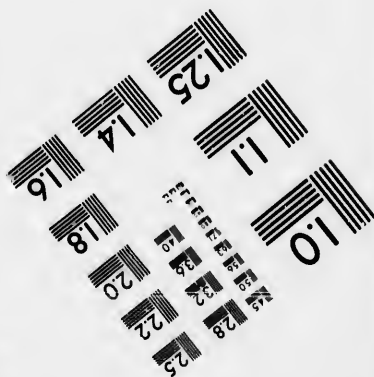
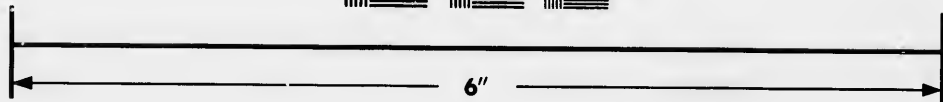
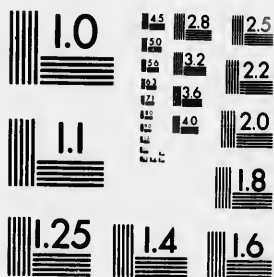


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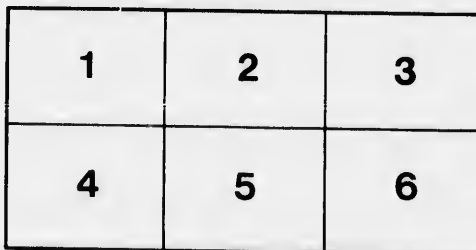
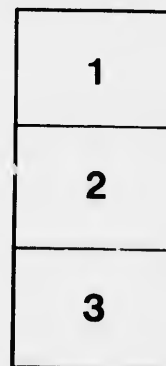
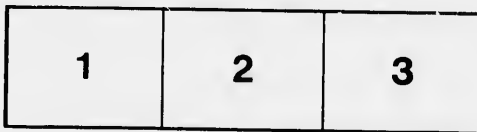
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THE THREE CRIMES

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THE CRIME AT RAWDON.



In Rawdon, a poor, small Canadian village in Montcalm County, lived the unfortunate family of a poor farmer, unfortunate, not only on account of their poverty, but also on account of their ignorance. This family, comprised the father, Michael Nulty, of Irish descent; the mother, Emilie Ricard, born of Canadian parents; Thomas, the eldest son, the murderer, aged 21 years; and Elizabeth, Ann, Helen and Patrick, the four victims of the blood-thirsty monster. The other members of the family, viz., Margaret, Mary, Judith and Catherine, probably owe their being still alive to their absence on the fatal day of the butchery, for, with the exception of

his father and mother, the murderer wanted to do away with the entire family in order to make place for himself and the woman he had chosen for his mate.

But, let us not anticipate.

The Nulty family was one destitute of all intellect. The father and mother, completely illiterate, never cared to cultivate the minds of their children; consequently they were as ignorant as it is possible for human beings to be.

Thomas Nulty, better known by the familiar name of Tom, had grown up careless and indifferent, seeing in life only the pleasures it could give.

Finding at home his daily food, which, however coarse, was nevertheless sufficient to appease his hunger, he cared not for work. He passed his life in idleness and spent his time between eating and sleeping, visiting and dancing.

For Tom was an inveterate dancer. It is said he inherited this passion from his mother, who, while young, had not an equal in dancing.

Another thing for which Tom had a passionate liking was playing the violin. When tired of dancing, his pleasure was to scrape the fiddle and make the others dance.

One can easily understand that such a disposition was not calculated to prepare the young man for the responsibilities of life, but, on the contrary, planted in his breast the seeds of a most ferocious selfishness.

The Rev. M. Baillargé, curate of Rawdon, tells in the newspaper "La Presse" of November 20th, the impression produced on him by this strange family, and we believe it will interest our readers by reproducing here a part of the priest's interesting article.

Here are the very words of the reverend father:

"The Nulty family resides in the woods, at about ten miles from the church, in the northeastern portion of the parish. This family, as well as several others in the same region, are under the spiritual guidance of the curate of St. Theodore of Chertsey, whose church is the nearest.

"In 1894, at the time of my parochial visits, I could not see these families, as the roads were impassable.

"In 1895, the vicar (there was then a vicar at Rawdon) replaced the curate who was ill. It was owing to this that one fine morning I received the visit of three persons of typical demeanor. They were Michael Nulty, his wife, and their son Tom. They impressed me as newly-landed immigrants. They accomplished their Easter duty; I invited them to breakfast. The mother alone accepted, the others behaved much like Indians.

"A little later the father told me that he had eaten up his tithing and that he would bring me fencing instead. I accepted. After this I asked him about himself and children. He told me, without a blush of shame or consciousness, things that were stupefying. I found myself facing a lack of education I had thought im-

possible. His house was full of children, all brought up in the most shameful ignorance. It was in reality even worse than I thought.

"Mr. Nulty," said I to him, 'are you going to bring me your daughter Elizabeth?'

"The poor child did not know A from B. She was going on 16 and had not made her first communion! The mother was there, hesitating whether she would or not let her daughter come to me for three or four months. Tom was there, silent. He appeared surprised at—I don't know what.

"Elizabeth came.

"I give up any attempt at describing her mode of life. It was contrary to all recognized customs. I gave her a room in the second story. The following morning she came down, her dress over her night shirt, which was visible nearly an inch.

"I gave her a first lesson in catechism.

"Elizabeth, who made the heavens and the earth?'

"She answered: 'Who made the heavens and the earth!'

"Do not repeat my question. Here is an easier one. Is there a God?'

"Is there a God,' she repeated.

"Once more, do not repeat what I ask you. Come, is there one God or several Gods?'

"There are several Gods, sir!'

"I had all the information I wanted. I was obliged to give her as many as seven or eight lessons in the day on one subject before I could make her grasp and retain it.

"Several days after her arrival, Elizabeth found in her room a belt left there accidentally by the housekeeper; she took it and began to cut it with her scissors, and, after fixing it up to her taste, she put it on and came down to the kitchen, proud of her handiwork. The housekeeper, dumb-founded, recognized her belt, no longer useful. This is to show how little notion Elizabeth had of the value of property.

"For many days Elizabeth went to the looking-glass twenty or thirty times a day to admire herself. She did not seem to get tired of it. It would seem as if she never had seen a looking-glass. She would also open all the drawers, take every article out one by one, look at them with curiosity, and afterwards replace them with a sigh.

"All of a sudden she would start, go to the end of the hall and sing two hours at a time without getting tired; singing as well as dancing were her strong points and sole talents.

"She barely passed her examination for her first communion. Notwithstanding all the pains taken with her at the presbytery, she never showed any gratitude. Her's was a silent nature, insensible to all except singing and dancing—more like an animal than a sensible being.

"While Elizabeth was at the presbytery—a sort of new Noah's Ark—I sheltered a young fool who was the heart-break of his parents, named Gilbert Brousseau. This young man having committed a grave fault, I gave him a beating that made a great noise at the time. A short time afterwards I sent him to Longue Pointe, and Elizabeth saw him no more. I will speak of him again shortly.

"The following year, that is to say this year (1897), I sent word to Mrs. Nulty that I would take Annie, and to send her to me three months before the time set for first communion. The time came but no Annie; eight, fifteen, twenty days passed and still no Annie. Finally I sent a messenger to inquire into the matter.

"Mrs. Nulty was hesitating to send me Annie, Why? I was told finally.

"Mrs. Nulty had asked my messenger in the most serious manner, 'Say! is it true that the curate killed Gilbert Brousseau?'

"The messenger was dumbfounded; he had all he could do to explain to Mrs. Nulty the folly of such a thought, adding, he could not understand how a woman of her age could get such an idea into her head.

"Annie came, I was one of the first to meet her; she looked at me with surprise. 'A man with a dress!' said she to my house-keeper. 'I did not know that priests wore dresses.' Although Annie was going on fifteen, she had never seen a priest wearing a cassock (my cassock was hidden by my great fur coat at the time of my parochial visit); she had never even seen the village of Rawdon. And probably had never seen a church before in her life. Her knowledge of life was about on a par with Elizabeth's.

"I found out that the child had no notion of hell; she did not even understand the name.

"If you killed your mother, would you do wrong?'

"Yes, sir.'

"If you should die immediately afterwards, where would you go to?'

"To the old nick.'

"Where is old nick.'

"Down below.'

"Catherine, another sister of Tom's, who was married this year, conducted her love affairs in so ridiculous a manner that she drew the attention and pity of the public. After the ceremony the newly married couple did not even present themselves in the vestry for registration.

"As to Judith, I always thought she was crazy."

Emilie Ricard, Tom's mother, was, in her prime, the most inveterate dancer in the north. We do not know whether she kept up the practice after her marriage. In this case, which is very likely, many things would explain themselves; we have seen above a specimen of her credulousness.

In any case, Tom is the brother of Annie, Catherine, Judith, and the eldest son of Emilie Ricard.

After what precedes, is it too much to say that Tom was born under an unlucky star, that he takes after his family? Receiving no more education than his sisters, his intolligence remained befogged for years, and his moral sense was never as refined as it should have been.

He was even worse off than his sisters, for his first studies took place under the paternal roof, and, to judge by his sisters, were far from being brilliant. Add to the lack of education, a life far from the world in a wilderness where the same old rocks, the same trees, the same tumble-down shanty always stared him in the face, and for almost his only food, the same eternal buckwheat cakes at all meals, and tell me what were the prospects of this young man during all the years of his youth.

Let us not exaggerate, but neither let us shut our eyes to facts patent to all.

Men act more often under the force of habit than the impulse of the moment, and the importance that they attach to an act depends altogether on the light in which they see it.

How feeble is this light, when it comes from a scarcely visible spark! The will follows the intellect. The evil that one imbibes gives color to the evil that exists around us. Whatever we consider, evil depends a great deal upon transmitted ideas, preconceived judgments, deep reasoning. From what precedes, could any one set any value on the thoughts of a being raised amidst the surroundings of the Nulty family?

If ignorance has a tendency to destroy the mind, passion in many cases weakens it.

A violent love takes possession of Tom's being. In the space of fifteen days he makes, on foot, eight trips of ten miles each. No one to stop him; no one to open his eyes, not a friend to put him on his guard. The obstacles he meets only increase his passion. A devilish idea has flashed in his mind. He has seen evil—how, up to what point? That is the secret of the Almighty.

Tom is tasting guilt. The tree falls in his way, it is inclined. But if it leans on the wrong side; where does the impulse come from; whence are the winds that push it into the abyss?

Circumstances tell.

Were we right in saying that there were mitigating circumstances, to say no more?

To appreciate Tom's crime, one must look at it from a special point of view, outside of the ordinary ideas of civilization.

From the summit of these considerations the criminal appears in a different light; the veil falls from our eyes and the being who a little while ago appeared to us as a monster now seems surrounded by a hazy cloud, which causes us to pause. While not willing to absolve entirely, we feel too weak to lift a hand against him, who may be more sinned against than sinning. We recognize in the man a degenerate being, but are forced to say "The stem whence he sprung was already decayed."

Tom's act is that of a savage, the natural consequence of a savage-like education. A savage is, so to speak, but half a man. He answers to God for his actions, but as he is not a responsible being, God makes due allowance for the lacking qualities.

The way Tom acts since he fell into the hands of justice has shaken all our ideas of the proprieties of life. If we study his previous life we realize that he has not changed. As he acted then, so he acts now, like a being deficient in natural understanding. Tom did not understand what he does not know yet.

In this manner we are able to get a better understanding of the tragedy. The scene changes, the actors come forward, and the leading man appears in his true light.

The victims remain, but the scandal is diminished, the responsibilities are less, * * * and as for justice * * *

We now understand the intellectual value of the actors in the drama.

From what has been said we can understand without any difficulty that all the members composing this family group were completely devoid of moral sense, and that the least jar was liable to determine in them the brutal explosion of an unconscious violence.

In spite of his lack of education Tom was a part of society, and received therefrom the benefits it bestows on all its members. Amidst these benefits, love must be taken into account, accompanied by all its seductions, but at the same time by all its charges. These last, for the man in his normal state, for the conscientious and intelligent worker, are an additional incentive to love, love consecrated by marriage. The more the object of this love has need of protection, the more isolated it is, the more the man needs energy and self-sacrificing spirit to insure his mate's comfort. The simplest countryman knows that. Thanks to the religious education they all receive from their earliest youth they are not ignorant of the fact that life is a perpetual sacrifice—that marriage is a solemn act which imposes upon the new head of family grave duties, which in their turn are compensated by the satisfaction given by their accomplishment. This being the case, these people prepare themselves for the solemn act by working, saving, rendering their youth in some sort holy. It is because these precepts are faithfully carried out in our country places that our brave and loyal countrymen are happy, notwithstanding the rude labor that the tilling of the soil imposes upon them.

Tom Nulty had no idea of the duties of man.

Brought up like an animal, accustomed to do as he pleased, abandoned to his brutal instincts, he did not know the simple duties of a citizen even by name. Endowed with a robust constitution, the prey of all the animal instincts, fatally compelled to live the idle life of the poor, he grew like a young cub accustomed to being daily fed and allowed full liberty to go and come.

And the unfortunate young man lived on, careless, never asking himself whether life would always be as lenient for him.

One day, however, it dawned upon him that his fickleness should cease, to make place for a more durable sentiment. He said to himself that, built as he was, happy as he was, he would do well to imitate his companions and take to himself a wife.

This being settled, he must find a home, not only for himself but for his bride and his future children.

The house of his father was very small, its resources very feeble. But careless Tom could not realize that the easy life he had led until then could cease, and he spoke to his father of his prospects.

The old man told his son that it was an impossibility for him to feed an additional mouth at the family table, or to find room for another woman in his house.

If Tom wanted to marry, he would have to find another home and take care of his new family.

This answer destroyed Tom's hopes. Accustomed as he was to lead an idle life he could not make up his mind to make a change, that is to say, work for a living.

He went to his sister and made the same request, namely, would she consent to take him with his wife in case he would marry.

Margaret Nulty, who is married to a Mr. Poudrior, living at Waxford, answered, like her father, that her circumstances did not warrant such an increase in the family. In brief, Tom was refused everywhere.

Tom said nothing and went away, having to all appearances resolved to go to work in order to save enough to go housekeeping.

Such a resolution in such a man was not to be taken seriously. In him it was the shadow of a thought. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that on his way to the contractor, to whom he was to offer his services, Tom backed out, and, with head bowed as if loaded with a painful thought, he came back to his home, dreaming.

It was almost noon.

It was a Thursday, the 4th of November, 1897.

The fields were deserted and silent; a biting breeze whistled through the denuded boughs of the trees, tearing away the last purple leaves that had not yet fallen.

In this wild solitude Tom was thinking, perhaps, for the first time in his life.

He was thinking that labor was a hardship, and did not know that work was the penalty inflicted upon man by God.

At this time, flashed upon his mental vision all the obstacles that were between him and his project of marriage,—his passion for dancing, his love for the fiddle, his leanings towards an idle life; and he was thinking with bitterness.

He was thinking that if his father's house was not incumbered by his sisters and his little brother, he could himself enjoy with the mate of his choice the idle life he always had led; he could eat, drink, sleep, idle away the time in smoking or dancing without ever being obliged to work.

His head bowed down, he was advancing slowly, while thinking of the future, when the idea which had smouldered in his brain took a horrible firmness.

What! his three sisters, his little brother! are they, then, the insignificant obstacles to his happiness?

Well, thought he, since they are in my way, they must die.

It is then that, turning back upon the road, he regained the house, determined to accomplish the awful deed.

As a matter of fact, only the sudden disappearance of his three sisters and his little brother could make place for him and his future wife at his father's hearth.

No doubt, he loved the beings whom he had thus doomed to die in his cold, heartless calculations, but he loved much better the idle life he had led until this hour, and above all things he wanted to continue this life and at the same time enjoy all the gross pleasures of which he had always been so fond.

In order to lead this existence, and to perpetuate this life of a spoiled child, when he would have taken unto himself a wife, he must needs always have, not only an assured shelter, but a table always served for him, without having to procure the supplies by honest work.

It was evident that strangers would not furnish him these things. Only his father and mother, although poor themselves, would be weak enough and ignorant enough of their duty towards society to facilitate for him so smiling a future.

Notwithstanding his little intelligence, Tom was shrewd enough to understand that his laziness, together with his other faults, would not find outside of his father's house the asylum he sought for his love and his animal appetite.

It was after these reflections that he took the wicked resolution to clear the way by killing the four innocent victims that fate had placed in his way.

And this is why Tom Nulty was going towards his home about noon on Thursday, the 4th of November. He knew the house had been left in the care of the four children, Elizabeth, Annie, Helen and Patriek. On arriving, Tom was struck by the unusual quiet of the place.

What! said he to himself, uneasy for the accomplishment of his horrible purpose, is there no one at home?

No sooner had he thought this than he saw Elizabeth, the eldest of the children, whose duties had called to the barn.

Tom grinned in a fiendish manner. For an instant, owing to the great quietness of the place, he had thought that the four innocents doomed by him to a horrible death, in order to accomplish his projects, had foiled him by going away for some purpose or other. This absence would have imperilled his purpose.

The sight of Elizabeth, showing that his fears were unfounded, had thrown a gleam of ferocious joy in his brutish brain, and he

grinned while he grasped a strong woodman's axe and stole silently towards the barn.

Watching with a vigilant eye, listening with both ears, tip-toeing like a Huron on scout, he looked like a tiger seeking to surprise a timid fawn drinking the sweet water of a spring. Poor Elizabeth had no suspicion. She doubtless saw Tom, but paid no attention to his presence, unusual as it was at that hour of the day. Without interrupting her work she could see him, the lazy brother, advancing stealthily, a hand behind his back, as if hiding something; she was so accustomed to see the strange freaks of her brother that she was not surprised, and probably did not think it worth her while to stop work and talk with him.

Tom, hiding his axe, advanced towards his sister; he came almost upon her, and, watching a favorable moment, while the poor girl was stooping to pick up some small object on the earth, he straightened himself up, swinging his terrible instrument over the head of the unhappy girl, and with the arm of a woodman attacking a big tree, he struck the poor creature, killing her with a single blow.

Elizabeth died without a struggle; death was instantaneous. A deep cut, horrible to see, was gaping on the left side of the poor girl's neck.

Tom stared stoically at his dead sister for a few seconds; the frightful wound through which this young creature's life's blood was flowing, could not arouse a gleam of pity in the breast of this monster. On the contrary, it seemed to double his thirst for blood.

Gnashing his teeth, and foam oozing from his lips, the wild-eyed fratricide threw a glance at the shanties which formed part of the miserable farm, and wiping the cold sweat from his brow with his shirtsleeves he was starting towards the main building when his sister Annie, innocent girl, came to offer herself to his merciless blow.

The poor little one was advancing unsuspectingly towards the barn; she was coming to help her sister in her work.

Tom shuddered, but stiffening himself against any emotion that might turn him from his purpose, he hid behind the door, intending to destroy the poor child with one blow of his terrible axe.

The unhappy creature on reaching the door saw before her the lifeless body of Elizabeth, lying in a pool of blood; uttering a heart-rending shriek, she covered her eyes with her hands and fled.

This unforeseen flight only delayed her fate an instant longer. Realizing what a danger for him there was, should the child escape, Tom sprang like a tiger and ran after his victim.

In three steps he overtook Annie, still shrieking with horror and terror.

The deadly axe again came into play. Wielded by an arm, whose strength was increased by a maniacal fury, it described a large circle and fell on the poor child, almost severing the head from the body.

In her turn Annie was stretched lifeless upon the soil, and her heartrending shrieks stilled for ever.

From this moment Tom was no longer human. He had only one impulse, and that was destruction and murder. He was thirsting for blood. He could have wished the entire humankind to stand before him, since it was so barbarous as to impose work upon him, in order to destroy it at one blow as he had destroyed his two sisters, Elizabeth and Annie.

Dishevelled, haggard, terrible, he was considering his second victim with a furious rage, and seemed to enjoy this horrible contemplation, when a sudden thought recalled him to his infamous work.

The thought of Helen and Patrick rushed through his brain on fire.

He raised his head as would a tiger disturbed over its prey by an unexpected noise.

Tom was surprised to hear strange sounds coming from the house, only a few steps from the scene of the butchery.

Helen and Patrick had witnessed the flight of their sister Annie and had seen their big brother strike her down as she ran.

Poor children! Terrorized, and moved by the supreme instinct of self-preservation they had hastily tried to barricade themselves in the house by piling articles of furniture together in the vain hope of escaping the ferocity of the murderer.

It was this noise that had caught the attention of the fiendish brute.

Poor Helen! Poor Patrick! They had seen Annie fall under Tom's blow, and seeing the fury of the murderer, were afraid to share her fate. The unhappy children did not want to die, and, after having erected their useless barricade, they were begging Tom to spare them.

Vain efforts! The brute had tasted blood and was beyond control. With a wild rush he threw himself on the door, which resisted unexpectedly.

"Open the door," shrieked the fiend, with a horrible curse.

The two children, crazy with fear, held to each other with the energy of despair, and only these words could pass their pale lips:—Mercy! Mercy!

Unhappy children! Mercy! Why mercy!

The fiend was getting impatient. The resistance shown by the door increased his exasperation. He retreated one step, lifted his murderous axe and struck the door with all his strength.

The door fell with a sinister noise over the frail obstacle that the children had placed behind it.

With a violent kick Tom scattered what lay in his way, and penetrated into the bare room.

Instinctively the two children separated and fled, each in an opposite corner, as if they were trying to gain time by dividing

the attention of the murderer, in the wild hope that succor would reach them in time.

Alas! they were doomed to die.

Tom first sprung on Helen. Before the poor child could utter a cry the murderous axe had fallen, gashing the neck in the very same place where her sisters had been struck.

A third corpse lay in the path of the murderer.

As to little Patriek, pale and trembling with terror, he had no time to stammer a vain prayer for mercy.

Tom, pitiless, swung his axe for the last time, and the keen edge of the weapon cut out the life of the last innocent being who stood in the way of his projects.

After accomplishing this horrible massacre, Tom Nulty left the house, and wandered in the woods like a wild beast gorged with blood.

Towards evening, he went to the house of an honorable farmer, Mr. Beaudry. There he met Miss Rosa Lesperance, the granddaughter of Beaudry, who questioned him about his excited state and his sadness.

"Nothing is the matter," replied Tom.

He stayed at Beaudry's until ten o'clock at night, conversing much as usual, and left the house to go home at his usual hour.

Miss Rosa Lesperance, who is ordinarily called Miss Beaudry after her grandfather, with whom she stays, is a pretty, dark-haired girl; her large black eyes are soft and frank. Elegant and intelligent, this girl had made a profound impression on Tom, who, despite his wildness, had nevertheless a heart.

Miss Rosa is eighteen years old; she lived two years in Montreal, where she acquired the grace and innocent coquetry of the young misses in the city. One can easily understand how such a girl made an impression on a fellow keenly alive to all that makes life agreeable in spite of his dislike to work.

Tom met Miss Rosa Lesperance only two weeks before the crime. Accustomed to have his way in everything, he followed up his usual line of conduct and came right to the point.

He had hardly made the acquaintance of the young person, before he asked her to marry him. Miss Rosa said neither yes nor no, and this vague answer, this polite putting off, was sufficient for him to build his plans for the future. He considered himself as already the husband of the young girl, and, without letting the grass grow under his feet, he enquired first of his parents, then of his sister, whether he could get from them the shelter and the daily food without having any other care than taking his place at the table, or going to bed.

It has already been seen how this beautiful project had miscarried.

It must here be said that in all this affair, Miss Lesperance is blameless.

Like any other young girl of her age, she received the attentions of a young man, whom she could suppose to be no better nor worse than any other young man of her acquaintance.

It is perfectly natural that when her suitor asked her hand in marriage, Miss Rosa may have allowed him to indulge the hope of becoming her husband, without engaging herself positively. Tom seemed very much struck; in fact was head over ears in love. Although the young lady lived very nearly five miles from his house, he went to see her almost every day, in spite of the bad state of the road.

But Tom Nulty, the ignorant and headstrong being now known to the reader, had no idea of social duties, and moreover, was unable to seize the delicate shades of a non-committed answer. Miss Rosa not having positively said no, he concluded that she had said yes, and he acted accordingly.

Who knows what would have happened, if the young girl had positively refused the brute!

Now it is easily understood how the motive of the crime was easily discovered.

As soon as the bodies were discovered, suspicions were directed towards a mysterious tramp who had been seen in the neighborhood. But the able Detective McCaskill, seconded intelligently by Coroner Lafontaine, did not long hesitate to suspect Tom Nulty.

From that moment, the detective watched Tom like a cat watches a mouse. He studied his actions, his going and coming, his words, the look of his face, and did not need many hours to be convinced that he was the guilty man.

On Saturday, the sixth of November, Tom assisted at the funeral service of the four victims in the modest little church at Rawdon. The Chief Constable Levesque, a deep observer, remarked that Tom was showing unmistakable signs of uneasiness. This sign, added to the suspicions already entertained, confirmed Detective McCaskill in his previous opinion.

Tom was invited to come to Mr. Morin's Hotel as soon as the service was concluded.

Tom accepted the invitation without any hesitation.

Of course, he was being watched, and any attempted flight would have been followed by an arrest.

It was about noon when Tom appeared before the clever detective.

Point-blank, the latter asked, "Tom, how did you employ your time on Thursday last?"

The murderer remained silent, and the detective went on:

"You have a right not to answer. Moreover, I must tell you beforehand, that all you may say can be used against you in case I think fit to arrest you.

"This being understood, I ask you again, How did you employ your time Thursday last?"

Tom Nulty, thus warned against any declaration that he might make detrimental to himself, spoke, nevertheless, and he began to stammer a weak story in which he related his wanderings in the woods after leaving Madame Poudrier's house. At twilight he had gone to Mr. Beaudry's, where he passed the evening with Miss Rosa Lesperance.

Briefly, he accounted for a part of the time. Serious gaps in his story occurred, nevertheless, gaps which he appeared unable to fill.

Detective McCaskill's suspicions were gradually becoming certainties.

He began, accordingly, to press Tom so close that the young man, who had murdered his sisters in cold blood, could not avoid the logic of his questioner.

One after the other he told contradictory stories which, notwithstanding frequent denials, showed him to be, if not the murderer, at least the accomplice or the instigator of the crime.

The detective was now convinced. Taking Tom Nulty aside, he looked at him square in the eye and said:

"I now know all that I wanted to know. It was you that killed your brother and sisters! You are my prisoner."

Tom was taken aback, hardly having enough strength left to weakly deny the frightful accusation.

At half-past three in the afternoon on the same day, Tom entered a carriage with High Constable Levesque and Detective McCaskill, who were taking him to the Joliette prison.

On the way to jail, Tom, unable to keep his mouth shut any longer, confessed fully to the officers, and the following day, Sunday, he repeated his confession as follows:

"My name is Thomas Nulty, I will be twenty-one years old next Christmas.

"The Tuesday before the murder, I went to see my sister Margaret, who lives in Waxford, two miles and a half from Chertsey.

"My sister is thirty years old, and is married to Alex. Poudrier. I remained at my sister's until ten o'clock Thursday morning, and then started for home.

"On arriving home I went into the house, where I found my three young sisters and little brother.

"After taking off my coat, I went out of the house and taking the axe, which was at the door, I began to split wood.

"Almost at the same instant, my sister Elizabeth came out of the house to go to the barn. I followed, having then no intention of killing her. On approaching her, I suddenly felt seized with an insane desire to kill, and, as I had the axe in my hand, I placed myself so I could not be seen, and struck her on the neck. I came out of the barn then and met my sister Annie. I do not remember anything else. I do not know whether it was I that struck Annie; neither do I know if I struck Helen and Patrick. I do not remember having burst in the door. I came out of the house unconscious of having killed my brother and sisters.

"I went afterwards towards Chertsey, passing through the woods, where I wandered a part of the time.

"When I committed the murder, it was about noon.

"After having wandered in the woods a part of the afternoon, horror-struck at the crime I had just committed, I went to Mr. Beaudry's house. When I got there, Miss Beaudry asked me what was the matter, I seemed so sad.

"'Nothing is the matter,' I replied.

"I was living on the best of terms with my sisters, who took good care of me; I loved them very much, and we had much fun together. I would often go to dances with them. I do not know why I killed them.

"I left Mr. Beaudry's to go home at about ten o'clock that night. I regret what I did with all my heart. I have no accomplices, and did not premeditate the crime."

And the murderer ended his confession by saying that his crime merited death, and that he was ready to expiate it on the scaffold.

We will not undertake to follow the detectives in their task, whether they tried to find out Tom's accomplices or merely sought to prove premeditation.

After three weeks of lively debate between the opposing counsel, during which the incidents which we have just related were confirmed by various testimony, this crime had a fit ending in the sentence of death pronounced upon Tom Nulty.

The fourth of February, at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, after deliberating for fifteen minutes, the jury rendered a verdict of murder in the first degree.

This verdict was heard in the midst of an awful silence.

The Honorable judge then rose, and, addressing the prisoner, asked :

"Have you anything to say before I pronounce your sentence?"

Tom Nulty answered :

"I am not guilty, to my knowledge, for I had no reason to do the act."

The Honorable judge then pronounced the sentence as follows :

"The sentence of this court is that you, Tom Nulty, be taken to the common jail of the district of Joliette, there to be detained until the twentieth day of the month of May next, at nine o'clock in the morning, thence to be led to the place of execution and there and then you shall be hung by the neck until you are dead.

"May God have mercy on your soul."

The public wrath is now satisfied. However, there are many who have scruples of conscience about the condemnation. While the pleadings have not absolutely proven that Tom was irresponsible, serious doubts assail all fair-minded persons. It would therefore not surprise us to see the sentence of death commuted to one of imprisonment for life.

THE CRIME AT ST. LIBOIRE.

The four-fold murder at Rawdon had so occupied the public mind that another drama happening a few days before at St. Liboire parish, Bagot county, had almost escaped notice.

When, however, the murderer of Rawdon was discovered, public curiosity, always on the alert, went wild over the mystery of St. Liboire, which from this moment occupied everybody's attention.

In fact, this event was worthy of the interest shown.

Following are the facts:

On Saturday, the 30th of October, 1897, Dr. Berthiaume, physician, of St. Liboire parish, was visited by Mr. Nadeau, blacksmith. This man seemed hurried and very much moved. Without stopping to indulge in the usual greetings, he said bluntly:

"Hurry up, doctor, I came to fetch you. Quick, quick, you must come with me. We first found Johnny Laplante stretched in the middle of the road, in front of his house, we think he is dead."

The physician wanted to inquire about the event, but the man, Nadeau, who was in a hurry to get back to his friends, would not give him time to discuss the question then.

"Hurry up, hurry up," he was saying, "hurry, up, doctor."

The physician jumped into the carriage and both were soon speeding towards the house of the unfortunate Laplante.

Several neighbors were gathered together, close by the house, surrounding a body stretched on the ground in a pool of blood.

The doctor alighted, followed by Nadeau, and walked quickly towards the group of men, who moved aside on his approach, thus bringing to view the inanimate body of Johnny Laplante.

The unfortunate man was stretched his full length. The right arm alongside the body, the left spread out at an angle of about thirty degrees.

The hat of the victim was held in the left hand. The fingers of the right hand were shut tight.

The head as well as the left hand were literally bathed in blood.

The physician calculated that there was a half gallon of clotted blood under the head, and at least two ounces under the left hand of the corpse.

After contemplating this sad spectacle for a few minutes, the doctor said:

"Stand a little aside, my friends, that I may look for some signs indicating what caused the death of our friend.

The men immediately moved out of the way.

At this season and at this time of day, it is very dark. A lantern was brought to the doctor; he stooped almost to the ground, and as he moved the lantern from place to place over the corpse, the sepulchral light added to the horror of the scene.

The physician first ascertained that Johnny Laplante was stone dead.

As soon as convinced that the man was beyond human aid, the doctor began slowly to make a thorough investigation, in order to ascertain the cause of death. Up to this time every one believed it to be a simple, if unfortunate, accident.

Therefore, having ascertained that death had occurred only a short time before, the body being still warm, the doctor examined the corpse.

The clothes of the dead man were buttoned to the neck. On opening the coat and the vest, the physician saw nothing out of the way; all was clean and in perfect order.

The doctor then observed the surroundings and the position of the corpse. It soon became evident to him that the body had not been moved, and lay there as it had fallen; therefore, death had been instantaneous.

Was it a crime, or an accident? The doctor and persons present began a vigorous search, but found nothing like a clue. No instruments, no weapon of any kind, were found in the vicinity.

After having marked exactly the position of the body, and taken note of all the details of the finding of the corpse, the doctor ordered it taken into the house.

We think it useless to attempt the description of the scene of desolation in the family of the dead man.

These things are felt but cannot be described. Mrs. Laplante is an excellent mother, now a widow with seven children, the eldest of whom is thirteen years old, and the youngest less than a year old.

We will allude again later to this stricken family and the anguish of the wife, for an instant accused of complicity in the murder of her husband.

For the moment, we will merely follow the events of this drama, following the order in which they happened.

As soon as the corpse was brought into the house, the first care of the physician was to wash the face of the victim which was covered with clotted blood.

No sooner was the blood removed, than the doctor ascertained the presence of a horrible wound in the back of the head at the base of the cranium. The blow had been so violent that the skull was crushed in.

The victim had also the lower jaw broken in the middle. Doubt was no longer possible. Laplante had not met death by accident; he was the victim of a horrible murder.

Pondering the arrival of the justice, the doctor believed it his duty to further search the corpse, in order to discover some clue to the possible murderer.

In presence of witnesses, he went through the pockets of the victim, and found a pocket-book containing a dollar and a few cents, also a silver watch and chain.

That was all, and that was very insufficient ground upon which to build a theory about the murder.

As soon as these preliminary steps were taken, the doctor threw a sheet over the corpse, and left it in the care of the brother of the victim, Desire. Immediately afterwards he communicated the facts by telephone to Coroner Blanchard.

We will not follow the inquest in all its details. We will merely state that the criminal or criminals were sought for with a patience worthy of all praise.

During the first fifteen days the progress made was null. At this time several persons were suspected, and the newspapers of the day threw out hints that some arrests would soon take place. Nothing of the kind happened, however, and the culprit fell into the hands of justice before any innocent person was arrested on suspicion.

About the inquest held by Coroner Bouchard over the murder of Johnny Laplante, we will remark, by the way, that we noticed with pleasure that all the proceedings were held with closed doors, an excellent practice, unfortunately not as general as it ought to be.

As a matter of fact, public inquests offer great opportunities of interference with the ends of justice. As soon as a crime is committed, it belongs to the coroner to investigate all the clues bearing on the subject at the time the guilty person or persons are sought. When all the discoveries of the coroner are made public the criminal can, and often has taken advantage of the knowledge thus spread out. Should the coroner make a false step the criminal may escape.

In almost all cases, the publicity given to the coroner's investigations are liable to place the success of his search in jeopardy. Notwithstanding this we have seen the newspapers, in a selfish spirit, complain of the action of the coroner, who ordered closed doors in accordance with the formal instructions of the public prosecutor.

The publicity given a coroner's investigations is as fatal to their success, and as foolish as would be the action of a hunter singing at the top of his voice, when in quest of game.

Let us close this digression and resume our narrative.

On the morning of the murder, that is to say, the thirtieth of October, at an early hour, Johnny Laplante went to St. Hyacinthe, at which place he was to receive a sum of money exceeding \$210.

It seems that his wife was very uneasy. A certain party with whom her husband had business relations, had threatened him several times, and Mrs. Laplante was aware of the fact.

"Be sure, and do not be late," were her last words to him when he left the house, "and do not let yourself have anything to say to that man, but come home as soon as your business is done, as I will be uneasy until I see you again."

"Be easy, my good wife," said he, "and fear nothing. I will be back from St. Hyacinthe by the six o'clock train."

Notwithstanding this assurance and her knowledge that her husband was a good man, sober and faithful, the good wife had a heavy heart all day long.

An unaccountable foreboding hung like a cloud over her. At six o'clock she was feverishly awaiting her husband's coming; the time seemed desperately long. At half-past six her uneasiness grew so great as almost to overcome her; her husband should have arrived and she could not understand the delay. Enervated, she lay down a moment, hoping that a short rest would calm her and help to pass away the weary time of waiting.

She staid thus, dozing and half conscious until seven o'clock. When she heard the clock strike the hour, she jumped up, haunted by an unexplained terror. She was looking about her, not knowing what to think, unable to form a resolve, when suddenly a knock came at the door.

It was the knock of a person in a hurry, having important news to communicate, not the insignificant knock of a neighbor coming to spend an idle hour.

In the state in which the poor woman was, she felt that the person knocking was the bearer of bad news.

Before she could take a step, she heard the door open, and the voice of an excited man ask one of the children in a tone calculated to inspire uneasiness:

"Is your father at home?"

"No, sir," answered the child.

This took but a moment. Mrs. Laplante had hardly seen the man, and her surprise, joined with her uneasiness, had not allowed her to detain the unknown and question him.

She came to herself promptly, and her forebodings of the day overcoming her, she uttered a piercing shriek, folded her arms about her children, and bursting into tears, she said:

"Oh! my poor children! a great misfortune threatens us."

And, while this devoted family was in grief without yet knowing the extent of their misfortune, Dr. Berthiaume was but a few steps away, performing sad duties, as we have related at the beginning of this chapter.

In the same time that the doctor was trying to solve the mystery surrounding the death of Laplante, the wife of the victim, unaware that the father of her children was lying dead at fifty or

sixty feet from her, yet full of gloomy forebodings, heard some passers-by speak of a man found in the road, drunk or dead.

She jumped up.

"It is my husband," she cried, wringing her arms wildly.

"It is him * * he has been killed. * * Oh ! my children.

* * My dear children. * * Poor orphans." * *

And she gave herself up to a despair that nothing could diminish.

No one was there to console or uphold the unhappy creature. Instead of soothing her, the children, on the contrary, increased her grief by their presence, for the poor innocents were unable to do more than mingle their sobs with her's.

After giving away in this manner, a reaction soon set in. In the most intense crisis there comes a moment when the body or the mind must have a moment's rest. The body stiffens against pain, the mind reacts against prostration, and from the fact of becoming more calm becomes more lucid ; a desire of knowing the worst takes the place of all other thoughts.

This reaction took place in Mrs. Laplante's mind ; she dried her tears, and by an effort of her will became comparatively calm, and, hoping against hope she went to the door, firmly resolved to learn the worst.

At this moment the door opened, and a dismal sight met her eyes ; three men were bringing in a body. Notwithstanding all their efforts its head would loll from side to side, and fall alternately on the shoulder of one of the bearers, or on the chest of another ; then the limbs would fall inert from one side to the other. Reverently the bearer would straighten up the head or rearrange the limbs and advance with the utmost care. At this sight, seeing her worst fears realized, Mrs. Laplante did not faint or scream, but immediately directed the bearers with a calmness deemed impossible.

We will now leave this devoted family and resume the thread of our narrative.

As we have said, a fortnight elapsed before justice had sufficient clues to work upon in ferreting out the guilty party or parties.

Thanks to the secret investigations of the coroner's inquest, all the theories, guess work and rumors on the part of the public were avoided.

Some slight clues had given rise to vague suspicions, directed towards two or three persons in the neighborhood ; these suspicions, however, would not hold water, and the inquest, ably conducted, by all who had anything to do with it, in any capacity, was so quietly carried on, that the various clues brought before it were so thoroughly sifted that, at the end of the fortnight, suspicions, strong almost to certitude, were directed towards a young fellow, named Johnny Guillemain, a nephew of the dead man, who had left the parish a few days after the crime to rejoin his family, residing at Biddeford, Maine.

It is certain that if the inquest had been public, the newspapers would have related one by one all the discoveries of justice, and that the young murderer, thus made acquainted with the charges that gathered upon his head, would have had all the opportunities in the world of escaping the penalty of his horrible crime.

Our insistence upon this point will be forgiven us. We believe that there will never be enough protestations against the publicity given to preliminary inquests. There is in this system an inconvenience and a danger, both equally grave.

The inconvenience is, that the criminal, informed day by day of the progress of the inquest, is thus allowed to escape at the precise moment when his guilt is manifest. The danger, that the criminal is enabled, according to circumstances, to profit by the mistakes made in the beginning of an inquest, and, throwing the searchers off the track, sometimes cause an innocent person to be accused.

Who dares assert that this was never the case, or that it cannot happen?

As soon as suspicion was directed towards Guillemain, the police acted with renewed activity and discretion.

It was found out without difficulty that the young man who had not a cent to spend at St. Liboire, was spending freely at Biddeford.

To be brief, after an exchange of telegrams, the Chief of Police at Biddeford was asked to proceed with the arrest of Guillemain, which was done.

As soon as the news of Guillemain's arrest was known in St. Liboire, the people were dumb-founded. Everybody thought that the arrest was an error that would quickly be recognized.

The young fellow was well liked in St. Liboire, and all had faith in him. Moreover, he not only seemed to love his uncle, but really did so.

Guillemain is a youth of seventeen, very peaceable and obedient, and as far as known then had no bad habits.

Even after his confession, people refused to believe him guilty.

"It is impossible," they said. "This child, for he is but a child, cannot have committed so atrocious a crime. He is too weak; too shy; too peaceable to have attacked the strong man that he used to call his father."

The curate; the mayor, Mr. Ducharme; Dr. Berthiaume, Mr. Lajoie, one of the principal merchants, and all the best citizens of the place, could not, and would not admit the guilt of the accused. They all believed him incapable of committing even the smallest misdemeanor.

Even those who doubt, do not believe him capable of committing the crime alone.

They said: "He must certainly have had an accomplice. He could not conceive the crime or commit it alone."

This last version satisfied everybody, and it is certain that all, even the police officials, believed that Guillemain was led into the crime by one or several accomplices.

This state of affairs gave Guillemain an opportunity to invent a horrible story; more horrible than the crime itself.

The miserable creature, when questioned as to his accomplices, answered that he had been pushed to the act by his aunt, who had promised to marry him after the deed.

The horror of this declaration can easily be understood, but it is horrible to think that some people believed in this declaration, although it was a lie from beginning to end.

Here is, in brief, the substance of Guillemain's declaration on this subject.

He first said that on or about the first of October he went to St. Liboire, on a visit to his uncle; while there, during two weeks, according to his statement, his aunt spoke to him continually about the freedom that her husband's death would give her, and that she wanted to get rid of him. On the thirteenth of October, Laplante was to go to St. Hyacinthe to collect a large sum of money. "It was then," further said Guillemain, that "My aunt judged the moment favorable, and she told me that I would never have a better occasion to kill him without fear of detection." The prisoner added that his aunt plied him with liquor during the entire day and never ceased urging him to commit the crime.

At the favorable moment, completely under the control of his aunt, he hid himself behind the house, and when his uncle passed by without seeing him, he struck him on the head with a stick and killed him with one blow.

This declaration, of which we give the sense, if not the precise terms, was made before the authorities at Biddeford.

We will see further on, that after the extradition the accused did not persist in this statement, but that he sought to throw off the police in another direction as false as the other.

Notwithstanding the horrible accusation that the boy had made against his aunt, the latter did not believe in the guilt of her nephew.

"I do not believe," she said, "that my nephew is guilty of the murder of my husband. As long as he lived with us, he was a good boy and showed himself willing and useful. Nothing in his behavior, before or after the murder, shows any signs of guilt."

Thus spoke this good woman; this mother with a bleeding heart, who would not believe her nephew guilty in face of his confession; attributing it to an aberration of the mind. It was this good creature whom the miscreant dared to accuse at the moment when she was defending him against all evidence.

Like every one else she was at last compelled to believe in the repeated confessions of the murderer.

To show how much faith Mrs. Laplante had in her nephew, we will here faithfully report the narrative of a person who had an

interview with the widow on the seventeenth of November. After describing the scenes about the house and sketching the mother and children, the narrator reports the words of the murderer's aunt as follows :

"Is it not terrible?" said Mrs. Laplante, after being made acquainted with our mission. "I assure you that neither I nor my late husband could ever have believed young Guillemain, our nephew, capable of committing so horrible a crime. From the time of his arrival here, Johnny Guillemain worked exclusively in the fields. My poor husband could never have thought him capable of committing murder. Johnny was always very willing, and very attentive. How could I imagine that he would turn out to be a murderer?"

"The detectives were here this morning," continued Mrs. Laplante, "and asked me why I did not answer the questions put to me? I now remember that my nephew has done many reprehensible things. When he was very young he was guilty of several thefts that we thought trifling; these should have awakened our attention. I even advised his father and mother of them. They answered, 'Never mind; it is nothing.'

"Now," continued the widow, "I am accused of being the accomplice of this monster. Is it not frightful? * * Perhaps you are going to believe that when I locked my doors and shut the windows tight, it is because I feared something. That is not the reason why I acted thus. My children are a prey to so great a fear since the death of my poor husband, that I have been obliged to do so in order to quiet them.

"Personally I have no fear; on the contrary, my greatest happiness would be to see my husband appear and say, 'This one, or that one is guilty.'

"Happily," continued the widow, "I am well known in the village as a true and faithful wife. I never did anything without telling my husband, and my husband never did anything without telling me.

"I was silent, because, I suppose, it was God's will that I should not say anything," continued Mrs. Laplante. "To tell the truth I did not know what I was doing the night of the murder. How can a poor woman, who has just heard of the death of her husband, remember all the circumstances before and after the crime.

"But the most frightful thing, in my mind, is that I am accused of having urged young Guillemain to the act. Had he been thanked, my conscience is as easy as on the day of my baptism. In the first place I was too old for him. You know that Guillemain, the prisoner, is only seventeen years old, while I am more than forty-two.

"When I saw my nephew arrive here," continued the widow, "I asked myself, 'What is he here for? Should he not remain near his father, who needs his services.' We received a letter from

Biddeford, saying that Johnny did not like work. When I saw him I thought to myself, 'There is something wrong,' but said nothing.

"I have three sisters established at Biddeford," said Mrs. Laplante, "and my intention was to go and join them as soon as possible. Guillemain was telling me the most wonderful things about the States. To hear him talk, everything over there is beautiful and good; and he was telling me that it would not be long before I could secure a good place.

"I have lived in a state of alarm since the murder of my husband," continued the widow. "It seems to me to-day that I am more calm. It is perhaps because the guilty man is found, and I hope that my husband will be avenged.

"The detectives," said Mrs. Laplante, "came here this morning to search the house and asked me how much money I had. Let me assure you it was easy to count. I had five dollars in silver and three dollars that Mr. Lajoie had lent me to pay a bill with. I had seventy-five cents left, which I gave to the curate for masses for the repose of the soul of my poor husband.

"When Johnny Guillemain left here, he borrowed from me two dollars and a half to help to pay his passage to Biddeford, the place where he was to find a position for my brother. 'Come,' said he to me after the death of my husband. 'Come to Biddeford; you can easily find good positions for yourself and your children; in this way you will all live together happily.'

"I advised Johnny to remain here until after the inquest. He would not listen to me. He had been advised to go and see one of his uncles in Biddeford, a Mr. B. Menard, where he could get money. I do not know whether he went or not.

"When the detectives came here they put the whole house topsy turvy; they also burst open Johnny's trunk, without finding anything suspicious. They even visited the drawers of an old sewing machine, which had belonged to my mother. As you can understand, I preferred that it should be thus, because when one is innocent, one has nothing to fear."

In order to preserve the quaintness and the originality of Madame Laplante's remarks, we have reported the interview in her own words.

"But," said the visitor, "what did Guillemain say when he was told of the death of his uncle?"

The question was answered by one of the children, an eight-year-old lad, who said:

"He cried like a baby. But," continued the child, "he would not look at papa's body, and he went off right away to tell the neighbors."

Before going on with our narrative, let us give some particulars about young Guillemain.

The murderer was born in St. George Range, at about three miles from the main village. He lived with his folks in the United States, where the latter had settled about a year previous. Guille-

main was Mrs. Laplante's own nephew, his mother and the widow being sisters; known before their marriage by the name of Berthiaume. Guillemain was visiting at his uncle's, Mr. Laplante, and had arrived there only a short time previous to the murder.

He selected for the murder the day when he knew that his uncle was to receive a large sum of money. When the body of the victim was found, Guillemain refused to view it, saying he was averse to strong emotions.

It will interest the reader to know the text of Guillemain's testimony at the coroner's inquest before he was suspected of the crime.

Here it is:

J. B. Guillemain, jr., of St. Liboire, aged 17 years, testified as follows: "I came to St. Liboire about four weeks ago. Before coming here I lived at Biddeford, Maine, where I had resided about two years. To my knowledge my uncle and myself never had any words together. At this time my uncle did not go out very often. My aunt was not sick on Saturday morning. My uncle said he was going to St. Hyacinthe. I heard nothing. I went out ditch-digging with another of my uncles, Desiré Berthiaume, of St. Liboire; we worked until about two o'clock in the afternoon, but returned to the house about noon to take dinner. When we came back, at two o'clock, my aunt was alone with the children. I then split wood with the two eldest boys. After that we had supper, about six o'clock, with the entire family. I did not go out that evening, and was there when Mr. Lapierre came in to ask whether Mr. Laplante was at home. My aunt answered no! Lapierre went out immediately to tell our neighbor, Mr. Nadeau. When I saw the body in the road I did not recognize it. My aunt was lying down on her bed. I also declare that my aunt did not go out of the house since two o'clock; she scrubbed the floors of the house in the afternoon. One of her cousins, a daughter of Desiré Berthiaume, arrived at the house about six o'clock, and was still there when Mr. Lapierre came in. As soon as the body was brought in, the young girl went home. I went to Mrs. Berthiaume's, where I stayed that night."

We will not enter into the minute details of this drama. However interesting they might be, they would destroy the clearness of our tale.

After his arrest at Biddeford, the prisoner, full of shame or remorse, seemed impatient to leave the city where his parents reside. This longing on the part of Guillemain enabled the Canadian police to bring the culprit back to Canada without having to go through the formalities of extradition. Officer Ducharme brought back the young man with him and lodged him in the common jail at St. Hyacinthe.

On the eve of his departure for Canada, Guillemain made another confession. He named another accomplice without, however, retracting what he had said about his aunt. These confessions of Guillemain were full of mystery; but it must be considered that

the police of Biddeford were only bound to render, and did render, the Canadian police only a passive co-operation.

In his latest confession, Guillemain not only persisted in his accusations against Mrs. Laplante, but named another accomplice, namely, Louis Tetrault, of St. Liboire.

Later on, Guillemain became more talkative and gave particulars of the crime.

He said that in order to please his aunt, he had killed his uncle with one blow of a stick; then he took from his pocket-book the money it contained. According to this version his aunt had retained two hundred dollars and had given him only eighty dollars.

These rumors ran wild at St. Liboire before the arrest of Guillemain, although but little faith was taken in the story, yet the two alleged accomplices were keenly watched, and an attempt to leave the parish by either of them would have been followed by an arrest.

Before relating how the accusations of the prisoner were met, let us see how the accused received them.

Mrs. Laplante, as we have seen, made light of the infamous story. Anyhow, nobody believed that the charge was founded. Mrs. Laplante loved and was loved too dearly to allow any possible participation in the awful crime.

As to Louis Tetrault, it was another thing. He had been suspected before Guillemain's accusation. It is true that the suspicions entertained were resting on extremely indefinite ground.

It was principally on account of his strained circumstances that people were willing to entertain the idea that he might be guilty. His possible object would have been to appropriate the sum of which Laplante was bearer on the fateful day.

Louis Tetrault lives at a distance from the centre of the village, and about forty furlongs from Laplante's house. He heard without emotion that Guillemain was accusing him of participating in the crime.

"He can say all he pleases," said he smiling to one who was speaking to him about it, "for myself I know nothing of the affair, except what I heard after the murder, and I was one of the lust in the parish to hear of it." He added:

"I never spoke to Guillemain in my life, and I only know him from seeing him pass by."

In brief, Louis Tetrault manifested the most profound indifference about the accusation of which he was the object, and, like everybody, would not believe that Guillemain was able, young and weak as he was, to kill his uncle with a single blow.

On the eighteenth of November, about six o'clock in the afternoon, the public prosecutor, Mr. Blanchet, accompanied by Detective Lambert, went to Louis Tetrault's in order to search the house before going to Biddeford to take possession of the prisoner. Louis Tetrault allowed the investigation without a murmur and helped the visitors in their searches. After having explored every part of the house, they found a pocket-book, containing forty dollars, hidden

amongst old clothes, and a couple of bills of small denominations placed in a trunk. Louis Tetrault was then asked how he came by this money. Tetrault answered that it belonged to his father and that it was in his possession for a short time only, being the amount of the rent of a small farm also belonging to his father. The father of Tetrault confirmed this story.

The officers went away, carrying the money with them; they had not been able to disturb Louis Tetrault's imperturbable demeanor. This was the state of affairs at the time Guillemain was arrested. While waiting for his arrival at St. Liboire, and especially when confronted with the two persons he had accused of complicity, the people who knew Guillemain began to investigate his past life; then it became known that this young man, whom all had believed sinless, was in reality a lazy, profligate, worthless scamp, only seventeen years old. It was found out that for eight years back he had been a thorn in the side of his parents, whose honor is beyond cavil. About four years previously he had gone to Bildeford, and at first worked faithfully, but he soon tired of that and led an idle life. He kept bad company, and it was not long before he lost what little honesty he had left. But a short time since he was courting a girl whose conduct was not as it should be, and his parents had been unable to make him cease his visits, which were the talk and the scandal of the neighborhood.

To what disgraceful act of his did he owe his exile from Bildeford? No one knows; perhaps the trial will reveal many things calculated to throw light upon his true character. When Guillemain came to St. Liboire he changed his manners, and to all appearance he was a model young man, attentive to his duties, full of respect for his uncle, who gave him a true-hearted hospitality. Did not this radical change of behaviour hide the premeditation of a crime? All the circumstances surrounding the drama seem to indicate that such was the case, but the proof will not be forthcoming until the trial of the young man.

We have said that Guillemain consented to come back to Canada, waiving all extradition proceedings. On Saturday, the twentieth of October, he left the jail at St. Hyacinthe, and, accompanied by Chief of Police Chenette and Detective Lambert, was taken to St. Liboire in order that he might be confronted with his pretended accomplices.

The trio arrived at Mrs. Laplante's.

On entering the house Guillemain made a move as if to throw himself in his aunt's arms—"Good morning, aunt," said he,— "Keep off, you wretch," said Mrs. Laplante, making a gesture of repulsion, and she added passionately.— "What did you do with my husband, you miserable wretch? You not only murdered him but you wanted to make me out your accomplice; what did I do to you, unhappy widow that I am, left without support, without money, without everything? What did these unhappy children do to you? What did my unhappy husband do to you that you should have killed him so cowardly? Why don't you answer? You not only

made me a widow by depriving me of him whom I loved so tenderly ; not only did you make these poor children fatherless ; not only are you exposing us to the direst poverty, but you are trying to make me out as guilty as you,—is not such conduct abominable ? ”

The poor woman thus apostrophized the prisoner without a tear in her eyes, but with a righteous indignation that struck the officers forcibly. The children who listened to this outbreak were shrieking and sobbing as if their hearts would break.

Alone, Guillemain was unmoved ; after a short silence, however, he said :

“ No! my aunt, it is not true, I could not accuse you of complicity, since you are guiltless. All the stories told about this murder are lies. No, my aunt, here, in the presence of the constable and his companions I declare that you are innocent. I beg your pardon for the evil I have wrought you.”

The police officers took note of this declaration, and in order to cut short this painful interview, they went out immediately after to go to Louis Tetrault's.

Although it was not late, everybody seemed to have retired, and Louis Tetrault's house was in complete darkness. After having taken counsel of his companions Detective Lambert said to Guillemain : “ You will go in alone, tell Tetrault that you escaped from the jail, and ask him to break your handcuffs and give you money to leave the country.”

This being agreed upon the three officers placed themselves so as not to lose one word of the interview.

Guillemain knocked at the door, and almost immediately Tetrault opened the door, having a light in his hand.

Guillemain did not have time to recite the fable dictated to him by the officers. At the first words he was stopped by Tetrault, who burst out with : “ Get out of here, you wretch, or I'll choke you ! ”

The detective had imagined this very clever scene, hoping that Tetrault, if really guilty, would give himself away by helping his accomplice to escape.

We have just seen how the murderer was received.

At this moment Guillemain attempted to run away ; the officers ran in pursuit and only succeeded in stopping him by threatening to shoot.

He was brought back to Tetrault's house and there he renewed his denunciation, introducing a variation, however. In this last version he declared Tetrault to be not an accomplice but the real author of the crime. According to this last story Guillemain gave himself out as the witness of the crime and he said that Tetrault had given him \$80 to keep his mouth shut.

Notwithstanding Tetrault's denials Guillemain persisted in his declaration and said he had hid the money in a tin box placed in a corner of Laplante's stable, where it was found in accordance with his statement.

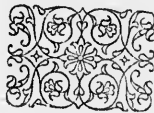
Although the police officers were incredulous, they arrested Tetrault, and in spite of his tears and entreaties they brought him to St. Hyacinthe jail, where he was imprisoned in a cell.

On Tuesday, November twenty-third, the two prisoners were taken to St. Liboire, where the coroner's inquest was to conclude.

By the advice of his counsel, Guillemain refused to answer the questions of the magistrate. The latter then took the deposition of Detective Lambert, who had heard Guillemain when he accused Tetrault of the crime. The sitting was long and interesting, but will not be reproduced here, inasmuch as all the newspapers published the particulars of the inquest, which resulted in the acquittal of Louis Tetrault.

As a result of the session it was decided to send Guillemain before the Grand Jury, and Tetrault was released.

The trial will now furnish the details of this sad narrative.



THE CRIME AT ST. CANUT.



Monday, the 22nd of November, 1897, the Montreal newspapers published the following despatch :

" ST. SCHOLASTIQUE, Que., Nov. 22.—The dead body of Isidore Poirier, joiner by trade, of St. Canut, a small village situated at about five miles from here, was discovered in his house to-day, his throat cut from ear to ear, and the corpse literally bathed in blood. He was known to have been alone in the house from Sunday evening, his wife having gone to visit her family a few miles away in St. Canut parish. Probably a suicide. Poirier had no children. The coroner has been notified."

At that date, the entire province was so excited by the crimes at Rawdon and St. Liboire, that this despatch was hardly noticed. Besides, this news seemed almost of no importance compared to the horrors attending the other events. It was only a couple of days after that the horrible truth was known, creating a consternation easily to be understood.

"What! another crime!" said the horror-stricken people to each other.

What curse has fallen over the land! Inside of three weeks, three crimes, each more horrible than the other, had startled the community. Has an epidemic of crime broken over the country?

Alas! the crime of St. Canut was yet more horrible than at first thought.

Here are the facts:

Isidore Poirier, joiner and carpenter by trade, dwelt in a handsome frame cottage built by himself, in the village of St. Canut. He had been married to a Miss Cordelia Viau about seven years, and had no children.

To all appearance, the couple lived happily, but in reality the wanton conduct of his wife caused Poirier a great deal of pain that he was not always able to hide successfully. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that, in order to drown his domestic sorrows, the man did sometimes take a drop too much, although this has not been established to a certainty. At any rate, whether Poirier drank or not, it could not be said that he was a drunkard.

His wife, Cordelia Viau, had a pleasing figure, was pretty well brought up; a musician; a rider, and was a little light-headed. If this woman had married any one but a workman, she would have been happy and made her husband happy. As it was, she was constantly aspiring to better her condition, and her behavior towards her neighbors, somewhat haughty, had alienated all feeling of good fellowship. She was the organist of the village church and lorded it over the people of St. Canut in a manner that wounded their susceptibility. Moreover, her conduct, which was not above reproach, had provoked numerous comments. People had even gone so far as to ask the curate, Rev. M. Pinault, to expel her from the parish.

From this it will be seen that the woman was not altogether a saint in the estimation of the people of St. Canut.

While we are sketching the characters of the actors in this drama, let us say a few words about Sam Parslow. He was a laborer, of St. Canut; a bachelor, enjoying the esteem of the population. Unhappily for him he was weak, and let himself be domineered by the Poirier woman, who had inspired in him a violent passion. This passion scandalized many people, and it was chiefly about this that the curate had been asked to interfere. As it was, the curate only paid slight attention to what he considered pure gossip, and did not believe it necessary to interpose his authority, at least in his official capacity.

We now sufficiently know the actors in this drama to begin the narrative of the crime.

As we advance in the tale, the actions of the two principals in the drama will reveal us more about the character than any biography we might write at this moment.

It was Monday morning, the 22nd of November, 1897, that the corpse of Isidore Poirier was discovered. The circumstances were as follows :

On that day, Mrs. Poirier came back from her father's, where she had passed the night ; according to her story, she had left her husband at home, drunk. On her return she had tried to open the door of her house. Finding it locked, she thought that her husband had already left the house to go to St. Jerome, where he was engaged in building a church. Not thinking the matter of any moment, she then went to the Church of St. Canut, where a marriage was going on, and played the organ for the ceremony. At the conclusion of the service she betook herself to Mr. Bouvrette's, related these facts to him and requested his help to enter her house.

Her neighbor, Mr. Bouvrette, obligingly followed her, and, entering the house through a window with the assistance of the woman, he easily opened the door from the inside.

"While you are here," said Mrs. Poirier to him, "I beg of you to go into the sleeping room ; I cannot go there, I am afraid."

Mr. Bouvrette opened the door of the sleeping room, and there, stretched across the bed, he discovered the body of Isidore Poirier, who had his throat cut from ear to ear.

Mrs. Poirier, who had followed him, then shrieked out, with an fierce yell of terror :

"Ah ! the unfortunate man has committed suicide."

Then she cried like an insane person, affecting the utmost despair.

Mr. Bouvrette, who was very much moved himself, tried to calm her, and, succeeding without much trouble, he went with her to his house. Madame Poirier would not go back to her house after that.

Mr. Bouvrette then went to the curate, who in turn sent for the coroner.

At first everybody believed in a case of suicide ; this opinion, however, did not last after the examination made by Doctors Lamarche of St. Scholastique and Henri Provost of St. Jerome. The wounds of the victim had been made with a large kitchen knife, rather dull. There were seven wounds, of which we give the description in the words of the physicians who were appointed legally to hold an examination and autopsy of the corpse.

The first wound, two inches long and four lines deep, divides the chin in two parts. Another starts from the upper lip and extends to the left ear. The third extends transversely to the middle part of the left mastoid. The fourth stretching from one of the mastoidian apophyses to the other, measures eleven inches in

length ; it crosses all the muscles, arteries, veins and nerves in the throat and reaches the spinal column. This is the most hideous and horrible of all.

The under part of the jaw was separated in two and shows a large gaping wound measuring about two inches in length. This blow must have been the last. It was given with extreme violence. The blade of the knife penetrated to the jaw-bone, which it chipped.

The fifth wound stretches across all the protuberances of the left hand. It indicates the resistance that the victim must have opposed to the assassin. It is likely that he tried to grab hold of the knife by the blade and that the murderer drew it back with violence. This wound alone would have caused Poirier's death.

The unfortunate victim bears a sixth wound in the upper part of the right arm. This wound, which seems to have been made with the point of the knife, is one and a half inches deep and three quarters of an inch wide. The physicians also ascertained the presence of a contusion over the right ear.

The state of the room presented unmistakable traces of a violent struggle between the victim and the assassin. The walls were splashed with blood, and the floor almost completely covered with large dark red stains. At the foot of the bed a pool of clotted blood seemed to indicate that at this place the victim had received a terrible blow. It was probably there that the murderer had cut the throat of his victim from ear to ear. Five bloody stains on the wall, evidently made by a hand, would indicate that the dead man had leaned against it for support. Another proof that a struggle had taken place is the existence of two deep boot-heel marks on the freshly varnished floor.

These prints were one and a half inches larger than the heel of the victim's own shoe.

Further on there was a broken lamp which could not have been lighted at the time of the murder, as it was empty, and no trace of oil could be found on the floor.

In another room was found a second blood-stained lamp. The landing at the top of the staircase, twenty feet away from the fatal room, was also blood stained ; the stain appeared as if made by a piece of cloth saturated with blood. The floor, however, was absolutely free from stain at this spot.

In the face of such signs the theory of suicide had to be abandoned. The murder being established, it remained for the police to discover the murderer. Coroner Mignault set upon this task immediately.

The first step was to ascertain what had taken place on Sunday. Sam Parslow and the Poirier woman, who had been seen harnessing the horse at the house of the victim, at about five o'clock in the afternoon, were questioned accordingly. At that time Isidore Poirier had been seen to come out of the house, speak to Sam Parslow, who thereupon had led the horse back to the stable, only to hitch him up again only a short time afterwards.

It was evident that the Poirier woman and Sam Parslow could furnish precious revelations. However, before proceeding with them, Mr. Bouvrette had been interrogated, and he had told the coroner the facts related above, about the discovery of the corpse.

Some neighbors were then questioned; they had seen Poirier after mass and after vespers. One of the witnesses had even had a couple of drinks with Poirier; and he swears the latter was not under the influence of liquor.

After the hearing of these witnesses, the magistrate ordered Sam Parslow to appear before him. Parslow is a man 34 years old; a well appearing fellow.

Here is his declaration :

" On the day of the death of Isidore Poirier, I remained at his house the whole afternoon until four-thirty. I will tell the truth. The dead man stopped me before mass. I saw he had been drinking. His eyes were already getting wild-like. I took a drink with him. He had a bottle of whiskey in the house, almost full; but he was certainly well nigh drunk then. I then went to mass, where I sang as usual. After mass I dined with Poirier, and we had another drink after dinner. After vespers we had another drink together. While I was there no one came to the house. At half-past four I went home, where I found my brother and my old mother. I changed my clothes, and I then went to one of my brothers, in a carriage driven by my nephew, Willie Parslow. It was six o'clock when I arrived at my brother's, who resides about one and a half miles away. I stopped up until nine o'clock, then went to bed; only my brother and my stepmother were there. I got up on Monday morning about six o'clock and did the chores at my brother's, where I stayed since Wednesday last. Mrs. Poirier stopped at my brother's at about eight o'clock in the morning and asked me if I could drive her husband to St. Jerome. I answered yes. On arriving at Mr. Bouvrette's, I saw that the shutters of Poirier's house were closed. I then thought that both him and his wife had left for St. Jerome. I went into Bouvrette's and there I learnt the news of the suicide.

" It was Mr. Bouvrette who told me how he had discovered the corpse.

" I did not enter Poirier's house after his death, because the doors were locked and the priest would let no one enter.

" I have not got any key of that house at this moment. I have had the key when Poirier and his wife went to St. Jerome or elsewhere, and I gave it back to them on their return. I never entered the house at night with a key. My relations with the couple were these: When Poirier needed my services he asked me, and I helped him willingly. There never was any unlawful intercourse between Mrs. Poirier and me. I never stayed there the entire night. I never made any present to Mrs. Poirier except a breast pin, worth half a dollar. On the night of the eighth of November, I slept at home. I went to Mr. Poirier's only on business. I worked for him.

all summer. I have no knowledge of what went on at the inquest. I am of the opinion that Poirier committed suicide, because he has told me it was his intention to kill himself. Once in particular he said to me: 'I am completely discouraged; my business is bad; I am in debt everywhere, and I hardly earn enough to live on. I am going to wait a little while longer and if things do not change for the better I will arrange otherwise. A man living as I live would be better off if he was dead.'

At this point of the interrogatory, Coroner Mignault showed to Parslow the knife found in the possession of the victim.

"Have you seen this knife at Poirier's?"

Parslow looked at the knife, without moving a muscle of his countenance, and answered:

"I never saw this knife, neither at Poirier's or any other place."

It is to be remarked that suspicions were already hanging over Parslow's head, and the coroner had told him so, adding: "I warn you that all you say may serve against you later. You are not compelled to speak, but all your declaration will be noted."

Thus it is seen that already from the beginning of the inquest, suspicions were rife against Parslow and the Poirier woman. The latter had long been the subject of gossip and of secret reprobation. Her conduct, so thoughtless as to be almost scandalous, made her odious to the population.

As soon as the murder became known, there was but one opinion about it throughout the village,—unanimously she was thought to have killed her husband, or to have had him killed by her lover.

Thus it was that from the beginning of the search, public opinion designated the two as the true criminals.

Let us see why such was the case.

Mrs. Poirier was the organist of the village church, her husband directed the choir, and Sam Parslow was one of the best singers under him. It was no doubt due to this fact that an intimacy sprung up between Sam and Mrs. Poirier. The acquaintance had already lasted three years when the drama took place. In the very beginning of their relations, Isidore Poirier went to the States to work. In his absence his wife kept company with Sam openly, disdaining the good advice of her husband's friends. Last spring Isidore Poirier returned home, and was not long in finding out the true state of affairs. Home quarrels followed, which at one time threatened to divorce husband and wife.

At that time the discord between the two was the talk of the town. Unhappily Poirier was meek and good-natured; he did not insist upon his rights and his wife came out victorious, that is to say, continued to receive Sam openly at her own house. Poirier made the best of it, and received Sam as a friend, forgetting all the grievances he had against him.

Isidore Poirier was by trade a carriage-maker. Before leaving for the United States he was foreman in an important carriage shop. He was generally liked by his fellow-men. It is denied that

he was a drunkard or that he ill-treated his wife. He had on the contrary a very mild temper, and this was undoubtedly the cause of his horrible death.

Sam was also well thought of in the parish. He was a temperate man, and until his intimacy with Mrs. Poirier had never been the object of scandal-mongers.

The coroner's inquest lasted several days. After testifying, Sam Parslow seemed very uneasy; he attended the sittings however, and endeavored to keep as good a countenance as possible.

On Thursday it was Mrs. Poirier's turn to testify.

Following are the exact words of her deposition:—"Last Sunday, my husband and I got up at about seven o'clock; my husband did the chores while I was preparing breakfast. He went out and I asked him not to be long as breakfast was ready. He said he was going to Bouvrette's to get a tobacco press. He came back, and after pressing some tobacco he took his breakfast and washed himself. While breakfasting I noticed that he had been drinking, and I told him, 'You have been drinking.' He said yes, and he then went to the stable to fetch the bottle. He said he had much hard work during the week and he wanted to brace up. He struck his cup so hard in the saucer that he broke it, saying while he did so, 'It is too much of a hard life, but there will soon be an end to it.' He took another drink, and asked me to drink with him. I refused. He made a good breakfast.

"We went to mass afterwards. After mass Sam Parslow came home with my husband and they had a couple of drinks together, then we had dinner.

"My husband did not eat much. He was crying. After dinner we sat down on the sofa. Mr. Hall knocked at the door then, and I told my husband to go and lie down. I opened the door for Mr. Hall, and my husband came out of his room. He 'treated' Mr. Hall.

"Sam Parslow came to our house at about half-past one, but he did not stay. My husband went to lie down on the bed, and I went to vespers. During vespers I asked Sam to come and hitch up my mare. He came through the rear and hitched up. I then went out and asked Sam not to come in, but to unhitch the mare. My husband then came out to tell me I should go to my father's; thereupon I told Sam to hitch up again. My husband went to the stable to fetch a bottle of gin. I went away immediately after and my husband saw me to the door. I had asked Sam to stay and sleep with my husband; he said he could not. My husband used to drink and get intoxicated. On my way out I stopped at my sister's and gave her a pair of overshoes that came from Montreal, then went to my father's.

"I stopped all night at my father's, and left there about half-past six Monday morning. I came to my house and saw all the blinds pulled down. I knocked at the front and back doors; not

receiving any answer I supposed he was asleep or absent. I then took off my shawl and went to Bouvrette's to warm myself.

"I asked Mrs. Bouvrette whether she had seen my husband; she answered no. Mr. Bouvrette then came in and said, 'I am going to fetch your mare to shoe her, as your husband told me.' It was then ten minutes past eight. I did not tell Mr. Bouvrette to go and fetch my mare. After that I went to the church, and after mass I returned home. I did not have the key of the house; I had left it with my husband. Mr. Bouvrette went around the house and knocked at the windows while I was away. I then asked him to bring a screw-driver in order to unfasten the outside sash. He did so. He then opened the window and entered the house. I asked him to open the door. After he had done so I went into the house to put down my music books. I do not remember having asked Mr. Bouvrette to go and see where my husband was, because I was afraid. When he came back he told me not to go.

"I ran toward him and I saw my husband's shirt full of blood. Mr. Bouvrette then told me, 'Come home with me, I am going to get somebody.' I went with him. I saw that my husband was on the bed. I do not know whether the door of the room was open or shut."

Q. When did Parslow leave your house?

A. He must have left after me. I did not see him go out. I do not think anybody can enter the house from outside. The door must be opened from inside.

Q. Did Parslow have a key of your house?

A. I was in the habit of leaving the key on the table or on the organ, or any place easily reached.

At this point the Coroner showing the knife, asked the witness:

Q. Do you recognize this knife?

A. Yes, it belongs to me, it must have been with the other knives in the drawer of the sideboard. I seldom made use of it. The last time I saw it, it was clean and in good order.

The Coroner then showed the witness various objects found on the victim after the crime. These objects were: a watch, the ring of which has been taken away, a chain broken in three pieces, a red handkerchief spotted with white flowers, a purse, a rosary, a tobacco pouch and the key of a trunk. The witness recognized these objects as having belonged to her husband. "My husband," said the woman, "was accustomed to wind his watch every day at supper time, about six o'clock."

When the watch was found it was not going. The time shown by the hands was twenty minutes past six. As it was broken when found, this must be the time at which it stopped.

"I washed the handkerchief you have shown me, Sunday morning. The last time I saw his watch and chain, these two articles were in perfect order."

At this moment the coroner asked the following questions:

Q. Did your husband have his life insured?

A. Yes, for the sum of \$2000. This policy was issued by the Standard Life Ins. Co., and was payable to myself.

Q. Do you know that public rumor has it that Sam Parslow is your lover?

A. I do not know that.

Q. How is it that Sam Parslow could enter your house at any time, day or night, in the absence of your husband? Did you not, yourself, ask him to come in?

A. I stopped Sam Parslow when I needed him to run errands for me, to go to the post-office and other places.

Q. Did you ever allow Sam Parslow to kiss you?

A. No, never.

Q. Did you not "blow him kisses" with your hand when he was passing by the house?

A. No, never.

Q. To what cause do you attribute the death of your husband?

A. To himself. I did not know him to have any enemies. Moreover he told me several times he wanted to commit suicide. The first time it was six months after our marriage; he said he did not earn enough money and he wanted to end it all. The second time was when he came back from California, where he had been eighteen months. He had two notes to meet and had no money; he was discouraged and told me he wanted to make an end of it.

Q. In case your husband has really been murdered, have you any reason to suspect anybody?

A. I do not know anything about that.

With these words ended the testimony of the Poirier woman. Already suspicions rested against her, or at least as to her pretended ignorance of the exact cause of her husband's death, or of the murderer. She was nevertheless interrogated as an ordinary witness. She was not warned that she could answer or not as she chose.

If the woman's testimony is read attentively, the main impression is that she was bound to urge suicide as the cause of her husband's death. This did not escape the notice of the detectives, who began to suspect her strongly from this time forth.

All the other witnesses that were heard gave testimony of such a nature as to strengthen the suspicions against the woman and Sam Parslow. From this moment the two were not lost sight of a single moment, and the case was placed in the hands of Detective McCaskill, who had just operated so successfully in the Rawdon affair.

A small detail to note by the way. At the instance of Rev. M. Pinault, the curate, the Poirier woman claimed her husband's corpse and asked M. Gilbert Lauzon, who was just going to St. Jerome on business, to buy her a coffin and to buy it as cheap as possible.

We all know that the authorities refused to deliver the body to Mrs. Poirier, and placed it instead in the care of the dead man's family.

The first act of Detective McCaskill after he had inquired into the testimonies at the inquest, was to ask Coroner Mignault to go to Mr. Bouvrette's, where Mrs. Poirier was stopping, in order to interrogate her in private, thus to acquire a sort of certitude, and also to inquire into the way she passed the time between the hours of noon and six o'clock in the evening, on Sunday, the 21st of November.

Coroner Mignault accordingly went to see Mrs. Poirier, and here is how he relates his visit in his official report :

"At a few minutes after ten o'clock I went to Mrs. Bouvrette's at the request of Detective McCaskill. There I saw Mrs. Poirier and she said to me: 'Mr. Mignault, can you not allow me to go home and fetch some clothes? I need some handkerchiefs and dresses for the child that I am bringing up.' (This child is now at Mrs. Poirier's mother's.) I answered her, 'Very well, come with me and we will go together; anyhow, I want to speak to you in private, and there are too many people here.'

"She put on her hat and mantle and we went out together.

"As soon as we were outside I told her: 'Mrs. Poirier, you are accused by everybody; they all say you had unlawful relations with Sam Parslow: that is known to be a fact. It is useless for you to deny. Will you please tell us what you did on Sunday, the twenty-first of November, between noon and six o'clock in the evening?' She answered: 'I went to vespers to accompany the singers upon the organ. I came home afterwards.'

"As she was saying the last words we had arrived at the door of her house. She entered first and I followed. On arriving near the door of the room where the murder was committed, from which the corpse had not yet been removed, she hesitated a moment. The body of the dead man was covered with a white sheet. She finally entered and went directly to the bureau, of which she pulled the drawer open and took out some handkerchiefs and a few other articles. I asked her if she desired to take a last look at her husband's corpse. She was crying at the time, or at least she was holding her handkerchief to her eyes. In answer to my question she nodded affirmatively. I lifted the sheet covering the corpse and she threw a cold, almost harsh glance towards the victim.

"I asked her to come out again, that I still had something to say to her.

"She followed me without uttering a word. At the very moment when we stepped out of the house the church bell began tolling. Each stroke of the bell sounding sadly in the damp morning air like a sob, seemed to awaken an echo in the heart of the woman, and I saw abundant tears roll down her cheeks. Wishing to continue the conversation I then asked her, 'Will you give me an exact account of your doings that Sunday afternoon?'

"Before she began to talk I told her she could remain silent if she chose. She said, 'As soon as I came out from vespers I came home, then I left to go to father's.'

"She would say no more.

"Again and again I urged her to confess having participated in the murder. I was telling her that her guilt was evident, and that sooner or later the truth would be known. A score of times she seemed to be on the verge of speaking. She would stop in front of me and seem to form a supreme decision, still the confession would expire on her lips.

"Finally I asked her point-blank, while looking her straight in the face:

"'Are you guilty, yes or no?'

"'No,' she answered.

"I asked again, 'Is Sam Parslow guilty?'

"She denied again, and said: 'The stories told about Sam Parslow and I are false. He is not my lover.'

The woman would not add another word, notwithstanding all the coroner's urging.

The coroner, however, basing his decision upon the testimony heard at the inquest and upon the discrepancies in the statements of the two principal witnesses, Sam Parslow and Cordelia Viau, widow of the late Isidore Poirier, concluded that there was sufficient proof to authorize the arrest of these two persons; accordingly, the detective went in his turn to Mrs. Bouvrette's, and there said to Mrs. Poirier:

"Madame, however painful my duty may be, I must accomplish it without fear or favor. After hearing the evidence at the inquest I am compelled to arrest you, as I suspect you of not being foreign to the death of Isidore Poirier, your husband."

Hearing these words, the Poirier woman became pale as death. Her features contracted and her eyes reflected the expression of an exceeding fear. This emotion soon passed away, however; she soon became calm again and said with a decided air, "It is well."

The Chief Constable Brazeau, was in the meanwhile proceeding to the arrest of Sam Parslow, who was living at his brother George's house.

When Sam saw the officer he smiled sadly and asked:

"What is new?"

The Chief Constable answered:

"Sam, I have this morning received orders to arrest you."

"I was expecting this," said Sam simply. "I am ready to follow you."

The Chief Constable then handcuffed Sam and said, "Come."

Then followed a pathetic scene.

Until that time Sam Parslow had remained unmoved. When, however, the time came for him to bid farewell to his mother, brothers and sisters; when the time came for him to leave this house where he passed his happy infancy and careless youth, where

he had tasted all the joys of home life, his apparent unconcern gave way to make place for deep emotion.

Great tears rolled down his cheeks. He threw a glance on the old furniture of the room, which brought to his mind a world of recollections, then approaching his sobbing mother, he said in a scarcely audible voice:

"Mother, do not cry, I will soon come back to you; I am not guilty, and they will acquit me."

The Chief Constable and his prisoner then rejoined the detective, the coroner, and the Poirier woman, and all left together for St. Scholastique.

While on the way, the detective tried to converse with Mrs. Poirier, but she refused to open her mouth or utter a word in answer to any question. When they arrived at the prison, the detective was firmly convinced she would never confess.

Where Mrs. Poirier was locked up in a cell, her boldness disappeared and she began to look her situation in the face.

Like most guilty persons, she yielded to the first moment of weakness and had no rest until she could confess fully.

She asked for Detective McCaskill, who came immediately to her summons.

Then the Poirier woman, without any introduction, commenced her confession:

"It is Sam Parslow who killed my husband," she said. "Six months ago he bought a revolver and told me he would shoot him. I would not consent; I was afraid of the noise. I told him, we will get arrested on the spot.

"Last week Sam sharpened a knife, saying: 'I am going to rid you of him, even if I lose my head for it.' Sunday afternoon I started to go to my father's and left Sam alone with my husband. When I came back, I saw that the shades were pulled down. I knew then that Sam had accomplished the deed."

The detective, fearing that the Poirier woman might deny her story afterwards, said:

"It is too bad to see a handsome woman like you shut up in a dark cell, I will take you to a nice room, a parlor."

She appeared satisfied and said "That's good."

Mr. McCaskill then went out and got Coroner Migneault and Chief Constable Brazeau to hide themselves behind a curtain in the private office of the judge.

When Mrs. Poirier was brought into the room, she repeated almost word for word, if not adding to it, her previous statement, this time in the hearing of the two officers, who took copious notes of the interview.

After that the detective ordered the prisoner to be reinstated in her cell. She manifested her discontent at having been deceived, but apparently unaware that she had spoken before witnesses.

After this scene, Detective McCaskill sent for Sam Parslow and had him brought to the same room, where Coroner Migneault made

him acquainted with the confession of Mrs. Poirier. To this end he made use of the notes he had taken while hid behind the curtain, which read as follows :

"Sam Parslow killed my husband with a butcher knife. The knife belonged to my husband.

"Parslow and I wanted to kill my husband ever since New Year's Day, 1897. I had told Parslow that the knife with which the deed was accomplished was not suitable to kill him with one blow. I advised him to buy a revolver. There was a long discussion between us about the same revolver. I was of opinion that the revolver was too noisy and he dared not use it.

"Sunday, the twenty-first, after vespers, while I was still in the house about four o'clock, Sam entered the room where my husband was and had the knife with him then. I did not know before that that he had the knife. I went out then to go to my father's. I did not help him."

Sam Parslow was overwhelmed when he heard the reading of these notes ; he became very pale ; then seeming to take a sudden resolution, he spoke in his turn and made the most complete revelations in the following terms .

"Isidore Poirier was lying down across his bed. I struck him across the throat with the knife, but I did not think I had killed him. She was helping me; she was sitting at the right and I was on the left near the pillows. I used a butcher knife to cut his throat with.

"After I struck him, I went out. I was afraid. She followed me. I do not remember having struck the man but once."

The prisoner then hesitated a little, then said he remembered nothing else.

The coroner then asked :

"Sam, were you in love with Mrs. Poirier ?"

"Yes," answered he, "but I did not think she would marry me.

"I told her I would give my head in order to save her from trouble. I admit having bought a revolver with the intention of killing Poirier. I killed him because I loved Cordelia, and I thought her husband was in the way. I wanted to rid her of him.

"When I took the knife and started to kill Poirier, I was 'like one magnetized.' I did not want to go, yet I went anyhow. The woman told me:

"'Be brave, Sam, only one good blow and all will be over. Do not weaken.'

"I did not remark whether she held him or not, I only saw that she was on the other side of the bed.

"The knife I used belonged to Cordelia. I had sharpened it myself some days previously.

"There was no question between us of any insurance policy. One day, however, she told me:

"'Should Isidore die, I would be happy and you too ; we could live comfortable, and I would no longer have to bother my head

about the notes to meet of which my husband speaks all the time.'

"She never told me that her husband ill-treated her, but she often led me to understand that his presence was painful to her. She told me once, 'He is good for nothing else but drink.'

"The revolver that I bought to kill Poirier with is hidden under the rafters of the roof at my brother George's house, on the left. The clothes that I wore on that day are also hid there.

"None of my folks knew of the plot between the woman Poirier and me. The day I made her acquaintance was an unfortunate day for me.

"She always did with me what she pleased. I do not know what I did after I left the fatal room, I remember nothing else."

Such is word for word the confession of Sam Parslow.

It is easily seen therefrom that the confessions were spontaneous and not dictated by remorse. In the woman it was the need of breaking up the feeling caused by the solitude of her dark cell. This phenomenon is well known and very common. As to Sam he felt compelled to follow the example of his accomplice.

A person whom we cannot name, as our indiscretion would be very prejudicial to him, had occasion to see the two accused persons in their cells and speak with them. From the report of this person we will see that the confession, or rather, the denunciation, of Cordelia Viau was inspired by a sordid motive. "I confessed," said she to her questioner, "because I thought everything was discovered. I was under the impression that Sam compromised himself at the coroner's inquest. As I have said, the murder was premeditated for a long time previously. Sam had spoken of it for more than a year, and every time that conversation would run upon this subject I used to say to him, 'You are not capable of killing him, you are too much of a coward for that.'

"Twice or three times Sam combined plans to undo my husband while he was working at St. Jerome. He would find pretexths to bring him to St. Canut. He missed his chance every time. I did not think he would kill him, I believed him too weak. When I left home to go to my father's Sunday afternoon, Parslow told me, 'Kiss your husband before you go away, this is the last time you will see him alive.' I did not pay any attention to these words and I went away. When I came back on Monday I saw Sam and he told me 'all is over.'

"I began to believe he had told me the truth on the previous day.

"I went nevertheless as far as the house, and knocked at the two doors. When I saw that no answer came I began to tremble. It is then that I went to the church to play the organ for a wedding. I knew at the time that my husband was dead. I did not love my husband, but I tried to be good to him.

"I never loved Sam Parslow either. I let him come to see me because I knew that he would do my bidding. He was my slave, and he did all I told him.

"I never quarrelled with Sam, the only dispute we ever had together was about the revolver with which he was to kill my husband. I had told him, 'If you use a revolver you will have yourself arrested immediately.'

"He answered, 'I don't care as long as you are left alone.'

"Sam Parslow knew I did not love him very much. We have had conversations about insurance. He knew that my husband's life was insured. Once he said to me: 'When your husband dies you will get your money and you will be happy.'

"I think I told him that we would share this money."

Q. Were you in the house at the time of the murder?

A. No. I had left to go to my father's.

Q. Do you know that Sam Parslow has said that you were in the house at the time? Do you know that he pretends that you were in the room, and sat down beside your husband's body?

A. Yes, I know it, and I was also told that Sam wanted to throw all the blame on me.

Q. Do you know whether there was a struggle between the murderer and your husband?

A. Yes, there was a struggle.

Q. How do you know that?

After hesitating a long while the prisoner answered that she was in the house, but not in the room.

"I believe," she said, "that the fight started at one end of the room near the bureau. I heard the noise of the boots on the floor, but I heard no outcry."

All of a sudden the woman said:

"I did not say that I was in the house, I cannot, I will not have it said. I will never say that I was there.

"When Sam Parslow was speaking of killing my husband, I used to tell him, 'If you kill him you will go and give it away right after. You are too weak to keep a secret of that kind.'

"He answered: 'You will see that I will know how to defend myself. I will not let myself be taken so easily.'"

The prisoner then came back to the question of her absence on Sunday afternoon. She insisted upon it, saying:

"When I went away, my husband saw me to the door; he did not come out though. It was impossible for Mrs. Bouvrette to see him, because a tree was in the way."

The prisoner then asked with an uneasy voice, what was going on outside.

Her visitor did not answer that question; he offered some consoling words, then took his leave, and went to Sam Parslow's cell.

As an introductory greeting the visitor asked:

"Did you sleep well last night, Sam?"

"It was impossible for me to sleep a single instant," said Parslow. "I cannot explain the situation in which I find myself. I do not understand how it was possible for me to kill Isidore Poirier. He was my friend. I loved the woman to madness and she often told me that she was unhappy. She never said that her husband was ill-treating her, but she did not love him. He was a very mild man, even when in liquor. He loved his wife and treated her like a spoiled child.

"I never had any knowledge that he refused her anything. I never believed that Cordelia would give me money if I killed him. Moreover, it was not for money that I committed the crime. I knew that the woman did not love me very much, but she seemed to take pleasure in my company.

"We went out together often, and every time we devised ways and means to rid ourselves of Poirier. I cannot explain the feeling that I experienced in the presence of this woman. She fascinated me. Every day I would resolve never to see her again, and every day I broke my resolution. I often cried after being scolded about it by my brother George; often I was saying to myself that I was wrong to continue having anything to do with her, but I never had the strength to break off.

"Ever since New Year's day I had it in my mind to kill Poirier. I was fearful of the moment when the occasion would present itself, yet I felt it was unavoidable. Now that the thing is all over with, it seems to me that I have just awakened from a dream. I remember perfectly every detail of the crime; it is so fearful I cannot believe in it."

Q. Did Mrs. Poirier ever lead you to understand she would marry you?

A. Yes, she did, since she was often saying to me "when we live together we will arrange in this or that manner." She urged me to the crime by saying she was unhappy. I would have done anything for the woman.

Q. Did you ever tell any member of your family what you intended doing?

A. No, never.

Q. Is it true that you bought a revolver, intending to use it in killing Poirier?

A. Yes, it is true. After that I would not use it because Cordelia said it would make too much noise and I would inevitably be arrested.

Q. Is it true that you hid the revolver among the rafters at your brother George's.

A. Yes; I told the detective where to find it. My clothes are also in that house. I do not remember whether I had any blood on my hands after cutting Poirier's throat.

"I repeat again that Mrs. Poirier was with me when I committed the crime. She was sitting on the bed beside her husband and followed me when I went out."

After a few consoling words, the visitor departed, leaving Parslow the prey of remorse.

We have insisted upon the precise official confessions of the two accused in order to remove all doubts as to their guilt from the minds of our readers. Whatever the causes which led them to confess, it is doubtless a fact that the confessions exist and that they should stand for themselves.

As it is, it would appear that we are wrong: according to one of the singularities of the law, the confessions are not to be received as evidence. Not having been obtained according to the forms prescribed by the code of criminal procedure, they are to be considered as having no existence.

After communicating with their counsel, the accused have withdrawn their confessions and plead "not guilty."

The search for truth should always be the sole aim of justice; at any rate this is the popular belief. It does not seem to be so in practice.

The defense of criminals is a series of surprises; a duel where deceit is the weapon, and when the counsel for the defense is shrewder and craftier than the public prosecutor, he often comes out victorious. So much so, that upon the crime of the individual is grafted a social crime, the costly systematic protection of the criminal against the victim.

We will see by the incidents of the trial how the jury will consider the denials of the accused.

As we go to press the trial of Cordelia Vian has just ended. On the fourth of February she was declared guilty of the murder of her husband, and the jury did not require much time to agree upon that point.

In virtue of the elasticity of criminal procedure, the cause of Cordelia Vian was separated from that of Sam Parslow, her accomplice. This was done in order to enable each to testify against the other.

In spite of the verdict of the jury, the judge could not render sentence, as the question of the confessions had been reserved by the court, during the trial, to be submitted to the court of appeal. Accordingly, the sentence will not be pronounced before the court of appeals has given an opinion as to whether the confessions will be admitted in evidence or not. If not there would have to be a new trial.

There is no doubt about Isidore Poirier having died at the hands of the two accused.

But according to precedents the letter of the law must prevail.

THE END.

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