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MEMOIRS

OF

VIDOCQ,

PRINCIPAL AGENT OF THE FRENCH POLICE

UNTIL 1827 :

AND NOW PROPRIETOR OF

THE PAPER MANUFACTORY AT ST MANDÉ.

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

*"Que l'on n'accuse pas ces pages d'être licencieuses, ce ne sont pas les récits de
Petron, qui portent l. feu dans l'imagination et font des provinces à l'impureté.
Je décris les mauvais succès, non pour les excuser, mais pour les faire haïr. Qui
pourrait ne pas les prendre en horreur, qu'il agisse plus prudemment le dernier degré de
l'abrutissement ?"*
Montaigne, Vol. III.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON :

WHITTAKER, TREACHER, AND ARNOT.

AVE-MARIA-LANE.

MDCCCXXIX.

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MEMOIRS OF VIDOCQ.

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I know not what species of individuals they were whom MM. de Sartines and Lenoir employed to constitute the police, but I know very well that under their administration thieves were privileged, and there were a great number of them in Paris. Monsieur the lieutenant-general took little care about checking their enterprises, that was not his business; he was not sorry to know them, and from time to time, when he found them to be clever, he amused himself with them.

If a stranger of distinction came to the capital, M. the lieutenant-general soon set the most expert robbers to work upon him, and an honourable recompense was promised to him amongst them who should be sufficiently skilful to rob him of his watch or any valuable trinket.

The theft effected, M. the lieutenant-general was instantly informed of it, and when the stranger presented himself to give his statement of it, he was struck with amazement, for scarcely had he described the missing valuable when it was instantly restored to him.

M. de Sartines, of whom so much has been spoken and so much is still spoken, wrong or right, took no other pains to prove that the police of France was the best in the world. As well as his predecessors, he had a singular predilection for thieves, and all those whose talents had once met with his approbation were sure of being allowed to go on with impunity. He sometimes flung out defiances to them; he commanded them into his presence, and thus addressed them: "Gentlemen, the honour and reputation of the thieves is at stake, it is said that you cannot effect a certain robbery, —the proprietor is on his guard, therefore form your plans, and remember that I have pledged myself to your success."

In these times of happy memory, M. the lieutenant-general of police assumed no less vanity from the skill of his thieves than did the late abbé Sicard of the intelligence of his dumb pupils; great lords, ambassadors, princes, the king himself, were present at their exercises. Now-a-days we bet upon the fleetness of a horse, then people betted on the adroitness of a cutpurse; and if persons wished to amuse themselves in society, they borrowed a thief from the police in the same way as they now have the services of a gendarme. M. de Sartines always had at his elbow some score of the most skilful, whom he kept for the private pleasures of the court; they were generally marquisses, counts, knights, or at least people who had all the fine airs of the courtiers, with whom it was so much more easy to confound them, as at play a similar inclination to cheat established a certain parity between them.

Good company, whose manners and habits did not essentially differ from those of these thieves. could,

without compromising themselves, admit them into their society. I have read, in the memoirs of the reign of Louis XV. that they besought them "to give them an evening," as, in our time, we pray, cash in hand, for a similar favour from M. Comte, the celebrated *Prestidigitateur* (sleight-of-hand man), or some first rate prima donna of the Opera.

More than once, at the solicitation of a duchess, a renowned robber was released from the cells of Bicêtre; and if, when put to the proof, his talents equalled the utmost expectation which the lady had formed of them, it was seldom that M. the lieutenant-general (whether to keep up his credit or to aid his gallantry) refused freedom to so valuable a member of society. At a period in which there were pardons and lettres de cachet in every person's pocket, the gravity of a magistrate, however severe, was not opposed to the knavery of a scoundrel, if he were at all comical or adroit. As soon as he had excited admiration or astonishment he was pardoned. Our ancestors were indulgent and much more easily amused than ourselves; they were also much more simple and much more candid; this is no doubt the reason why they thought so much of whatever was neither simple nor candid. In their eyes, a man who for his exploits was condemned to the wheel, was the *ne plus ultra* of all that was admirable, they felicitated, they exalted, they loved him, and related or listened with pleasure to the relation of his deeds of prowess. Poor Cartouche, when he was led to the Grève (place of execution) all the ladies of the court shed tears,—it was a perfect desolation.

Under the *ancien régime*, the police had not thought of all the benefits they might reap from robbers; it only considered them as a species of amusement; and it was only at a subsequent period that a plan was devised for placing in their hands a portion of the charge of watching for the common security. Naturally the preference was due to the most famous robbers, because they were most probably the most intelligent.

Some were selected as private agents: they were not required to give up their lucrative profession of plundering, but only expected to denounce their comrades who seconded them in these expeditions: on these terms, they were to remain possessors of all the booty they obtained, and never brought to justice for the crimes in which they had participated. Such were the conditional agreements made by the police; as to salary they had none, it was a sufficient favour to be allowed to give themselves up to rapine with impunity. This impunity was only terminated by the commission of some flagrant crime, when the judicial authority intervened, which was but rare.

For a long period none were admitted to the police of safety but robbers not sentenced or liberated: about the year six of the Republic, a certain number of fugitive galley-slaves were added, who solicited the employment of secret agents, whereby they could support themselves in the metropolis. They were edgetools to handle, and, as such, used with much distrust; and the moment they ceased to be useful, they were got rid of. They usually set some other agent to watch them, who, leading them on by false manœuvres, compromised them, and thus furnished a pretext for their arrest. The Richards, Cliquets, Mouille-Farine, Beaumonts, and many others who had been police spies, were all conducted again to the Bagne, where they terminated their career, broken down by the ill usage of their ancient companions whom they had betrayed; again, it was customary for agent to plot against agent, and the most crafty was left in possession of the field.

A hundred of these individuals, whom I have already cited, Compère, Cesar Viocque, Longueville, Simon, Bouthey, Goupil, Coco-Lacour, Henri Lami, Doré, Guillet, called Bombance, Cadet Pommé, Mingot, Dallisson, Edouard Goreau, Isaac, Mayer, Cavin, Bernard Lazarre, Lanlaire, Florentin, Cadet, Herries, Gaffré, Manigant, Nazon, Levesque, Bordarie, were, in a measure, the purveyors to the prisons, to which they sent

each other by turns, mutually accusing each other, and certainly not unjustly; for they all robbed, and they were all privy to the deeds each performed: for how could they have lived without robbery, as the police allowed them nothing for subsistence?

In the beginning those robbers, who wished to have two strings to their bow, were very few in number; the reception given by the other prisoners to any one that had turned *nose*, (informer,) was a cause why the numbers did not increase. To suppose that they were actuated by any feeling of loyalty, would be to form a wrong estimate of these robbers: if the majority of them did not denounce others, it was from a fear of assassination. But it was with this dread as with the apprehension of every danger which must be faced, it gradually disappeared. At a later period the necessity of escaping the arbitrary power with which the police was armed, contributed to render the custom of informations more common amongst the robbers.

When, without any other form of process, and only because it was the gracious pleasure of the police, they put into the *stone jug* (prison) the individuals reputed incorrigible robbers, (a ridiculous denomination in a country in which nothing was ever tried to amend them,) many of these wretched beings, worn out by a detention which had no prospect of termination, devised a singular expedient for obtaining their liberty. These incorrigibles were also in their generation in some way suspected: reduced to a state which made them even envy the fate of the condemned, since they were at least freed at the expiration of their sentence; that they might be brought to trial they resolved to have themselves denounced for some petty robbery which they had oftentimes never committed; sometimes the crime for which they wished to be betrayed was allowed to them for a small payment by their comrade the denouncer, and happy even they who had crimes to sell! They emptied more than one can at the tap-room to the health of the doer of their crime. It was

a lucky day for the voluntary *dénoncé* when he was led from Bicêtre to La Force, but not so fortunate as that in which, when led before the judge, he heard the sentence pronounced, by virtue of which his term of incarceration was limited to a few months only. This period having elapsed, his liberation, which he awaited with the utmost impatience, was at length announced to him; but between the two gates tipstuffs were placed, who seized on his person; and he fell, as before, under the jurisdiction of the *préfet* of police, who sent him again to Bicêtre for an indefinite term.

The women were not better treated, and the prison of St. Lazare was crammed with these unfortunates, whom illegal rigour reduced to despair.

The *préfet* was never tired with these incarcerations; but a moment did arrive, when, from absolute want of room, it was necessary to think of thinning the dungeons, those at least in which the prisoners were literally piled in heaps. He, in consequence, had it suggested to these "incurrigibles," that it depended on themselves to put a termination to their captivity, and that they would deliver immediately lines of route to all those who would volunteer into the colonial battalions. All were persuaded that they were to be allowed to join freely: it had been promised them; but what was their surprise, when the *gendarmerie* appeared to conduct them in separate brigades to their point of destination. Thenceforward the prisoners did not appear over anxious to put on the uniform; the *préfet*, perceiving that their zeal had marvellously cooled, ordered the gaoler to solicit them to enter, and if they would not, to have recourse to compulsory measures. It may be relied on that a jailor, under such circumstances, would even exceed his orders. He of the Bicêtre not only solicited the prisoners who were in health, but even those who were not so; no infirmity, however severe, was a ground of exemption in his eyes: they were all fitting, in his opinion,—hump-backed, one-eyed, lame, and old. In vain did they remonstrate; the *préfet* had

decided that they were soldiers, and, willing or unwilling, they were transported to the isles of Oleron or Ré, where officers, selected from amongst the most brutal in the army, treated them like negroes.* The atrocity of this measure was the cause that many young men, who would not submit to such treatment, offered themselves to the police as auxiliaries: Coco-Lacour was one of the first to try this path of safety, the only one open to him. At first, some difficulties were raised against his admission; but at length, persuaded that a man who had dwelt amongst robbers from his earliest infancy would be an admirable acquisition, the préfet consented to enrol him amongst the secret agents. Lacour made a formal engagement to become an honest man, but could he keep such an undertaking? He was without pay, and when the appetite is keen, the stomach sometimes prevails over the conscience.

To be a spy without pay, what a situation! it is to be a spy and thief at the same time; and thus, the evidence of the necessity established against the secret agents a prejudice which always told against them, whether innocent or guilty. If a brigand, to be revenged upon them, should determine to inculpate them as his accom-

* The colonial battalions, at a period when France had no colonies, were destined to be the scum of our land force. The officers were almost all swindlers and cheats, dishonoured from misconduct, and rather intended to carry a constable's staff than a soldier's sword. When imperial despotism existed in all its vigour, the colonial battalions recruited amongst a crowd of respectable citizens, military or otherwise, whom Fouché, Rovigo, Clarke, &c. immolated to their caprices, or those of the master whose slaves they were. Generals, colonels, adjutant-commanders, magistrates, and priests, were used as common soldiers in the isles of Ré and Oleron. The police had united in this exile royalists and patriots with grey hairs, who were compelled to submit to the same discipline as the incorrigible robbers. The Commandant Latapie made them march side by side without distinction.

plices, with or without proof it was impossible for them to clear themselves.

I could state a volume of circumstances, in which, although strangers to the crimes with which they are charged, secret agents have been condemned by the tribunals, but I shall confine myself to the two following facts.

M. Hémart, the first president, went into the country ; on alighting from his carriage, he saw that the portmanteau containing his property was carried off. Enraged with the authors of this deed he determined to use all means to detect them, and bring down on their heads all the severity of the laws. They had only incurred a correctional punishment, but M. Hémart could not resolve on considering as a simple larceny a robbery which was effected to his individual loss ; chastisement would be too lenient, it was a crime which he wished to make it, and, with this intent, he presented a petition to the chief judge, that he might decide the question, if the breaking open after committing the robbery did not constitute an aggravation of the case ?

M. Hémart sought an affirmative decision, and as he desired so was the judge's sentence. Thereupon the robbers, whose audacity had roused the anger of the president, were discovered and apprehended. They had been found with the property, and it was difficult to deny it ; but they suspected an old *pal* of having denounced them, named Bonnet, a secret agent ; they pointed him out as their accomplice, and Bonnet, although innocent, was sentenced with them to twelve years' imprisonment and fetters.

At a subsequent period two other secret agents, Hericz the younger, and Ledran, his brother-in-law, had stolen some portmanteaus, and having emptied them to divide the spoil, deposited them with two colleagues, Tormel the father and son, who, afterwards denounced by them, were tried and convicted of a robbery of which the perpetrators alone had the booty. Whether at the Bicetre or La Force, not a day arrived

that I did not see some of these worthies arrive, and hear them mutually reproach each other with their bad conduct. From morn till eve these supernumerary spies were quarrelling, and their violent debates unfolded to me how perilous was the path which I had chalked out for myself. But I did not despair of avoiding the dangers of the profession, and all the mischances of which I was witness were so many examples to me, from which I formed my own line of conduct, which would render my fate less precarious than that of my predecessors.

In the second volume of these memoirs I have spoken of the Jew Gaffré, under whose control I was, in some measure, placed at the moment of my entering the police. Gaffré was the only secret agent with a salary. I was no sooner united with him than he tried to get rid of me; I pretended not to see through his intention, and if he contemplated my destruction, I resolved, on my side, to defeat his plans. I had a dangerous game to play: Gaffré was wily as a snake. When I knew him he was called the high-priest of thieves. He had begun at eight years of age, at eighteen he was whipped and marked on the Place du Vieux-Marché, at Rouen. His mother, who was mistress of the famous Flambard, chief of the police in that city, had endeavoured to save him: but although one of the handsomest Jewesses of her time, the magistrates would grant nothing to her charms: Gaffré was too culpable; Venus in person could not have prevailed upon his judges. He was banished. However, he did not quit France, and when the revolution burst forth, he was not slow in resuming the old course of his exploits in a band of chauffeurs, amongst whom he figured under the name of Caille.

Like the majority of his confederates, Gaffré had completed his education in the prisons, and then he had become an universal genius, that is to say, there was no species of *prigging* in which he was not fully expert. Contrary to custom, he adopted no special

or peculiar line of conduct ; he was essentially the man of the moment ; nothing came amiss to him, from *cutting a weasand*, to *drawing a wipe* (assassination to pocket-picking). This general aptitude, this variety of contrivance, had enabled him to amass a small sum. He had, as they say, *shot in the locker*, and could live without working ; but people of Gaffré's profession are industrious, and although he was liberally paid by the police, he kept on adding to his accumulations the produce of some unlawful exactions, which did not prevent him from being much considered in his quarter, (then the Martin,) when, with his acolyte Francfort, another Jew, he had been named captain of the national guard.

Gaffré was afraid that I should supplant him, but the old fox was not cunning enough to hide his apprehensions ; I watched him, and was not slow in discovering that he was manœuvring to get me into a snare. I appeared to be blindly led by him, and he chuckled internally at his anticipated victory ; when, wishing to catch me in a plot which I saw through, he was himself taken in the net, and in the end shut up for eight months in the depot.

I never allowed Gaffré to surmise that I had suspected his treachery, and he continued to dissemble the hatred which he bore towards me, and that so well, that we were apparently the best friends in the world. I was on the same terms with many robbers who were secret agents, and with whom I had associated during my detention. These latter detested me heartily, and although we kept smiling countenances towards each other, they flattered themselves that they should pay me off some day. Goupil, the Saint George of pugilism, was amongst those who afforded me their friendship, and, constantly attached to my person, filled the office of tempter ; but he was not more fortunate nor more adroit than Gaffré. Compère, Manigant, Corvet, Bouthey, Leloutre also tried to catch me tripping : but I was invulnerable, thanks to the advice of M. Henry.

Gaffré having recovered his liberty, did not renounce his design of ruining me. With Manigant and Compère he plotted to get me condemned; but, persuaded that having once defeated him he would not leave me, but return to the charge with vigour, I was incessantly on my guard. I awaited him firmly, when one day that a religious solemnity had attracted a vast crowd to Saint Roch, he announced to me that he had orders to attend there with me. "I shall take Compère and Manigant with us," he added, "as we learn that at this moment there are many strange robbers in Paris, and they will point out to us all they know." "Take whom you please," I answered, and we set out. When we reached our destination, there was a considerable crowd; the service we were upon did not require that we should all unite at one point. Manigant and Gaffré went first. Suddenly, in the place they were, I remarked an old man, who, by being pressed against a pillar, did not know where to put his head; he did not cry out, from respect to the sacred place, but his whole person was disarranged and his wig knocked awry; he lost his footing; his hat, which fell off, and which he anxiously followed with his eyes, was rolled from place to place, sometimes from and sometimes towards him. "Gentlemen, I beseech you, I beg of you," were the only words which he pronounced in a most piteous tone; and holding in one hand a gold-headed cane and in the other his snuff-box and pocket handkerchief, he shook his hands in the air, as if he would have reached the ceiling with them. I found he had lost his watch, but what could I do? I was too far distant from the old gentleman; besides, my advice would be too late; and then Gaffré, was he not also a witness of the scene? and although he said nothing, he doubtless had some motive for it. I adopted the wisest plan, and was silent to see what would ensue, and during the space of two hours, the duration of the ceremony, I had an opportunity of observing five or six of these concerted squeezes, and saw Gaffré and Manigant always in

them. The latter, who is now in the Bagne at Brest, under a sentence of twelve years' fetters, was at this period the most expert pick-pocket in the capital; he excelled in extracting the money from a person's pocket and transferring it into his own; with him the transmutation of metals was reduced to a simple displacing, which he effected with incredible talent.

The short stay in the church of St. Roch was not particularly productive; however, without including the old man's watch, he had stolen two purses and some other articles of value.

After the ceremony had terminated, we went to dine at a coffee-house; the worthies paid the expenses, and nothing was spared; we drank deeply, and at the dessert they confided to me what I could not fail to have known. At first they only mentioned the purses, in which they found a hundred and seventy-five francs in hard cash. The bill paid, there remained a surplus of one hundred francs, of which they handed me over twenty as my portion, counselling me to be silent and discreet. As money has no name, I thought there was no reason for a refusal.

The party appeared enchanted at having thus initiated me, and two flasks of Beaune were emptied to celebrate the occasion. No mention was made of the watch, nor did I allude to it; not only that I might appear ignorant of it, but I was also all eyes and ears, and was not slow in learning that it was in Gaffré's possession. I then began to assume the appearance of a drunken man, and shamming a call of necessity, I desired the waiter to lead me where I wished to go. He conducted me out, and when alone I wrote with a pencil this note:—

“Gaffré and Manigant have just stolen a watch in the church of Saint Roch; in an hour, unless they change their intention, they will cross the market of St. Jean. Gaffré carries the spoil.”

I hastily descended, and whilst Gaffré and his confederate thought me engaged up five pair of stairs,

I got into the street and despatched a messenger to M. Henry. I went back again without loss of time, and my absence had not been of long duration. When I entered I was out of breath, and as red as a turkey cock. They asked me if I felt better!

"Yes, a great deal," I stammered out, and falling nearly under the table.

"Steady boys, steady," says Manigant.

"He sees double," observed Gaffré.

"He is done up," added Compère, "quite done up, but the air will revive him."

They gave me some sugar and water. "Go to —" I cried out, "What! water for me, water for me!"

"Yes, it will do you good."

"Do you think so?"

I extended my hand, but instead of seizing the glass I upset and broke it. I then played a few silly drunken tricks which amused the party, and when I judged that M. Henry had received my despatch, and taken measures accordingly, I insensibly came to myself.

On going out, I saw with pleasure that our route was not changed. We went towards the market of St. Jean, and there saw a file of soldiers. When I saw them sitting at the door, I did not doubt but that they were there in consequence of my message, and the less so as I observed Ménager the inspector following us. When we passed they approached us, and, taking us politely by the arm, invited us to enter the guard-house. Gaffré could not imagine what this meant, but supposed the soldiers were in error. He wished to argue the point. They desired him to obey, and he was compelled quietly to submit. They began with me, but found nothing; when it came to Gaffré's turn he was not at all easy. At length the fatal watch was produced from his fob: he was a little disconcerted, but at the moment of his examination, and particularly when he heard the commissary say, "*Write: a watch set with brilliants,*" he turned pale and looked at me.

Had he any suspicion of what had passed? I do not think so, for he was convinced that I did not know of the robbery of the watch; and, besides, he was sure that, if I had known it, as I had not left them, I could not have turned *nose*.

Gaffré, on being questioned, pretended that he had bought the watch; they were persuaded that this was a lie, but the person who was robbed not being present to claim his property, it was not possible to condemn it. He was, however, confined for a time in Bicêtre, and then sent under *surveillance* to Tours, whence at a later period he returned to Paris. This villain died there in 1822.

At this period, the police had so little confidence in their agents, that there was no kind of expedient to which they had not recourse to prove them. One day Goupil was let loose upon me, and came with a singular proposal.

“You know François, the publican,” said he to me.

“Yes, and what of that?”

“If you will help me, we will draw a tooth or two from him.”

“How?”

“Why he has very frequently addressed the prefecture, to obtain permission to keep open house during part of the night, which request has always been denied; and I have given him to understand that it only depends on you to procure what he is so anxious to have.”

“You are wrong, for I can do nothing.”

“You can do nothing! very true, certainly! Oh you can do nothing, but you can buoy him up with the hope that you can do it.”

“That is true, but wherein would be the benefit to him?”

“Say the benefit to us. François, if well managed, would *bleed* well. He is already told that you are the man who is ‘all in all’ in the administration: he has a good opinion of you, and so no doubt he will *tip* freely on the first requisition.”

“Do you think he will part with the *blunt* ?”

“I am sure, my boy, he will *shell out* six hundred francs as easily as a penny; we shall handle the ready, that is the main thing, and we can afterwards leave him to his reflections.”

“Well, but he will be enraged.”

“Never mind, let him do his worst; but give yourself no trouble, I will provide for all. No *black and white work* (writing) mind; you know the proverb, ‘Writings are men, words but women.’”

“True as gospel; no receipt for cash in hand, and yet we can safely pocket.”

“Certainly, he who sows should reap; and no labour no profit. Meanwhile I will go and see how the land lies, and sound the old boy.”

Goupil then took my hand, and, shaking it heartily, added, “I am now going straight to François, I will tell him you will call in the evening; I shall fix the hour for eight o'clock, but do not you come till eleven, because (as you must say) you will have been delayed; at midnight we shall be told to go out, you must appear to comply with this formality, and François will seize the opportunity of urging his request. You are a man of experience, and know how to play your cards. Farewell for the present.”

“Adieu,” I replied, and we separated. Scarcely, however, had we turned our backs on each other than Goupil returned.

“Oh!” said he, “you know that very frequently the feathers are more valuable than the bird; I want a pluck at the feathers, otherwise ———” and he assumed a peculiar attitude, opening his enormous mouth, holding his hands about six inches from the ground, as if he was about to scrape the pavement, and completing the menace by drawing back his body and advancing his legs, in which the mobility of his feet were not the least comical part of his attitude.

“All’s right,” said I to Goupil, “you shall not swallow me. We will divide,—it is a bargain.”

“ On the word of a thief.”

“ Yes, make yourself easy.”

Goupil immediately took the road to the Courtille, where he very frequently went, and I that of the prefecture of police, when I informed M. Henry of the proposal made to me. “ I hope,” said he, “ that you will not lend yourself to the plot.” I protested that I was not at all inclined to do so, and he evinced his pleasure at my free communication. “ Now,” he added, “ I will give you a proof of the interest that I take in you ;” and he arose to reach from his chest a packet of papers, which he opened. “ You see it is full, and they are all reports against you : they are in abundance, but yet I employ you, because I do not believe one word of what they say.”

These reports were the production of the inspectors and peace officers, who, through a spirit of jealousy, continually accused me of robbery. That was the burden of their song, as well as that of the robbers whom I had detected in the very act : they denounced me as their accomplice, but when I was on every side exposed to unfavourable representations, I defied calumny, I braved its assaults, and its teeth were broken against the brazen buckler of truth, which, by the means of incontestable *alibis*, or impossibilities of another nature, became resplendent by the evidence of facts. Accused daily for sixteen years, I was never betrayed by it : once only I was interrogated by M. Vigny the judge. The complaint laid before him had some colouring of truth, but I had only to appear before him and the whole was proved false, and I was instantly freed from all suspicion.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The biter bit—Provocation—Wolves, lambs, and robbers—My profession of faith—*The band of Vidocq* and the old man of the mountain—No morality in the police—My calumniated agents—“*A cat in gloves catches no mice*”—The fishing rod—Put on gloves—Desplanques, or the love of independence: or where the devil has he hid himself?—The regulation of MM. Delaveau and Duplessis—The movable roulette tables and the *ultra philanthropist*—Proper manners, proper bearing, proper studies—Long and short gowned Jesuits—The reign of under petticoats—Obstinaey of robbers called reformed—Coco-Lacour, and an *old friend*—*Castigat ridendo mores.*

GAFFRÉ and Goupil having failed in their plans for my destruction, Corvet resolved to try his success in the same way. One morning, when I was in want of some particular information, I went to the house of this agent, whose wife was also attached to the police. I found both man and wife at their lodging, and although I only knew them from having once or twice cooperated with them in some unimportant discoveries, they gave me the information I required with so much good will, that, like a man who has the feelings of good fellowship towards those with whom he is associated, I offered to regale them with a bottle of wine at the nearest *cabaret*. Corvet alone accepted the proffer, and we went together and seated ourselves in a private room.

The wine was excellent; we drank one, two, three bottles. A private room and three bottles of wine leads on to confidence. About an hour afterwards, I thought I perceived that Corvet had some proposal to make, and at length he somewhat suddenly said, “Listen, Vidocq, (and he knocked his glass on the table with some emphasis,) you are a jolly lad, but you are not open amongst friends; we know well enough that you are a fellow *workman*, but you’re a *deep file*: we two might do a fine stroke of business.”

I pretended not to comprehend him.

“Nonsense, come, come,” he replied, “no *gammon*, that will not go down with me, I know you are a

cunning fellow although I don't know your *place of work* I will speak to you as I would to my own brother, if I think I may depend upon you. It is all very well to serve the police, but there is nothing to be made out of it, and a crown changed is a crown spent and gone. Now if you will keep counsel, there is a job or two which I have in my eye which we will do together, and which will not hinder us from doing our friends a good turn."

"How," said I, "would you abuse the confidence placed in you? that is not right, and I am sure that if it were known at the prefecture they would give you two or three years of it at Bicêtre."

"Ah! you are like all the rest," replied Corvet, "you are going to be mealy-mouthed and squeamish; you are delicate, are you; come, come, we know one another."

I testified much astonishment at his holding such language to me, and added that I was fully persuaded that he only said so to try me, or perhaps lay a snare for me.

"A snare!" cried he, "a snare! I bring you into trouble, I had rather put my own neck in jeopardy; you must be mad to suppose it. I do not beat about the bush; when I say anything it is blunt and straightforward; with me there is no back door, and as a proof that all is not as you believe, I will tell you that no later than this evening I am going to work. I have already laid my plan, the keys are made, and if you will come with me, you shall see how I will do the job."

"I doubt you have either lost your senses, or you wish to entangle me in your net."

"What, do you not give me any credit for better feelings? (Elevating his voice.) I tell you then you shall not have a finger in the pie. What more would you have? I shall take my wife with me, it will not be the first time, but it will be the last if you choose to make it so. With two men there is always a resource at hand. The business of to-day regards you nothing;

you will wait for us in the coffee-house at the corner of the Rue de la Tabletterie. It is almost facing where we are going to work, and as soon as you see us come out do you follow ; we will sell the booty, and we will go snacks. After that you will no longer distrust us. What think you?"

There was so much appearance of sincerity in this discourse, that I really hardly knew how to act with Corvet. Did he want an accomplice, or did he seek a means of destroying me? I have still my doubts on this point; but in either case Corvet was a manifest rogue.

By his own confession, his wife and he committed robberies. If he had spoken the truth, it was my duty to deliver him up to justice; if, on the contrary, he had lied, in the hope of entrapping me into a criminal action to denounce me, it was only right to prosecute the plot to its termination, that I might show to the authorities that to tempt me was labour in vain.

I had endeavoured to dissuade Corvet from his design, but when I saw that he persisted, I feigned to allow myself to be seduced.

"Well then," I said, "since it must be so, I accept the proposal."

He instantly embraced me, and the rendezvous was fixed for four o'clock, at a vintner's. Corvet returned home, and as soon as he had left me I wrote to M. Allemain, commissary of police, in the Rue Cimetière St. Nicolas, to inform him of the robbery which was to be perpetrated in the evening. I gave him, at the same time, all the necessary information for seizing on the culprits in the very commission of their crime.

I was at my post at the agreed hour; Corvet and his wife were not long after me, and after drinking a bottle or two of wine to cheer them in their work they proceeded on their enterprise. A moment afterwards, and I saw them enter a court-yard in the Rue de la Haumerie. The commissary had so well contrived that he apprehended the two at the moment when, laden

with booty, they left the apartment they had ransacked. This couple were condemned to ten years' confinement.

During the trial Corvet and his wife asserted that I had tempted them to the robbery. Certainly in the line I had pursued, there was nothing that could be construed into such a temptation; besides in a robbery I do not see how there can be any provocation possible. A man is honest or he is not: if he be honest, no consideration can be sufficiently powerful to determine him on committing a crime: if he be not, he only wants the opportunity, and is it not evident that it will offer itself sooner or later?

And if this opportunity makes a rogue, may not the robber become an assassin? Certainly he who labours to demoralize a frail being, and to inculcate pernicious principles, for the horrid pleasure of ultimately delivering him up afterwards to the executioner, must be the most infamous of scoundrels. But when a man is perverted, when he declares himself in a state of hostility with his equals, to draw him into a snare; to attract him by hopes of booty which yet he is prevented from gaining; to hold out to him the bait, which eventually takes him;—is not this rendering a real service to society? It is not the sheep which is placed in the wolf's trap which creates his depredatory instinct. He has the same inclination for robbing; he is predisposed to the action, and the action will be infallibly accomplished; for, at one time or other, the robber will go any lengths to perfect his crime. What is important is, when an attempt is made and the authors detected, the eye of the police is upon them, and the body of society thus guarded and benefitted. In fact I see no harm, but quite the reverse, in casting before the viper the piece of cloth on which he may exhaust his venom.

In a large city like Paris, gangrened hearts are never wanting, nor minds criminally perverted; but every robber who infests the metropolis has not the mark of crime upon his brow. Some are skilful enough to go on a long career of guilt before they are detected.

They are culpable, and should be brought to justice and convicted, that is to say, if taken with booty in hand. Well, when individuals of this kind have been pointed out to me, whether because their connections and habits rendered them suspected, or because they led a free life without any ostensible means of existence, to cut short their exploits I held out a snare for them; and, I confess it without shame, I did not make the least hesitation in doing so. Robbers are persons whose nature is to appropriate to themselves the property of another, just as the wolves are voracious animals whose nature is to attack the herds. We can scarcely confound the wolves with the lambs; but if it were possible that the one was concealed in the skin of the other, would a shepherd, when he saw the mark of their teeth, be to blame, if, to prevent future attempts, he tempted the voracity of all those whom he thought capable of biting? We may be certain that the one that bites is the one who has always been inclined to bite. If Corvet and his wife have robbed, it is that already, by fact or intent, they were robbers. On the other hand, I had never provoked them; I had only simply adhered to their proposition. It may be objected towards me, that by threatening them I could prevent them from committing the robbery which they had premeditated; but to threaten them was not to correct them: to-day they might have abstained, to-morrow they would have carried off a new booty: and certainly to have done so, they would not have called for my aid. What would have been the result? That the moral responsibility of the crime committed would have fallen on me with all its onus. And then if Corvet had any intention of implicating me in an affair of the kind, with any kind of promise from the préfet of police, after the event, did not my own personal safety prescribe the necessity of precaution, so as to undermine any trap which might be laid to ensnare me, and thus defeat those who invented and those who were the agents of it. This was the result I arrived at by denouncing Corvet to the

commissary of the quarter in which his operations were to be carried on, instead of denouncing him to the préfet. By following this plan, I was assured that if he had been set on they would disavow it, and justice would be done.

If I have insisted on the fact of provocation in this affair, it is because it was the general assertion and means of defence of the majority of those whom I was the cause of apprehending in the actual commission of robbery. We shall find, in the next chapter, that the idea of resorting to so pitiful an excuse was often suggested to them by my enemies. The recital of a plot of four agents of my brigade, Utinet, Chrestien, Decostard, and Coco-Lacour, will show how contemptible were the strongest imputations against me.

I will not here repeat what I have elsewhere said on the provocation of political measures. The discontent, legitimate or not, the superciliousness, the exasperation, nay, the fanaticism, do not constitute a state of perverseness; but they may produce a sort of momentary blindness, under the influence of which the most honourable man, the most virtuous citizen, will be easily misled. Captious reasonings, perfidious combinations, an intrigue to which he has no clue, may lead him to the abyss. Satan comes and carries him to the top of a mountain, whence he shows him the kingdoms of the world; he shows him the whole of a chimerical arsenal of armies, cannons, soldiers, and people ready to rise against oppression. He seduces him by impossibilities, and for impossibilities salutes him by the title of liberator; and the wretch, whose imagination gives birth to speculative ideas, thinks that he has at last found a point of strength and a lever to shake the world. Impelled by the most execrable of demons, he dares to utter his dreams: hell has its witnesses, its judges, and the delirium terminates at the scaffold's foot: such is, in a few words, the history of the *patriots* of 1816, excited by the infamous Schilkin. But let us return to the "brigade de sûreté."

After the formation of this brigade, the peace-officers and their agents, who bore me no love, cried out, "shame on't:" it was they who spread about the most absurd tales of me; they coined the phrase of the "band of Vidocq," which was applied to the persons composing the police of safety: they said that it consisted only of freed galley-slaves, or of skilful old pick-pockets, who knew all the *rigs* of *prigging a reader* or *fogle*.

"Can," said they, "such a man be allowed to have such a band? Is it not placing at his control the life and money of the citizens?" At another time they compared me to the Old Man of the Mountain; "When he likes he will cut all our throats," said the respectable M. Yvrier; "has he not his Seids? It is infamous; in what times do we live!" he added, "there is no morality, not even amongst the police." The worthy old fellow, with his morality! But it was not that which disquieted him; these gentlemen, vulgarly called peace-officers, would willingly have forgiven us for having been at the galleys, if the *préfet* had not, when he wished to detect or apprehend a robber, had more reliance on us than on them. Our address and our experience had the preference with the magistracy: and thus, when it was shown to them that all their efforts to effect my disgrace were useless, they changed their batteries; they did not attack me more directly, but they assailed my agents, and all the means possible of making them odious to the authorities seemed good. If a robbery were committed, either at the doors of the theatre or within the walls, they drew up a report, and the members of the terrible brigade were designated as the presumed authors of it. It was the same every time there was any large meeting, the peace-officers did not allow one occasion to escape of attacking the brigade. Not a cat was lost but they were accused of the robbery.

Fatigued at last with these perpetual inculpations, I determined to put an end to them. To reduce these

respectable gentlemen to silence, I could not cut off the arms of my agents, for they were absolutely needful to them: but to conciliate all, I told them that in future they must constantly wear leather gloves, and I declared that if I met any one of them ungloved I would instantly dismiss him.

This entirely disconcerted the malevolents; henceforward it was impossible to reproach my agents for *working* in the crowd. The peace-officers, who well knew that the hand cannot act adroitly when covered, kept their mouths closed, remembering the proverb, "*a cat in gloves catches no mice.*" One morning I gave this order to my agents as one which I had hit upon to put a stop to all the tattle of which they were the object.

"Gentlemen," said I, "they will no more credit your probity than they will the chastity of priests. Well, then, to prove how wrong they are, I have thought that nothing would be so natural as, in any case, to paralyze the limb which is the instrument of sin; in this instance, gentlemen, it is your hands; I know you are incapable of making improper use of them, but to avoid a shadow of suspicion, I expect that henceforward you will not appear abroad without gloves."

This precaution, I must say, was not called for by any conduct of my agents, for no robber, or galley-slave, whom I employed ever compromised himself as long as he formed one of my brigade; some have fallen again into evil ways, but their return to guilt was after having been dismissed from my band. Knowing the former course and situation of these men my power over them was arbitrarily exercised; to keep them to their duty, a will of iron and most determined resolution was required. My ascendancy over them arose from their not having any acquaintance with me previous to my entering into the police service: many had seen me at La Force or Bicêtre; but I had never been otherwise than a brother prisoner, and I could defy them to produce one affair in which I had participated, either with others or with themselves.

It must be stated that the majority of my agents were freed convicts, whom I had myself apprehended when they had been sinning against justice. At the expiry of their sentence they came to beg me to enrol them, and when I found them intelligent, I made use of them in my brigade of safety. Once in the brigade they became instantly reformed, but only in one particular,—they robbed no more: as to the rest, they were always debauched, addicted to wine, women, and play; many of them lost their monthly pay at gaming instead of paying their lodging, or the tailor who provided them with clothes. In vain did I devise means of giving them the least possible leisure, they always contrived to find time enough to indulge in their vicious habits. Compelled to devote eighteen hours per day to the police they were less debauched than if they had been entirely at leisure, but yet they committed various follies, which, when they were but trifling, I usually overlooked. To treat them with less indulgence would have been to show my ignorance of the old adage, which says, “it is impossible to stop the flow of the river.” So long as their excesses were not connected with their duties, I confined myself to a reprimand, and those reprimands were frequently but so many strokes of a sword in water, but yet sometimes, according to the men I had to deal with, the due effect was produced. Besides, all the agents under my orders were persuaded that I watched them closely and incessantly; and they were not mistaken, for I had my spies, and through them learnt all they did: in fact, whether far or near, I never lost sight of them, and any infraction of the rules and regulations laid down for them was immediately punished. What will appear surprising is, that under every circumstance in which the service required it, these men, so ill disciplined in other respects, conformed to my will, even when there was a matter of danger to be performed. No man but myself, I may say, could have commanded equal devotion.

I insert my regulations for the information of my readers, who may see that without mingling in politics I had occupation enough.

PREFECTURE OF POLICE.

Regulations for the private brigade de sûreté.

Art. 1. "The private brigade de sûreté is divided into four detachments. Each of the agents commanding one detachment receives his instructions from his chief, and he receives his orders of surveillance and manœuvre from the chief of the second division of the prefecture of police; with whom he must consult every day, and whenever it may be necessary for the maintenance of order and the security of persons and property. He shall make a return to him every morning of the result of the surveillance of the preceding evening and night of his brigade, and every chief of a detachment shall bring his private report.

2. "The private agents shall exercise a severe and active surveillance to prevent offences; they shall arrest, as well on the public way as at the cabarets, and other public places, persons escaped from fetters and prisons; the freed galley-slaves who cannot show any permission for residing in Paris; those who have been sent away from the capital to their own homes, to remain there under the surveillance of the local authorities, conformably to the penal code, and who have returned to Paris unauthorized; as well as those apprehended in the very act of robbery. They shall conduct these latter before the commissary of police of the quarter, to whom they shall make their report, to inform him of the reasons for apprehending these suspected persons. In case this public functionary should be absent, they shall leave them at the nearest station, and carefully search them in presence of the commandant then on duty, that it may be correctly stated as to what property was found upon them. They shall always ask of these suspected persons their abode, to verify subsequently, and

in case of a false residence being given, they shall inform the commissary of police, who will testify concerning the same. They shall point out also the witnesses who may be heard, and of whom they shall take care to procure the names and residences.

3. "The private agents can only confine in the stations the individuals before mentioned. They shall not take them thence without an order from the chief of the brigade, to whom they must give an account of their operations, or by virtue of a superior order.

4. "The police agents may not enter any private house to apprehend a person suspected of crime without being provided with an order, and without being accompanied by a commissary of police, if there be a search to be made in the house.

5. "The police agents must always walk alone, that they may the more easily observe the persons passing on the public way, and shall make occasional halts in the most populous thoroughfares.

6. "Circumspection, veracity, and discretion, being indispensable qualities for every police agent, any defection in these will be severely punished.

7. "The police agents are prohibited, day or night, from extending their surveillance to any other quarter of the city than that appointed for them by their chief, unless some extraordinary event shall imperatively summon them, and of which they shall give an exact report.

8. "The police agents are also forbidden from entering the cabarets and other public places, to sit at table and drink with common women, or other individuals who may compromise them. Those who tipple, have secret and habitual connections with female thieves or common women, or live with one of them, shall be severely punished.

9. "Gaming, being the vice which most particularly leads a man to commit base actions, is expressly forbidden to the police agents. Those who are found

playing for money in any place shall be instantly suspended from their station.

10. "The police agents are required to give in to their chief of brigade an account of how their time is passed.

11. "The first infringement of the regulations herein laid down will be punished by a mulct of two days' pay: in case of a recurrence of the offence this mulct shall be doubled, besides the addition of a severe punishment should that be judged requisite.

12. "The chief of the brigade is especially charged to watch over the execution of these regulations. This is also particularly recommended to the chiefs of detachments who receive his orders, and should make their reports daily, as to what they have done conformably therewith, as well as of those they may have given to those agents under them.

"Given at the prefecture of police. 1818.

"The Minister of State and Préfet of Police.

(Signed)

"COMTE ANGLES."

"By his Excellency, the Secretary-general of the Prefecture.

(Signed)

"FORTIS."

Under M. Delaveau, I wished to add a few articles to the above; but the rigid préfet, who filled Paris and the suburbs with his ambulatory roulette tables, refused to give his sanction to a regulation which anathematized gambling. I had also classed amongst the duties of my agents, the right of sending away from the Quai de l'École, the Champs Elysées, and all public places, those herds of wretches, of all ranks and ages, who abandon and prostitute themselves to a shameful and disgusting purpose, which seems to have in some measure emigrated with the jesuits. I often begged for the repression of these disorders, but Messrs. Delaveau and Duplessis constantly turned a deaf ear to it; in

fact it was impossible for me to make them understand that the law which punishes the offence against good manners is applicable to these *ultra philanthropists*, whenever they sin so grossly. I have not yet been able to explain why such hideous depravities were in some measure privileged; perhaps there existed a sect who, to detach itself from the world on the one hand, and to withhold itself from its most delicious influences, had sworn hatred to the loveliest half of the human species; perhaps, like the society of *bonnes lettres*, and that of *bonnes études*, they formed a society of *bonnes mœurs*—jesuitical manners. I know nothing of it, but in a few years the crime has made so much progress that I counsel our ladies to be on their guard; if it continue, farewell to the empire of the petticoat, the long or short gown; the jesuits only love their own.

I have generally found that amongst the members composing the brigade, those who went heart and hand into its duties became at length tolerable members of society, that is to say, that leaving one trade to enter upon another, they pursued their path steadily. Those, on the contrary, who did not go readily to work, fell into irregular habits, which invariably led to an unhappy termination. I had particularly occasion to make an observation of this nature with reference to a man named Desplanques, who was my secretary.

This Desplanques was a well-bred young fellow; he had talent, good style in writing, was a fine penman, and had several other qualifications which might have led him to an honourable rank in the world. Unfortunately he had an addiction to robbery, and to perfect his disgrace he was most superlatively idle. He was a robber with the soul of a pick-pocket, which is tantamount to saying, that he was unfitting for anything requiring assiduity and energy. As he was not punctual, and acquitted himself very ill in his department, it happened that I frequently scolded him: "You are always complaining of my negligence," he replied, "with you one must be a slave: on my faith, I am

not accustomed to be so used." Desplanques had just left the Bagne, where he had passed six years.

In admitting him into the brigade, I thought I had made an admirable acquisition, but I was not slow in being convinced that he was incorrigible, and I found myself compelled to dismiss him. Being then without resource, he betook himself to the only mode of existence which in such a situation can be reconciled with the love of ease. Passing one evening through the Rue du Bac, he broke a square of glass in a money changer's shop, and ran off with a wooden bowl full of money. At the same moment he heard a cry of "stop thief," and was warmly pursued. At the words "stop, stop," officiously repeated from all quarters, Desplanques redoubled his speed, and would soon have been out of reach, but at a turning in the street, he fell completely into the arms of two agents, his old comrades: the rencontre was fatal. He tried to escape, but his efforts were useless; the agents fastened on him and dragged him to the commissary, where the positive commission was immediately sworn to. Desplanques was an old offender, and condemned to the galleys for life: he is now at Toulon, where he is undergoing his sentence.

People who judge of all without having any knowledge of individual facts, have asserted that agents who have been originally robbers, must, necessarily, have an understanding with them, or at least temporize with them as long as they are sufficiently adroit as not to expose themselves. I can attest that robbers have no more cruel enemies than the freed convicts who have assembled under the banner of the police; and that they, following the usual examples in such cases, never exert more zeal than when they are serving a friend; that is to say, seeking to apprehend an ex-comrade. In general, a robber who thinks himself reformed is without pity for his ancient comrades; the more he has been intrepid in his time, the more implacable he will be.

One day, Cerf, Macolein, and Dorlé were brought

to the bureau charged with robbery. On seeing them, Coco-Lacour, who had long been their companion and intimate friend, was apparently overpowered with indignation ; he rose and apostrophized Dorlé in these terms.

LACOUR. Well, sir, what are you still incorrigible ?

DORLE. I do not understand you, M. Coco, with your morality !

LACOUR (*in a rage.*) Who do you call Coco ? Learn that that name is not mine ; I call myself Lacour ; yes, Lacour, do you hear ?

DORLE. Ah ! my God ! I know it too well, you are Lacour ; but you have not, I dare say, forgotten that when we were comrades you had no other name but Coco, and all the *friends* you have call you by that name, and no other. I say, Cerf, have you ever seen a *cocoa* of such strength ?

CERF (*shrugging his shoulders.*) There are no children left, all the world is mingled, monsieur Lacour !

LACOUR. It is good, good, very good, other times, other manners ; *castigat ridendo mores* ; I know that in my youth I may have committed some little venial offences, but —

Lacour tried to arrange some words, in which the word *honour* was distinguishable ; but Dorlé who was not in a humour to listen to his remonstrance, closed his mouth by recalling to him all the various times when they had *worked* together. A thousand times Lacour has experienced disagreeables of this kind : and if ever he reproached the robbers with their tenacity for *sticking to business*, his good intentions were always recompensed by similar impertinences.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

God bless you!—The conciliabules—The inheritance of Alexander—The rumours and prophecies—Grand conspiracy—Inquiry—Discoveries on the subject of a *Monseigneur le dauphin*—I am innocent—The fable often reproduced—The Plutarch of the literary pillar, and Tiger the printer—The wonderful and well-authenticated history of the famous Vidocq—His death in 1875.

ONCE attaining the post of chief of the police of safety, I no longer cared for the snares with which they so often sought to encompass me. The time of trial was past; but still I was compelled to keep on my guard against the base jealousies of some of my subalterns, who envied my appointment, and did their utmost to endeavour to supplant me. Coco-Lacour was a leader amongst the malcontents, who endeavoured to caress and injure me at the same time. At the moment when this rogue was at fifty paces from me and would have overturned all the chairs in a church to come and salute me with a honeyed "God bless you," when, by chance he heard me sneeze, I was well assured that he was a snake in the grass. No one despises more than myself those petty attentions of a man who is servile, even when civility is scarcely requisite. But as I had a conscience which told me that I had done my duty, I cared very little as to whether these demonstrations were false or true. Scarcely a day passed without my spies informing me that Lacour was the soul of certain meetings, (*conciliabules*;) where all matters relating to me were discussed. They said that he projected my downfall; that there was a party formed against me, the aim of whose conspiracy was to destroy the tyrant Vidocq. At first, the conspirators contented themselves with clamours; and as they had my destruction perpetually in perspective, that they might mutually please each other, they universally predicted it, and each of

them partook beforehand of the inheritance of Alexander. I am ignorant whether the inheritance devolved on "the most *worthy*," but I know very well that my successor did not hesitate to have recourse to every stratagem, more or less skilful, to succeed in getting it adjudged to him previously to my abdication.

From clamours and scandal-meetings Lacour and his partisans passed to more decided measures; and on the approach of the sitting, during which Peyois, Leblanc, Berthelet, and Lefebvre, who were accused of robbery, by the aid of a crow-bar, or monseigneur le dauphin, they spread a report that I was on the eve of a catastrophe, and that, in all probability, I should not get off with clean hands.

This prophecy, delivered at all the vintners in the environs of the palace of justice, was soon brought to me, but I did not disquiet myself any more than at so many others which were not realized; only, I thought I perceived that Lacour redoubled his attentions and suppleness towards me; he saluted me more respectfully and with more ceremony than usual; his eyes, aided by the spiral movement of his head, when he sought to give himself the graces of a man of good breeding, sedulously avoided all contact with mine. At the same time, I remarked with three other of my agents, Chrestien, Utinet, and Decostard, an increase of zeal for the service, and a complaisance which astonished me. I was instructed that these gentlemen had frequent conferences with Lacour; as for myself, without thinking the least in the world of watching their steps for my personal interest, I had surprised them chattering and talking of me. One evening, particularly, passing into the court of la Sainte-Chapelle, (for they had plotted even in the sanctuary,) I had heard one of them rejoicing that I should not *parry the thrust about to be made at me*. What did this mean? I had not the least idea. When Peyois and his accomplices had been tried, the judicial examination developed a most atrocious machination, tending to

prove that I was the instigator of the crime which had led them to the galleys.

Peyois said, "that having addressed me, to ask me if I knew a recruiter who wanted a substitute, I had proposed that he should rob on my account, and that I had even given him three francs to buy the crow-bar, with which he had been taken when forcibly entering the house of *Sieur Labatty*." Berthelet and Lefebvre confirmed Peyois's statement; and a vintner named Leblanc who, implicated as well as they, appeared to have been the real provider of funds for procuring the instrument, encouraged them to persevere in a system of defence, which, if allowed, would have the effect of clearing him. The advocates who pleaded in this cause, did not fail to draw all possible argument from this imputation against me, and as they spoke from conviction, if they did not determine the jury to come to a decision favourable to their clients, at least they contrived to insinuate into the minds of the judges and the public most terrible prejudices against me. I therefore felt it incumbent on me to exculpate myself, and, sure of my innocence, I begged M. the *préfet* of police to grant me an inquiry, that the truth might be made evident.

Peyois, Berthelet, and Lefebvre were condemned, and I imagined that not having henceforward any motive for persisting in falsehood, they would confess that they had calumniated me; I presumed, besides, that in case their conduct should have been the result of suggestion, they would not make much difficulty in naming the advisers of the imposture which they had so impudently supported in the presence of justice. The *préfet* allowed the inquiry I solicited, and at the moment when he confided the care of directing it to M. *Fleuriais*, commissary of police for that quarter of the city, a previous document, on which I had not counted, preceded my justification; it was a letter of Berthelet to the vintner Leblanc, who had been declared not guilty; I transcribe it here, because it shows to what are reduced the accusations which were perpetually made

against me, the whole time I was attached to the police, and since I have belonged to it. It follows, and I have preserved even the exact orthography.

“ A MONSIEUR,

“ *Monsieur le Blanc*, maître marchand de vin, demeurant barrière du Combat, boulevard de la Chopinette, au signe de la Crois, à proche Paris.

“ Monsieur, je vous Ecris cette lettre Cest pour m'enformer de l'état de votre santée Et an même teimps pour vous prevenir que nous sommes pourvus an grace de notre jugement. Vous ne doutez pas de ma malheureuse position. C'est pourquoi que je vous previens que si vous m'abandonné je ferais de nouvelle Revelation de la peince que vous avez fourny et qui a deplus été trouvée chez vous, dont vous n'ignorez pas ce que nous avons caché a la justice a cette Egard, et dont un chef de la police a été cités dans cette affaire qui était innocent Et qu'on a cherché a rendre victime, vous n'ignorez pas les promesse que vous m'avez faite dans votre chambre pour vous soutenir dans le tribunal, vous n'ignorez pas que j'ai vendu le suc et de la chandelle a votre femme C'est pourquoi si vous m'abandonne je ne vous regarderés pas pour un nomme dapres toutes vos belles promesses.

“ Rappeles vous que la justice ne pert pas ces droit et qui je pourés vous faire appellees en _____

“ Vous navés Rien à craindre cette a passer secrettement.

“ BERTHELET.”

And lower down, “ j'approuve l'écriture ci desus.”

(TRANSLATION.)

“ TO MONSIEUR,

“ *Monsieur le Blanc*, master vintner, living at the barriere du Combat, boulevard de la Chopinette, at the sign of the Cross, near Paris.

“ SIR,

“ I write you this letter to inform myself of the state