

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF MONSIEUR CLAUDE

Edited by George Tickell

BEING THE CHRONICLES OF A FAMOUS PREFECT OF POLICE DURING THE REGIME OF THE SECOND EMPIRE, IN THE REIGN OF NAPOLEON III, NOW PUBLISHED FOR THE FIRST TIME. THE DUKE OF LAMBAY'S . . . DIAMONDS . . .



FROM HIS FOAM-COVERED LIPS ISSUED A MANIACAL YELL.



"A MURDERER most magnificent" was the phrase coined by Monsieur Claude when referring to his grace the duke of Lambay in the years following that worthy gentleman's departure from Paris to take up his residence in Switzerland. He it understood that M. Claude in thus speaking did not express himself abhorrent of the singular character of the nobleman in question. On the contrary the noted chief of police spoke in accents that almost approached admiration. As a scientist in criminology he refused to discuss dark deeds wrought by unprincipled people from a moral standpoint, his criticisms being coldly dispassionate. Therefore his description of the duke must be taken strictly as a tribute to that gentleman's infernal ingenuity.

Had he been asked to state his opinion of the duke on other grounds it is possible that he would merely have smiled his inscrutable, official smile and declined to be interviewed further. But there were many other people living under the flag of the second empire who would have been perfectly willing to burst into fervid eloquence on the subject. For the eccentric ways of his grace formed a fruitful topic of conversation among all classes of Parisian society.

It must be confessed that the remarks of the majority of his critics were the reverse of complimentary and with good reason. This man, in whose veins ran the royal blood of England, had by his monstrous actions and dark mysterious mode of living, completely severed all bonds of sympathy between him and the human race. The members of his own great family did not look upon him with less scorn than did those whose enmity brought into contact with his repulsive personality.

That the duke was perfectly aware of the emotions which he excited in the breasts of his fellow creatures is not a fact to cause surprise, for few people cared to disguise their feelings in regard to him. Impervious to insult and seeming to court rather than avoid criticism, he took an insane delight in gloating over the sinister reputation he had established, and secure in the prestige and power conferred by his wealth permitted no chance of adding fresh infamy to his name to escape him.

The house in which he dwelt was no mean index of the perverse nature of its proprietor. It stood, in the early sixties, in a secluded corner of the old Beaujon quarter, painted from caves to foundation in bright broad stripes of varied hues.

The building of odd design and peculiar shape, nestled in an angle of neglected gardens surrounded by high walls. An air of ghastly gloom enveloped the whole estate, an air that was in perfect keeping with the mysterious inhabitant, who came and went secretly by a small door in the western wing, the main entrance, guarded by large, rusty iron gates, always remaining closed and offering an insurmountable obstacle to the curious neighbors.

The treasure contained in this mansion consisted of 16,000,000 francs' worth of diamonds, and indeed the duke was miser as miser. Exactly what grace's household. Exactly what transpired within the walls of the gloomy mansion after Ellen repulsed her master was never brought to light, but the fact remains that on the morning of November 20, 1863, her lifeless body was discovered lying

in the garden below the west wing of the house. It was evident that death had been the result of a fall from an open second story window under which the body was found.

Thus far the police investigation went, and not much further, for none of the domestics who were examined admitted having heard any unusual noise during the night which might have helped to explain the tragedy. The duke testified that, feeling indisposed, he had retired at an early hour after swallowing a sedative prescribed by his physician for insomnia. He had slumbered heavily, according to his statement, and knew nothing of the girl's death until notified by his confidential valet. The latter, an Englishman, 25 years of age, was closely questioned by the detectives, it having come to their knowledge that a strong affection was supposed to have existed between him and the deceased. He proved a complete alibi showing that he had passed the night away from the house with a friend, having obtained leave for that purpose, and not returning until just after the body was found. His demeanor, as was perhaps natural when his fondness for the girl was taken into consideration, was that of a man half frantic with grief, but he bore up well under the cross examination and replied to every question asked him with a promptness and lucidity that left no doubt as to his innocence.

The duke furthermore averred that the girl had acted strangely for several days and that he believed her to have committed suicide. This assertion was corroborated by several of the servants, although their testimony did not greatly impress the officers, who were well aware that none of the duke's domestics was likely to contradict any statement made by their employer. Shaw alone ventured to deny the allegation, but his word was not of sufficient weight to establish the girl's sanity, and in the end Ellen Crosby was officially declared to have destroyed herself while in an unusual state of mind.

It may be plainly stated, however, that neither M. Claude nor his assistants believed that the unfortunate victim had gone to her death as described by the verdict. Popular opinion held the duke responsible for her demise and in their hearts the inmates of the prefecture agreed with this view. But to attempt to convict the duke was useless. The waters of the fountain of justice were tainted by many a foul current during the sway of the second empire, and peremptory orders from a higher source brought the investigation to an abrupt close.

The duke's wealth enabled him to set in motion powerful influences which rendered him immune to the penalties which would have menaced an ordinary person in such a situation. Meanwhile, to the surprise of many, Henry Shaw continued in the duke's service. He had succeeded in gaining the confidence of his master and all of the latter's secrets, even including that of the fraud by which he had obtained the greater part of his wealth, were in his possession. Beyond expressing his belief in Ellen Crosby's sanity, Shaw made no effort towards exposing the true facts of the girl's sad fate, and wrapped himself in a mantle of impenetrable reserve that effectually withstood the inquiries of all his associates.

But still waters run deep, and this man who apparently took no further interest in the tragedy was in reality planning a bitter revenge upon the individual whom he regarded as the author of his sweetheart's death. He knew that the hardest blow he could strike the miser would be to deprive him of his treasures that were dearer to him than his life blood. The first step he took in the furtherance of his scheme was to write a letter to the duke of Molinford in London, pledging

himself in return for a sum of 100,000 francs to restore to the family of the duke of Lambay the diamonds of which their unscrupulous kinsman had defrauded them.

Shaw had made a careful study of the strong box and the arsenal defending it and watched patiently for an opportunity when he could open it without risking annihilation by so doing. The coffer containing the diamonds was built in the wall of the bedroom adjoining the duke's study.

As before stated its steel door was equipped with a pistol battery, and outside of the inner defense was a wooden door covered with drapery. Once the steel door was made fast by the owner it was impossible for anyone not possessing a knowledge of the secret springs to open it.

On December 7, 1863, the duke removed a few stones from the coffer for the purpose of having them reset by a jeweler. With almost incredible carelessness in a man of his suspicious temperament, he forgot for the first time to lock the inner steel door. Shaw, who was present when his master opened the coffer, was quick to note the duke's negligence. He waited until his master had gone out, and then taking a file he carried in preparation for just such a contingency, forced the lock of the outer door and opened the inner one. As the bolt of the inner lock had not been shot into its socket the pistol battery was rendered harmless and the muzzles of the loaded weapons gaped impotently in the valet's face.

A great treasure lay before his glistening eyes. There were diamonds of fabulous value, jeweled decorations and gold in abundance. Carefully Shaw selected the most valuable stones, stowed them away in a leather bag which he had provided for this auspicious moment, and having filled his pockets with gold, left the house. He went straight to the railway station and caught the first express train for Boulogne.

The duke returning home that evening missed the familiar figure of his trusted attendant. As the hours wore on and Shaw did not appear a terrible suspicion flashed across the miser's mind. He rushed to his precious strong box, tore aside the silken draperies and beheld the forced lock. Flinging open the doors a glance told him that the most cherished gems of his collection had disappeared. There were missing diamonds and money to the extent of 4,000,000 francs.

For a few minutes the panic-stricken duke raged furiously, shrieking in his high falsetto voice at the servants whom his cries had summoned to the spot. It is questionable whether the approach of death could have caused more anguish in his avaricious heart. The contemplation of his treasures had been the great, supreme delight of a nature so warped and corrupted that aught else in life could stir to rapture the thin blood in his withered veins. At last he cooled down, and with the abatement of his frenzy came the hunger for revenge.

Messengers were at once dispatched to the prefecture and in a short time two detectives made their appearance. Having replied to their interrogations the duke inquired if their chief, M. Claude, was in his office. On receiving a reply in the affirmative he ordered his carriage and drove post haste to the head of the police department.

M. Claude was at this time a man about 45 years of age. He was of middle height, snawy of frame and possessed of a pair of keen steel-blue eyes before whose penetrating gaze many a habitue of the underworld had shrunk and stammered forth damning confessions of crime. Living in the corrupt period his uncompromising honesty of purpose shone all the clearer by contrast with the intriguing element which surrounded him and rendered him as remarkable for his integrity as he was famous for surpassing skill in his profession. He was seated at his desk, bending over a pile of correspondence, when his dual visitor entered.

"I salute your grace," he said, suavely. "Pray be seated."

The nobleman allowed his thin, emaciated figure to sink limply into a chair, and drawing a flask of perfume from his pocket removed the stopper and inhaled the contents before speaking. M. Claude watched him coldly and when the duke raised his head said gravely:

"I regret to hear of the loss your grace has sustained. I presume it is in connection with the robbery of your diamonds that I am honored by this visit."

"Yes, yes," said the duke, distractedly. "But above all I wish to have this affair conducted so that the details of the case will not be made public."

"We will endeavor to respect your wishes in the matter, your grace," responded the chief.

"Listen, M. Claude," said the duke, in subdued tones. "I know that I can trust you. Now the truth is that I cannot afford to appear in court to prosecute this thief should you arrest him. It is imperative that the former history of the jewels which he has stolen should not become a topic of public interest."

"If I am not mistaken," returned M. Claude, languidly, "the diamonds in question at one time provoked a serious discussion between your grace and the duke of Molinford, pledging

himself in return for a sum of 100,000 francs to restore to the family of the duke of Lambay the diamonds of which their unscrupulous kinsman had defrauded them.

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"In common with many other mistaken persons I fear that you have hitherto supposed me dead to all feeling save that of gain. Desolated by the thought of leaving a false impression on the mind of such an admirable man I have endeavored to prove to you that a prince of my blood is competent to execute revenge upon one who incurs his displeasure through a far more satisfactory medium than that of your police courts. Hasten therefore, my dear friend, and behold the proof of my assertion."

"Lambay,"

Shortly after receiving the above missive, M. Claude, accompanied by three detectives, approached the deserted house in the Beaujon quarter and entered by the side door. The interior of the building, denuded of its rich furnishings, gaped black and empty before them. Mr. Claude signaled to one of his assistants to light the lantern he carried.

"We must seek the duke's sovereign underground," he said, and directed his steps to a stairway in the rear which wound its way down to the cellars of the mansion. Midway on the steps he paused and held up his hand.

"Listen!" he said, with a warning gesture.

A muffled moan, at times low and hoarse and again rising into a strident shriek, broke upon their ears. There succeeded a harsh, horrible snarling as of a brute in pain or anger.

M. Claude shook his head in response to the questioning gaze of his men.

"Some new dexterity of his grace," he said, drily. "Let us proceed, but be wary."

He produced a pistol and having examined the charge carefully crept cautiously downward with the detectives at his heels. Reaching the foot of the stairs they found themselves in a vault which apparently extended under the entire building. It was traversed by a corridor and on either side yawned the open doors of small rooms apparently intended to accommodate provision and wine supplies for the house.

The noise, which for a few moments had died away into silence, now broke forth with redoubled vigor from the far end of the corridor, and the clashing of iron against stone mingled with the hoarse, guttural growls and ear-splitting cries which had appalled the listeners before.

The detectives paused and glanced askance at each other, but M. Claude's stern voice rang out crisply.

"Forward!" he commanded. "Hold the lantern high, Franz, so that its rays may shine before us."

Peering into the gloom they advanced cautiously and came to a halt before the closed door of a room at the end of the passage. M. Claude turned the handle and the door swung open easily. A snarl like that of a wild beast caused them to spring back swiftly, but the next instant they rushed into the room uttering a simultaneous cry of horror at the sight that met their startled gaze.

Chained to an iron staple in the wall there crouched in a corner the naked figure of a man whose wide staring eyeballs glared hideously in the yellow light of the lantern. His face, crusted with blood, oozed and horribly lacinated, writhed convulsively as they looked upon it. Then from his foam-covered lips issued a maniacal yell, which changed, at its highest note into a series of barks and growls, deep and menacing as the bay of a blood-hound.

Despite the awful change in the visage of the unfortunate, M. Claude recognized him at once.

"It is Henry Shaw," he ejaculated, "but who or what is that lying beside him?"

In the shadow of the corner could be discerned the vague outlines of a dark shape lying prostrate and the man with the lantern brought the light to bear upon it.

"A dog—and dead," M. Claude, he exclaimed. "See how its swollen tongue protrudes from its mouth!"

M. Claude bent forward and picked up an object that his foot had trod upon and held it to the light. It was a piece of meat thickly encrusted with salt. The chief drew a deep breath as the truth flashed upon him.

"The explanation is here," he said. "This is the duke's revenge and one well worthy of him. He caused this wretched creature to be kidnaped on his release from prison, chained him here with a savage mastiff, fed him brute on salt meats and allowed it no water until it went mad and attacked its companion prisoner."

"But the beast is dead," said Franz, staring at the inert bulk of the huge animal.

"Strangled," responded M. Claude. "They fought to the death and the man conquered, but at a frightful cost. His hands are bitten into mere shreds of flesh. And he too is a victim of hydrophobia."

As he finished speaking the maniac uttered another terrific yell and sprang to an erect posture with his chain clanking furiously. He stood for an instant with mutilated hands outstretched and then lurching forward fell heavily on the stone floor. His limbs twitched convulsively, stiffened and lay stiff. M. Claude bent over him and saw that a film of ghastly white foam had settled over the staring eyes.

"It is finished," he said softly to his men. "The vengeance of the duke has run its course."
(Continued by W. G. Chapman.)

HOME OF HUCK FINN

HOUSE WHERE MARK TWAIN'S HERO LIVED TORN DOWN.

Hannibal, Mo., Where Place Stood, Unconscious of Its Greatness—Anecdote of House and of the Two Mark Twains.

Hannibal, Mo.—Huckleberry Finn's ancient habitation in North Hannibal, near the river front, has passed from the earth. Since Hannibal has admitted that Mark Twain was really a great man, it has taken particular pride in the "hoary-headed" domicile and the revenue derived from post-cards showing the structure would have built a much better house. R. H. Coons, the owner of the property, recently had the "Huck" Finn home torn down to erect a row of modern flats, which will have, it is hoped, a living effect on the somewhat dreary district of North Hannibal.

A characteristic story is told in connection with the house. One summer day a gentleman from the east came to Hannibal to secure data for a Mark Twain story. He could find Holiday hill easily enough without a guide, because it towered up the sky on the north end, and prevented the town's further extension unless the good citizens take a notion to tunnel.

An ice man was asked for the direction to Huck Finn's cottage.

"Never heard of him," said the native. "He sure don't live in these parts."

The stranger went west a block and accosted a boy with a fishing rod on his shoulder.

"He don't run with our crowd," he said. "Maybe he lives down by the bridge."

"I'm not looking for Huck Finn himself," said the visitor. "He's dead, but then you might try the graveyard," replied the boy. "It's up yonder—the stones is marked, I reckon."

Presently a citizen came along who could furnish the information. Huck's home was only two blocks from where the ice man said "he didn't live in those parts." In the basement door stood a black "aunt," with her hands resting on her hips. (She wore a tricolor handkerchief on her head.)

"I knows," she said; "you's one of dem relicky hunters."

"I'm engaged in gathering some material in reference to Mark Twain."

"Well, you needn't go no further," said the big aunt hospitably. "He's right heah."

"Who's here?"

"Mark Twain."

"In this house?"

"To be sho'."

"What's he doing here?" asked the surprised visitor.

"Ah, doah know, but yo' kin cum in an' see."

She led the way to another underground apartment, and with pride pointed to something on a pallet. The stranger's eyes, gradually becoming accustomed to the semi-light, distinguished an infant pickaninny busily endeavoring to swallow its glossy arm.

As the two came and stood by the bed it suspended operations and thoughtfully regarded them out of two big white eyes.

"Quite a baby," said the guest.

"How'd you come to call it Mark Twain?"

"Da tole me if Ah did that, Mistah Sam Clemens, wot used to lib' heah, wot sen 'im sumthin' nice."

"Did he?"

"Ah reckon Mistah Clemens, tho' it was nice," she said, doubtfully; "the sent 'im a razer an' a lookin' glass."

"Mr. Clemens was grateful?"

"Mebbe so. And he writted to my ole man sayin' if the razer did wot he expected he'd be pleased to sen a tombstone for 'n' thab'y."

Will Breed Alligators. One thousand alligators, ranging from the length of a lead pencil to monsters that could crush a man in their jaws have arrived from the southwestern part of Louisiana and were landed loose in a new gate farm in East Los Angeles. They were brought in a specially arranged freight car over the Southern Pacific.—Los Angeles Times.

Cheap Gas Production. Prof. Blau of Germany has discovered a new process of developing illuminating gas that may be bought by the bottle at the rate of 15 cents a pound. A 22-pound cylinder of gas a pound would give a 50-candle power light for four months using four hours a day. That is to say, the cost would be 1 1/2 cents an hour, or, say, \$1.25 a month, or even less.—Brooklyn Eagle.

Future for Egypt. An Egyptian paper says that the native families pay an average tax of \$4.65 an acre, or 28 1/2 per cent of the crop. Foreigners and land companies hold 655,000 acres. Through their insolvency and liquidation, and the redistribution of the estates formed since 1902, it is probable that large amounts of gold may be unhoarded.

Much the Best. "What is the best thing for a poet to have?" asked the bardet, "a deep knowledge of human nature, a temperament that enters into the emotions of others or a natural gift for saying things beautifully?" "All your guesses missed," replied the veteran rhymist. "The best thing for a poet to have is a job."

All Keystones. Every stone in an arch is a keystone, though the name is usually applied to the center one.