

THE PANTIN TRAGEDY.

All Paris, and it may be said all France, was horrified when the lifeless and mutilated bodies of a woman and five children were known to have been found buried in the ground near the station of Pantin, a short distance from Paris. The bodies were discovered to be those of the wife and children of Jean Kinck. It was at first supposed that Kinck, with the assistance of his son Gustave, had been the murderer. To give consistency to this theory the wife was accused of infidelity, or at least it was believed that Kinck had murdered her from a feeling of jealousy, prompted thereto, perhaps, by her step-son. It has since been discovered beyond dispute, that the murderer was Jean Baptiste Traupmann, and no doubt is entertained that he also murdered the elder Kinck, while the body of Gustave, having been discovered near the place where the others were found, dispels all suspicion of his having any part in the dreadful deed.

We shall briefly state the main facts connected with the history of the victims and the murderer:—The Kinck family, consisting of Jean Kinck, a native of Guebwiller, in Alsace; of his wife, Marie Rousselle, from Tourcoing, in French Flanders; five of their children, and a son of Jean by a former wife, named Gustave, lived in Roubaix, in French Flanders. Jean Kinck was a manufacturer, industrious and thrifty, who had accumulated about 800,000 francs, or say \$20,000—a little fortune for one in his rank of life. The family lived together in perfect harmony, and bore an unblemished character, the only alleged disagreement between man and wife having arisen from a wish of Jean Kinck to remove his habitation, or perhaps only part of his business, to his original home near what is called the "Vallon d'Alsace." A month ago a young man, named Jean Baptiste Traupmann, a native of Cernay, or Burnstadt, in Alsace, became acquainted with Jean Kinck in the way of business, worked in his establishment, made himself intimate with the family, and wormed out as much of their affairs as suited his purpose. Traupmann was the son of an able but dissipated workman; he was nineteen years old, and had only left home about seven or eight months ago; he had lived and worked at Pantin, and had become familiar with some of the Germans of loose character who have established a kind of colony in the neighbourhood. Traupmann was small and slender, but gifted, if his father may be believed, with extraordinary strength and daring. His stay with the Kincks, at Roubaix, was between the 16th of May and the 26th of July. Ten days after the latter date, Jean Kinck, full of his scheme of setting up a business in Alsace, left home for Guebwiller, whither he never arrived. A month afterwards his son, Gustave, by agreement, followed the same route and arrived at Guebwiller on the 8th of September, and was astonished to hear from his father's relatives that Jean Kinck was not and never had been there. In obedience to instructions from her husband, Madame Kinck had sent him three registered letters containing money to the amount of 5,500 francs, and these letters had been claimed by a young man, evidently Traupmann, who gave himself out as Jean Kinck, but who could not impose on the postmaster and other people, to whom Kinck's age, if not his personal appearance, was perfectly known. It was about this time, from the 8th to the 13th of last month, when Jean Kinck had in all probability already been murdered, that Madame Kinck received letters purporting to be from her husband, but written in a strange hand—a circumstance explained by a statement that Jean Kinck had sprained his wrist—inviting her to go to Paris, where he, Kinck, intended to establish himself at Pantin. Madame Kinck, telegraphed her inability to go on Monday, the 13th, but she travelled to Paris, on Sunday the 19th. Three days before, Gustave, who was then at Guebwiller, received also a telegram, in his father's name, bidding him to go to Paris, and appointing a rendezvous at the Hotel du Nord. At this hotel Traupmann was already established since the 13th, having taken a room in the name of Jean Kinck. It was by all these manoeuvres that Traupmann, having already disposed of Jean Kinck, succeeded in getting together all the members of the family, between the Hotel du Nord and Pantin. By what stratagem he allured the eldest son, Gustave, into the field where his body was subsequently found, is not known; but there seems to be no doubt that this first victim fell separately, and at an earlier hour than the six others. At 11 o'clock Traupmann met Madame Kinck and her five children at the station, drove them to the place where he had already dug their grave, and there killed and buried them. That he had accomplices to aid him in his work is sufficiently probable, inasmuch as, besides the pickaxe and spade which Traupmann had bought in the Rue de Flandre, at La Villette, two other similar instruments were found on the spot, and inasmuch as a man who had been seen with Traupmann in Paris, and who was conspicuous for his athletic appearance, and especially for his enormous hands, was seen, with two others, to follow the Kinck family at a distance as they walked to the slaughter field. If Traupmann



JEAN BAPTISTE TRAUPMANN.
(Simulating sleep to avoid being interrogated.)

had accomplices—and he could hardly, however strong, have felt equal to the task of despatching so many victims single handed, even although he divided them into two batches—his accomplices must have been sought by him among those bad characters with whom he had become acquainted in that locality. But, whatever help he may have deemed necessary, there is no doubt that Traupmann alone had laid and carried out his plan, which he now deemed fully successful, and of which he trusted he had secured the benefit. Jean Kinck lay dead in Alsace, all his family buried at Pantin. Traupmann had in his possession the watches belonging to father and son, all the family papers, a seal which he had engraved by Bouillan, in Rue St. Martin, a month before, with the words "*Gustave Kinck, mécanicien, Rue de l'Alouette, à Roubaix.*" and had gone to Havre, where he hoped to embark for New York.

The bodies were frightfully bruised and mutilated, the mother having no less than twenty-three distinct wounds. The wounds by which Gustave died were of the same character as those of his mother, brothers, and sister—the back of his head was crushed in as with a blow from a pickaxe; his throat cut from ear to ear, so as nearly to sever the head from the body; and in the gaping wound—a wound in which one could easily plunge his two clenched fists—still remained the weapon by which it was effected. This was simply a common table-knife, black-handled, but highly sharpened. The same nervous, half frantic, bestial energy that guided the assassin's hand through the infinity of strokes dealt to the other victims was to be seen here; and there remains little room for question that the same hand was guilty of all the various offences. A few hours after the murder Traupmann is proved to have written a letter to his sister, Françoise, enclosing to her 20 fr. Some of the fruits of the "affaire" he had in hand, about which he had frequently written to his parents, informing them that it was to yield him a large amount of money! This he affectionately assured them gave him great pleasure, not so much on his own account, as because it would enable him to relieve the wants of his sick mother!

Traupmann heard the account of the finding of the bodies of the mother and the five children read aloud from the newspapers. He also learned thereby that the father and son, both having unaccountably disappeared, were suspected of being the perpetrators of the crime, so that he probably felt himself safe from arrest. But after his capture at Havre, he made a statement to the effect that the elder and the younger Kinck had compelled, or induced, him to assist them; that they were the murderers, and that the day after the murder (Monday, the 20th,) he met the younger Kinck in Paris, who informed him that the murder had been discovered; that their flight was then determined on, and that Kinck entrusted to his charge the valuable documents which were subsequently found secreted on his person. He was kept in utter ignorance of the discovery of the body of Gustave, which was subsequently found near the spot where the others were found. In utter ignorance of the spectacle he was about to witness, Traupmann was brought into the presence of the body of Gustave Kinck. The sight was too much for him; he covered his eyes, first with his hands, then with his handkerchief, and nearly fainted away.

"Oh, poor fellow!" at last he muttered.

"Come," said the officer, "take away that handkerchief and look at the body. You have no need to pretend to weep over it. Do you recognize that corpse?"

"Yes, I do. It is Gustave."

"And it was you who killed him, was it not?"

"No, no; I did not. His father must have killed him for fear that his youth and his conscience might have led him to talk about the crime that they had committed."

"Well, we'll see about that," replied the officer, "but you know we can't believe your word."

"Oh!" soliloquized Traupmann, "if I could only be in his place!"

"In whose place?"

Traupmann was here wise enough to hold his tongue, and made no answer to this adroitly-put question.

"Answer me?"

But no answer came.

Then the official tried another tack.

"You have written to your father?"

"Yes."

"Your last letter was on Monday, the 20th?"

"Likely enough."

"The very day of the murder?"

No reply.

"And you sent him a lot of money on that day, did you not?"

No reply.

"But you must answer me!"

"Well, I did. Now do not ask me another question, for I won't say another word," returned Traupmann.

The object of the murderer is evident enough. He intended to possess himself of the whole of Kinck's property: probably to report that Kinck and his family had gone to America; to go there himself and return in a few years with all the family papers which he had secured, and then claim the estate. The conception was utterly horrible in its means, while the end was comparatively insignificant at best, and beset with so many chances of miscarriage, that one is astounded that any human being would be capable of entertaining it. Without a thought as to the lives he was about to sacrifice, except as to how he could best destroy them, this young man cherishes his plot of wholesale murder for months; tracks and kills the elder Kinck, tries to secure the money remitted by his wife, and finally decoys the whole family into the meshes he had laid for them, and murders them one after another, doing the bloody work with horrible and even needless barbarity. And he rejoices that his success in this "thriving affair" is to enable him to assist his parents!

There are so many ways of illegally acquiring money now a days, of easier attainment than wholesale murder and forgery, that one is astonished Traupmann did not try forgery without murder, or burglary, or even less desperate, though sometimes equally effective, modes of acquiring other people's property. Why he did not do so, the newspapers allege, may be found in the fact that he had read the *Mystères de Paris* and the *Juif Errant*, and had been particularly struck with the character of the Abbé Rodin, in the latter novel, a Jesuit who, among other exploits, had made his way to the inheritance of the Renepont family by compassing the death of its numerous members. It very evidently struck young Traupmann that he could emulate the achievements of his model by exterminating the whole of the Kinck family, and coming in for their little fortune.

Traupmann now lies in jail at Paris, and every effort is being made to sift the whole case to the bottom,—the general belief, founded on some of the facts above stated, being that he must have had accomplices.

Fearing that the newspapers may not bring out the facts with sufficient clearness, we wish to have it known, in all its naked hideousness, that a trial at the Middlesex Sessions has this week established the fact, that a system of murdering children by wholesale is carried on in London under the very noses of our vigilant police. The plan is worked out by a conspiracy, in which the criminals are so divided as each to seem without guilt of bloodshed. Thus there is a den for lying-in-matrons, *au secret*, somewhere in a Cold-Harbour Lane, in Camberwell, as the evidence showed. Secondly, there are nurses (so-called, the hags!) who receive such children, and get them adopted by "ladies" at £8 per head, on condition that no further questions shall be asked. These "ladies" drop the children in the fields of suburban ditches, having first drugged the poor little creatures to sleep. Of the woman detected it was said by Traughton, 3 T, "that five children had been found in Fulham since January, and twelve in Kensington since April,—an unprecedented large number for that district; and it was during this time only that the prisoner lived in its neighbourhood." Can any of the evils said to be consequent on a Foundling Hospital, as encouraging immorality, be worse than this? If punishment fail to put an end to immorality, is it not possible to find some means of remedying its evil effect, of increasing the population by making human life more valuable, and having it cared for in its early stages? The abominations of heathen sacrifices are not more hideous in detail than these criminal records of the condition of England's metropolis in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.—*Echoes*, Oct. 2.