

CHAPTER X

CRIMES OF PASSION

CRIMES of this character nearly always arise from sexual passion, which, thwarted or irritated, provokes jealousy, hatred, and thirst for revenge.

Numerous love affairs which ended in murder might be mentioned, but, leaving aside the scandal they caused on account of the social position of the actors, none of them shows any peculiarity worthy of mention.

We will confine ourselves to the study of five cases representative of this type of crime both by their character and by the circumstances surrounding the drama.

Jealousy and an insult to conjugal honour were the motives of the notorious *Fenayrou case*.

Burger, who was associated with the woman *Jobin*, and *Vermande* were slaves of love who killed in order to satisfy their fatal passion.

The crime of *Madame Lefevre* was caused by a mean and jealous spite, the savage hatred of the mother against the daughter-in-law who claims the affection of her son.

Finally, the sad adventure of the nobleman, *de Kerninon*, who met his wife on his travels. This case ends with murder committed by the outraged wife.

THE FENAYROU CASE

The *Fenayrou* crime is the most striking and at the same time the most complete example of a savage murder committed for motives of jealousy and revenge.

At the time it shocked the whole world, especially on account of the dreadful rôle played by the wife, who helped her husband to dispose of her lover.

On the 28th May 1892, at 9 a.m., Denis Bailly was drawing sand from the Seine, on the territory of Montesson, near the bridge over the river Pecq, when a voice from above shouted: "Hello, there's a corpse to be fished up! Are you going to do it?"

Shaking his head, Bailly replied: "I saw it, but it smells so bad. . . . Still, as nobody else wants to, let me have a boat and I'll go and have a look."

A few moments later he pulled up from the Seine the naked body of a man, thirty to thirty-five years of age. A piece of linen had been placed over the mouth, tied at the back of the head and held up by a safety-pin in the underlip. A flattened tube of lead, about twelve yards long, had been passed four

times round the neck and under the right leg, lifting it up to the chest. Then it had been slipped again round the neck and then down to the right leg, to which it was fastened by a half-knot.

The head showed traces of numerous blows. The skull was fractured and the bones pushed into the brains. On the left breast three distinct wounds appeared, which seemed to have been caused by a dagger.

The body was buried without being identified, but a few days later, after certain information given by a woman called Barbet and after the exhumation, it was discovered that the dead man was a certain Aubert, brother of Mme Barbet, a chemist of the Boulevard Malesherbes, missing from home since the 18th May. Mme Barbet did not hesitate to say what she thought. According to her, her brother had fallen a victim to the revenge of his former employer, Marin Fenayrou, who suspected him of being his wife's lover.

Following this deposition, Fenayrou, his wife and his brother were arrested next day. All of them pleaded an alibi. Then Mme Fenayrou, while being taken by the then *Chef de la Sûreté*, M. Macé, from Paris to Chatou, confessed to the crime while sitting by his side in a first-class compartment. Certainly none of the travellers could have imagined the kind of confidence this woman was making in low tones to the gentleman who was sitting next to her.

Herself the daughter of a chemist, she had married, on the 21st January 1870, following her mother's wishes and notwithstanding her own antipathy, Marin Fenayrou, who had managed the shop since her father's death. She was then eighteen years of age. The marriage went along in a happy-go-lucky manner for two years. Then Fenayrou took a pupil, Louis Aubert.

For several years, except for an interruption caused by his military service, Aubert conscientiously managed the shop, in which his employer, who was lazy and always on the racecourses, did not show himself very much interested.

He also took advantage of the liberty accorded to him to become the lover of Mme Fenayrou.

In August 1879, Fenayrou sent Aubert away, but Mme Fenayrou continued to see him without her husband's knowledge.

Without being absolutely sure of his dishonour, Fenayrou supposed Aubert to be the lover of his wife and, as she denied his accusations, he often insulted her and threatened her with death.

On the evening of the 24th March 1882, a more violent scene than usual occurred between husband and wife. The husband, coming home in a temper, asked his wife if she knew the Rue

Pigalle. She was disconcerted. He announced his certainty that she went there to meet her lover in a house which he indicated. She denied this. Then the scene changed. Fenayrou shouted: "Take care! I know everything. Only a loyal confession can save you."

He was so terribly excited and so sure of himself that she thought it more prudent to confess. Weeping, she asked his forgiveness.

He answered: "I will forgive you on the condition that you bring Aubert here. I want to avenge this scandal on him."

She agreed without arguing. "I'll do all you ask. I'll be your slave."

This agreement made—a forgiveness of which Aubert's life was the price—Fenayrou began to plan the details of his revenge. His first notion was to prepare a pair of eyeglasses in such a way that they would pierce the eyes of Aubert when he put them on. Later, Fenayrou considered enticing the other into a trap which would render him powerless, so that the wronged husband might torture his victim as much as he wanted. For this purpose he had bought a boar-trap, which was later found in his possession.

Finally he abandoned all such complicated schemes and staged as follows the drama he intended to play.

On his order his wife wrote to her lover, who had neglected her for some time, several urgent letters expressing her wish to see him ~~once~~ more. As he did not reply she went to visit him.

At first Aubert received her coldly, then, softened by flattery and caresses, he consented to arrange a further meeting with her.

In order to facilitate this meeting, on the 28th April Fenayrou, under the name of Hys, rented a lonely house at Chatou, surrounded by lofty chestnut-trees, which had formerly belonged to Madeleine Brohan.

After an examination of the place, he at first thought of raising the floor of the kitchen so as to dig a grave under it. With this purpose in view he bought a spade and a pickaxe. But he changed his mind and abandoned this plan. He then ordered a small perambulator in Paris in order to carry the corpse of Aubert to the Seine after his murder. At the same time he bought the hammer destined to be the instrument of the crime.

Aubert being a sturdy fellow, Fenayrou thought it would be better to obtain assistance, and asked his brother Lucien, to whom he confided his sinister plan after a good dinner, to be his accomplice.

Notwithstanding the affection he had for his brother, Lucien

hesitated until Gabrielle backed up her husband and compelled him to come to a decision. "My poor Lucien, I am altogether guilty. Your brother is right in wanting to revenge himself on Aubert. You must help to put him out of the way."

Lucien allowed himself to be convinced, and the three accomplices promptly fixed the date of the crime.

It was the 18th May 1892.

At 8 p.m. Gabrielle Fenayrou, praying in the church of Saint-Louis d'Antin, was waiting for the moment to go and meet Aubert.

At 8.30 p.m. she found him at the place fixed for the meeting and told him she was going to take him for the evening to a house in the country where there was no fear of being discovered by her husband. Aubert consented. They both took the train and left it at Chatou.

It was very dark. As they came into the street of Croissy Aubert remarked to his mistress that it was very dark where she had taken him, and that he had never possessed the soul of a hero. She laughed and reassured him. He continued to follow her and she led him through the garden of the villa into the hall, where he hung up his hat, and finally into the sitting-room.

No lights were lit. Gabrielle Fenayrou went to the mantelpiece to turn on the light and groped about aimlessly for some seconds. Aubert then lit a wax match and held it above his head.

At that moment Fenayrou, who was hidden behind the opening of the door and holding a hammer in his hand, gave him a violent blow on the head. Aubert was knocked down, but he got up again immediately, and, recognizing his assailant by the dim light of the match that lay still burning on the ground, attacked in his turn.

Undoubtedly he would have saved his life, but Gabrielle Fenayrou clung to him, holding his left arm with both hands. She pulled him violently backwards, screaming: "You wretch, you shall not kill my husband now."

Freeing himself by this opportune intervention, Fenayrou rained blows on his victim, who fell, face to the ground. Then he called for a light.

Gabrielle Fenayrou lit a candle.

Aubert was gasping out his life at their feet. Fenayrou leaned over him, turned him over and shouted: "In the heart you made me suffer, by the heart you are going to die." Seizing a foil he had put ready on a chair, he plunged it three times into his victim's breast. At last, satisfied with his revenge, he stopped.

Gabrielle left the room to fetch Lucien Fenayrou, who had

stayed outside. She told him that the deed was done and asked him to go in and help his brother.

The corpse was dragged into the kitchen, encircled by the tube of lead and loaded on to the perambulator.

After washing their hands, the trio went out into the night and took the direction of the bridge of Chatou, where Marin propped the perambulator against the rail, attached a rope to the body and, with the help of his brother, dropped it into the Seine.

Night as accomplice threw its shadow over the murderers. . . .

Their cause lost by the statement of Gabrielle, Fenayrou and his brother could do nothing else but confess in their turn.

The facts admit of no argument, but the psychology of the sad heroes of this tragedy needs enlightenment. Neither the investigation nor the trial was very useful in this respect.

Certainly, the mentality of the betrayed husband is not surprising, but it is difficult to understand why he wanted vengeance on a liaison that had come to an end two years before.

It has been established that he had a very individual sense of honour. On the 23rd March after her confession, he removed his wife's photograph from its frame and took away her wedding ring and her bride's crown. After the murder on the 28th May he restored these things to her with the words: "Now you are mine again, just as on the day of our wedding."

As to Gabrielle Fenayrou—who was at once religious and adulterous, and had had another lover after her liaison with Aubert came to an end—her visit to the church of Saint-Louis d'Antin leads one to imagine that a certain mysticism played a part in her crime, and that she considered Aubert's death a kind of act of redemption.

One cannot help wondering if the part she played was not that of a discarded and revengeful mistress, pretending to aid in her husband's vengeance.

For whatever reason, the Court, after having at first condemned Fenayrou to death, revoked its decision and sentenced him to the same penalty as his wife—penal servitude for life. The weak and inconsistent Lucien was acquitted.

At Noumea, Fenayrou obtained permission to keep a chemist's shop and lived quite happily until the concession was withdrawn because of irregularities in the exercise of his business. He was then put in charge of a ferry-boat and died soon afterwards of cancer on the liver.

As to Gabrielle Fenayrou, she was pardoned in 1903 and released at the same time as Gabrielle Bompard, whose sole companion she had been at the prison of Clermont, Oise.

THE BURGER-JOBIN CASE

The Burger-Jobin case is much nearer to us in time. It dates from April 1920. It is the typical example of a crime of passion caused by a guilty love.

In this instance the mistress and her lover killed the husband.

The case starts in exactly the same way as that of Fenayrou.

On the 8th April 1920 the torso of a man was found in the Seine near the spot called the "Abreuvoir de Bougival." It was packed in a sleeping-bag of waterproof linen, marked "A. Bill." Five yellow leather straps—like those of a military revolver—surrounded the bag. The head and the legs, neatly cut off without any bones being broken, were missing.

As nearly always happens when a corpse is fished up, the first inquiries gave no result, and it seemed certain that the remains found at Bougival would never be identified. But on the 12th September 1921—that is to say, eighteen months later—a postman chanced to open a copy of *Le Matin* of the 23rd August 1921, which had been put among the file of "addresses unknown" in the office. It bore the address of a certain M. Jobin, Boulevard Ménilmontant, with no further indication. He noticed an article in this paper describing the discovery of a corpse in the Seine at Neuilly. At the end of the article a sentence was underlined, which stated that "the victim had never been identified."

The postman also remembered the crime of Bougival and, thinking that the statement underlined in this way might interest the Police, he informed his chiefs of his discovery.

Next morning the paper was sent to the Police headquarters. The addressee was traced and found at No. 3 Boulevard Ménilmontant. He was a certain Paul Jobin, a clerk. He stated immediately that the newspaper had been sent to him by his sister, Marie Jobin, living at Cressier in the Canton of Neuchâtel in Switzerland, because their brother, Gaston Charles, born on the 25th March 1880, at Arc, Doubs, and an employé at the Grand Hotel in Paris, had been missing since the 25th March 1920.

He added that his brother's wife had told the whole family that her husband had left for Spain in order to evade the French law of military service. But in his opinion the irregular behaviour of his sister-in-law rendered her story unbelievable. His idea was that his brother's disappearance might be the result of a crime.

The investigation immediately instituted discovered that the woman Jobin was a person of easy morals; that when her husband disappeared she had for lover a certain Burger, also employed at the Grand Hotel; that her husband always came

home for the night, and that after a time she lived with Burger in the Hotel des Bosquets—which he had bought—in the Place de la République at Toul.

Not only had Mme Jobin not informed the Police of the disappearance of her husband nor made the least effort to trace him, but she had also consulted a lawyer with a view to finding out when she would be able to marry again.

The investigation established the fact that Mme Jobin had only been able to keep her husband by means of blackmail, while her concierge described her as inconsistent, insincere, proud, mean, and bold.

When, in 1910, he came home unexpectedly in the afternoon, Jobin found the door of the house bolted. As his wife refused to open, he had broken in and found a half-dressed man in a cupboard who, with the help of his wife, had nearly killed him.

He would have liked a divorce, but his wife took advantage of her knowledge of certain incidents in his past to compel him to live with her—the irregularity of his military situation (his papers describing him as having been born in Switzerland when actually he was a Frenchman), and some petty thefts he had committed at the Grand Hotel being her weapons.

“His military situation was going to be settled,” he told his sister when she saw him for the last time on the 15th March 1920. “He had been forgotten on the census-lists, but had put himself straight. He was waiting for the order to join his regiment and hoped to be rejected.”

A point to be noticed is that by a decision of the military authorities on the 3rd March 1920—a decision that must have been communicated to him but had no doubt been intercepted—he had been ranked in the auxiliary services and was allowed to stay at home. There was, therefore, no reason for him to desert. Nevertheless, he disappeared a week later, and his wife told his family that he had received an order to join his regiment and had fled to Spain, after buying a cork jacket to cross the Bidassoa River because he could not swim.

The investigation further showed that Mme Jobin was entered on the judicial records as sentenced to three months' imprisonment for a theft committed in 1905. This conviction had been suspended because she was a “first offender.”

Jobin had been seen for the last time on the 23rd March, and the corpse taken out of the Seine on the 8th April seemed to have been in the water for about twelve days.

Jobin was forty years old, and the corpse was that of a man between thirty-five and forty. He had been rejected on account

of a tumour in the right side and the corpse had a tumour in the same place. The corpse had been packed in a sleeping-bag of English manufacture, and at the Grand Hotel Jobin had been given a quantity of English military impedimenta left behind by clients.

These were the reasons why, on the 28th September, the arrest of Mme Jobin and her lover, Burger, was ordered by M. Warrain, the Examining Magistrate.

Quick action was needed in a case which dated so far back. When arrested, Burger at once admitted that he was the lover of Mme Jobin, but stated that her husband had deserted at 6 a.m. on the 25th March when he was going to his work. Later he retracted this statement and confined himself to the mere fact that Mme Jobin had told him so.

Questioned in her turn, Mme Jobin repeated her tale. She stated with emphasis: "He kissed me when he left and said: 'I have to join my regiment but I shan't. . . . I am not going to play the fool. . . . I am sacrificing everything to avoid being a soldier. I'll write to you when I can. Don't worry about me. Sell the furniture and do whatever you like.'"

She added that he had 8000 francs in gold with him.

Her defence was destroyed by the fact that Jobin had been invalided from the army on the 3rd March. This was proved to her. Disconcerted, she made a partial confession. It was a moot point whether she was sincere, but the fact of the crime was clearly confessed. Here is her statement: "Jobin was killed on March 23rd in our flat between 11.30 p.m. and midnight, after a quarrel in which Burger and he exchanged insults, because he made an anti-patriotic speech. Indignant and exasperated by what he had said, Burger strangled him when he had gone to bed, and then set about disposing of the corpse. After cutting it into pieces, he packed the body into three parcels, the largest of which contained the torso and the arms. The next day, that is the evening of March 24th, we both took a taxi into which we placed the three packages, and told the driver to take us to the Pont Mirabeau. When we arrived there, Burger threw the big parcel over the railing. The second parcel, a leg, was thrown a little later over the railing of the Pont de Grenelle. The third contained the head and the other leg. We decided that after all it was better not to throw this into the Seine and went next day and buried it in the Bois de Clamart near the Fontaine Saint-Marie."

Bewildered by the confession of his mistress, Burger confessed to having killed Jobin, because he was exasperated by his anti-militarist and anarchistic speech.

Now, Jobin—"the best fellow ever" in the words of his concierge—was neither an anti-militarist nor an anarchist. He was exactly what the investigation showed him to be—a weak and soft-hearted man in the hands of a bold, passionate, and intriguing woman.

He ran no risk whatever as long as his wife had lovers whom she did not prefer to her husband. But when she met Burger, this husband—however little exigent he was—became too much; the pretended call to military service gave her an unexpected opportunity of bringing about his disappearance without calling attention to herself. From that day he was condemned to death.

After the deed Mme Jobin sold her furniture, made Burger buy the Hotel des Bosquets at Toul, and there joined the man of her choice. The two lovers lived happily till the day the Police interfered with them.

On the 28th September, following the indications of the actual murderers, Jobin's skull and leg were exhumed in the Bois de Clamart in a remote spot not very far from the Fontaine Saint-Marie.

Justice spoke the last word.

Sitting on the bench of the court was to be seen a squarely-built man, with an energetic face, a strong chin, and a decided glance, but one whose appearance did not show criminal characteristics.

The face of Mme Jobin, with muscles slack and wrinkles round the mouth, showed the passionate temperament of a woman who had gone as far as murder to satisfy her desires. . . .

The system of defence adopted by both the accused was of no avail in a crime so abominable and so well engineered. Crimes of passion are only excused by juries for reasons of their real or supposed spontaneity.

After rather a short trial Burger was condemned to death. Soon afterwards he was executed.

Mme Jobin, condemned to hard labour for life, is ending—this time without a companion—a miserable life in the solitude of a prison.

THE VERMANDÉ CASE

We have seen how in the preceding cases the murderers brought about the disappearance, first of the lover, secondly of the husband.

In the crime of passion we are now about to describe it is the woman who mysteriously disappears.

The Vermandé case is a very recent one ; it dates only from the 13th March 1927.

In contrast with the preceding cases, Vermandé acted alone. And he did not cut his victim into pieces and then throw them into a river—things which are always difficult. He had a much surer and more convenient way of disposing of the corpse. He was in charge of the furnace of a factory at Nancy, "Les Imprimeries réunies," where he was also employed as an electrical mechanic.

This man was an admirable example, both from the moral and the physical point of view, of the seducer. He was always looking for fresh conquests and had no sense of morality. He had no other anxiety than to satisfy his lusts.

Up till then he had spent his life in debauchery. He cared nothing for the unhappiness he caused, and had abandoned two girls whom he had betrayed and who had borne him children.

Meeting with a woman in whose illegitimate conquest he did not succeed, compelled this man, so little fashioned to contract lasting ties, to marriage. This is the reason why he married Angèle Schili. But such a man as Vermandé could not remain faithful for long, and he soon tired of his wife. The day came when another married woman named Vinckel pleased him more. He made her his mistress in December 1926, and thenceforward thought only of separating from his own wife in order to enjoy this new victim at his ease.

It was impossible to dispose of his wife in the easy fashion in which he had settled his previous love affairs. In consequence the unhappy woman was condemned to death.

He commenced his plans by telling his mistress that as his wife had a lover he proposed to leave her. Then, in order that she too might be free, he encouraged her to leave her husband. But Mme Vinckel refused to do this ; she was unwilling to give up her child.

He then utilized against this woman whom he pretended to love an unspeakably vile plan to render the separation of husband and wife inevitable. By means of an anonymous telephone call he told her husband of the rendezvous his wife had made with him for the following Saturday afternoon, with the intention of being surprised *en flagrant délit*.

As her husband only caught them together in a café, Mme Vinckel denied having had intercourse with Vermandé, and, in the absence of proof, Vinckel allowed himself to be convinced of her innocence.

During the following days Vermandé rang several times in

vain at the door of the Vinckels' house. Finally, exasperated by this opposition, he told the husband in so many words that his wife was his mistress, and showed him letters she had written and a portrait she had given him. This time, the end Vermandé desired was brought about. The husband turned his wife out of his house. Only the second part of the programme now remained—the disappearance of his legitimate wife.

On Sunday March 13th he confided in his mistress: "I believe my wife is getting ready to go away; she is mending her linen."

On Monday March 14th he announced that she had left during the afternoon of the previous day.

He said that after the midday meal he had gone as usual to look after the furnace and on his return had found on the table the presents he had given her in earlier days—her wedding ring, another ring, and a necklace.

Speaking of it he seemed to have tears in his eyes. Noticing this, his mistress said: "If you regret your wife, go and fetch her back." To which he made the ridiculous reply: "It isn't that which troubles me, but to know that my dog is alone in the house."

Nothing could now keep Vermandé in Nancy. Through the agency of his mother he sold his furniture and his wife's jewels and came to Paris with his mistress on the 27th March.

But the family of Mme Vermandé notified the Police of her disappearance, and their attention was drawn to the factory furnace of which Vermandé had been in charge.

It was remarked that he had carefully lighted the furnace for no reason so far as the work of the factory was concerned on Sunday, March 13th. On examination the ashes were found to contain the remains of bones, teeth, garters, and the hooks and metal bones of a corset.

The crime was clearly established.

When arrested in Paris, Vermandé confessed to having killed his wife at about 4.30 p.m. on the 13th March, after a quarrel during which he reproached her with having betrayed him. . . .

"I took her by the throat," he said, "and when I let go she fell down and didn't move again. Distracted, I took the body by the arms and threw it, dressed as it was, into the furnace through the upper door."

He denied any kind of premeditation, and said he had lighted the furnace, not to get rid of his wife's body, but to dry some repairs which the masons had been making.

The last paragraph of his statement shows a curiously calm state of mind for a murderer.

"When I looked into the furnace the next morning," he said,

"I noticed nothing abnormal, and I took nothing away from the ashes that were there."

The unhappy Mme Vinckel knew nothing of the crime. The Police left her alone; she was sufficiently unlucky in having met a seducer of the Vermandé type, who had taken her from her family and associated her name with his disgrace.

On the 15th October 1927 the Court of Meurthe-et-Moselle condemned this wretched creature to death. But the sentence was altered, for no particular reason, on the following 1st January to one of hard labour for life.

THE CASES OF Mlle DE C—— AND MME LEFEVRE

Revenge and hatred, those evil fruits of love, bring with them, as we have already said, the crime of passion, which is sometimes also committed by a near relative living in the same surroundings as the lovers.

For obvious reasons we cannot mention certain cases which would most strikingly illustrate this particular kind of drama. The most interesting would certainly be the recent instance of a young girl, belonging to the best industrial society of Lyons, whose lover was killed in the middle of the night at the door of her bedroom by a member of the family.

We will respect the silence with which this case has been surrounded.

Instead, there is another case of the same kind of which we can narrate the facts. It dates from the end of the last century and ended tragically in an act of romantic revenge, the authorship of which Justice has been unable to prove.

A certain Mlle de C—— lived with her family in a huge old house in the Rue D—— Romantic and unreasonable, she had fallen deeply in love with her foster brother, a handsome boy called Louis, the son of her father's gardener. Her brothers and Louis were friends, and her sisters treated him more like a brother than a servant.

He was in truth a chivalrous and charming boy, who had, in many instances, shown a complete devotion to the family that employed him.

The girl took many walks by herself in the garden, and the two young people were very much helped by a private staircase leading from the first floor, where was Mlle de C——'s bedroom, to the garret occupied by the young man, and also by the complicity of a chambermaid, herself the mistress of the handsome Louis. They soon became lovers.

The inevitable happened. Mlle de C— became *enceinte*. She managed to disguise her condition and, with the help of the chambermaid, she procured an abortion after seven months.

Unquestionably this story would have remained unknown had not the cook's little dog one day dug up the child's corpse in the garden and run about with it in his mouth.

A secret investigation revealed the truth to the girl's relations, whereupon two of her cousins, Messieurs de C— and de R— took upon themselves the task of vengeance.

Under pretence of fastening the lightning-rod to the house they persuaded the handsome Louis to attach a support wire to a very high belvedere.

The boy never shirked a job. He at once climbed up to the belvedere together with the two cousins. A few moments later his body fell into the courtyard of the house from a height of a hundred feet. When he was taken up he was scarcely breathing and could give no account of the circumstances attendant upon his fall. He died a minute or two later.

A slater standing on the roof of a neighbouring house stated that he had seen the group formed by the three men at the moment of the fall. It had seemed to him that the two cousins were bending over the young man and were trying to hold him up, even at the risk of their lives.

People mourned the tragic end of an excellent fellow, the victim of his own carelessness, who had almost dragged down in his fall two friends who had vainly tried to save him.

But the Sunday after the catastrophe Mlle de C—, after hearing Mass in a convent with her mother, her sisters, and her cousins, asked if she might pay a visit to the Mother Superior.

Once within the holy precincts, she declared that she would never leave them. It was believed that the terrible death of her foster-brother had inspired her with the desire to withdraw herself from the world, but the conclusion arising from certain passages in the official inquiry leads one to the conclusion that, under the pretence of mending the lightning-rod, four hands united to throw down the unfortunate Louis.

It seems also to be certain that the father and brother of the young man demanded satisfaction from the family for his blood, but that the present of a considerable sum of money and a large farm appeased their anger and quashed their claim.

Thus was saved the honour of an illustrious family.

Besides the reactions of love, other motives provoke crimes of hatred—prejudice to rights, accusations, quarrels, envy, and so forth. . . .

Here is a recent example of a crime of passion arising from one of these motives—a family drama of Balzacian style—the Lefevre case.

It happened in an essentially bourgeois state of society. Its sad heroine, a woman of sixty years of age, after living an honourable life—but one in which sentiment had always given way to pride—appeared in the dock accused of the murder of her daughter-in-law.

The crime was committed, if not exactly in public, at least without disguise.

On the 25th August 1925, André Lefevre, a public notary of Valenciennes, was driving in his motor-car with his mother and his wife. The relations between the two women had been rather strained for a long time, but when, near Lille, he took his car into the "Chemin de la Solitude," about fifty yards from the Rue du Faubourg de Béthune, the young man certainly did not dream of what was going to happen behind him a few moments later.

As he was looking attentively before him, a shot rang in his ear. He turned round. His wife, *née* Antoinette Mulle, 31 years of age, was lying on the seat, her forehead shattered by a bullet, whilst his mother, with set face and hard eyes, brandished a smoking revolver.

Instantly arrested, the murderess—a woman with a strong-willed face, the features of which were made sharper by her age—confessed with the greatest calm that she had committed her crime to rid herself of a daughter-in-law whose character was incompatible with her own.

Later, she denied premeditation, and said that the revolver, which she had bought a few weeks before at Vichy, was only intended to assure her security in her own home, the door of which closed badly and might afford easy entrance to malefactors. She completely denied any intention to kill, although the revolver she had used had been loaded in her presence. She was nervous, she said, and had unconsciously pulled the trigger.

She stated her motives as follows: Before her marriage I knew my daughter-in-law only by name. We met often after the wedding, but our relations, without being unfriendly, were certainly not cordial. She did not ask my advice; she behaved as if I did not exist, and that cut me to the heart."

The investigation showed that Mme Lefevre, authoritative, proud, and avaricious, had never admitted that her son should escape her authority after his marriage. She would have liked to continue to order him about as well as her daughter-in-law.

Unable to subdue the young married couple to her will, her

hatred of her daughter-in-law increased from day to day and had been the solitary cause of the tragedy.

The position of the son, planted between the corpse of his wife and the crime of his mother, was so cruel that one could not be surprised that he took no action against Mme Lefevre and that he left it to Justice alone to avenge his murdered wife.

Sentenced only to imprisonment on account of her age, the murderess expiates in solitude and silence the inexcusable crime which her jealous hatred led her to commit.

THE DE KERNINON CASE

For the last episode in this chapter we have kept the de Kerninon case. It is the story of a crime the chief cause of which is to be found in the weakness of character of an inconstant and inconsistent man when opposed to the imperious will of a determined, mean, and jealous woman.

Jealousy, hatred, and the spirit of revenge armed the hand of the murderess.

Count le Roux de Kerninon was the last member of a noble family of Brittany, the pedigree of which went back as far as the early thirteenth century. During the course of time it had intermarried with most of the influential people of the neighbourhood. During his military service in Algeria more than thirty years ago he fell in love with a young widow, eight years older than himself. She was Suzanne Theola. After the death of her husband she had been a theatrical singer.

She was very beautiful, possessing the languorous charm of the Algerians, an olive complexion, dark, profound eyes, and a supple carriage. She became his mistress.

Notwithstanding his family's opposition, the Count regularized their position by marriage when he had finished his service with the colours. Husband and wife came to live at Brest, bringing with them the son of the young woman's first marriage, little Emile Fleury.

It has been said—but the fact has not been proved—that the Count de Kerninon entered into relations with Suzanne less from a wish to do so than from fear, and that, from then onwards, the woman who was to become the Countess de Kerninon used every means in her power to achieve her purpose.

Whatever the truth, it seems certain that de Kerninon, a loyal and brave man who was faithful to the motto of his ancestors: "War or Love," was madly devoted to the woman he had chosen.

Probably she loved him in return, but pride entered to a great extent into the sentiments she had for him.

Some years went by peacefully. The passion which the couple shared disguised their deep mutual differences of character and taste. But when the amorous period came to an end they began to quarrel. The Countess had become accustomed to the exercise of a dominating influence over a weak husband who always gave way to her. She now obliged him to abandon living in the country and to participate in the worldly pleasures which made up her life. They went to live for part of the winter in Paris and the remainder on the Riviera, while they spent the summer months at fashionable bathing-places.

The Count de Kerninon passed only a few weeks of the year in the house of his ancestors.

Again years passed, during which the differences between the couple became more and more pronounced. In spite of the proofs of devotion the Count had given his wife by educating her son and setting him up at his expense as a public notary at Lannion, the woman became more and more masterful and worried him without ceasing.

In order to establish her son she had made her husband sell, against his will, the family estate and brought him to live at Lannion.

At last, tired of the vexations of his married life and desiring a change, Count de Kerninon took for his mistress a girl from the devastated areas of France, a girl named Bernardine Nedellec, a typist, who seems to have been genuinely devoted to him.

This liaison did not last long before it was known to the Countess de Kerninon. Yielding to a jealous impulse, she had falsely obtained from the poste restante a letter addressed to Count de Kerninon by Bernardine Nedellec and from that day onwards daily quarrels broke out in the home, despite which Count de Kerninon continued to meet Bernardine.

One day, the Countess, faithful as usual to the strong line, tried to rid herself of her rival by talking to her herself. Entering her house, she kept the girl under the threat of a revolver for more than a quarter of an hour and peremptorily ordered her to give up her husband.

This violent scene finished with the arrival of the Count, who came into the dining-room and found his wife and his mistress face to face.

The story of that time has revealed that he did not show himself in a very brilliant light under these difficult circum-

stances. Not knowing what to say, he at once turned on his heel, taking his wife with him.

From that moment the Countess became a positive fury, so exasperated was she with her unfortunate husband. According to confidential statements which Bernardine later repeated, she made the Count spend whole nights "between the revolver and the razor" uttering threats against him and her rival. These he noted down with a pencil on scraps of paper which he enclosed in his letters to his mistress.

These strange notes read: "Your heart is mine or nobody's"; "Your love or your death"; "If you leave me I'll get you back"; "If I could lay my hands on her I'd give her something." And so on.

The state of mind which precedes crime was taking shape.

To ensure a rupture between Bernardine and her husband Mme de Kerninon tried in vain, with the assistance of her son, to convince him that his mistress had been unfaithful—which was not the case.

Her ire grew and she did all she could to bring about an estrangement, since she knew that the Count intended to leave Bernardine a considerable sum of money in his will.

He had even stated one day, during an argument, that he would not alter the dispositions of his will in Bernardine's favour without definite proof of her unfaithfulness.

Tired of his hellish life, he often left his home to pass the time with the woman of his choice.

When he returned for the last time, tired and discouraged, he tore up the will made in favour of Bernardine Nedellec, on the Countess's insistence and in order to calm her.

At length, on 21st September 1924, Bernardine, who had been staying at a hotel at Lannion for several days, was waiting for the Count on the public road at a place where he had fixed an appointment. More than an hour went by without his arrival. Then a friend came and told her that a terrible accident had happened at the Count de Kerninon's house at the very time fixed for the appointment. He was said to have shot himself in the head by accident while handling a revolver.

Bernardine at once cried: "*It is she who has killed him.*"

At first treated by Doctor Le Goffic, the Count was later transferred to Doctor Auregan's nursing-home.

A first examination by X-rays was not successful in determining the exact size of the bullet in the patient's neck. The doctor went to Maître Fleury and asked him to give him one of the revolver bullets for purposes of examination. When the notary

had gone to fetch the revolver, which was deposited in his safe, the doctor found two unused cartridges as well as several empty cartridge-cases. He contented himself with taking one bullet only and, after his departure, Maître Fleury—this was a very serious point—threw the empty cartridge-cases as well as the unused ones into the cesspool.

The tale invented by the family to account for the accident found credence, and it was thought that the Count would pull through.

In the meantime he had been visited at the nursing-home by Bernardine Nedellec and by two other persons and had said to them in substance : “ *My wife tried to kill me ; but don't denounce her. As soon as I am cured I will settle with her.* ”

Two days later he died. The medical certificate stated as the cause of death “ a tumour on the lung, complicated by his wound. ”

Bernardine Nedellec at once denounced the crime and an investigation was held. Mme Fleury declared : “ There is no question of a crime. It was a terrible accident which has thrown us all into despair. It was about 1.30 p.m. and we had just lunched. My husband had gone back to his office, situated in a neighbouring house. The Count and Countess de Kerninon had gone to their room, which is on the first floor, overlooking the street. I was in the garden when I heard a shot. I came back to the house. I then saw Monsieur de Kerninon coming down the stairs, his hand and face covered with blood. My mother-in-law was leaning against the stair-railing in a fainting condition. ‘ It's an accident,’ she said. ‘ He had a revolver in his hand. I tried to take it away so that he should not wound himself, when suddenly it went off. ’ ”

Notwithstanding this statement, which was confirmed by Maître Fleury, the investigation was continued. Then Mme de Kerninon altered her version of the affair and stated that her husband had tried to kill himself. She said that they had quarrelled. She had asked for money and he had refused her. She reproached him with his unfaithfulness and, exasperated, he took a revolver and tried to kill himself. She said she had thrown herself on him to divert his aim, but it was too late.

Unhappily for her, this statement was contradicted by the medical evidence. Four wounds had been found in the body—one in the neck, two in the hands, and one in the cheek.

For her part, Bernardine vehemently accused the Countess. She reported the conversation she had had with the Count on his death-bed, mentioning the names of the witnesses to whom he had made the same confidence and ending by saying : “ When

he tore up the will made in my favour, the Count signed his death-warrant."

Also, the Examining Magistrate received two statements from the scene of the drama which told heavily against Mme de Kerninon—a neighbour and a servant had both heard several shots.

Count de Kerninon had therefore not killed himself.

Notwithstanding its improbability, the Countess persisted in her story of the suicide. In Court, she defended herself obstinately against the prosecutor in spite of the evidence against her. She showed herself in her true light, ambitious, domineering, and jealous. It was obvious that she had every reason to be jealous of Bernardine—reasons of love, of interest, and of personal gain.

The jury brought in a verdict of Guilty, but with extenuating circumstances. The Court sentenced her on 8th May to eight years' penal servitude. She is now undergoing this punishment in the prison at Rennes.