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WHOLE NO. 370.

## As Bad as Bad Can Be.

### THE TERRIBLE CONSPIRACY FOR WHICH THE WIDOW GRAS IS ON TRIAL IN PARIS.

REDUCING ONE LOVER TO DISPERSED ANOTHER FOR LIFE WITH A FEW DASH OF VITRIOL.

From a Correspondent of the N. Y. World.

Paris, July 21.—The city's sensation now is and for some days will be the trial of the widow Gras, nee Eugenia Armande Bricourt, and styled Jenny de la Cour. Her crime was not murder, but complicity in a cowardly and malignant assault upon one of her lovers, but her conduct and that of the accomplice who did her infernal behest, afforded such singular psychological study that it is small wonder that Paris is running mad after tickets to the court-room, which are rather easily to be obtained than invitations to a State banquet.

Eugenia Bricourt is thirty-eight years old, one of the four children of an honest but poor laborer of this city. As a child sent out to peddle fruit and flowers she displayed a singular precocity and intelligence, and at the same time an ardent desire for money and ease. A rich lady, the Baroness de P., observing her pretty face and graceful manners, adopted her and sent her to school, but in 1848 her parents suddenly took her back, and set her to selling gingerbread at the *barrière*. In 1854, then working in a chenille factory, worn out and penniless, she applied to her former protectress, who received her, fed and clothed her, and married her at the age of seventeen to a young man named Gras, giving her an outfit and a wedding-portion of 3,000 francs, which was invested in a small grocery shop. Money making by trade she found too slow, and after a few months she abandoned her husband, who died in 1871, in hospital. This was in 1856. Taking the *nom de guerre* of Jenny de la Cour she became the mistress of an officer at Vincennes, but finding him too poor, abandoned him for another protector. She tried a perfumery shop, then a stationery shop, each establishment being merely a screen for her illicit practices; then, to gain notoriety, she debuted as a minor actress at the Folies Marigny. This was in 1862, and she made somewhat of a success—that is to say she became a rather notorious and fashionable demi-monde. She had a passion for literature about this time, and produced some very bad verse, much lauded by her lovers.

She only rhymed herself, but was the cause of ruin to others, as she obtained from visiting her, and pressed to her when she picked up at a pigeon shooting match a wounded pigeon and nursed it tenderly in her breast, the author of the poem being one of Napoleon's Ministers, who was her companion for the time. It was the great scandal of the good people of Vitel. In 1865 she lived in the Rue Saint-Georges, in very comfortable, even luxurious, quarters. There she made the acquaintance of a rich Breton landowner, with whom she lived at Nantes until 1871, when she married. The price of breaking with her was heavy. He gave her the house where they lived, which she sold for 7,000 francs, and three undated notes for 29,000 francs. To get these back he settled 24,000 francs upon her, payable in quarterly instalments, but she retained possession of the blank obligations, and negotiated them, plucking him in all of 60,000 francs. Later she extorted a further sum of 3,000 francs, under threat of sending his letters to her to his wife's family. In 1871 she took up with a rich simpliciton of twenty, who paid her rent and allowed her 3,000 a year; when he married in 1876 she blackmailed him out of 5,000 francs, and from time to time extorted other sums from him. Meanwhile, for nearly three years, she had maintained illicit relations with a young man, Rene de la Roche, an orphan, heir to a large estate in Touraine. He was rather a boy than a man, being only eighteen when their intimacy began. She visited him frequently at his rooms, and obtained such a complete ascendancy over him that he was a mere slave to her; he consulted her in business matters and family affairs, and when from time to time he travelled wrote her letters accounting for every minute of his time. When last year her protector married, she had only De la Roche left, and she set herself to black him. She was growing old, and must assure herself now or never against poverty. What money she made she had invested in stock, and she was unsuccessful. With such a fearful anxiety did she devote herself to this employment that her broker says, "She was no longer a woman, she was an interest table." At the same time she reduced her house old expenses to a miserly sum; she bought only scraps of meat of an inferior quality, lived largely on cheap vegetables, and scolded if a candle was left lighted or an ounce of charcoal was wasted.

For about a year a workman came every Sunday to carry up wood and coal, decant wine and discharge other services, after which he breakfasted with the widow Gras. His intimacy with her was a subject of remark to the stations in life being so different. He was two years her senior, a widower, had served with distinction in the ranks and now was employed in an oil factory at St. Denis, at a wage of four francs a day. Nathaniel Gaudry had been born in the same street as the widow, and from the time of childhood had loved her passionately, his love had strengthened with his years. His fellow-workmen noticed that on Mondays he was always gloomy and preoccupied, and extorted from him the secret that he had met a friend of his childhood, whom he hoped to marry—"Not a workwoman," he said proudly, "but a real lady." So violent and consuming was his passion that whenever he was particularly excited and sad his companions would say, "Ah, you've been to see your sweetheart." Eugenia Gras, conscious of her power over him, took every means to strengthen it. During their Sunday interviews she plied him with books of the craziest or most staid indecency or suggestiveness; she allowed him to assist at her toilet; she practised upon him with harshness and exciting drugs, and having thus maddened her devotee with amorous passion she refused even to allow him to kiss her hand! It is surprising that this woman had as absolute control over her slave as the Old Man of the Mountain ever had over his zealots. In November last, Gaudry wrote to her, proposing marriage. She replied in the following note: "Come to me. I have need of you for a matter concerning us both. Tell your employer you must be absent on family affairs. I will pay your expenses." Under pretext of settling up a small estate Gaudry got leave and was absent November 20-22. On his return he was moodier than ever, and was unable to eat or sleep.

When he arrived at the widow's house she gave him twenty francs, and said: "I wish to have revenge upon a man who when I was in business swindled me of some money, and the most effective way to strike him is to strike his son. If you will disguise the boy without killing him, I will marry you and be faithful to you." No saying she gave him a set of spiked brass knuckles, and walked with him to the Cafe de la Roche frequently to point out his victim to her agent. She showed him De la Roche's lodgings, and arranged, to avoid mistake, that when De la Roche left her she would lift a corner of her curtain, when Gaudry was to fall on him and beat him murderously about the head and face. Gaudry kept a watch for three nights, but for a wonder, De la Roche did not visit his mistress. On the third, his conscience revolting at such an assassin's work, he returned home and did not see the widow Gras again till the 11th of January. He says he did not wish to commit the crime, but was too feeble to resist her temptress, and so obtained from visiting her, and pressed to her when she picked up at a pigeon shooting match a wounded pigeon and nursed it tenderly in her breast, the author of the poem being one of Napoleon's Ministers, who was her companion for the time. It was the great scandal of the good people of Vitel. In 1865 she lived in the Rue Saint-Georges, in very comfortable, even luxurious, quarters. There she made the acquaintance of a rich Breton landowner, with whom she lived at Nantes until 1871, when she married. The price of breaking with her was heavy. He gave her the house where they lived, which she sold for 7,000 francs, and three undated notes for 29,000 francs. To get these back he settled 24,000 francs upon her, payable in quarterly instalments, but she retained possession of the blank obligations, and negotiated them, plucking him in all of 60,000 francs. Later she extorted a further sum of 3,000 francs, under threat of sending his letters to her to his wife's family. In 1871 she took up with a rich simpliciton of twenty, who paid her rent and allowed her 3,000 a year; when he married in 1876 she blackmailed him out of 5,000 francs, and from time to time extorted other sums from him. Meanwhile, for nearly three years, she had maintained illicit relations with a young man, Rene de la Roche, an orphan, heir to a large estate in Touraine. He was rather a boy than a man, being only eighteen when their intimacy began. She visited him frequently at his rooms, and obtained such a complete ascendancy over him that he was a mere slave to her; he consulted her in business matters and family affairs, and when from time to time he travelled wrote her letters accounting for every minute of his time. When last year her protector married, she had only De la Roche left, and she set herself to black him. She was growing old, and must assure herself now or never against poverty. What money she made she had invested in stock, and she was unsuccessful. With such a fearful anxiety did she devote herself to this employment that her broker says, "She was no longer a woman, she was an interest table." At the same time she reduced her house old expenses to a miserly sum; she bought only scraps of meat of an inferior quality, lived largely on cheap vegetables, and scolded if a candle was left lighted or an ounce of charcoal was wasted.

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duel I will strike at his face—trust me to reach it." "No; you are not of the same rank in life, and he would not fight. It must be as he has planned it." Gaudry insisted no longer, but gave himself up to her control. The assault was to be made at the door of her lodgings, Rue de Boulogne, on the night of the 13th-14th, the night of the grand masked ball at the Opera. She had written to Rene de la Roche, who was in Touraine, asking him to escort her to it, and, after some objections, he had consented, partly because of her influence over him, partly from the natural desire of a young man to take part in such a festival. Yet she had a presentiment of evil impending, for so he wrote, and added: "I am sad to-night; it would take very little to make me cry."

De la Roche promised to reach Paris on the 12th at dusk, to spend the night there, and on the 13th to escort her to the masked ball. He arrived on the 12th at midnight, remained with his mistress till 9 next morning, returned at 5 to dine with her, and arranged to call for her at 11. She was as affectionate towards him as ever, but was calm and collected, and betrayed no suspicious excess of affection. Meanwhile Gaudry was stalking his victim. He was with the widow in her unlighted boudoir at 5, when the bell rang announcing De la Roche's arrival. Telling him to return to his room, she led him out noisily, showing him before doing so the bottle of sulphuric acid, and letting fall a few drops upon the floor, which they seared and stained. When he returned at 10.30 the porter saw him enter the widow's room. She went in with her boudoir, where she was preparing a blonde wig and a pink domino for the masquerade, gave him the acid, which was in a small tin, showed him the cupboard in her dressing room where he was to conceal himself, and then sent her maid away for a day and placed a stool in the closet for him to sit upon—and enjoined on him strict silence, as the rooms were above the porter's dwelling. At 2 o'clock she would return with De la Roche on hearing the carriage wheels. De la Roche would steal noiselessly down stairs, meet them in the courtyard and fling the acid in Rene's face, escaping through the gate, which she would leave open. At this moment De la Roche's carriage drove up. Turning to Gaudry, she whispered: "The acid is in the room; when Gaudry would steal noiselessly down stairs, meet them in the courtyard and fling the acid in Rene's face, escaping through the gate, which she would leave open. At this moment De la Roche's carriage drove up. 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