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A Night Adventure.

The Detective's Story.

BOUT half-past seven in the evening, A toward the fall of the year 1844, two men were seated at table-Balzac, the host, Vidocq, the guest.

Said the latter: "M. de Balzac, why do you tax your imagination for fiction when you can get reality, before your eyes, close to your ears, under your hand ?"

"You believe in reality? I'm delighted. I did not imagine you so innocent. 'Tis only we novelists who create reality and make it visible. Whenever any one comes to me with 'M. de Balzac, I've got a splendid subject for you,' I know before hearing it that it's worthless. If the subject is good there are no details; if the details are excellent there is no subject. No realityonly half a fact."

- "But I can give you one."
- "Complete?" "Complete."

" Ah !"

And Vidocq commenced: "On the 14th of December, 1834 or '35, a fearfully cold night, I was on duty at the prefecture de Police. The room in which my colleagues and myself were stationed opened on to the staircase leading to the offices of Monsieur le Prefet. The glass in the upper part of the door was rendered almost opaque by the condensed moisture which had settled on it; but about 1 o'clock I noticed two shadows flit past, and opening the door I saw two and her servant, the former dressed in full evening costume. This puzzled me. What could a lady want, one hour after midnight, with the Prefect of Police? Strangely dressed, too; the flowers in her hair put in at haphazard; her hair hardly even looked as if it had been combed, and beneath her rouge, (for she had used some, although she was very young and marvelously beautiful,) her face was ghastly pale. But what struck me as being the most extraordinary in this strange toilet was, that while on the one foot she wore a black boot, the other was protected by a white satin slipper.

On my asking what brought her there, the lady, without even stopping or looking round, answered curtly that she wanted to speak to Monsieur le Prefet, and before I was able to reply that he could not be seen at such an hour of the night, the door of the magistrate's apartment was opened and the lady entered; it was closed again immediately, and the servant, thus left alone on the stair-case accepted my invitation to come into the room I had just left. Although her dress was not as strange as that of her mistress, she was equally excited, and in the few words she spoke in answer to me I noticed a nervous trembling which was not caused by cold alone.

But let us see what was taking place meantime in the Prefet's apartments. After an exceptionably heavy and fatigueing day's work, he had gone to bed at midnight, giving strict orders that he was not to be awakened till 8 o'clock on any pretext whatever; and such orders were never known to be disobeyed. The huzzier, as tonished that both the sentinel and the porter had allowed these two women to enter, desired to know the object of the lady's

- "To see Monsieur le Prefet."
- "Impossible."

The lady stormed, entreated, threatened; but all in vain, till at last tearing off her pearl necklace and diamond bracelets, she thrust them excitedly into Pere Caron's hand, crying:

"Ten thousand francs—twenty thousand -I don't know, more or less. But now,

He went; how could be resist? Timorously he set about his task and at last succeeded; while the Magistrate irritated and savage at being thus disturbed, sprang up in bed with a sudden bound.

"Scamp! scoundrel!" he stormed. What were your orders?"

"A-a-a lady, sir," stammered the unfortunate huissier.

"Well, even then ?"

"Most urgent and important reasons,

"A lady-at this hour and in such weather! Let her go to the devil!"

"The lady knows Monsieur le Prefet ?" "Of course-who doesn't? But sufficient; I want to sleep; and the next time you disobey my orders you march. Now go."

The huissier retired crestfallen; but the lady was not to be discouraged. "He must not be allowed to fall asleep again," she urged. "Run back at once-

"No, Madame," interrupted Pere Caron. "I should lose my place, and I have a wife and children to support."

"Is that all?" cried the lady. "If you lose your post through me I promise on my honor that you shall have an annuity of two, three, four thousand francs settled on you and your family. Take these, as earnest;" and handing him two thousand francs in notes, she continued: "Tell Monsieur le Prefet that to-morrow, at the Tuileries, Louis Philippe, King of France, will thank him for what he does for me to night."

The words, "King," "Tuileries," "four thousand francs annuity," whirled through Caron's head as he again confronted his master, whose rage this time was almost uncontrolable.

"What is the woman's name?" "She has not told me, Monsieur."

"Fool that you are ! go and ask at once; and if this business be not finished in three minutes, you past the rest of the night in the cells."

The lady, however, would not disclose her name, and the huissier gave himself up for lost; but the Prefet, struck by this strange persistence of a nameless lady, who dared to promise the King's gratitude, felt that the case must be an extraordinary one, and at last decided to give way.

"If the lady won't give her name, ask her then to send it under seal," was the result of his deliberation.

With a deep-drawn sigh of relief, the strange visitor acceded to this request, and inclosed her card in a scaled envelope. The Préfet started up in astonishment when he saw the name, and after a second glance to assure himself that he had read aright he turned to Caron:

"Show the lady into my private officequick ! and with the greatest deference."

It was the Countess Helene de B-, one of the most remarkable women of Louis Philippe's reign, distinguished by her beauty and elevation of mind; one of those women who rightly or wrongly, were considered to carry in the folds of their dresses the fate of Ministries-nay, even war or

The Prefet, on joining the Countess, attempted to excuse himself but the lady gave him no time for explanations, for her case was too pressing to allow of formalities. Her voice broken and quivering, she thus addressed him:

"Sir, I have come to you because-because a dreadful misfortune has happened to me, such as no other women has ever known-so dreadful, you can form no idea. Monsieur, save me! You can-you must," she gasped with a despairing cry. "You know that my husband left for Bordeaux a week ago."

"The magistrate inclined his head, and subdue the involuntary tremor in her voice, continued her story: "During his absence she had been visited by a person, a young man, whom she became acquainted with at the Austrian Embassy. Her husband, whose passions would sometimes border on a delirious frenzy, had noted the attentions of this Hungarian officer, who, although she did not encourage him, would continue his visits during her husband's absence, sometimes even late, very late, in the evening. That very evening M. de Karls (such is the crime or wrong to stab him?" was the officer's name) would insist on seeing her home, much against her will, for her husband's return was to be expected every hour; and then occurred that fatal event." This word let loose the flood of sorrow so long pent up, and the Countess, loosing all control over her feelings, buried her face in her hands and sobbed forth pas-

"He was my lover, my love;

This confession placed the Magistrate search should fail to recover it? It should more at his case. He knew now what was never be found." wanted-saw exactly what had happened -at least he thought so; unexpected arrival of the husband, surprise of the lovers, duel already fought or to be fought, and the lady flying to him for his assistance in order to thwart her husband's revenge-or at least to prevent the scandal from becoming known, but he was wrong. Her husband had not even come back, asserted the Countess,

"Then what is that dreadful misfortune?" asked the Prefet ironically. "No one wounded-no one killed?"

"Neither killed nor wounded, do you say, Monsieur le Prefet? Wounded there is none as yet; but dead there are two-first, myself, (for I shall never survive this,) and then he who is now in my carriage?" "In your carriage?"

"Yes, M. de Karls; he died two hours ago in my house, and his corpse is now below in my carriage."

"At your house?-assassinated?-a corpse?

"No, no; not murdered, thank God! He died from a sudden rush of blood to the head while he was with me-with me! Oh! it is horrible, terrible, that I should have to think of my reputation, my honor, my worldly name, of that world that will soon know all, of my husband's honor, when I would be alone with my sorrow, my tears, and the dear one who is dead ! But no, that cannot be; and to you I have come for help. You can you must asssist me."

"How, Madame, how? My resources are not infinite. A case so unparalleled-what can I do ?'

"You must!" cried the Countess, rising and speaking with the authority partly of a powerful and influential woman, partly of one who implores, "till you have devised some means I do not leave this place. Surely you-of the secret police-

"It is impossible, Madame, impossible!" "In three hours my husband will be here."

The Prefet rose and rang the bell. "There is but one man in Paris, nay, I might say, in the world, who can save you, and I have called him. Will you confide in him-tell him all?"

"You answer for his secrecy?"

"Yes."

"Then let him come."

As soon as I entered the room the Prefet addressed me brusquely: "Vidocq, a great personage, died suddenly, a few hours ago, Madame's house." "Very good, M. le Prefet; we will say he

died a sudden death.' "Madame's husband is away, but re-

rns to-night

" At what hour? "Auy moment."

"Then we may as well say he has re-

turned." "Just as well. The body of the young man is below in Madame's carriage," con-

tinued the Prefet. I waited, listening.

"You must get rid of this man for us."

"Which one? Husband or lover?" "The dead man," said the Prefet, curtly.

I understood well enough, but the joke was too much for me. "Then," I said, "that will be a more difficult affair. It's easy enough to get rid of a living man; but a dead one-ah!" but let me see; you wish me to spirit away, before daylight, the corpse in Mme. la Comtesse de B.'s carriage ?"

The lady started. "You know me?" "I have that honor, Madame. Now, there is one way of getting rid of this corpse."

"And that is?"

"What do you say, Madame, to the body being found in the streets this morning, the lady, after making a great effort to about three or four o'clock, pierced with several dagger wounds ?"

" Assassinated?"

"Yes, Madame. Three stabs in the stomach and one in the heart; it shall be well done. The body is found; nothing on it, not even watch or rings-murdered by thieves. Great excitement for twenty-four hours; inquest, which will end in nothing, and in a week the whole affair forgotten.' " Murdered !"

" But since he is dead, Madame, where

"Enough?" cried the Countess, her face buried in her hands; "enough, Monsieur, enough. Horrible, horrible-it can never be; never !" I could not understand ber; but some

people are delicate, you see. What can one do? "Then what do you say, Madame, to the

"Then there should be no burial?"

"Burial, Madame burial? Ah! if Madame desires the luxury of a burial, my plan is useless."

"But how would you hide it?"

"That is my business."

"Oh ! no-I must know."

"Believe me, Madame; you had better not. Does the surgeon show his saw to the patient whose limbs he is going to amputate? Nay, Madame, do not seek to control my actions, let me choose my own expedients ; what can it matter so long as you are set free? and therefore, Madame, tell me if my second offer is accepted."

On receiving this sharp and decided answer I took my hat and moved toward the door, but, on seeing this, the Countess gave a quick, sudden cry of pain, that made me turn round involuntarily, and in doing so I caught the Prefet's eye. He signed to me to remain.

"Oh! Monsieur," exclaimed the Countess, 'imagine some other means, I conjure you. My life and my honor are in your hands."

Had it not been out of respect for my chief, I should have disregarded the lady's scruples altogether, and have caused the body to be thrown into the Seine, with a hundred weight of stones fastened to it. As it was, I saw that I was master of the position, and thus addressed the Countess:

"Please give me M. Karl's address."

"What, is that necessary?"

"Indispensable."

"She gave it to me. "Now, Madame, in a few minutes I hope to have finished my task successfully."

"And how? No stabbing, no dreadful disappearance."

"None whatever, since you wish it so. Everything will be done in the most simple manner, your reputation uncompromised, and M. Karls' body treated with as great respect as though it was under his father's roof. In a quarter of an hour the corpse will be in M. Karls' own room, and you Madame, will in five minutes, be in your own carriage, free from the dreadful burden it now contains."

"Ah, Monsieur! how can I thank you? How can my gratitude equal the service you do me ?"

She took me by the hand as though she would crush it to pieces-it was one of the finest moments of my life."

Although I spoke with such assurance to the Countess, I will not deny that I was not without uneasiness, and intimated to the lady that we had done with the Prefet's private omce, and that our next scene of action would be the street.

Before leaving the room she turned around to the Magistrate, and, pressing her hand closely to her heart, she bade him trust in her as he would in God. The Pere Caron, who was waiting with lights in the ante-chamber, she spoke in passing:

"You shall not be forgotten, Monsieur, all that I have promised shall be done." Descending the grand staircase, I stopped at the door of the room where I had loft the servant, who now joined us with the delight of a prisoner set free.

"Honorine," said the Countess, "all goes well, but we have to finish." "Ah! yes-to finish."

While the two went on a little in advance, I called out one of the most intelligent inspectors, and told him, as concisely as I could, what had to be done.

The coachman was asleep, and the principal object in view was to get the dead body out of the carriage without his knowing what had taken place. But how to do so if he should be awake?

"We shall see," said the officer; "we shall soon see."

"If he does not sleep," I answered, "he must sleep." "Of course he must one way or another."

"The devil!" I cried; "not the other way; no, not." Following the two women, we crept along in the shadow of the houses. The driver

was fast asleep. While the officer ran back to tell the ladies they might advance, I opened the carriage door, got out the dead body, and placed him at full length in the shadow of the parapet which runs along the Quai des Orfevres, wedging him firmly with a couple of stones, for the pavement was sloping. He was a magnificent man, six feet or six feet one, at least; fair, elegant, and such clothes, such linen! All this was done in the twinkling of an eye. The two ladies had now arrived, but they could hardly body disappearing suddenly from the face crawl along; they were worn out, and more of the earth, so that even the most rigorous like shadows than human beings, and could

not even get into the carriage without assistance. Such fright, such terror in their downward looks, as they took their places without uttering a sound!

"Monsleur," said the countess to me, seizing my arm with a force that left the imprints of her nails; you promise me that the body shall not be outraged?"

"I swore, Madame, that in a quarter of an hour M. de Karls should be in his own bed; he will be there."

And, bowing to the ladies, I closed the door with a terrific bang, and then jumping upon the wheel, I woke the coachman. "You sleepy scoundrel," I cried "can't

you hear the ladies? They've been calling out to you to start for more than a quarter of an hour."

"All right, all right," he muttered, gathering up the reins. " Where to? where to?"

"Home, of course, you idiot-Rue Bellechasse,' The carriage dashed off at full speed, the

horses feet striking tire from the stones in their mad gallop; a few minutes later and

Without loss of time, I led the inspector to the place where I had put the dead man, and, raising him up, we placed his arms within our own, and carried him away as though he was dead drunk; but, although we were both strong men, it was with the greatest difficulty that we could keep from slipping as we made our way to the Pont Neuf. My idea was this: Pont Neuf is a vast thoroughfare, into which all the principal streets empty themselves, and where it is impossible for any one to say with certainty from which part of Paris the wayfarer may have come. From the city, from the Faubourg St. German, from the Greve or from the Faubourg St. Jaques, he cannot say. I further intended to throw off the scent any ulterior search as to where M. de Karls had passed the night; hence my choice of the Pont Neuf. As soon as we arrived opposite the Place Dauphine, I decided to stop and wait for the first passing cab; and any one who knows Paris can easily imagine that we had not to wait long. As soon as we heard the sound of wheels, I told the inspector to imitate the singing of a drunken man, and to do so as well as he could in a German jargon. I had hardly given the order, when he burst forth in splendid style with an Alsatian drinking song, in which I joined as heartily as one could wish, and in such a manner that the approaching cabman could not fail to think us both intoxicated. As soon as the cab came within a few yards of us I cried out, "Here, my man, can you take this gentleman home; we've neither time, nor are we sober enough to do it ourselves?" Without waiting for an answer, I opened the door and thrust in the dead body, not being very particular, you may imagine, whether he was seated comfortably or not, and banging the door to, gave the driver five francs for his journey, and told him the address: "Rue St. Florentine, first large house on the right, and look alive." And he did, while we struck up our song again, as two drunken men will when they part from a companion.

The trick was done.

When the cabman got to his journey's end he was not at all astonished to find his fare fast asleep; but, experiencing very great difficulty in awakening him, he began to think something must be wrong, and rang the bell fierce ly. The door was opened; the porter and his wife came out, recognized M. de Karls at once, although his face was still more drawn and disfigured, and in a few moments the whole household was up, in a dreadful state of dismay and consternation. The driver examined by M. de Karls valet, told all he knew; the gentleman was completely drunk when he was put into the cab off Pont Neuf by two other gentlemen hardly less intoxicated, who went off singing as soon as they had put him in; that was all; everything.

The dead man was carried upstairs to his room and laid on his bed-so that I had kept my word to the Countess; while next day the papers mentioned the unfortunate death of M. de, Karls, a young man of noble family, who was seized with apoplexy while going home in a cab. What took place on the Countess' return home I cannot tell you, for I never heard; but a few days after, she was obliged to attend the funeral service in the Madeleine, owing to the Count's official relation with the Austrian Embassy. What a torture it must rave been to her? Obliged to appear calm and indifferent, not daring to weep or to pray, while her whole soul went out in

sorrow to the beloved dead. CONCLUDED ON SECOND PAGE.