way by the vacillating light of the street lamps, which the wind swayed to and fro on their rusty chains, and he kept plunging into quagmires which reminded him, at the gates of Paris, of the country roads of Brittany.

After an exhausting climb the viscount found himself, at about one o'clock in the morning, in front of the garden-gate, and a bright light which appeared over the top of the trees caused him to think that he had arrived opportunely.

Without loss of time he commenced the escalade, and managed to grasp without much difficulty the branches of the nut-tree which grew against the door; then, drawing himself up by his arms, he found himself after two attempts in the garden, without other damage than a large rent in his trousers.

But this was the easiest part of the undertaking.

He had to make his way into the middle of a veritable jungle, and approach the house without betraying his presence. Fortunately the roar of the storm, which swayed the branches of the great trees, drowned the sound of the branches which Servon broke as he walked along. He advanced stealthily, with his arms extended like a blind man, and scratching his hands in the brambles; but a Breton used to hunting in the woods can afford to despise such trifling annoyances.

(To be Continued.)

NAPOLEON AND ENGLAND.

It is also pertinent to inquire what would have happened had Napoleon been successful in landing an army on English shores. In the first place, his mastery of the seas would have been quickly ended by the combined efforts of the English war vessels then afloat, and he would have been left without base of supplies or communication. In the second place, he would have met resistance from a proud, free, enlightened and desperate people, which would have paralyzed all his tactics, and would have worn out any army he could have kept together. Did Napoleon fail to understand this? Of course not. He had said before that an army which cannot be regularly recruited is a doomed army. He had seen this theory verified in Egypt, and he knew very well that a permanent mastery of the seas was out of the question with the fleets and flotillas at his disposal. It would appear in the case of any other man than Napoleon that the proof was complete, in view of what actually did occur—namely, the attack by land on Austria. The impression which Metternich received in 1810, that this had been the Emperor's intention from the first, and the lavishness with which Napoleon, throughout his public career, made use of any and every form of ruse, even the costliest, in order to mislead his foes, are complementary pieces of evidence which furnish the strongest corroboration.—Prof. W. M. Sloane's "Life of Napoleon" in the November Century.

NO PLACE FOR ENJOYMENT.

Miss Smalltalk—No! I shan't go to the opera again very soon. Somehow the Metropolitan isn't built for hearing.

Mr. Upingee—Really, you amaze me! I thought its acoustic properties perfect.

Miss Smalltalk—Well, all I know is, we could hardly hear one another in our own box, and I had to strain my ears the whole evening to hear what the people in the next box were saying.

Pills do not sure Constipation. They only aggravate. Kari's Clover Root Tea gives perfect regularity of the bowels.

NOT ABOVE TRADE.

The Prince of Wales has not that contempt for trade that many a lesser social personage possesses. At the Marlborough Club one evening an intimate of the Prince asked him how he liked the idea of having relatives in business—an allusion to the two brothers of the Marquis of Lorne, one of whom is a stock broker, while the other is in the tea trade. "If I would have me," answered H. R. H., mentioning a shopkeeper on a huge scale, "I would go into partnership with him myself to-morrow."

"My baby had croup and was saved by Shiloh's Cure," writes Mrs. J. B. Martin, of Huntsville, Ala.

CONCENTRATED EXTRACT.

There may be a great spiritual lesson in the fact that the meaner the dog the quicker his owner will fight for him.

In the economy of life it doesn't pay to be always borrowing trouble and paying a high rate of interest on it.

More hopeful than all wisdom or counsel is one draught of simple human pity that will not forsake us.—George Eliot.

FROM NEW YORK.

"I am a commission merchant doing business in the West Indies. I used some of your Putnam's Painless Corn Extract when in Canada, and think it is the best cure for corns I have ever seen. Please send me a few dozen for friends and customers in South America and the West Indies."—William Gould, New York city.

Archbishop Langevin is prevented from attending the installation of Cardinal Satolli at Baltimore by business matters.

The Spanish have defeated the Cuban rebels in a battle on the Caimana River, killing 100 of them.