

a scuffle had taken place there, and round about were the prints of the paws of a large dog. Some endeavor, however, had evidently been made to efface these marks, so that, beside the paw-prints around, nothing was distinct.

Immense excitement was caused in the rural district by these two crimes, perpetrated in such close proximity of place and time, but all efforts to discover the criminals, proved fruitless, and shortly after a third outrage, of a still more extraordinary and infamous description gave new strength and stimulus to the general alarm and excitation.

The villagers of Montreuil, on entering the church one morning to cross themselves, and say a prayer, according to the custom of good Roman Catholics, were surprised to behold the Abbe Viere seated by the pulpit at the side of the altar, clad in the grandest robes of his holy office, having his back to the congregation, his eyes fixedly directed on the crucifix, and his hands clasped as if in prayer. Many went in, repeated a *pater*, counted beads, crossed themselves, and came out, not daring to disturb the apparent devotion of the father. At length a young priest entered hurriedly at the altar door, prostrated himself before the cross in a hasty and agitated manner, then went over to the Abbe Viere, spoke to him, touched him, and found that he was dead. With a loud voice, and in great excitement, he proclaimed the fact to the horror-stricken people. It appears that, on entering the church through the sacristy, he found that the lock of the door had been picked and broken, and there were stains of blood upon the floor and upon the ground. Much alarmed, he proceeded onwards, examining as he went. In the robe-room all was disorder; the robes had been moved and disarranged, the floor was covered with blood; the cupboard had been opened and a basin and sponge taken therefrom—the former was filled with water so deeply stained that it looked like blood, and the latter appeared like a lump of clotted gore. The Abbe's cassock was on the floor; it looked as if it had been drawn along the ground and trampled upon; it was torn all down the back; there were numerous rents about the breast and neck, and it was well nigh saturated with blood. The robes worn by the Abbe at grand mass on the occasion of the high fetes of the church had been taken away.

On examination, it was found that the ill-fated priest had been deprived of life in a similar manner as had the victims in the two former cases. The throat had been torn and lacerated in the same singular and fatal way, and the wounds were covered over with a large piece of pitch-plaster. The face and hands of the murdered man were washed; he had been arrayed in his best robes of office, and carefully placed in the chair below the altar, where he was discovered as described. He had solemnized, the day before, a marriage betwixt some wealthy parties of the neighbourhood, had gone to the residence of the bride's father, where he had spent the remainder of the day, had received the priest's fees, and some handsome "offerings," to the church; and as he was returning with these, he had been way-laid, robbed and murdered. The impious and sacrilegious associations which augmented the enormity of this crime, raised the excitement to an almost unprecedented extent. Nothing else was talked of for a long time. The cleverest police-agents from Paris were called to the assistance of those from the locality, and every possible effort made, with unflinching earnestness and industry, but still the course of justice was defeated.

Various other outrages, all perpetrated with the same extraordinary combination of secrecy, audacity, and horrible originality, occurred in various parts of the same district, and at various intervals of time during the period of a year and a half—all obviously belonging to the same series, directed by the same diabolical genius, and perpetrated by similar means. The above instances, however, are all that need be cited here, as we are not engaged in depicting the "Night side of Nature," nor in compiling a companion volume for the "Newgate Calendar," or a *recueil* from the *Gazette des Tribunaux*.

It happened during this time that one of the *diligences* running from Calais to Paris, through St. Omer, broke down shortly after leaving the latter place, to which the conductors were obliged to take it back in order that it might be repaired. As the damage was but of a slight nature, it was not expected that any serious delay would be incurred in consequence. The passengers, who all fortunately escaped without any serious injury, were accommodated with a room in a house by the way-side, where they were to wait until the vehicle should be repaired and brought to the door.—Among them was a young Englishman, named Charles Ferrers, who was on his way to Paris, where he intended spending a year or two. Knowing but little French, and being the only Englishman in the company, this gentleman became tired of being cooped up in a room with a party of foreigners, who were all engaged in eager conversation with each other, whilst he was silent and alone, and resolved to walk on a while, until the *diligence* should overtake him. Having inquired of the conductor the road the coach would take, he went out, the conductor assuring him that the vehicle would pass and take him up before he had proceeded far.

Busied with his own thoughts, the young Englishman walked forward in a meditative mood, little heeding any one who passed, or any feature of the road. In this fashion he went on, until he became conscious of having proceeded a considerable distance, perhaps more than two miles, from St. Omer. The evening was advancing, and shortly it would be dusk. In some anxiety he feared he had taken the wrong road, and studiously endeavored to recall the instructions of the conductor, in conjunction with the course he had followed. However, as he could not remember having passed a single cross-road or turning, the way from St. Omer having been an unbroken and almost straight line, he speedily became reassured, and continued to walk forwards, though now at a sauntering pace, and with an ear attentively listening for the sound of wheels. Being a student and a lover of botany, he was attracted presently by a large bunch of curious mosses growing on a bank, and went to examine them. Behind this bank was a thick grove of trees, of considerable extent, and stretching some distance across the country. Whilst stooping, thus engaged, he became conscious of the sound of hard breathing, as of some creature on the bank above him; and, looking up, perceived a large wolf-dog on the top of the bank, standing in an attitude of fierce watchfulness, its large red eyes fixed upon him, its mouth open, and its long, thin tongue quivering betwixt its jaws like a flake of dull fire. Besides the hostile bearing of the brute, there was something sufficiently ferocious and alarming in its appearance to make the startled Englishman draw back and clutch his walking-stick with a firmer grasp. The creature was of a great size and strength, and the hair

that covered its gaunt body was in an extremely rough and disorderly state, especially around its neck, and from the top of its head a large patch had been torn off, recently, and with great violence, as the bare place was still marked with blood which had flowed where the hair had been wrenched out by the roots. Ferrers had heard of the recent outrages, when in England, and it is not surprising that the remembrance of them now flashed across his mind with panic-striking force. Involuntarily he began to move towards St. Omer, regretting his own thoughtlessness in coming so far alone in a country so notoriously infested, and cursing the delay of the tardy *diligence*. As he moved away, the dog followed, springing from the bank and trailing after his footsteps with a crouching, crawling gait, very singular and ominous. It appeared to the frightened Ferrers that the animal only waited a signal from its master or masters, who might be lying concealed close by amidst the trees, to fasten upon him and tear him by the throat as other victims had been torn. He looked fixedly at the brute, as he retreated cautiously, and step by step, but found he could not engage or fascinate its eyes with his own, as he might have done; he thought, had it been merely obeying the instincts of its own nature. It did not look towards him all the time, and seemed to avoid encountering his glance, but crouched after him steadily, its long mouth open, its fangs displayed, its tongue still quivering betwixt its jaws; and though turning its head from side to side, maintaining so close a surveillance over him, that the least movement of his stick was followed by a low growl. The creature was evidently acting under severe training; its ferocity was not awakened, its passions were not roused, and though it pursued him in a manner so sinister and threatening, it had still the appearance of a dog acting under the fear of the whip.

In this curious fashion Ferrers retreated some fifty paces. At that distance from the spot where he received the first alarm, some large trees on the right—the side from which the dog had issued—threw their branches far across the road, deepening into dark gloom the dusk of the evening. Ferrers, whose apprehensions, founded upon the frightful stories of robbery and murder which he had heard, had already excited his nerves to a painful tension, winced and trembled on finding himself at this point, of which the solitude and obscurity were in such desperate keeping with his fears. He paused, and again tightened his grasp around the stout staff he carried. As he stopped, the dog stopped also. Under the impulse of a sudden thought, he went towards the animal, and uttering a caressing exclamation, held his hand out, with a conciliating gesture. But these approaches won no response; there was no wagging of the tail, and no relaxation of the sullen yet eager watchfulness of the brute. Ferrers glanced around him, at the thick wood upon the right, at the dark, sombre spot behind, up and down the broad, white, silent road. No living being was in sight; no welcome sound was to be heard; as far as eyes and ears could perceive, he and this wolf-dog of strange and alarming behaviour were the only occupants of a vast and dreary solitude. But the evidence of the senses was nothing worth. Imagination arrayed the scene in terrors, conjuring up a thousand crouching forms amidst the trees, a thousand gleaming eyes and cruel ferocious faces peering out from amongst the leaves, a thousand low whispers of direful import in every sigh of the wind. A