

THE TWO PONIARDS.

The Romance of a High Russian and His Italian Wife.

Some time previous to the Franco-Prussian war the Avenue Villiers, Paris, was growing up amid the waste lands of the old field of Monceau. This thoroughfare, which was the home of some of the most noted of the demimonde, was on the night of Jan. 5, 1870, the theatre of one of the most startling tragedies that the journals of the French capital ever recorded. Situated at the corner of the Avenue Villiers and Rue Cardinet was a magnificent hotel built for a wealthy Englishman, and given up by him when he was summoned to the East Indies on matters appertaining to government duties.

About the 11th of December previous there came to Paris a Russian of fabulous wealth. He, accompanied by his bewitching wife, occupied the hotel that the Englishman had abandoned, having had it fitted up in truly royal magnificence.

To the neighbors in the immediate vicinity this couple seemed to be on the best of terms and to live together like two turtle-doves, although apparently exactly opposite in nature and temperament. He from the eternal and desolate winter of Russia, while she, fully thirty years his junior, was from the sunny and balmy climes of Italy.

The Russian gentleman was very eccentric and mysterious in his manners and movements. Some said he was a spy from the Russian Government. His wife was never seen in public with him except on one or two first-nights at the theatre.

However, things went on smoothly with M. Ivan Verefkin and madame until the fatal night of Jan. 5.

At about 12 o'clock on the above-mentioned night, as the gendarme was patrolling that section of the city, when about 300 feet from the residence of M. Verefkin, he noticed a black object lying on the sidewalk. As he drew nearer he saw that the object was the form of a man lying on his face. As he was about to turn the form over in order to obtain a glimpse of the unfortunate victim's face, he started back with a suppressed cry. Still imbedded in the man's back was a glistening poniard. From the wound a few drops of blood trickled.

The richness of the unfortunate man's attire inspired the rough officer with considerable respect.

"This is the work of some cowardly assassin," he muttered, as he turned the body and looked at the face. The nose was slightly bruised, as the victim must have fallen on his face on the hard pavement.

Procuring assistance, the unfortunate man was carried to the prefecture, and there an investigation was made. Nothing could at first be learned either to establish the identity of the man, or to obtain a clue to the perpetrators of the crime. As the commissary was unable to proceed further unaided, he sent for Vilmont, one of his most trusted detectives. It was not long ere that sleepless individual put in an appearance. As he entered the apartment where the commissary and his clerk were discussing with serious faces the details of the murder, he had the appearance of a man who had casually dropped in to say "Good morning" and then discuss the probabilities of the weather.

"Monsieur le commissary has sent for me," he said.

"Yes, Vilmont. A crime has been committed, and we are all at sea, both as to who the unfortunate man is, and, naturally, who are the guilty parties?"

"Ah! we'll see," answered Vilmont, as he approached the body. Then with a slight start, he exclaimed:

"As I live it is Monsieur Verefkin!"

Vilmont stroking his beardless chin, muttered:

"Can it be as I thought? Monsieur was indeed then a spy, and has thus been disposed of. Well, it is perhaps as well." Then aloud to the Commissary: "Monsieur, this is the body of Monsieur Ivan Verefkin, a wealthy Russian gentleman, who lived in the Avenue Villiers, at the corner of the Rue Cardinet. What a blow this will be to madame, his wife!"

"Vilmont," said the Commissary, "perhaps you had better go and fetch madame, that we may lose no time hunting up the criminals."

"It is now five o'clock. It is perhaps an unseasonable hour to arouse a lady, but she no doubt will be up nervous about her husband's welfare."

Vilmont departed, and taking a sacre, arrived at the mansion. A light was still burning in the vestibule, and the apartments on the floor above were ablaze with light. Vilmont rang, and the door was almost immediately opened by a sombre-looking porter. Before the detective had time to ask for madame a rustling of a dress was heard, and Mme. Verefkin appeared and in great excitement asked:

"Oh, monsieur, do you come from monsieur my husband? He is safe? Nothing has befallen him? Speak—speak, I pray you!"

Greatly moved at the anxiety of the lady, Vilmont could hardly speak. Then, with considerable effort, he said:

"Madame, I do not bring good news. Your husband has met with a great misfortune. He is—dead—murdered!"

"Dead!" she echoed, catching at the balustrade for support. "Oh, who has killed my darling?"

The keen eye of Vilmont noticed that, although madame appeared greatly shocked, she did not weep. Not a tear bedimmed her bright eye.

"Will madame accompany me to Monsieur le Commissary? Justice demands that madame should aid us in our endeavor to unearth the villain who has so cowardly taken off Monsieur Verefkin," said Vilmont.

She started, and then calming herself, said to her maid:

"Blanche, bring my coat and bonnet, and we will go with monsieur."

The three entered the fiacre, and were driven to the Prefecture. As they neared the place madame's grief and agitation increased. Alighting, they entered. The Commissary met them at the door. Ere he had time to express his sorrow for madame's great bereavement, she rushed past him and threw herself upon the lifeless body of him

who had been her husband. Her piteous moans drew from the eyes of these men who were accustomed to such scenes a tear of pity.

As the Commissary gently took her from the body and led her to the chair Vilmont again noticed that, despite her great grief, no tears had fallen from her eyes.

"Strange," he muttered, "but some people cannot shed tears."

When Mme. Verefkin became sufficiently calmed the Commissary asked:

"Madame, do you suspect any of this terrible crime?"

"No, monsieur," she answered, "my husband had no enemies that I know of. He was too good, too kind."

As the magistrate asked the question he picked up the poniard with which Monsieur Verefkin had been killed. The maid, who had been moving about in her chair, saw the knife, and in a shrill voice exclaimed: "My God! that is madame's dagger!" For a moment it seemed as though the woman would faint. The magistrate rushed to her assistance. Then she murmured faintly:

"No—no, Blanche, that is not mine although it looks like it."

Vilmont's eyes glistened.

"Aha! That is why she could not weep. A clever actress. We'll see."

Advancing toward the magistrate, he spoke a few hurried words. The commissary addressed Mme. Verefkin:

"Madame, I am very sorry to have troubled you, and since you can shed no light upon the murder of your husband, you are at liberty to go to your home. Vilmont will accompany you."

So saying they departed. Vilmont with the determination to see madame's dagger, that so much resembled the one with which M. Verefkin had been murdered.

Having arrived at the home of madame, the detective asked:

"Will madame kindly show me her dagger? I am very sorry to trouble you, but it may lead to the capture of the culprit."

"Certainly, if monsieur will follow me," she answered.

She ascended the broad staircase and entered her boudoir. The detective felt uneasy. Approaching her escritoire, she opened the uppermost drawer and handed Vilmont a poniard.

"Great heavens!" he exclaimed, "it is a fac simile of the one used to kill monsieur!"

The only difference being that madame's initials were on her's. It had been scratched off, but the word "Lyons" was still legible. The detective carefully put it in his pocket and left. He went straight away to the prefecture and there saw the poniard besmeared with blood. Wiping off the blood on this dagger too, the name was scratched except the two letters—na.

The detective came to but one conclusion, and that was both daggers had been made in the same city—He determined to go there and hunt up the maker. Taking with him the poniard on which madame's initials were, he started for Lyons, first leaving a comrade to watch madame's movements. Arrived in Lyons, he inquired of a dealer who the manufacturers of cutlery were. He was given a list. The dealer then asked him if there was any particular line of cutlery that he desired. He answered that there was, at the same time showing the poniard.

"Ah!" said the dealer, "that was made by M. Godeaux & Co., and sold only by his principal agent, M. Barton, in the Rue Madeline."

Thanking him, the detective left, and hastened to see M. Barton. He found that gentleman in his private office. Of him Vilmont asked, producing the poniard:

"Do you deal, monsieur, in this class of goods?"

"Yes," he answered scrutinizing the dagger closely, "and I remember this one very well. I sold it to a lady some three months ago. I remember the transaction well, because her marvelous beauty attracted me. By the way, another reason that I remember it so well is because she bought two, and I jokingly asked her if she were going to slay all mankind, she might better penetrate their hearts with a glance from her eyes than with a cold blade of steel. She had her initials engraved on this one, but the other one was plain."

Thanking the gentleman, Vilmont departed and took the first train to Paris. He in reality had only a clew. Of course madame had bought the two poniards, and she still had one of them. What had become of the other one? She might have lost it, and some one picked it up. He had now in reality obtained a clew. He would, however, put it to the best use, and having magnified his evidence, confront madame with it. He reached Paris three days after the murder of Monsieur Verefkin.

On his way from the depot to the prefecture he directed the driver of the fiacre in which he rode to drive through the Avenue Villiers. As he neared the Verefkin mansion he saw opposite in the shadow of the leafless trees the comrade that he had left there. He drove by, and motioned for the man to follow for a piece down the avenue. As the man came up he said somewhat nervously: "You have arrived just in time. I fear the bird is about to fly. There has been considerable commotion about the house for the last twelve hours."

There was evidently no time to be lost. He must hasten to the prefecture, state what he had learned, obtain a warrant, and return as soon as possible. Leaving his comrade to watch he hastened to the prefecture. It was not long before he returned with a warrant, and accompanied by the commissary. They rang, and the door was immediately opened, as though the inmates were expecting some one. Without waiting to be announced the detective, followed by the magistrate, ascended to madame's boudoir. When they reached the room a queer sight met their gaze. Mme. Verefkin stood in the middle of the room surrounded by trunks half filled. The room was in chaotic confusion. As they appeared at the door madame stood as one dumb, and a deadly pallor overspread her features. From her apparently lifeless hands a letter, half read, had dropped. Quick as a flash of lightning, Vilmont stopped and picked it up.

"Give me that letter," she shrieked. "It is mine; you have no right to read it."

The last lines put aside any doubts as to her commission of the crime. They were:

"I will meet you at the hotel (you know the one). We are now free to love one another as of yore. You are a brave girl. I knew you would not stop at the sight of blood. Come to me. VICTOR."

When confronted by the evidence of the dealer at Lyons and the damning evidence of the note she was completely unnerved and wept like a child.

"It was you, my love, that betrayed me. Why did he write that note!" she sobbed.

She was arrested and escorted to the prefecture, where surrounded by the cold, damp walls, and hoping for leniency, she made a full confession.

She was born in Florence. Her occupation since early womanhood had been that of an artist's model. While posing in the studio of one Victor Vallani, she had fallen in love with the artist. He was not long in accomplishing her ruin. She still loved him. One day a wealthy Russian visited Vallani in his study, and meeting in the beautiful model, fell madly in love with her sweet face and voluptuous form. He was repulsive to her.

Victor, who was poor, struck upon the idea of her yielding to the Russian, and extracting from him as much as possible from his well-filled purse. She would have given her life to please the man she loved. The Russian proposed to go to Paris. She did not desire to go, but Victor had persuaded her to. He had given up his profession, and lived on the money she supplied him. If she did not accompany the Russian, Vallani would have to work, and that had become distasteful to him. She accompanied him to Paris after she had demanded that he should marry her.

They were married and went to Paris. Here her concealed dislike for the man so much her senior increased. She absolutely despised him. She longed to be with Victor. By one stroke she could rid herself of the man she loathed and return to her lover, and bring with her untold wealth. For this purpose she had gone to Lyons and purchased two poniards—to kill him with one, and have the other in case she should be suspected. She had endeavored to keep them concealed, but the maid, Blanche, had by accident seen one.

As to the commission of the crime it was simple enough. Monsieur Verefkin was very regular in his habits. She knew the exact time he would return home on the night of Jan. 5. Going out by the back entrance shrouded in a cloak and hood, she waited in a concealed corner until he should pass to enter the front entrance to the house. As he passed, she, with the dexterity of the women of her country, plucked the poniard into the back of her husband. With a moan he fell. She then returned unseen. The rest is known. She was tried, and owing to her confession leniency was extended her. She was sent to the galleys for twenty years.

Law Without Lawyers.

Miners, plainmen, and other pioneers of civilization seem to be possessed by an unreasonable prejudice against lawyers. The early miners of the Pike's Peak region enacted this law:

"Resolved, That no lawyer shall be permitted to practise law in any court in this district, under penalty of not more than fifty, nor less than twenty lashes, and be banished from the district."

It is not known that any person suffered the penalty of this absurd law, but it shows the strong prejudice of the new community against lawyers. This prejudice sometimes extends to the technicalities of the law, and even to those whose observance is necessary to the proper administration of justice. An amusing illustration of this tendency occurred in the early history of California:

The jurisdiction of justices of the peace was then limited to cases where the amount involved did not exceed two hundred dollars. One Watson sued a Mr. Dunham on a note for four hundred dollars.

As the suit was brought in a justice's court, Dunham's lawyer proposed to dispose of it by pleading, "no jurisdiction." But, as he was willing to see how far the justice would go, he reserved his plea until "his honor" had entered judgment.

"Ah, yes; just so," replied the justice. "The court has thought of that, and discovered a remedy. The court enters judgment against your client for four hundred dollars, and issues two executions for two hundred dollars each!"

And he did it.

When Nevada allowed those who quarrelled to settle their disputes in their own fashion, two men became angry over a wood-claim, and one of them shot the other's head off. The best counsel in the State appeared for the shooter, when his case came up for trial before Judge A.

The judge had his own views of the case, and at the proper time gave them utterance. When the evidence was all in, he waving aside the prisoner's counsel, and the prosecuting attorney, said:

"Young man, seeing that this is your first offense, I shall let you off this time. But you must be very careful how you go shooting round this way in future, for they hung a man over in Carson the other day just for doing the very same thing."

Kentucky once boasted of a judge who sympathized with the Nevada justice's method of administering justice. A young gentleman well-dressed was brought into court to be tried for grand larceny. The judge, after looking at him intently, turned to the throng of spectators and said:

"Gentlemen, I do not believe that any man who dresses so decently, and looks so handsomely as this man does, could ever be guilty of stealing. He looks to be an honest man, and, notwithstanding the indictment, I believe he is one. All of you who are in favor of his going quits, hold up your hands!"

The hands were lifted up, and the judge turning to the prisoner, said:

"There, go now; you are unanimously discharged."

Chief-Justice John Appleton, of Maine, who will retire from the bench at the expiration of the present term, is a rich man. Among his possessions are 100,000 acres of good timber lands in Maine.

AN IDEAL BLIND MAN.

The Remarkable Achievements of Professor Fawcett, the British Postmaster-General.

M. D. Conway writes to the Cincinnati Commercial Gazette from London: "It is probable that Professor Fawcett will live in history as the ideal blind man. The expression of blindness is all over him, and in every smallest movement, contrasting at every moment with the tokens of his triumphs over it. His habitual loud voice in conversation, that of one who cannot measure the distance of those to whom he is speaking; his unaltered look as one approaches, until his hand is touched or he is spoken to, and the suddenness of his smile then; his intent air, as of one concentrating all other means of perception to make up for the absence of sight; and, more than all, perhaps, the absence of all these small conventionalities, or tricks of manner, which people unconsciously copy from one another; these have more and more become the visible characteristics of Professor Fawcett as his real and intellectual mastery has increased. So that he is as unique among the blind in actual powers as he is outwardly among the seeing. He has few equals in fly fishing, is a capital skater, and knows all the flowers and vegetables in his garden as well as his gardener, in all their stages of growth. Not long ago he was walking with Sir Joseph Hooker in Kew Gardens, and talked about the trees and ponds and paths with such appreciation, expressing the wish that the public might enjoy them often, that Sir Joseph forgot that he was talking to a blind man and told him that he (Fawcett) was welcome to enter the gardens at any time of the night or day. His wife has been such eyes to him that he constantly speaks of having 'seen it in the papers' this and that. He goes home from Parliament, across many streets and turnings, and if the cabman drive a yard beyond the door he is at once checked. He rarely fails to name the person who speaks to him, however long the time since their meeting."

"I remember as a very impressive occasion, one on which the pupils of the college for the blind were gathered at his mansion by the Duke of Devonshire, where they and their friends were addressed by Professor Fawcett. These afflicted youths of all ages and both sexes sat before the tall, intellectual man, who seemed to be their natural representative. His address was simple, cheerful, in every way felicitous. He said that he thought blind people received an unnecessary amount of condolence on their loss. While it was right that they should be speedily aided, the sympathy with them need not be sorrowful. They missed the dismal and ugly sight of the world, and their powerfully stimulated imaginations saw the world chiefly in its beauty, if they were in health and comfort. They constantly heard descriptions of all things, and these, especially if they had once enjoyed sight, became to the blind so real that they were apt to take their place in memory as things actually seen. He said that he himself often confused things he had heard about with things he had seen, and was sometimes astonished when it was proved to him that he could never have seen certain persons and objects of which he had the vivid impressions of a witness. There was in the blind statesman's speech on this occasion a hopeful and happy view of the world, and an indirect testimony to the good-heartedness and sympathy of human nature, more convincing than the pessimistic essays of Schopenhauer and more poetic than the moody moanings of Byron. One had to question whether the ancients may not have pictured love as blind because they thought people could see the fairest world better without eyes than with them. Indeed, whenever I have conversed with Henry Fawcett I have been impressed by the many beautiful myths which preceded the word mystic (closing the eyes), though he is the least mystical of men; and I have read a deeper meaning in Milton's description of his blindness as 'the overshadowing of heavenly wings,' and as illumined with 'an interior light, more precious and more pure.' Up to this hour of his illness, had I been asked to name a happy man, I should probably have named Henry Fawcett."

He Had Read the Papers.

From the New York Times.

A thrifty-looking country man, probably sixty years of age, bent on seeing all that was on view in the shop windows and the streets, attracted a large crowd when he had reached Murray street and Broadway, New York, Wednesday morning. A young man dressed in the height of fashion and wearing a tall silk hat, walked up to the countryman, and putting out his hand in a friendly manner said:

"How do, Mr. Davis; glad to see you. How's the folks at home?"

The countryman looked over the young man carefully, and being satisfied that he could take care of himself, made a movement as if about grasping the young man's hand, but instead of so doing he took him by the coat collar and faced him about so that he looked upon the City Hall park, held him firmly in position and gave him a kick that sent him sprawling into the street. Another young man, evidently a friend of the assaulted youth, rushed up and demanded to know the trouble. The countryman had become warmed up by this time and endeavored to inflict punishment on No. 2, but he escaped. The countryman then quietly walked away, muttering to himself, "I faint been reading the papers high unto forty years for nothing, and them confidence men must try a new game when they scoop in this old sinner."

Donnell Curtis and Arthur Powell discovered the body of a woman on the prairie about four miles from Jamestown. It proved to be that of a woman of bad repute named Lou Baldwin, who was last seen, a week before to go to a farm house in that vicinity, who became bewildered and finally froze to death.

Miss E. H. Ober, manager of the Boston Ideal Opera company, which began a sea-

son at Boston recently, has been warned by D. O'ly Carie that if she performs any of Gilbert & Sullivan's works as advertised, without paying 5 per cent. of the gross receipts, he will enjoin.

General Notes.

It is estimated that 32,000,000 human beings die every year.

There are 40,000 women in New York city who support themselves.

A barn in Butte county, Colorado, is capacious enough to hold 4,000 tons of hay and shelter 1,400 head of sheep. The floor is so wide that an eight-horse team can turn round in it.

At a stenographic exhibition at Paris a postal card was exhibited which contained 44,000 words.

The Hagerstown, Md., G. A. R. post has a fence rail from Antietam with twenty bullet holes in it.

Cincinnati has twenty-nine murders and one hanging in ten years.

The German nobility have been notified that they must publicly prove their right to the titles which they bear before the 1st of April. The reason for this order, which is likely greatly to thin their ranks, is that for a century past the custom has grown up of all the members of each noble family assuming the title instead of confining it to the elder branch thereof.

Providence, R. I., has a movement to drop blinders on horses. The Arabs consider both blinders and shoes a gross barbarism, their horses never wearing anything heavier than racing-plates, and these only in a mountainous region.

At St. Augustine life in the open air is the rule. Windows and doors are open all day long, and the sunny piazzas of the villas are occupied by visitors in summer clothing, and without wraps. St. Augustine was an old town when the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock.

The Pension Office is publishing a list of pensioners as large as three Webster's Dictionaries; the War Department is publishing a history of the war in about twenty times as many volumes as the "Voluminous Gibbon" put into his history; the Census Office is publishing a census bigger than any encyclopedia ever planned; the Surgeon-General's Office is publishing a catalogue bigger than eight Webster's Dictionaries, and the Congressional Library one still bigger. This is a liberal Government in the publishing line at the public expense.

A correspondent said the other day to ex-Naval Officer Burt: "It is said that neither Commodore Vanderbilt nor his son, William H., could pass one of our examinations." "Perhaps not," was the reply. "And they would make very poor clerks. What we want is a class of men willing to remain clerks. We do not want men full of fire and ambition, anxious to rise in the world quickly. That sort of men are necessary and useful in society and in business, but they do not compose the clerical class. We must have as clerks men of regular, methodical habits; men who are willing to do the same thing from year to year, and to rise gradually."

Mr. Verplanck Colvin's scientific survey of the Adirondack region has been published, and contains this remark: "The vast region of forests, lakes and mountains, which the world has come to call the Adirondack wilderness, possesses in addition to its wild grandeur and healthfulness, the greatest material importance to every citizen of New York. Its pure and abundant water will, at no distant day, supply the cities of the Hudson. Its vast deposits of iron will yet render it even more than at present the great mining district of New York, and bring wealth and competence to thousands. Its wonderful forests, under more economical and systematic management, will yet yield a noble income to the state from lands hitherto deemed wild, valueless, and worthless."

The River Route to Europe.

St. Louis Republican: Some people in Chicago and the East pretend to ridicule the Mississippi Barge line. And yet the boats, in the two weeks between Feb. 20 and March 6, took down the river from this city 1,100,000 bushels of corn and 350,000 bushels of wheat, besides flour, provisions, etc. It takes a mighty good railroad to do better than that. A new steamship line with regular sailings, perhaps as often as weekly, is about to take the route between New Orleans and Liverpool, and still another that between New Orleans and Havre. If, now, our importers will bring their goods this way, instead of through New York, the Mississippi valley, from St. Louis south, may issue a declaration of independence of the rival trunk lines with their pools, combinations and what not. There is no monopoly of transportation on the river, save as it is acquired by legitimate enterprise.

The Congressional preachers of Chicago have unanimously decided to perform no marriage ceremony when either of the parties has ever obtained a divorce on other than Scriptural grounds. The Advance says that this position is generally held by the Congregational ministry. It might be well for other religious bodies to consider this matter at their general conferences.

It will be remembered that the British government, during the war in Egypt, bought a lot of mules in St. Louis for campaign service. Owing to the sudden collapse of the rebellion the animals did not reach their destination. About 500 of them were landed at Gibraltar, where they at once demonstrated their independent spirit by refusing to eat the fodder placed before them. Spanish mules are fed on chopped straw mixed with beans and barley, but the American animals wouldn't have the beans at all. They caused something approaching a sensation by their astuteness.

An English traveler in America records as one result of his observations the general sadness on the faces of our men of affairs as they go about the streets.